

Rose Road
Association

Making a **positive difference** to
the lives of young disabled people



**SENDIASS Training for
Parents & Carers
of children with
Special Educational
Needs (0-25)**

Welcome

School refusal and anxiety

**Your Trainers:
Hannah Pinchin and Anna Gunn**

House Keeping

- Microphones on mute please
- Feel free to add comments and questions to the chat box and we will email you a summary sheet with the answers on after the talk (please keep them anonymous).
- PowerPoint will be shared after the training – sit back and relax!



SENDIASS

(Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service)

Who are we?

SEND

A service for those living or working with ages 0-25yrs with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Information

Providing factual information found in SEND Law and practices as well as local knowledge and signposting

Advice

Providing impartial advice on what steps to take in the areas of Education, Health and Social Care

Support

Providing confidential individualised support to empower those who seek our assistance

Why can children experience extreme anxiety and distress in relation to attending school?

- Academic pressures
- Home related worries
- Emotional developmental delay
- Testing and assessments
- Sensorial difficulties
- Undiagnosed SEN or illness
- Bullying
- Not feeling difficulties are understood or believed
- Physical difficulties
- Concerns around COVID-19

- Friendship issues or social anxiety
- Navigating around school or travel to and from school
- Adolescent hormone and brain development
- Learning difficulties
- Unstructured break times
- Classroom disruption
- Ineffective SEND support
- Separation anxiety
- Changes to routines and staff

How does school related anxiety affect children?



- Suggestions are being made to parents that they need to prioritise education over the mental health of their children and do whatever it takes to get them into school.
- An anxious child who is forced into school can be traumatised and can often experience a 'fight, flight or freeze' response when there. In this state, they are unlikely to be able to take in information or process it effectively. In these cases it's likely that they won't be able to gain the educational benefit from being in school that their peers may have.
- Parents feel pressure to do this and can often be affected alike. They want the best for their children and want them to have an education and hence try any means available to persuade their child to go into school. This can cause their child to resent the parent and also form a distrust. Low self esteem and be linked to these feelings when trying to persuade an unwilling child.
- Communication with your child key. Supporting them and letting them know you take their concerns seriously and believe them is important to be able to keep trust and try and move the situation forward.

How does school related anxiety affect children?



- Forcing a child to attend school can cause trauma for children and parents as it may break trust between the parent and the child.
- Trauma and compassion fatigue in a carer can also cause problems - if a parent is so burnt out this can lead to anger and depression which in turn could affect the relationship.
- A forced attendance could be a 'short-sighted' approach - it may lead to an increase in anxiety and therefore an increase in absence.
- Education is important but there are different means of delivering a good education.
- When a child has been refusing to attend school and their behaviour and/or anxiety appears to be worsening, it is important to seek help as soon as possible.
- More information can be found on the "Not Fine in School" website:
<https://blobby.wsimg.com/go/a41082e1-5561-438b-a6a2-16176f7570e9/FORCED%20ATTENDANCE%20Oct%202020.pdf>

Coding an absence due to anxiety

Schools must take an attendance register at the start of the first session and again after lunch.

A legal duty is placed upon schools to ensure that registers are accurately completed. They form part of the witness statement presented to the court in the case of a prosecution.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

“Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors’ notes.”

School attendance guidance August 2020

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School attendance guidance for 2020 to 2021 academic year.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3b3sChPeAJVAjdmqqfr8nG_dTMRFQ4BINYzeBwRjXF7k9J-tfqVFF2oFc](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3b3sChPeAJVAjdmqqfr8nG_dTMRFQ4BINYzeBwRjXF7k9J-tfqVFF2oFc)

What if I am being threatened with an attendance order?

If you are being threatened with an Attendance Order because of your child's absences from school, you should write to the relevant person or department (which is likely to be the Educational Welfare Service) to explain that your child has special educational needs and is experiencing mental health difficulties. Suggest to them that serving an Attendance Order in these circumstances would be premature and inappropriate as it is not useful to the child. What is needed is co-ordinated action by support agencies to identify and make provision for all of your child's needs.

Hopefully, once everyone involved realises that your child's non-attendance is to do with their anxiety and SEN rather than deliberate truancy, the threat will be withdrawn.

What can parents do?

Go and see a GP

Explain the difficulties your child is experiencing and ask for the GP's help, which could include:

- Referring your child to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Writing to the school to confirm that they suspect your child has an anxiety disorder and is currently medically unfit to attend school
- Documenting anxiety symptoms and any other difficulties in your child's medical records (for evidence if needed)

Please note that GP's do not have a statutory duty to provide informal sick notes for children.

