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### Have you checked in at school?

It's hard to believe that almost a quarter of the school year has passed. How are things going at your child's school? Does your child seem to be adjusting and performing?

Academic performance and overall enjoyment of school improves when children understand why school is important and what parents and teachers expect of them. It is also critical that parents get involved in their child's school to appraise their activities and show their kids that they value their education.

Now's the time to make a personal appraisal of your child's academic efforts and speak with your child's teacher. Learn whether your child is positive and adapting well to new situations, and approaching challenges with focus and enthusiasm or is he negative, moody, restless or easily distractible.

While most children meet their parent's expectations, causing them to swell with pride, too many children experience performance-limiting problems. About 14 million, or 1 in 5, American children have a mental disorder or emotional disturbance serious enough to lead to school difficulties, substance abuse, violence, or even suicide.

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is perhaps the most common cause of poor school performance. Children with ADHD may have trouble paying attention, and commonly daydream, squirm and fidget during class, have trouble taking turns with others, and act and speak without thinking.

School professionals and your pediatrician know the symptoms well. Comprehensive evaluation is warranted, as ADHD co-exists in many children who exhibit other conditions including learning disabilities, anxiety disorders, depression, and oppositional defiant disorder.

Sometimes emotional issues are at play. Up to 5 percent of children experience avoid attending school, or leave after arrival. Others suffer from frequent headaches,

abdominal pain and breathlessness, or complain of “just not feeling well,” subsequently missing numerous days of school.

Causes of school refusal include fear of failure, anxiety and fear of bullying at school. It’s important to intervene and find the cause of the problem as symptoms can become more severe over time.

Let your child know the value you place on their academic efforts and prove it by investing some time in their school. Get more involved if your child’s performance doesn’t meet your expectations or if you are concerned about their behavior. Ask teachers and school administrators for help and discuss your concerns with your pediatrician, sooner rather than later.

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