

Anxiety Affecting School Attendance

Many children and young people are anxious about attending school at some stage. This is normal. Anxieties are part of life and learning to face up to them is part of growing up. If your child seems anxious about school, the first step should be to talk to school staff about the problem. Advice and support is available from school. It is important that you make an appointment to talk with your child's teachers as soon as possible.

Separation anxiety or school anxiety can develop despite parental encouragement and support. A child might be fearful, withdrawn, tearful, or have physical symptoms, such as stomach-ache or nausea when faced with school. These may be signs of anxiety and an early response is beneficial. Action needs to be taken so that what starts out as a small problem does not develop into something more longstanding, which could get in the way of progress at school.

What is anxiety?

Another word for it is worry and it is perfectly normal but it becomes a problem when it stops people doing what they want or need to do.

How can you Help?

Facing up to the fear is the best way forward.

You can help by:-

- Keeping regular contact with school staff and including your child in this where appropriate.
- Listening and acting on any concerns.
- Contacting the Education Welfare Service early on, and keeping them informed at all times.
- Supporting your son/daughter in facing the fearful situation daily.

- Encouraging your son/daughter to remain in school.
- Teaching your son/daughter to relax e.g. breathing in a controlled way, taking exercise, following out of school interests (Please see pupil leaflet).
- Talking with him/her about what s/he does well.
- Encouraging him/her to socialise and keep in touch with school friends out of school hours
- Ensuring that preparations are made for school the night before.
- Ensuring that your child is sleeping well and eating regularly
- Aiming to have calm mornings, allowing plenty of time for an unhurried start.
- Reminding him/her that school is not optional for anyone below 16 years.
- The main advice is to try, try and try again. You must aim to be calm and confident when reassuring a child that the difficulty will decrease with time. Maintain regular home-school contact. It is most effective to continue to insist on your son/daughter going to school even if s/he resists. It will get easier over time as long as you persist.

Many children are anxious about school. By building up small successes, the anxiety that your child feels will subside and be experienced less frequently.

If, after you and the school have worked closely together there is no change you may wish to discuss the situation with your Link EP, who can consult with the School Anxiety Service as necessary.

The School Anxiety Service

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ANXIETY



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