

School Attendance Support

Attending school can be challenging for any young person and students with SEND often face even bigger challenges than their peers. However, it is so important that every young person attends school every day so everyone has access to all opportunities that are available through education.

By being in school every day, we can help our children's achievements, wellbeing and wider development. Evidence shows that students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best results at the end of their school careers. Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage. Being in school regularly and consistently also helps our young people to build positive relationships with staff and students and build their confidence to the point where they enjoy school and all the positives it has to offer.

Non-attendance of school, also known as school phobia, can start gradually or happen suddenly and it can be because of a variety of different reasons. It is important that we understand how our young people are feeling so we can validate their emotions and start working with them to tackle the issues that might be stopping them from going into school.

These are some of the possible causes of non-attendance:

- Stressful events at home or school or with peers
- Family and peer conflict
- Bereavement or other difficult experiences at home
- Starting or changing schools
- Moving home
- Bullying or teasing
- Problems with a teacher
- Poor school results.
- By not going to school, a child might be able to avoid scary things – for example, tests, certain teachers, the canteen etc and get out of social situations with peers or teachers.

In the case of low school attendance, it is so important that we, as your young person's school, and yourselves, as parents/carers, work closely together to ensure we can tackle any problems and keep our young people in education as much as possible. Communication is essential for this to happen, so please call the school if you are worried about attendance and we can then help you to access the wider support that might be needed.

There are also things that you can do at home with your child that can help to reduce their anxiety around coming into school.

- Help your child get into the habit of going to school and learn the value of regular routines
- Teach your child that attending school is non-negotiable unless they are truly sick
- Build relationships with other families and discuss how you can help each other out in times of need
- Identify non-academic activities (drama, art, music, etc) that can help motivate your child's interest in school
- Talk to your child about what's worrying them to help them lessen their anxious feelings rather than fight against them
- Try to avoid getting into arguments with them about school and show them you are on their side
- Use positive praise and reward your child for any successes in school

There is a list of website links below that have even more information to help support young people and their families with attendance and wellbeing so do check them out and use the support that is available.

- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/school-anxiety-and-refusal/>
- <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/09/02/back-to-school-week-everything-you-need-to-know-about-school-attendance/>
- <https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/education/school-university/coping-school-refusal/#:~:text=If%20your%20child%20is%20refusing,this%20issue%20is%20very%20similar.>
- <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/for-parents/understanding-education/about-schools/behaviour-and-attendance>