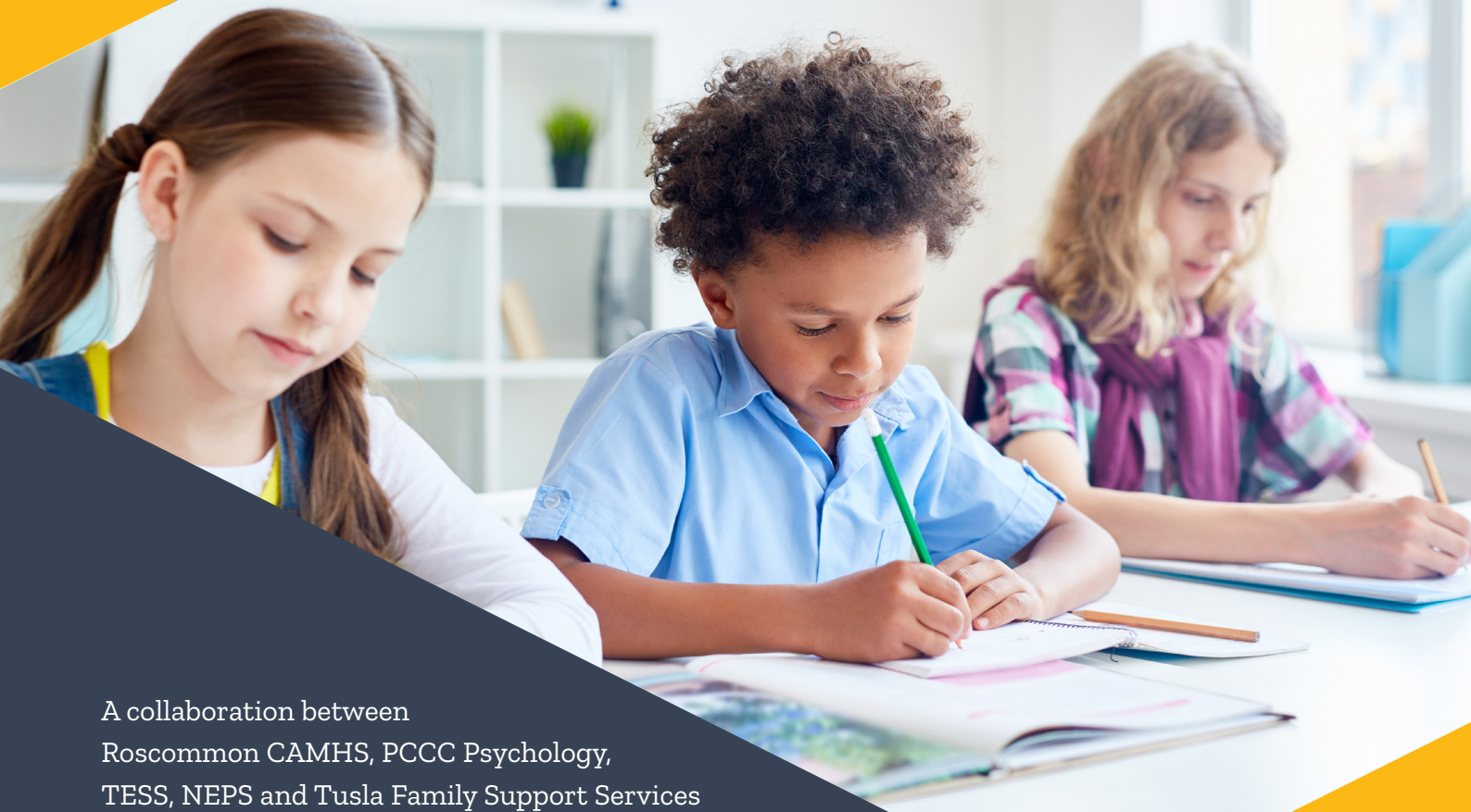




# Roscommon School Refusal Resource Pack


Information for Schools and Parents



A collaboration between  
Roscommon CAMHS, PCCC Psychology,  
TESS, NEPS and Tusla Family Support Services

This Resource Pack is based on current knowledge in this area.  
It is intended as a guide only. Not all the suggestions here will apply to any  
one student or situation.

March 2018- Revised July 2020

The background of the page features a photograph of a young person with brown hair, wearing a grey and navy blue striped sweater, covering their face with both hands. They appear to be sitting at a desk with an open book. In the background, another person in a white shirt is partially visible. The image is overlaid with a large blue geometric shape in the top left corner and a dark grey geometric shape in the bottom right corner.

School refusal is a challenge that confronts all schools sooner or later, at both Primary and Secondary level. Early recognition and intervention are key to prompt resolution. Where the problem persists or becomes complex, schools often seek the advice and support of outside agencies. However, navigating the system (for example knowing who to contact and when) can pose its own set of challenges. To this end, Tusla Family Support Services, The National Educational Psychology Service, Educational Welfare Service, PCCC Psychology (HSE) and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service have joined to produce this Resource Pack for Schools and Parents. The suggestions and strategies outlined in this pack are not exhaustive. However, it is hoped that the pack will provide some guidance and support to students, parents and teachers.

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We wish to acknowledge with gratitude our colleagues in the South East; Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (DCAP) Waterford & National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Waterford who were the first to devise a formal interagency approach to school refusal and from whose document "School Refusal, Good Practice Guide for Schools" we have borrowed heavily.

In memory of our dear colleague Elaine Lawless, TESS, who sadly passed away in September 2019.

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# 1. What is school refusal?

School refusal behaviour refers to a student's refusal to attend school or difficulty remaining in classes for an entire day. The problem is pervasive and exacts a heavy toll on students, families and schools if left unaddressed.

School refusal can be defined as the child's 'refusal to attend school or difficulty remaining in school for an entire day' (Lyon & Colter, 2007).

Refusal to go to school may happen at any age but most typically occurs in children 5-7 years of age and in those 11-14 years of age. Generally, the young person refuses to attend school and experiences significant distress about the idea of attending school. Young persons who refuse school do not typically engage in antisocial behaviour that is associated with truancy, such as lying, stealing or destruction of property. It differs from truancy in that the young person is staying at home with the knowledge of the family and despite their efforts to enforce attendance. The behavior is differentiated from parents who deliberately withdraw their young person from school and from youths with significant difficult circumstances such as homelessness that prevent adequate school attendance.

There are many reasons why a student may refuse to attend school or remain in school.

These include;

- Social and peer related difficulties
- Learning and curriculum difficulties
- Difficulties with the physical environment

Starting school, moving, and other stressful life events may trigger the onset of school refusal. Other reasons include the young person's fear that something will happen to a parent while he/she is in school, fear that she won't do well in school, or fear of another student. The young person possibly wants to do something more enjoyable outside of school, like practice hobbies, play computer games, watch movies, meet with friends etc. School refusal is a significant difficulty affecting many students, families and schools. It is a serious issue that is best managed early. Long absences mean that children miss out on important parts of the curriculum, which is detrimental to their learning and development.

Early identification of a potential difficulty is a key factor in addressing problems in this area. At this stage, there are strategies and interventions that school, class teachers and parents can adopt.



