

# Is your child anxious about attending school?

A leaflet for parents  
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**EDUCATION  
& the ARTS**  
Inclusion and Learning Support  
Educational Psychology Service

 **west  
sussex  
county  
council**

# friendships Scared? talk answers tests depressed?

## **Is your child anxious about attending school?**

High anxiety levels together with difficulties in attending school could suggest your child is experiencing emotionally based school refusal. It is very important to catch emotionally based school refusal as soon as possible.

### **Key signs to look out for include:**

Fearfulness, anxiety, tantrums or expression of negative feelings, when faced with the prospect of attending school.  
Insisting on illness, e.g. headaches and stomach aches, without physical symptoms.  
Distressed about separation from parents or carers.  
Tends to stay at home when absent from school.

### **Other contributory factors can be school or home related and may include:**

Changing schools or classes  
Struggling to make friends  
Bullying  
Competitive sporting activities  
Pressure over achievement of grades in school  
Family history of emotionally based school refusal, anxiety, phobias, depression  
Change in family set up, e.g. birth of a new baby  
Experience of loss through the death of a parent, parental separation, parent being hospitalised

### **Help is available and taking early action is very important.**

Your child's school is a key point of contact and it is important to share information as soon as possible. You may also wish to visit your GP to further investigate any physical and mental health issues.

## **Who should I approach within my child's school?**

Within your child's school, the key points of contact are likely to be:  
Secondary school - usually your child's Head of Year/ Head of House, Form Tutor or SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator).  
Primary school – usually the school SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) and your child's class teacher.

### **What steps should school staff take next?**

Early action is important and it is extremely helpful for your child to maintain contact with the school. An agreed member of school staff should act as a link person who will make immediate special arrangements as appropriate, to enable your child to maintain some contact with school. This may include adapted attendance arrangements. For example, varying when and how often your child comes to school and where they are taught. Additional support may also include mentoring and buddying arrangements.

The school link person will also seek further support as appropriate, from a range of professionals, whilst maintaining parental and pupil involvement at all stages. This will involve working together to explore the relevant factors and to devise a more detailed multi-agency action plan to support your child and family. The school link person will act as a focus for information sharing and co-ordinated activity between different professionals, school staff, pupil and parents. They will also make sure that all actions agreed are clear to everyone, that progress is kept under review and that everyone is kept informed.

## **Which professionals can the school seek further support from?**

The school will often involve an Education Welfare Officer who is experienced in supporting pupils who have attendance issues.

### **Other professionals the school could approach for further advice and support include:**

The School Nurse  
The Educational Psychologist  
GP  
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

### **The sooner you seek help, the sooner your school can work with you and relevant professionals, to help your child feel happier about attending school regularly.**

### **Are there additional sources of support and advice available to parents?**

YoungMinds Parents' Information Service - (a free, confidential telephone service providing information and advice for any adult with concerns about the mental health of a child or young person). Tel: 0800 018 2138

Parents and pupils can also phone the local authority education help line. This service can provide details of your Education Welfare Officer and other education services. Tel: 0845 0751007