



# School Refusal

Help and advice for parents and carers

If your child is refusing to attend school, this is known as 'school refusal' or 'school phobia' and is often caused by fear and anxious feelings.

## Help your child tackle anxious feelings

Remember that your child is probably struggling with feeling anxious. Talk about what's worrying them, making sure you listen to what they say. Try to help your child lessen their anxious feelings rather than fight against them.

### **Try to spot their triggers.**

See if you can think of strategies that can support your child when they face things that make them resistant to school.

### **Avoid arguing to get them into school and look at the core issue instead.**

This shows you are on their side, working towards the same goal.

### **Try worry management techniques.**

For example, use 'worry time' or the worry tree activity to help them gain control over their worries.

### **Use positive praise and rewards.**

Make sure you notice any efforts they're making.

### **Encourage things that help them to relax.**

For example, spending time with their friends, listening to music, going for a walk/run, baking or watching a favourite film.

### **Be consistent with your approach.**

Make sure that you give your strategies time to work.

## Creating a plan and working towards goals

Don't be afraid to break down challenges into smaller parts. For example, thinking about how your child usually travels to school and breaking the journey down into smaller steps. After some time, when they feel comfortable with each part of the process, you can look at working towards the next goal.

This method may feel time consuming, but it may be beneficial in helping your child to get used to taking a large task that may feel overwhelming and breaking it down into smaller, manageable steps.

Ensure that your morning routine stays the same. Get them to wake up at the same time and eat breakfast. Where possible, make the mornings feel normal and agree on a routine that works for them and everyone else in the family.

Create a plan with your child to help them overcome their worries, work with school to share this plan. Once the morning routine is working, next, it might be travelling to school. Then, getting over the threshold of being in school. Once in school, the year team can look at what their day looks like and can any achievable small modifications be made that would create a successful day.

# Support for you and your child

## Support from Cowley

Our Family Liaison Officer (FLO) is employed to provide a link between school and family.

The FLO will work with a child and their parents/carers to try to identify the ongoing support that might help. The school will work closely with you to create an individualised support package for your child's reintegration back into school.

Cowley works with external agencies, including the NHS and Barnardo's, for children or families who may need extra support.

## Cowley's SENCO

Mrs MacKay is Cowley's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and can be contacted via telephone: 01744 678 030

You can also talk to your GP or school nurse if appropriate.

## Mental health support

You could work with CAMHS, if your child is struggling to attend school for emotional or mental health reasons.

You can ask your school, local children's service or council if they can support with an Early Help and Assessment Plan. This brings together professionals supporting your child to help with any difficulties you may be facing.

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

## Other support services

If your child wants to speak to someone themselves, Kooth, Childline and The Mix have a range of online, phone and text support for children and young people.

Kooth  
[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

Childline  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
0800 11 11

The Mix  
[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)  
0808 808 4994