## 2.1 What causes school refusal?

There are lots of reasons why a young person might refuse school, and pinpointing the cause can be difficult. Often there are a number of factors that contribute to a young person's non-attendance. It is important to understand and address underlying issues when supporting young persons to return to school or attend consistently.

Predisposing Factors include;

- Environmental eg. Parental health or marital problems
- Social eg. Bullying or exclusion
- Educational eg. Finding some subjects too challenging
- Medical eg. Thyroid problems

The following factors can be involved in school refusal;

- A parent being ill (school refusal can begin after the parent recovers)
- Parents separating, having marital problems, or having frequent arguments
- Traumatic events, such as family illness, grief or domestic abuse
- A death in the family or a death of a friend of the young person
- Moving from one house to another during the first years of primary school
- Jealousy of a new infant sibling
- Excessive parental worrying about the young person in some way (for example, poor health)
- Difficulties with transition, such as moving to a new school, returning to school after a long absence due to illness or entering/exiting primary school
- School factors such as workload and academic pressures, fear or dislike of subjects, finding subjects difficult
- Interpersonal Conflict (for example, with peers or teachers)
- Peer problems, such as social isolation, bullying or conflict between/with friends
- Anxiety about social situations or activities that involve a performance or evaluation, such as sports days, speaking in front of the class or tests
- Anxiety around being separated from parents or carers
- Rewards inherent in staying at home, such as spending time with a parent, watching TV or playing video games

Bullying can also be a cause of school refusal. Bullying is unwanted aggressive behavior among school-aged children involving a real or perceived power imbalance that is repeated or has the potential to be repeated over time. Bullying can include threats, intimidation, and/or attacking someone physically or verbally.

Signs that a young person may be a victim of bullying include the following:

- Unexplained injuries
- Lost or damaged clothes, books, electronic items or jewelry
- Decline in academic performance especially in maths and reading
- Avoiding school complaining of headaches, stomach pain, feeling sick
- Skipping meals or binge eating -- may not eat lunch at school
- Nightmares and trouble sleeping
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Decline in self-esteem or feeling helpless
- New onset of self-destructive behaviors: running away, engaging in deliberate self-harm, suicide threats

## 2.2 Factors that reduce the risk of school refusal



### 2.2 Factors that reduce the risk of school refusal

- Secure relationship between young person and parents (whether united or separated).
- Co-Parenting - sharing tasks, being consistent, clear and firm
- Understanding of anxiety and factors that maintain it
- High levels of support and low levels of stress
- Student's easy temperament, good coping skills and an ability to make friends
- School having the resources and knowledge necessary to provide a supportive environment for the student
- Cooperation between those involved in supporting the student
- The student's sense of belonging in school

## 2. 3 HOW DOES SCHOOL REFUSAL COME ABOUT?

The following diagrams illustrate the cycles of thoughts and feelings that can lead to a student initially refusing to attend school and continuing to refuse to attend.



### WHEN SCHOOL REFUSAL STARTS





### 3. Information for Parents/ Guardians on Possible Precursors to School Refusal



Be on the lookout for:

- Frequent tearfulness/ distress/ pains in tummy or headaches on Sunday nights or Monday mornings
- Bed wetting or signs of distress/upset on Sunday nights at the thoughts of going back to school on Monday morning
- Young person showing distress or saying they feel sick when faced with returning to school after a break ( e.g. long weekend or school holidays)
- A pattern of the young person frequently asking the teacher to ring his/her parent from school / wanting to go home/ saying that they are feeling sick
- Young person being challenging/ having tantrums at the mention of going to school, or before school in the morning. This may be more common in young persons who have just started in school (ie. junior infants), but should normally settle in after a few weeks in school
- Prolonged difficulties (anxieties) for a young person when mixing with other persons (e.g. going outside to play with other children in the neighbourhood; going to after-school activities, parties etc.). Again, some young persons may experience such worries / difficulties, particularly if they are not exposed to this before attending school, but tend to settle after a short while
- Pre-occupation with being organised for school – overly perfectionistic
- A family stressor (e.g. parental separation or bereavement) can trigger some anxious behaviours/ feelings about leaving home, or leaving a parent in order to attend school. This is normal. Providing the young person with a calm listening ear, and letting them know that you understand, but that they still need to attend school, can help them to get through a difficult period

Adolescents may also show the following behaviour:

- Worry or fear related to school
- Sleeping difficulties and fatigue
- Change of mood, negativity towards school, subjects or teachers
- Increased self-consciousness
- Lack of engagement with school activities, outings, trips
- Poor sense of school belonging

What can you as a parent/guardian do to help?

- Speak calmly with the young person. Let them know that you understand
- Encourage them to talk to you about how they feel
- Be reassuring
- Once you have reassured them and helped them to take some slow deep breaths, be persistent and bring your young person to school. This is the right thing to do
- Give your young person some positive self-statements such as: "I can do this", "I went to school yesterday and it was fine"
- Praise them for making the effort to go to school
- Model positive coping and positive thinking - use examples from your own life
- Be consistent and present a united front
- Encourage relationships and communication outside of school
- Establish and maintain good routines for bedtime, getting up, breakfast, organisation of the uniform, school bag and equipment
- Listen but do not reinforce their fear/anxiety. Make statements such as "I know that you feel worried, we will work on it together, I will help you"
- Don't ask leading questions which assume a particular answer. For example ask, "How are you feeling?" rather than "are you worried?"

## 4. Signs that may be observed in school:

Most young persons are occasionally reluctant to go to school or have some anxiety about activities like participation in P.E. It is normal for young persons to miss some days of school during the year. School refusal is a more persistent problem that might be characterised by some of the following signs;

- Frequent complaints of illness before or during school, such as stomach aches, headaches, dizziness or fatigue (These problems often quickly fade if the young person is allowed to stay home)
- Difficulty attending school after weekends or holidays
- Long, unexplained absences from school
- Periodic absences or missed classes for which no explanation is given
- Frequent lateness to school or an adolescent who misses the bus every day





## 5. Roscommon School Refusal Pathway

This pathway was developed by services working with young people who are experiencing difficulties attending school for various reasons. It is hoped that this pathway and resource pack will provide a guide for schools and parents on the best way to manage school refusal and the relevant services that may be of assistance.

