

# Schools urge parents to get kids to school on time

Concern is growing at the number of parents failing to get their kids to school on time, with a pilot programme launched to address the issue.

New Zealand Principals' Federation president Denise Torrey said lateness to school had been a nationwide issue for some time. Research showed children who were late to class did not perform as well as their counterparts.

"Those poor kids are set up to fail and parents need to understand that," Torrey said.

Lateness to school, truancy and transience, when kids were moved from school to school by their parents, were the big three things on schools' radars, she said.

"Significant research has been done on those three things and how they [negatively] impact on kids' long term outcomes," she said.

Southland schools attendance officer Lindsay Thomas said there was a real concern in primary schools about lateness.

It was a "big problem", he said.

The attendance service was doing a pilot programme with a Southland primary school in which offending families were sent encouragement cards each week saying things like: "Your kids have been late six days this month. How can we help?"

He would not say which school was involved in the pilot programme.

Bluff School principal Alison Cook, who has been known to knock on the doors of families with late children, said lateness was not good for learning and she dealt with each case on an individual basis, working with each family.

"Lateness is not the kids' fault ... there are definitely some families that find the mornings a challenge."

It was not a big problem at her school, but if left unabated it could be, she indicated.

Tim Lovelock, president of the Southland Primary Schools Principal's Association, said he was aware of some schools fighting a battle against lateness.

"Not being late to school is key, early morning is optimum learning time straight away ... they are awake and alert and that's the best time of the day for learning."

The issue needed addressing early so the tardiness did not drag on into secondary school years, he said.

"If you think education is important for your kids you are going to get them there, you are going to find a way."