The following national guidance has been sent out to all GP's, schools and colleges by the General Practitioners' Council/ British Medical Association:

"Schools and colleges should note that GPs will not provide sick notes in support of special consideration applications. A medical certificate is not necessary when making an application for special consideration where a candidate misses an exam or their performance in an exam is affected as a result of a temporary illness/injury. As long as the school/college supports the application for special consideration this is considered sufficient evidence".

What can parents do?

Speak to the school

- Ask the class teacher, SENCO and or senior management team for a meeting to discuss what might be behind the school refusal.
- Consider the school's duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 to identify and support any special educational needs or disabilities that the child may have.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>
- Remember that the term “special educational needs” covers a broad spectrum which includes social, emotional and mental health needs. Your child does not need to be struggling academically in order to access SEN support.
- The school may need to seek support from outside agencies. The LA's education welfare service can be helpful in providing strategies and support for children who are beginning to school-refuse.
- If the school may not be able to meet your child's needs by itself, it may be appropriate to request an EHC needs assessment (the first step towards getting an EHC plan).

What can parents do?

Keep a diary and file documenting everything

- Describe what happens daily with your child – what they say or do, if you are able
- Keep notes and records of all conversations with school or medical staff – if you are able follow up conversations with written summaries so that you have written records, also ask for written confirmation of any verbal agreements
- Keep records of all medical appointments and any assessments or meetings
- Keep all relevant letters and print outs of emails
- For every absence send an email to school detailing why, each time

What can school do?



- Assess the student for SEND and offer support in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) as anxiety disorders are a diagnosable disability, particularly when a parent has reported this as the reason for absence.
- make a referral to an Educational Psychologist and/ or CAMHS for an assessment.

Schools are advised to involve specialists “*where a child continues to make less than expected progress, despite evidence-based support and interventions that are matched to the child’s area of need*”. The decision to involve specialists should be taken with the child’s parents.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

- Schools have had a duty to provide “reasonable adjustments” for disabled pupils since 2002: originally, under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; and, from October 2010, under the Equality Act 2010.

https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/reasonable_adjustments_for_disabled_pupils_1.pdf

- Schools have a duty to use its “best endeavors” to secure the special educational provision called for by the pupil’s or student’s special educational needs. Section 66 of the Children and Families Act 2014

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/section/66/enacted>

- If the school is unable to provide suitable educational provision that the child can access, they should apply to the Local Authority for an EHCP assessment.

What can school do?

- If the child is absent for more than 15 days, whether consecutive or cumulative, the school is required to inform the Local Authority medical needs officer who should arrange alternative full-time educational provision and should do so at the latest by the sixth day of the absence.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>
- provide homework whilst the student is unable to attend - their duty to educate does not stop because a student does not attend due to showing traits of SEN (diagnosed or not).
- explore the 'Local Offer' and make a referral to MAST (Multi Agency Support Team) who can provide strategies for attendance difficulties.
- put in place a support plan which has been shared with parents to identify a structured way forward including the strategies in place to phase back in full attendance when appropriate and a backup plan if this fails.
- help them reintegrate at school when they return
- make sure the child and family are kept informed about school events and clubs
- encourage the child to stay in contact with other pupils, e.g. through visits or videos

<https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>

Getting temporary education in place



Section 19, Education Act 1996. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>

- The Local Authority (LA) has a legal duty to secure suitable, full-time alternative education for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them. This applies whether or not your child has an EHC Plan.
- LAs have a power (not a duty) to arrange education provision, where not already available, for pupils aged 16-18.

Getting temporary education in place



- LAs should have regard to the statutory guidance entitled: ‘Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs’. “Health needs” can include anxiety and other mental health needs.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>
- It states in paragraphs 14-15 that LAs should provide such education as soon as it is clear that the child will be away from school for 15 days or more, whether consecutive or cumulative. They should liaise with appropriate medical professionals to ensure minimal delay in arranging appropriate provision for the child.
- “Full-time education” is not defined in law, and LAs will often only offer a few hours of home tuition per week. However, the guidance states (at the bottom of page 4) that it should *“equate to what the pupil would normally have in school – for example, for pupils in Key Stage 4 this would usually be 25 hours a week.”*
- It is unlawful to withhold or reduce the provision, or type of provision, for a child because of how much it will cost. Therefore, LAs must not have policies that limit a child’s education to a specified number of hours per week due to cost or availability.

What if my child has an EHCP?