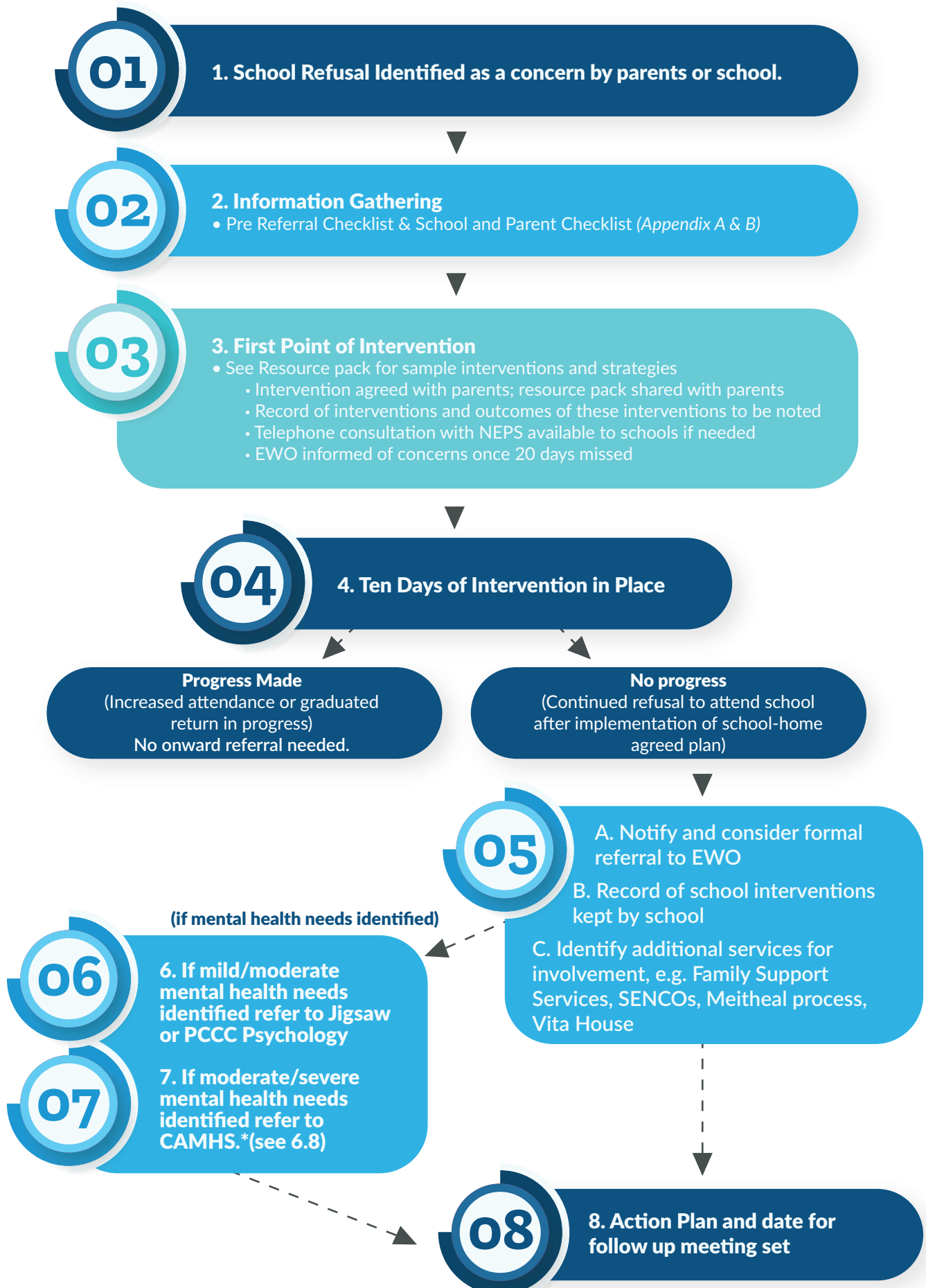
School refusal often causes high levels of distress for families and can be very difficult for schools to manage. Early intervention, clear planning and good communication between school, families and professionals is key. When a difficulty attending school becomes entrenched it is often much harder to work with than if it is identified early and intervention plans are put in place.

The pathway recognises the importance of early intervention and the key role that school has in identifying and intervening in this issue. The pathway guides families and schools on how to progress with early intervention and what to do if this intervention isn't working and professional support is required.



# Roscommon School Refusal Pathway

Pathway should be followed in order.



## 6. What can be helpful for all students in school?

Early identification is essential to ensure that minor situations do not develop into situations whereby full school refusal occurs. There are occasions whereby school refusal can develop in a sudden manner, with no apparent warning signs. School based programmes and interventions can assist when there are early warning signs and may aid in deterring outright school refusal.

### School Based Programmes and Interventions

#### 6.1 Promotion of Parental Involvement

The promotion of developing both an active and positive relationship between both parents and school is essential in ensuring that, when difficulties occur, there can be a quick and collaborative response. Channels between both parents and the school should remain open in order to share information which may be relevant in terms of the student's social, emotional and educational development. This open communication system ensures that where concerns arise, they can be dealt with efficiently. Parents may sometimes feel as though it is hard to connect with their young person in terms of how they are getting on in school. Some ways in which parents can get involved are listed below:

- Checking-in around homework
- Taking an interest in any projects which may have to be completed
- Attending school events such as parent-teacher meetings, fundraising events or school performances
- Keeping communication active with the young person's class teacher/year head in the form of a communication notebook or through face to face meetings
- Being invited in to help in the class with making resources, career days or assisting on school tours
- Supporting the student to attend after school activities

It is important that parents receive consistent information and advice in terms of encouraging regular school attendance and initial steps to take, should a decrease in attendance be noted.

#### 6.2 General Screening

It can be difficult to keep track of a large number of students within the school. However, in order to ensure that young persons do not "fall through the net", it is suggested that regular screenings in the areas of reading, writing, spelling, numeracy and behaviour (including social skills) are undertaken.

## 6.3 For Primary Schools (see [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie))

- Special Educational Needs - A Continuum of Support
  - Guidelines for Teachers
  - Resource Pack for Teachers
- Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties – A Continuum of Support

## 6.4 For Post Primary Schools (see [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie))

- A Continuum of Support for Post Primary Schools
  - Guidelines for Teachers
  - Resource Pack for Teachers

## 6.5 Attendance

Monitoring attendance is in itself a crucial preventative and intervention measure in terms of picking up young persons who may indicate early warning signs for school refusal. This is an area that all schools are obliged to adhere to and it is important that this information is utilised effectively.

Areas which may need checking include:

- Medical difficulties – to ensure there are no underlying physical reasons for the student refusing school
- Social reasons – checking in with the student's friends, or lack thereof and gaining a greater understanding of the student's social circle
- Educational reasons – is the student having difficulty in particular subjects, or overall?
- Environmental reasons – is there something in the environment causing distress for the student?

Assessing the above areas can lead to a more in-depth, focused intervention being put in place which is also tailored to the individual needs of the student themselves. The Continuum of Support documents aim to assist in supporting schools gather information and develop plans which aim to benefit the student.

## 6.6 School Based Programmes/Curriculum

There are a number of available school programmes and interventions which can assist in either the creation or implementation of a plan for early or established school refusal. These include:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
- Stay Safe
- Social Skills Programmes
- The School's Code of Behaviour (including incentive programmes to encourage positive behaviour such as regular attendance)
- Health and Safety Policy
- The Friends for Life Programme
- Teaching Mindfulness to all students

See Appendix G for more resources for parents.

DEIS schools may be able to avail of further supports including breakfast clubs, homework clubs or after school clubs.

## 6.7 When needs are identified- Post-Screening

Young persons who, as a result of the standard screening process, are identified as having needs should have a plan implemented in a timely manner to ensure that difficulties do not escalate and become exacerbated.

The Tusla Educational Welfare Service (EWS) pre-referral checklist (Appendix A) and School and Parent checklist (Appendix B) are useful resources to help in this process. Schools are encouraged to gather relevant background information, establish a plan, evaluate the plan as well as gather information on specific relevant interventions and resources available to them.

