



WIAS

Wolverhampton Information, Advice and Support Service

Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance - EBSNA

This is a broad umbrella term used to describe children and young people who have difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school or college.

Understanding any underlying reasons for non-attendance

It is important to understand the underlying reasons for a child or young person's school non-attendance and the impact as a whole family.

Young people can feel anxious about school for many reasons such as

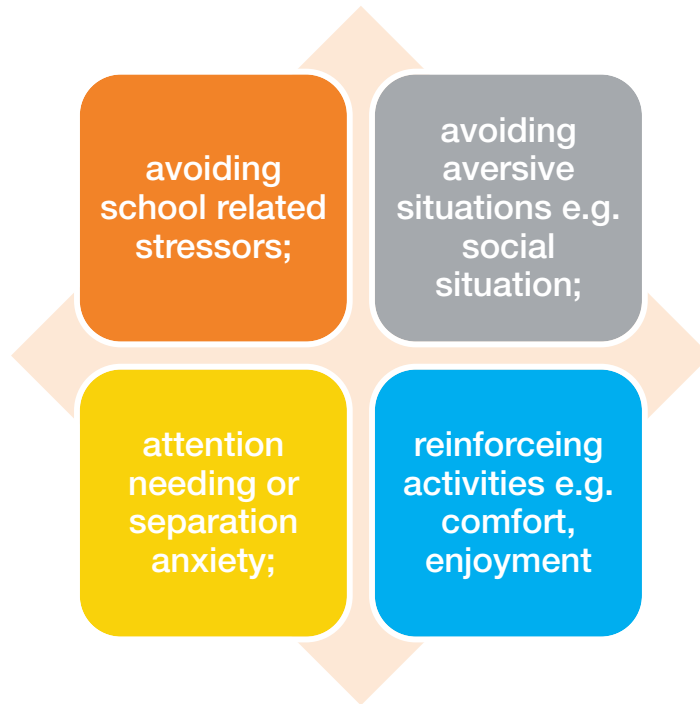
- settling into a new school, or a change of structure/routine
- friendship difficulties, social times such as break and lunch times or group activities
- exam or academic pressure, not understanding the work or fear of getting something wrong
- bullying
- difficulties outside school, such as bereavement, divorce, parental illness, being a young carer, or anxiety about separation from family or the comfort of home (this can be heightened after a school holiday or absence)
- physical illness or mental health conditions such as depression, or neurodevelopmental conditions including ADHD or Autism, which may be undiagnosed or not well supported

This may result in

- not wanting to get up and get ready
- being reluctant or refusing to go to school or college
- worrying excessively about small issues, such as having the right equipment for a lesson
- feeling sick or having stomach ache or headaches
- not doing schoolwork, or grades dropping
- being angry or upset, or acting out – at school/college or home
- withdrawing – seeming low, quiet or depressed
- reluctance to return after a period of illness
- not going to school without you knowing

Anxious feelings about school or college may lead to negative thoughts about the setting. Consequently, avoidance of the situation may reduce the anxiety but may lead to increased non-attendance.

FACTSHEET



Understanding attendance difficulties

There may be a combination of factors and it is helpful for school or college to understand these by identifying:

- Any noticeable difficulties
- Changes at home
- Peer relationships
- Relationships with adults
- Response to academic tasks
- Emotional distress: what did this look like? What was the cause?
- What the child/young person's and their family's views are about the attendance difficulties and about school
- How they respond to support and differentiation
- Ideas for further support

What support may look like

Help to achieve long term meaningful outcomes, rather than a sole focus on improving attendance at school.

A nurturing, inclusive and responsive school/college environment.

Early Intervention may include:

- a keyworker to explore patterns of attendance and speak to the child/young person, their parents and staff.
- Looking at risk and protective factors.
- Action plan (Assess Plan Do Review) with parents every 4 weeks. Meetings could be at home or a neutral location.

Multi agency intervention may include:

- Outside agency support e.g. Educational Psychologist, Wolverhampton Outreach service, school nurse and health professionals
- School staff/key worker to have regular meetings at home or neutral location
- Social prescribing (for age 13 and above)
- EBSNA Psychological Intervention - 6 weekly sessions of 1:1 direct work with the child/young person
- Alternate provision

What parents and carers can do

- Raise difficulties with attendance early; we know early intervention is likely to have better outcomes
- Listen to your child and create times when they can talk to you without being interrupted (e.g. whilst walking the dog, sitting together with a hot chocolate or driving to an activity)
- Name it to Tame it: Sometimes children don't have the words to describe how they are feeling. We can help them by naming the feelings or emotions that they have no words for. You could say something like: "When things change, I wonder if it makes you worry or feel anxious because things are different to what you know?"
- Establish morning and evening routines
- Keep in contact with the school and support into school and classes
- Support to complete homework
- Reinforce positives about school
- Support with peer pressure

Self help for children and young people

- Understand that anxiety is a natural feeling and a lot of people need support to manage anxiety
- Identify and change negative thought patterns
- Pick two or three ways that can help to manage anxiety rather than do all at the same time
- Talk to someone they trust, e.g. a family member or someone at school
- Relaxation techniques, e.g. going for a walk, listening to music, breathing techniques, reading
- Physical activities, e.g. stress balls, fiddle toys, exercise (note how you're feeling while and after doing it).
- Keep a diary to record their feelings on a daily basis – identify what triggers the feelings, what helps and how long the feeling lasts
- Record times when they feel good too as well as successes and achievements
- Distraction techniques
- Understand the feeling won't last forever – think about times when they have felt bad before but then felt better



Useful resources

- <http://www.educationalpsychologywolverhampton.co.uk/parents/emotionally-based-school-non-attendance.html>
- <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/education-and-schools/wolverhampton-inclusive-schools-everyone/attendance-pathway-targeted-stage>
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/anxiety/>
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/school-anxiety-and-refusal/>
- <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-practice/person-centred-thinking-tools/>

Please contact us if you require further information, advice or support.

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Complete our contact form at: <https://wolvesiass.org/contact-us/index.html>

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