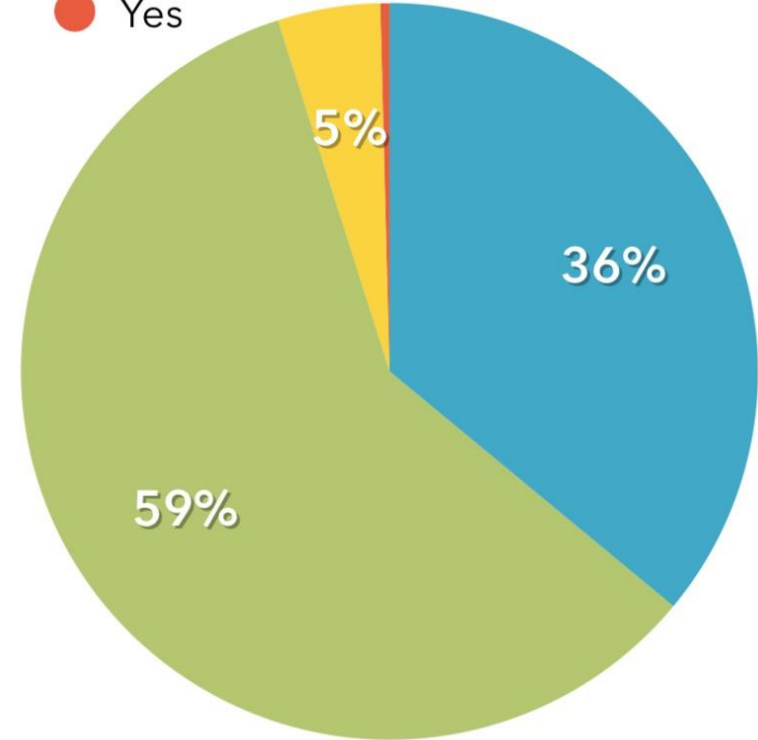
1. It is likely that the plan needs to be re-examined. Your child may need extra or different support, and/or a different school.
2. You should consider asking for an early review of the EHC plan or a re-assessment of needs, especially if your child's mental health needs have arisen relatively recently and are not covered in the plan.
3. The LA must continue to secure the special educational provision in the EHC plan while your child is out of school (section 42, Children and Families Act 2014).
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

Should a child be forced to attend school?

Almost half (45.5%) of parents in the Not fine in School Attendance Difficulties survey (May 2018) stated that they have forced their child to attend school as they felt under pressure to do so; in addition, 21.2% felt under this pressure but refused to force attendance. When asked if the use of force was helpful in resolving their child's anxiety, 36% of parents said 'no', and 59.1% said it has made things much worse. 0.4% of parents thought force helped & 4.5% thought it might have helped.

[1,661 Survey Respondents, www.notfineinschool.co.uk]

- No
- Made things much worse
- Might have helped
- Yes



Useful links

Government Guidance:

- Supporting children with medical conditions at school

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>

- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>

- School attendance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907535/School_attendance_guidance_for_2020_to_2021_academic_year.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3b3sChPeAJVAjdmqqfr8nG_dTMRFQ4BINYzeBwRjXF7k9J-tfqVFF2oFc

- Mental health and behaviours in schools

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755135/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools_.pdf

- Illness and your child's education

<https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>

- Alternative provision

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision>

Useful links

- IPSEA school refusal

<https://www.ipsea.org.uk/school-refusal>

- Autism anxiety resource pack

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cf788f054106a000185c13a/t/5e8d9df1d4d7ce5942cb8e55/1586339323794/anxiety+resource+pack_.pdf

Useful links

- Template letter to request authorisation of anxiety related non-attendance

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/a41082e1-5561-438b-a6a2-16176f7570e9/downloads/NFIS%20Authorising%20Anxiety%20Related%20Non-attendanc.pdf?ver=1604665772374>

- The affects of forcing an anxious child to attend school

<https://blobby.wsimg.com/go/a41082e1-5561-438b-a6a2-16176f7570e9/FORCED%20ATTENDANCE%20Oct%202020.pdf>

- A school's guide to anxiety related non-attendance

<https://blobby.wsimg.com/go/a41082e1-5561-438b-a6a2-16176f7570e9/NFIS%20Schools%20Summary%20Oct%202020.pdf>

- A parent's guide to anxiety related non- attendance

<https://blobby.wsimg.com/go/a41082e1-5561-438b-a6a2-16176f7570e9/NFIS%20Parent%20Summary%20Oct%202020.pdf>

Local Authority SEN team contact details



Southampton City Council

Email:

0-25service@southampton.gov.uk

Tel: 02380 833013

Address:

Special Educational Needs Team
Southampton City Council
Civic Centre (North Block)
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 7LY

Portsmouth City Council

Email:

sen.education@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Tel: 02392 841238

Address:

Special Educational Needs Team
Portsmouth City Council Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth
PO1 2EA

West Berkshire City Council

Email:

senteam@westberks.gov.uk

Tel: 01635 519713

Address:

Special Educational Needs Team
West Berkshire Council
West Street House
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Thank you for listening. Any Questions? Contact Us



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Self referrals/professional referrals welcome. For general enquiries email familyservices@roseroad.org.uk