## 6.8 Involvement of Outside Agencies and Support Services

Sometimes, despite the best efforts of parents and school, a quick return to full attendance does not occur. This may reflect the complexity of the situation, for example where there are challenges in the home environment, or where the young person and/or parent require additional supports above those available from the school. A timely referral to such supports is also essential.

Where there are ongoing difficulties with attendance, Tusla Educational Support Service (TESS) should be notified. Once 20 days have been missed a formal referral to TESS should be made. The National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) should also be consulted in this regard, either through telephone contact or formal referral. Telephone contact is not seen as one of the school's allocated formal assessments.

A young person may be referred to Clinical Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Jigsaw, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and/or other agencies depending on specific presentation. Where there is uncertainty which service is most appropriate, the department which appears most suitable can be phoned for advice. A request can be made directly to the Meitheal process (see page 35) if there are unmet needs for the young person. A referral can be made to Child Protection Social Work (TUSLA) if it is deemed that the young person's needs are not being met by the parent.



## 7. What can schools do when someone is identified as school refusing?

### 7.1 Individual Interventions

When a student is identified as having difficulty in attending school it is imperative to implement supportive interventions as soon as possible. It is essential that a potential difficulty for the student is picked up early through the preventative measures listed above, and that when non-attendance begins, help is provided immediately to prevent non-attendance becoming embedded. If a student is out of school for a period of time, it is harder to return to the routine of school. The following process is advised:

1. The school should alert the parents to the fact that there are concerns about school attendance.
2. A helpful next step is to organise a meeting between school, parents and young person to identify and discuss the issues. The Guidance Counsellor or the Learning Support Co-Ordinator are often staff members best placed to be a key staff support for the family. School refusal is not always due to anxiety and a full understanding of the family and young person's context should be sought by school.
3. This meeting should act as a supportive way of problem-solving the barriers that are causing the young person to miss school and an important objective of this meeting is to identify specific barriers to returning to school (see page 6). The School and Parental Checklist in Appendix B can be used to screen for risk factors which may underlie the attendance problem. It should be completed at the first meeting. Once the reasons for non-attendance are understood it will be easier to build supportive interventions around these.
4. Learning or social needs may be identified. The school along with the family should seek to address these barriers with interventions e.g. resource support, social skills curriculum or a buddy within school. A formal NEPS assessment may be warranted.

5. A plan for re-entry to school will be agreed and recorded with the young person, their parents/guardians and the school. Forced school attendance may be appropriate for younger students or those with mild school refusal. A gradual return plan is often recommended for older students or students who are experiencing more severe distress. An example of this type of plan is included in Appendix C. The main focus of this plan is a gradual working up of the amount of hours that the young person spends in the school environment. This plan should be agreed and signed up to by all relevant parties.
6. If the student is not yet doing full days, time at home should be structured as if they were in school (e.g. uniform on, no TV or internet, working on the subjects as indicated on the time table) with class work being given to the student to bring home and work on.
7. Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) should be notified of the absence from school. A telephone consultation with the NEPS Psychologist may also be sought by the school at this point.
8. Teachers and school staff should be made aware of the plan and briefed on anxiety related issues if present e.g. not to be asked to read or speak aloud in class or permitted to leave the classroom unhindered, if necessary with the use of break cards. Staff should be advised not to quiz the student on absences or question why the student has not been in class.
9. The student should be helped to identify the staff members with whom he or she feels most comfortable and who can greet the student returning to school and be the support for the student throughout the return process. Regular and set check in times with that staff member can be useful for the young person to discuss their difficulties and build a rapport with the staff member.
10. Any additional support strategies agreed at the return to school meeting should be implemented as soon as the student begins the return to school, for example resource hours designed for social skills programmes or extra tuition to catch up on missed work.
11. There may be a peer that can be identified as a buddy or mentor for the return plan. This peer could be asked to meet with the student returning on their first day to re-integrate them in school life. If the young person has missed school time a return to social activities can be daunting and a peer is best placed to help with this. This peer can help ensure the student is included in a group for lunches, is briefed on class work and remains close to them as a support over the return to school period. With the young person's consent it may also be helpful to brief peers on the return to school and urge them to be supportive with no questioning as to why the student has been absent, whilst avoiding over-dramatising the situation.
12. If possible, a quiet area of the school should be designated and the young person can be allowed use this as a relaxation/chill room; this will encourage the student to stay in the school rather than leave when their anxiety is high. A designated staff member may be useful to help calm the young person if time out is needed. Time out cards may be a useful strategy to trial with the student. This will allow them to leave the classroom without significant disruption. If they are in possession of these cards and are in the hallways during class time they can show this card without being unduly questioned.

13. Regular phone contact between parents and school staff is recommended in order to maintain the return to school plan. A teacher (possibly the identified staff member) should be allocated as the contact person for the parent.
14. A record of attendance and time spent in school should be kept by the school.
15. A review date for the return plan should be set 10 school days from the initial plan being made and all steps implemented over this period. A record of intervention should be kept in case of referral onwards. A checklist of these steps is found in the Appendices and if an onwards referral to services is made the checklist should be submitted also so that all involved can see what work has already been carried out.

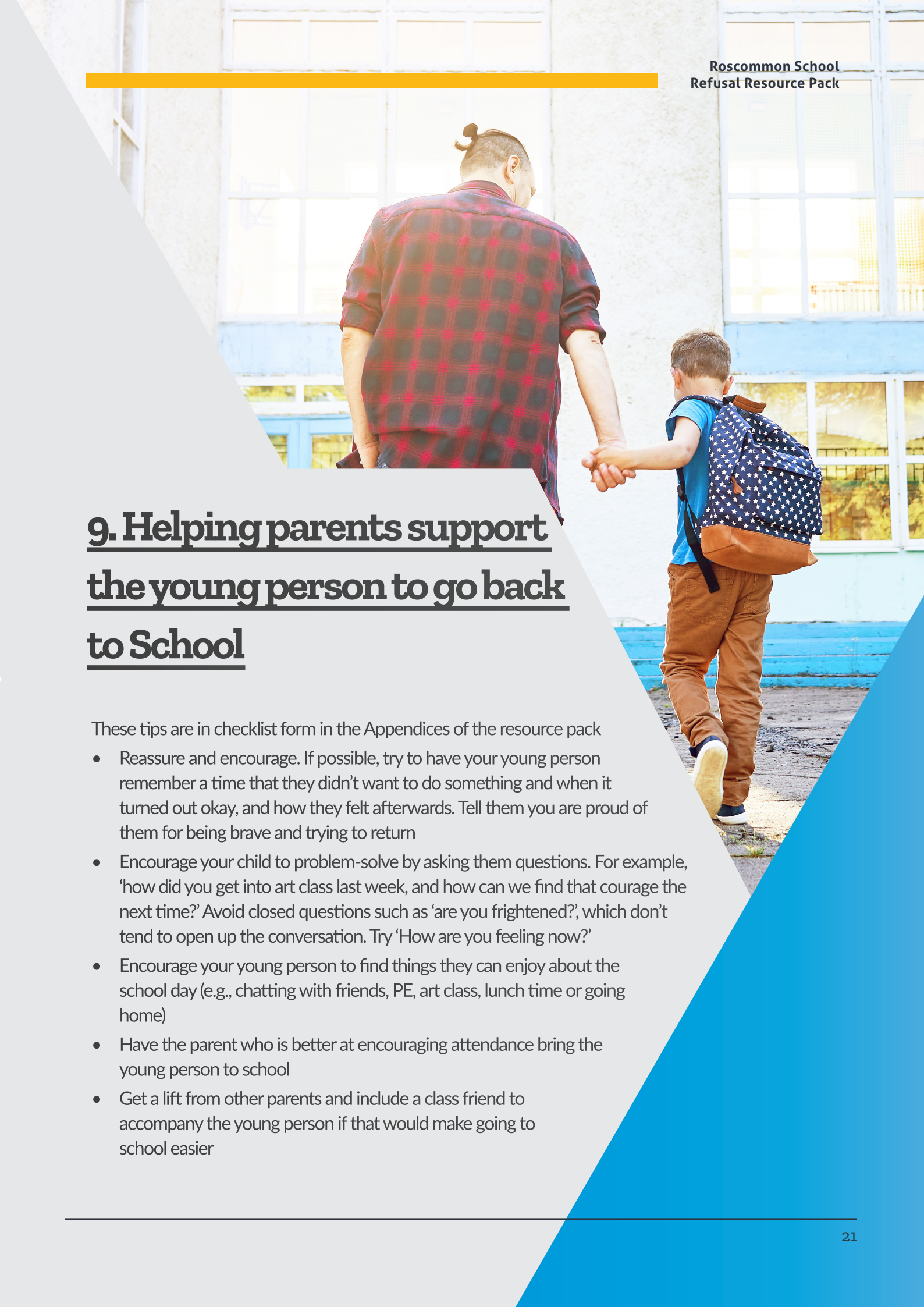
## 7. 2 In the case where a student has special educational needs which contributed to school refusal, the following are important to have in place to facilitate a smooth transition:

