**My Child Is Struggling to Attend School**

Since Covid, there has been an observed “cultural shift” in school attendance.

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/jan/13/cultural-shift-since-pandemic-causing-attendance-crisis-in-english-schools>

Nationally, children school refusing has increased. This causes a great deal of distress for parents and children and can put strains on relationships between families and between families with schools.

There are often a range of reasons why a child may school refuse, including:

* Social or general anxiety
* Fear of bullying or struggling with the work
* Problems at home or parents own anxieties
* Additional needs that haven’t been addressed
* Physical health difficulties that may or may not be linked to mental health
* Lacking confidence and social connection

Unfortunately, when there is anxiety, this makes us want to avoid the thing that makes us anxious. This makes us feel better in the short term, but in the long term it often means it becomes even harder to do the things that were making us anxious and makes us feel like we cannot cope with any discomfort. Sometimes anxiety can give us physical symptoms too.

If your child is having difficulty with attending school, these may be of use to look at:

* <https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/education/school-university/coping-school-refusal/>
* <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/school-anxiety-and-refusal/#GettingmentalhealthandSENsupport>
* Book: *Helping Your Child Overcome Separation Anxiety or School Refusal* by Linda Engler
* Book: *Overcoming School Refusal: A practical guide for teachers, counsellors, caseworkers and parents*
* It might be helpful to connect with other parents with similar experiences [https://en-gb.facebook.com/groups/schoolphobiarefusal/](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fen-gb.facebook.com%2Fgroups%2Fschoolphobiarefusal%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cemily.ferguson2%40nhs.net%7C277e8fd3a3ed440f676e08dafa43c366%7C37c354b285b047f5b22207b48d774ee3%7C0%7C0%7C638097466183877003%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=sSxkvZEOHSuKV6ucUGUjWhp3bCkaDi3GBikg74%2FWT1U%3D&reserved=0)

It’s important not to label children, but to spend time understanding what’s going on for them. School refusal can be addressed by families and schools working together, along with any additional support appropriate and available in the area. Some children may benefit from having additional support around their mental or physical health. Some options are:

* School Nurse: you can ask the school to make a referral to the school nurse to discuss health
* Consider the tips given in the above links
* Talk to the year head, head of house, or attendance officer
* Early Help Hub <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/earlyhelphub>
* Kernow Connect: <https://services.actionforchildren.org.uk/kernow-connect/>
* Young Minds Cornwall: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>
* Cornwall Council: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/mental-health/mental-health-support-for-parents-and-young-people/>
* Pentreath Re-Ignite project: <https://www.pentreath.co.uk/projects/young-people/re-ignite-2/>

*The provision for mental health support across the country is unfortunately quite limited. There are many online and self-guided options available, but 1:1 support can have waiting lists and exclusion criteria.*