Letters

LETTERS

Beyond the classroom: Maximising the last days of the school holiday

Barely a week left before schools reopen, many parents are beginning to shift gears. Conversations are turning to fees, uniforms, books, transport, and change of schools, among others. Teachers are finalising schemes of work. Children are slowly realising that the freedom of the holiday is drawing to a close. Yet amid this visible preparation, there is a quieter, often neglected aspect of readiness that deserves our attention.

Preparation is often misunderstood. Many parents equate it with buying scholastic materials, securing school fees, or revising notes. Those things matter, but true preparation goes deeper. True preparation for school is not only about what children carry in their suitcases. It is about what they carry in their minds, hearts, and habits. As parents and educators, this final stretch of the holiday gives us a valuable opportunity to prepare children beyond the classroom, even as education remains firmly at the back of our minds.

Holidays are not an interruption of learning; they are a change of learning environment. When the timetable disappears, children learn different lessons. They learn how time is managed, how adults handle responsibility, and how problems are solved without instruction from a teacher.

For parents, the holiday season reveals what children have truly internalised. A child who can manage simple responsibilities at home often adjusts more easily to school routines.

As school draws near, there is a temptation to focus entirely on academic readiness. Children do not struggle at school merely because of weak academic ability. Many struggle because of poor attention, low motivation, lack of self-control, or emotional fatigue. These issues cannot be fixed by textbooks alone.

Parents can address these quietly at home. Engaging children in conversation, encouraging them to explain their thoughts, and involving them in decision-making or problem-solving during daily activities stimulates thinking and builds confidence. These interactions sharpen the mind without turning the home into a classroom.

Much of what prepares a school child is never written in a syllabus. It is taught through parenting. Children observe how adults speak, listen, resolve conflict and respond to pressure. During holidays, this observation intensifies.

When parents model consistency, patience, and accountability, children internalise these qualities. A child who learns to listen at home is better prepared to listen in class.

One of the biggest challenges children face at the start of term is the sudden return to structure. Late nights, unplanned days, and unrestricted screen time make early mornings and classroom focus difficult.

The final days of the holiday offer a gentle bridge. Gradually restoring routines such as regular sleep times, designated quiet moments, or morning responsibilities helps children adjust emotionally and physically. This approach reduces resistance and anxiety when school resumes.

As school approaches, children often carry unspoken concerns. Some worry about academic expectations, others about friendships, discipline, or disappointing their parents. If these concerns are ignored, they may show up later as withdrawal, poor performance, or behavioural issues. This period is ideal for intentional dialogue. Asking children how they feel about returning to school, what they enjoyed during the holidays, and what they are worried about can reveal important emotional cues. These conversations help parents identify issues early, long before report cards or disciplinary notes arrive. When parents focus on growth rather than grades, children develop healthier motivation and resilience. Also, when we explain why routines matter, children begin to understand that discipline is not punishment, but preparation for success.

As the holiday season comes to an end, parents and teachers are reminded that education does not begin at the school gate. Schools provide instruction, but homes shape learners. Children who return to school emotionally grounded, mentally curious, and accustomed to responsibility are better positioned to benefit from formal education. This kind of preparation requires time, presence, and intention more than money or busy moments spent only looking for school fees and scholarly materials. You need to balance the boat.

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