- All teachers, SNAs and other staff members working with the student have been briefed about anxiety related problems (e.g. reading aloud in class), social problems (e.g. bullying), learning problems (e.g. dyslexia), or home problems (e.g. family bereavement)
- Where the student's learning needs have been identified, the student may need to be prioritised for assessment within school or by NEPS
- A suitably resourced and planned special educational needs programme should be implemented
- Where a school based anxiety-management programme is available, this should be reviewed with the student to provide an opportunity to learn about anxiety and how best to manage and cope

## 8. What if this is not working or the plan has not progressed?

- The case should be flagged with the TESS and a referral may need to be made if the young person has missed 20 days within an academic year. A review meeting with parents and school should be set within 10 school days to discuss progress. This discussion should include barriers that have impeded progress and possible solutions to these. Identify the areas of the plan that have worked and look at what it is about these supports that have proved helpful. Brainstorm other supports which may help
- All supports currently in place should be reviewed and if additional supports are needed they should be identified and implemented as soon as possible. This may include NEPS and Tusla Family Support Services
- It may be helpful to request the case be considered for the Meitheal process (see page 35) with the written consent of the parents. The Tusla Meitheal process identifies the strengths and needs of the young person and family while co-ordinating services in order to develop and review an agreed Action Plan. The aim is for the identified unmet needs of the young person to be met by the parents supported by the various agencies. There must be 2 or more agencies involved with the young person for Meitheal to be considered. Following this meeting regular reviews will take place with the young person, parents and professionals to monitor and support the implementation of the Meitheal Action Plan
- If no significant progress has been made a referral can be made to PCCC Psychology (if behavioural or mild-moderate mental health difficulties are present), or through GP or a senior clinician to CAMHS (if moderate to severe mental health issues are present): see CAMHS Standard Operating Guidelines  
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/camhs/operational-guideline/>  
Where there is doubt as to which service is the more appropriate, either service can be contacted for advice. Contact details are outlined in Appendix F
- A referral can be made to TUSLA Child protection Social Worker if it is deemed that the parents are not supporting the young person to meet their identified unmet needs





## 9. Helping parents support the young person to go back to School

These tips are in checklist form in the Appendices of the resource pack

- Reassure and encourage. If possible, try to have your young person remember a time that they didn't want to do something and when it turned out okay, and how they felt afterwards. Tell them you are proud of them for being brave and trying to return
- Encourage your child to problem-solve by asking them questions. For example, 'how did you get into art class last week, and how can we find that courage the next time?' Avoid closed questions such as 'are you frightened?', which don't tend to open up the conversation. Try 'How are you feeling now?'
- Encourage your young person to find things they can enjoy about the school day (e.g., chatting with friends, PE, art class, lunch time or going home)
- Have the parent who is better at encouraging attendance bring the young person to school
- Get a lift from other parents and include a class friend to accompany the young person if that would make going to school easier

- Try to have a teacher or friend whom the young person likes to meet them at the school to help ease the transition in the morning
- Strong will, determination, persistence and discipline are important qualities for parents to maintain
- Work through ways to help your young person cope with the scary aspects of school. Look at pros and cons of each suggestion. Decide which is most likely to work and give it a go
- During school time, make life boring for your young person at home; no screen time, no laptop, no T.V. These activities are more fun than being at school. Making home a fun place to be makes school less attractive
- If not attending school (or attending on reduced days) your young person should continue to get up at the same time and get into their school uniform as usual. They should sit at the kitchen table or somewhere distraction-free and complete some school work. All devices should be removed, this includes access to Wi-Fi, phones, screens and gadgets
- Try not to interact with your young person while they are at home and try to keep to a school timetable. Attention from parents can be rewarding so make a conscious effort not to visit friends, go shopping or to do enjoyable activities with the child during school hours
- Continue and maintain good routines for getting up, going to bed, eating, homework and fitting in some rest and relaxation so they have a secure framework to work around
- Respect your young person's feelings. The message should be "I know you are having a difficult time, I will help you through it"
- Give the young person the illusion of control. Ask "do you want to wear your red jumper or your blue jumper" or "do you want to bring lunch with you or buy it there"
- Emphasize and reward partial successes
- Deal constructively with family concerns and parenting issues, perhaps with the assistance of a health professional such as a psychologist or family support worker
- If your young person has questions regarding school, school attendance, rights and responsibilities, please refer to Appendix E to assist
- Normalise fears and worries, promote coping strategies and highlight the importance of Education
- Model coping strategies. Keep calm in front of the young person
- Encourage contact with and engage in activities with friends outside of school



# APPENDICES





Seirbhís Tacáíochta  
Oideachais Tusla  
Tusla Education Support Service

## Appendix A: EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICES

### PRE-REFERRAL CHECKLIST

For School Referrals please complete pre-referral checklist and Sections 1 and 2

Prior to submitting a referral form to the statutory educational welfare service, it is expected that the school has made attempts to resolve attendance issues. The purpose of this checklist is to note the actions taken prior to referral to the EWS. **This checklist should always accompany a referral form.**

To be completed in discussion with the Class Teacher (Primary)/ Year Head (Post Primary) or a nominated teacher/principal.

