



School refusal

A PARENTS GUIDE

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School refusal

School refusal is, the refusal by a child to go to school. When children completely refuse to go to school, extreme fear and anxiety are often a big reason why.

Your child might be feeling overwhelmed with anxiety about schoolwork, relationships with friends or teachers. They might have low self-esteem, or be experiencing bullying and feel too afraid to talk about it.



Signs and symptoms of school refusal

- Refusal to go to school in the morning
- Leaving or running away from school during the school day
- Tantrums and outbursts, especially in the morning
- Threats to harm themselves if they've made to go to school
- Physical symptoms like headaches, stomach aches, panic attacks and diarrhoea
- Extreme clinginess: not wanting to be alone in a room
- Sleep disturbances

How can I help my child?

01**Tackle it early**

The longer anxiety about school persists, the deeper it becomes. Seek professional help, such as counselling, through the GP.

02**Talk to your child**

Speak to your child, listen to their fears and respect their feelings. Identify the problem.

03**Speak to the school**

Talk to your child's school as soon as possible. Parents and teachers need to work together to support the child. There may be things the school can do to help, like mentoring or agree flexible start times.

04**Be mindful of your own emotions**

Although it can be hard, children are like sponges and will soak up how you are feeling. Be mindful of your own anxiety.

05**Maintain a routine**

Maintain a good routine for your child such as bedtime, sleep and meal time routine. You can also prepare for school the night before so your child knows what to expect.

06**Motivate your child**

Some children respond well to sticker charts depending on their age. You can motivate your child by showing the positive things about going to school.

07**Delayed goodbyes**

Do not delay goodbyes, as this can make it harder for your child.



Alternative provision

Pupils who can't attend mainstream school for a variety of reasons, including school refusal, are entitled to 'high-quality, alternative learning provision' known as Alternative Provision. Your Local Authority website should have information on what alternative provision is available in your local area.



Truantiing



If your child is skipping/ bunking off school and hiding it from you, it could be because of some of the reasons listed above. It can be a real shock to find out your child is not going to school, causing you to feel anger and worry, especially if they are showing other behavioural problems like aggression. It is really important that you encourage your child to go to school because if your attitude to school is negative it can rub off on your child.

Consequences of non-attendance

Parents need to make sure their child gets a full-time education and will be held responsible if their child does not attend school. The consequences can include:

- Penalties and fines
- Being taken to court
- The child being excluded
- A strain on their wellbeing and family life.



Where to get support?



SENDIASS

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) provides free impartial, confidential and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for children, young people and their parents on matters relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).



CONTACT

Contact is a charity for families with disabled children. They support families with the best possible guidance and information.