



# Every Day Counts

Raising Standards & Aspirations



## Where can I find help?

Contact the County Attendance Team, the contact details are listed below:-

The County Attendance Team  
Oxfordshire County Council  
Abbey House  
Abbey Close  
Abingdon  
Oxon  
OX14 3JD

Tel: 01865 323513

Email: [attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk)



**OXFORDSHIRE**  
**COUNTY COUNCIL**

2016

# Is your child refusing to attend school?



## Is your child anxious about attending school?

Most children worry about school at some point. Some children struggle with starting school and many find the transition from primary to secondary school a particularly difficult time. However if these anxieties continue your child may experience difficulties in attending school. Unless dealt with quickly this can become emotionally based school refusal.

It is important to remember that if a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 and that your early action and cooperation with school to ensure your child attends school is important.

## Signs of emotionally based school refusal

Some of the following signs could indicate school refusal. Claiming illness without any physical symptoms e.g. headache, stomach ache, nausea, dizziness, being physically sick getting ready to go to school, refusing to get out of bed or leave their bedroom, being tearful, expressing negative feelings about school, aggressive or destructive behavior, tantrums or being distressed about leaving you or being 'ill' following weekends or holidays.



## Contributory factors

At home contributing factors could be changes to family life such as birth of a new sibling, parental separation, illness in the family, financial difficulties due to, for example, loss of a job, death of a family member or pet, moving house, family history of depression, anxiety or school refusal.

At school contributing factors could include changing schools or classes, struggling to make friends, experiencing bullying, getting the school bus, difficulty in keeping up with school work, worry about upcoming tests and exams, dislike of certain subjects or teachers, potential embarrassment associated with using the toilet or changing for sporting activities.

## What you can do

Early action is essential. Encourage your child to talk to you or, if they find this difficult, a friend or family member. Listen to your child's point of view and check there is no underlying reason such as friendship difficulties, not being able to do school work etc. Do not dismiss your child's concerns as trivial as they have clearly made an impact on their ability to cope.

Ensure that if you had a bad experience at school this does not influence how your child feels by remaining positive about their attendance.

Request a meeting with the school as soon as possible. At secondary school your key point of contact will usually be your child's Form Tutor, Head of Year or Pastoral Support Lead. In primary school it is usually the class teacher.

**It is really important to stay in contact with the school and inform them on a daily basis if your child refuses to attend.**

At the school meeting an agreed member of staff should be named as key contact for you and your family. All of your concerns should be addressed and supportive measures put in place by means of a written plan. For example adapted attendance arrangements for a short term basis such as varying when your child comes into school and where they are taught could be considered.

Additional support such as mentoring or buddying arrangements could be discussed.

Arrangements for your child to feel safe within the classroom environment with staff awareness of concerns to ensure your child is seated where they feel comfortable and the possibility of a 'toilet pass' should they feel the need to leave the room should be discussed.

The school will make sure all actions are agreed with you and your child, review them regularly and ensure that everyone is kept informed. This could include seeking further support from other professionals available to the school.

You may also wish to seek advice from your GP.

Ensure you have a copy of the written plan and discuss this with your child at home to make sure the actions are agreeable.

## Other professionals the school could seek further advice & support with your agreement include:

- The School Nurse
- An Educational Psychologist
- Your GP (with your written permission)
- The Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- The Early Intervention Service
- The County Attendance Team
- A Home School Link worker
- The School Counsellor

## Who else can help?

Members of your family – a united, positive approach by the whole family will reassure your child.

Your child's friends – perhaps they can call on your child and walk into school together.

Websites that may help:

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