Child's Name	*	Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Home Address	*			
Date of Birth	*	PPSN	*	
Ethnicity	*	Language Spoken at Home	*	
School Name	*	School Roll No.	*	
School Telephone No.	*			
Class/Year e.g. 1st class or 1 <sup>st</sup> year	*			
Number of school days absent this school year out of a possible number of school days open	____ days absent out of ____ school days to date			
Number of unexplained absences year to date	*			
What is the presenting issue for this child	*			
Checklist actions to address poor attendance	Date of Action Taken	By whom		
In-school discussion with pupil (where appropriate)				
Contact between school and parent/ guardian to express concern e.g. phone call, letter, discuss at parents evening				
Specific meeting in school with parent/ guardian to identify problems and agree interventions				



Concerns and agreements communicated in writing to parent/guardian		
Implementation of any appropriate in-school measures (e.g. change of class, 'contact person' in school, support in class etc.)		
Use of appropriate interventions with pupil (e.g. attendance charts/attendance report, incentives, rewards etc.)		
Other school interventions (e.g. care team, Pastoral care team, student support team etc.)		
Previous EWS involvement in this case		

Does the school have....		
.....Home School Community Liaison Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		If yes please attach any additional supports given other than outlined above (on a separate sheet if necessary)
.....School Completion Programme Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		

**Signature of Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Capitals)

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: School & Parental Checklist

School, parent and young person should complete this form together. A high number of yes responses indicate a greater risk				
Name of Young person:				
Date:	YES	NO	N/A	Comments/Please indicate if there are discrepancies
<b>Attendance</b>				
Reluctance to leave the house in the mornings				
Late for school				
Absent for part or whole days				
<b>Environmental</b>				
Significant life events (e.g.: moving house/school, separation of parents/ family members, additions to the family, death of a pet). Please specify.				
Young person living in more than one home/temporary accommodation				
Low parental involvement with education (e.g. homework, parent teacher meetings, communication with school)				
Practical/financial challenges in getting to school				
<b>Learning Needs</b>				
Inabilities to problem solve				
Organisational difficulties				
Homework not done/incomplete on a regular basis				
Difficulties working under pressure/ processing difficulties.				
Specific learning difficulty. Please specify.				
Not achieving learning potential.				
Avoidance of particular school activities/subjects.				
<b>Social</b>				
Bullying				
Fallen out with friends/difficulties with peer relationships.				
Social communication difficulties.				
Not independent for age.				
Struggles during unstructured times				
Lack of active engagement in social and leisure outlets				
<b>EMOTIONAL WELL BEING</b>				
Often appears tired.				
Often appears to be lacking in interest/ motivation.				
Demonstrates low self esteem				
Shy, quiet or passive				
Appears worried or anxious				
Displays behaviours that challenge				
Lack of involvement in school life.				
<b>Physical well being</b>				
Had a serious illness or have a medical condition				
Complained of sickness or headaches				
Had rapid weight gain or loss				
Changes in eating habits				
<b>Completed by:</b> (please include school, parental/guardian, young person's name as appropriate). <div style="text-align: right;">             _____ (school representative)              _____ (Parent/Guardian)              _____ (Young Person)           </div>				

# Appendix C: SAMPLE RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN

## PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of Young person:	Date:
<b>Tuesday</b>	
Arrive in school at 9.30 a.m. (after school has started and all are settled in class)	
SNA/identified teacher meets the student and they go to the library until break to look at the timetable for the day and start work from individual plan.	
Student meets 2 peers at break time who take them somewhere quiet to play/engage in non-threatening activities.	
Student goes with 2 peers to class.	
At lunchtime, student goes with 2 peers into the playground (if ready). If not, they go somewhere quiet to play.	
After lunch, student goes to class or the library with SNA.	
<b>Wednesday:</b>	
Arrive in school at 9.30 a.m. (after school has started and all are settled in class)	
SNA meets the student and they go to the library until break.	
Student goes with 2 peers into playground to play.	
Student goes with peers to class.	
Student goes out to play with 2 peers at lunchtime.	
After lunch, student attends class.	
<b>Thursday:</b>	
Arrive in school at 9.30 a.m. (after school has started and all are settled in class)	
SNA meets the student and they go to the library until break.	
Student goes to meet friends in the playground (if ready).	
Student attends class as normal.	
<b>Friday:</b>	
Arrive in school at 9.30 a.m. (after school has started and all are settled in class)	
SNA meets the student and they go to the library for half an hour and then to class.	
Student attends playground and class as normal.	
<b>Monday:</b>	
Student arrives in school at normal start time.	
SNA meets the student and they go to the library for half an hour and then to class.	
Student attends playground and class as normal.	

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Profession/Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Profession/Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Profession/Role: \_\_\_\_\_

## SAMPLE RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Name of Young person:	Date:
<b>Tuesday</b>	
Arrive in school at 9.30 a.m. (after school has started and all are settled in class) Meet designated teacher (e.g. resource teacher) at main office	
Attend resource/learning support hours with resource teacher (individual or small group)	
Student meets 2 identified peers at break time and has access to quieter room/environment where possible (e.g. library/computer room)	
Student goes with 2 peers to class.	
Student goes home at lunch time and continues school work at home	
<b>Wednesday:</b>	
Arrive in school at 9.30 a.m. (after school has started and all are settled in class)	
SNA /identified teacher meets the student and they go to resource teaching hours	
Student meets 1-2 identified peers for break	
Student goes with peers to class.	
Student goes with peers at lunchtime.	
Student attends learning support/resource hours if available after lunch	
Student meets peer before last two classes and attends with peers	
<b>Thursday:</b>	
Arrive in school at 9.30 a.m. (after school has started and all are settled in class)	
SNA /identified teacher meets the student and they go to resource teaching hours	
Student meets 1-2 identified peers for break	
Student goes with peers to class.	
Student meets peers at lunch or has access to quiet environment	
Student attends class as normal for afternoon classes	
<b>Friday:</b>	
Arrive in school at 9.30 a.m. (after school has started and all are settled in class)	
SNA /identified teacher meets the student and they go to resource teaching hours for first class and then return to classes as normal	
Student attends lunch and classes as normal.	
<b>Monday:</b>	
Student arrives in school at normal start time.	
SNA /identified teacher meets the student and they go to resource teaching hours for first class and then return to classes as normal	
Student attends break times and classes as normal	

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Profession/Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Profession/Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Profession/Role: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D: Checklist for Parents/Guardians

(See Index 8 for further explanation)

TASK	Yes/No	COMMENTS
Reassure and encourage your young person.		
Problem solve ways to cope		
Help find and discuss some positive aspects of school that they enjoy		
Have the parent who is better at encouraging attendance take the young person to school.		
Young person accompanied to school by friend/friends		
Friend or identified teacher to meet your young person		
Deal constructively with family concerns and parenting issues		
T.V, laptops, gaming devices and the internet are not accessible when not in school		
Structure maintained outside of school.		
Use school timetable at home		
Ensure school books are at home		
Be mindful of your interactions with your young person during "school time" at home.		



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Tusla Education Support Service

## Appendix E: Tusla Educational Welfare Service

### REFERRAL FORM FOR AGENCIES OTHER THAN SCHOOLS

#### Section 1

#### Child's Details

Child's Name	*	Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Address	*			
Date of Birth	*	PPSN	*	
Ethnicity	*	Language Spoken at Home	*	

#### Family details

Mother's Name	*	Tel No.	*
Address if different from the child's	*		
Father's Name	*	Tel No.	*
Address if different from the child's	*		
Details of Guardian/Carer if child is not residing with parent/s	*		
Relationship to the child	*	Tel No.	*
Are other siblings known to EWS	*		



Seirbhís Tacáíochta  
Oideachais Tusla

Tusla Education Support Service

## Tusla Educational Welfare Service

REFERRAL FORM FOR AGENCIES

OTHER THAN SCHOOLS

### Section 2

### School Details

Child's Name	*		
School Name	*		
Address	*	Tel No.	*
Email	*		

Please fill in as much information as you can in the following section:

No. of school days absent this school year to date	*		
If Post Primary – Year group of pupil	*	If Primary – Class group of pupil	*
Summary or reason for referral to EWS	*		
Previous school/s	*		
Does this child have special educational needs?	*		
Has the child had any assessments (or is an assessment pending)	*		
Does the child have any health issues?	*		
Are parents aware that you are making this referral to the EWS	*		
Is there any additional information that you feel is relevant for this referral? (Use additional page if necessary)	*		



Seirbhís Tacáíochta  
Oideachais Tusla

Tusla Education Support Service

## Tusla Educational Welfare Service

### REFERRAL FORM FOR AGENCIES OTHER THAN SCHOOLS

## Section 3

## Referrer Details

Name of person referring	*	
Name of organisation	*	Title
Address	*	
Telephone number	Landline	Mobile
Email address	*	
Nature and extent of contact with Child/Family	*	
Signature of referrer	*	
Date	*	

### Note:

A referral received by the statutory TESS respects the responsibility of the referring agency continually to support the child as required and to work in collaboration with the service in that regard.

Referral forms, once completed and signed (and copied for school records), must be forwarded to EWS by post (clearly marked 'EWS REFERRALS'), to the appropriate TESS office. Details below: Referrals should not be sent directly to your EWO.

### Southern Area: Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Tipperary.

**Post:** Referrals Region 1, Tusla Education Support Service, Tusla, Block C, Heritage Business Park, Bessboro Road, Blackrock, Cork

### South County Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny

**Post:** Referrals Region 2, Tusla Educational Support Services, Child and Family Agency, South Dublin County Council Offices, County Hall, Block 3, Tallaght, Dublin 24

### North Dublin, Dublin City, Clondalkin, Lucan

**Post:** Referrals Region 3 Tusla Educational Support Services, Child and Family Agency, Ground Floor, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8

### West/North-West: Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Donegal, Leitrim, Roscommon, Longford, Offaly, Laois, Westmeath.

**Post:** Referrals Region 4, Tusla Educational Support Services, Child and Family Agency, Unit 19 Sandyfort Business Centre, Grealishtown, Bohermore, Galway

### North East: Fingal, Louth, Meath, Cavan, Monaghan.

**Post:** Referrals Region 5, Tusla Educational Support Services, Child and Family Agency, Louth and Meath Education and Training Board, Chapel Street, Dundalk, Co Louth, A91 C7D8

**Note:** For reasons of data protection, you are requested NOT to send Referral Forms by email under any circumstances.



For EWS use only			
Referral Reference No:			
Allocated for Assessment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Case to open?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Reason for decision			
Signature of EWO		Date	
Signature of SEWO		Date	

## Appendix F: USEFUL CONTACTS, RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

USEFUL CONTACTS NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NO
<b>Education Welfare Officers</b>  (EWOs) are employed throughout the country to offer advice, support and guidance to parents who need support in ensuring that their young person attends schools regularly	<u>Head Office:</u>  Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Floors 2-5, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8.  <u>Roscommon Office:</u>  Catherine McManus Government Buildings, Convent Rd., Roscommon.	01-7718500          087 4068497
<b>The National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS)</b>  NEPS psychologists work with both primary and post-primary schools and are concerned with learning, behaviour and social and emotional development.  With regard to School refusal, NEPS will offer an initial telephone consultation to the school (Step 3) and further involvement can be negotiated on a case by case basis with the school.	NEPS,  Government Buildings,  Convent Road, Roscommon	0761108895
<b>JIGSAW Roscommon</b>  Jigsaw Roscommon is a free, non-judgmental and confidential support service for young people (15-25) living in Roscommon Town and county. They provide guidance and support for young people who are going through a difficult or distressing time. They also provide advice and guidance for anyone who is concerned about a young person in their life or work.	Jigsaw Roscommon Primary Care Centre Golf Links Road Roscommon Town	Telephone: 090 666 5087  Email: <a href="mailto:roscommon@jigsaw.ie">roscommon@jigsaw.ie</a> <a href="http://www.jigsaw.ie/roscommon">www.jigsaw.ie/roscommon</a>

<p><b>Family Support Services</b></p> <p>Family Support is a style of work and a wide range of activities that strengthen positive informal social networks through community based programmes and services. The main focus of these services is on early intervention aiming to promote and protect the health, well-being and rights of all children, young people and their families. At the same time particular attention is given to those who are vulnerable or at risk. Drop in services are available, please contact these numbers to find your local drop in service.</p>	<p>North Roscommon Family Support Services, Boyle Health Centre, Termon Rd., Boyle, Co. Roscommon.</p> <p>South Roscommon – Project Leader, Family Support Services, Child and Family Agency, Old Monksland Health Centre, Old Tuam Road, Monksland, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.ie</p>	<p>071 – 9673606</p> <p>Email Sinead O’Neill7@tusla.ie</p> <p>090 6421515 / 0879894160</p> <p>Email: annemarie.kenny2@tusla.ie</p>
<p><b>MEITHEAL Co-Ordinator</b></p> <p>Meitheal is the proposed Child and Family Agency standardised approach to assessing the needs of children and families that have come to the attention of practitioners and community members because of a child welfare or safety concern. <u>Meitheal is a national practice model</u> that enables the needs and strengths of children and their families to be properly identified and understood. This way of working will ensure that the proper supports and services are made available to children and families when they are required</p>	<p>Denise Swanick, Child &amp; Family Support Network Coordinator, Child &amp; Family Agency, Riverside House, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon</p>	<p>086 044 3116</p>
<p><b>Child &amp; Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)</b></p> <p>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is a free specialist service for assessment and treatment of children and adolescents with moderate to serious mental health difficulties. In the case of school refusal, CAMHS might become involved if, for example, there is moderate to severe anxiety evident across many situations beyond school.</p>	<p>Castlecourt House</p> <p>Castle Street</p> <p>Roscommon</p>	<p>090 66 30352</p> <p>Email: camhs_ros@hse.ie</p>
<p><b>Family Resource Centre, Boyle, Co Roscommon</b></p> <p>Provides a professional counselling to families, individuals, couples and groups.</p>	<p>Military Rd, Knocknashee, Boyle, Co. Roscommon</p>	<p>071 96 63841</p> <p><a href="http://www.familylifecentre.ie">www.familylifecentre.ie</a></p>
<p><b>Vita House Family Centre, Roscommon</b></p> <p>Offers a wide range of enrichment and education programmes, workshops and seminars, services and supports, including professional counselling to families, individuals, couples and groups.</p>	<p>Vita House Family Centre</p> <p>Abbey Street Roscommon</p>	<p>090 66 25898</p> <p>Email: info@vitahouse.org</p> <p><a href="http://www.vitahouse.org">www.vitahouse.org</a></p>
<p><b>Community Psychology for Children &amp; Adolescents</b></p> <p>Primary care service for children and adolescents under 18 years. Individual assessment and intervention, training for consultation and community groups.</p>	<p>Psychology Dept; Galway Roscommon PCCC, HSE West, Roscommon Primary Care CENTRE, Golf Links Road, Roscommon</p>	<p>090 66 27091</p> <p>09066 65020</p>

## Appendix G: Resources for Parents/Guardians

- Help! I've got an Alarm Bell going off in my head! How panic Anxiety and Stress affect your body by K.L Aspden. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Overcoming your child's fears and Worries by Cathy Cresswell and Lucy Willetts, from the CBT overcoming series. Publishers Constable and Robinson
- <https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age6-12/mental-health-conditions-in-children/anxiety/tackling-back-to-school-anxiety>
- <https://www.parentline.com.au/parentinginformation/tipsheets/anxiety.php>
- [https://www.understandinganxiety.wayahead.org.au/education/strategies-to-support-anxious-children-in the classroom](https://www.understandinganxiety.wayahead.org.au/education/strategies-to-support-anxious-children-in-the-classroom)
- For suggestions on **Apps** on mindfulness and relaxation  
<http://parentingchaos.com/anxiety-apps-kids/>

## Appendix H: FAQ'S For Young Person.

ref: <http://www.childrensrights.ie>

### Do I have a right to education?

Yes. All children and young people in Ireland have the right to education. This right is protected under the Irish Constitution. In addition, the Education Act 1998 requires the Government to make sure that everyone living in the State is guaranteed "a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person". The Government must make sure that you receive a certain standard of education. This right is generally defined as covering primary and second-level education.

### Do I have to go to school?

Yes. You must go to school from the age of 6 until you are 16 years old, or you have finished three years of secondary school. The only exception is if you are being educated at home.

### Do I have a right to be taught at home?

Your parent or guardian can choose to educate you at home. To do this, they must register you with the Child and Family Agency's Educational Welfare Services which will work with them to make sure that your education meets the required standard.

### Do I have to go school every day?

Yes. Your parent or guardian must make sure that you go to school every day and must tell the school and give a reason if you are going to be absent.

### What happens if I am sick or have other reasons for not going to school?

If you are unable to attend school, your parent or guardian should contact the school, preferably in writing, to explain why. If you miss 20 or more days in a school year or if your school is concerned that you are missing too many days, the school must tell the Child and Family Agency's Educational Welfare Services. If there is no clear reason for your absence, the agency may send someone to visit your parent or guardian to work out how to improve your school attendance.



## **Do I have to do homework?**

Each school sets its own rules and policies for homework and as a pupil you are responsible for following the rules and policies of your school.

## **Do I have to do tests and exams?**

You must follow school rules or policy which may include sitting tests and exams. Pupils in primary schools will do standardised tests in reading and maths in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes. The law does not say that you must sit the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate exams. However, the Leaving Certificate is the most common way into third-level education (universities and third-level colleges).

There are also other education options such as the Leaving Certificate Applied, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Awards (some of these awards used to be called Further Education and Training Awards) and other courses and access programmes.

## **What happens if I get into trouble at school?**

Schools must have a system to deal with students who cause trouble or break the rules. By law, the Board of Management of every school must have a code of behaviour for students. The code of behaviour explains what will happen if you do not obey the school's rules.

Your school will give a copy of the code of behaviour to your parents or guardian when you enrol. The school may ask your parents or guardian to confirm in writing that they agree with the procedures in the code and that they will do all they can to make sure you obey the rules.

If you cause trouble in school, the school may consider a number of options such as:

- detention (being required to stay in school during lunchtime or after school for an hour or so),
- confiscation (taking away something, such as your mobile phone), or
- temporarily excluding you from class (putting you outside the classroom). If your behaviour is more serious, the school can suspend you or even expel you (explained on the next page). However, the school must act fairly and give you a chance to have your say.

## **What happens if I am suspended?**

Suspension means you are not allowed to attend school for a set number of days. A school may suspend you if you have seriously misbehaved. The school's decision must be reasonable and reflect the seriousness of what you have done. Schools must have procedures in place which outline what steps must be taken before you can be suspended.

## **What happens if I am expelled?**

Expulsion means you cannot attend this school again. By law, schools must have procedures in place which outline the steps to be taken before you can be expelled. For instance, the school's Board of Management must tell the Educational Welfare Officer that the school plans to expel you. The school must then wait at least 20 days before it can expel you. The Educational Welfare Officer will try to find a way to make sure that you still get an education, perhaps in another school.

## **Can I appeal my suspension or expulsion?**

You cannot appeal it yourself but your parents or guardian can appeal it for you. They must first appeal to the school's Board of Management. If this is not successful, they can appeal to the Department of Education and Skills. An appeals committee will hear the appeal and make recommendations to the Secretary General of the Department on what action to take. The Secretary General will then write to your parents or guardian and to the school's Board of Management with the reasons for the decision. The Secretary General may also tell the Board of Management how to resolve the issue.

## **What is bullying?**

Bullying is negative behaviour by a person or group against you which is repeated overtime. Bullying can be verbal, psychological or physical and can take place to your face, by phone, online or through social media. Bullying behaviour can take many forms including:

- deliberately excluding you from a group or activity;
- nasty gossip about you;
- placing an offensive or hurtful message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum or website where it can be viewed or repeated by other people;
- bullying based on your identity (that is bullying because you are gay or transgender, of a different race, a Traveller, have a disability or have special educational needs)

If you are being bullied, you have a right to be protected. No-one should bully you for any reason. For more information about bullying, please see the section on taking part in the online community on page 14.

### **What should the school do if I am being bullied or if I report a friend being bullied?**

First, you should tell your teacher, school principal or other trusted adult about the bullying. Schools must have a policy for dealing with bullying. This should state clearly that bullying is unacceptable. The school should have:

- procedures (instructions) for investigating and dealing with bullying;
- procedures to help those affected by bullying;
- strategies to prevent bullying happening in the first place; and
- a record of measures they take to tackle bullying

## **Privacy in school**

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### **Do I have a right to privacy in school?**

Privacy in school means attending school without any interference by the school in your private life, your personal space, your body or your belongings. There are some situations where a school can interfere with your privacy. For example, a teacher can search your bag if he or she believes that you are carrying illegal substances or alcohol. However, both you and your parent or guardian must agree to this.

Your parent or guardian must be present if a teacher wants to search you, for example, to check what is in your pockets.

Your locker is school property but you are entitled to privacy while the locker is assigned to you during the school year. A teacher may search your locker if he or she has a good reason for doing so. The teacher should tell you the reason for the search.

### **Do my parents have a right to know how I am doing in school?**

Your parents or guardian have a right to be kept informed about your education and behaviour in school. This is usually done through school reports, which parents receive once a year, and through parent-teacher meetings.

### **Do I have a right to see my school records?**

Not until you reach 18 years of age. This is when the school has to make school records available to you if you ask for them. If you are under 18, your parent or guardian can access school records on your behalf.

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# Roscommon School Refusal Resource Pack

Information for Schools and Parents

