



# BACK ON TRACK

## Fingal Schools Toolkit for Supporting Students Who Avoid School

A collaboration between FCYPSC, TESS, NEPS, SCP, HSE, Tusla, Foróige, Jigsaw and CAMHS



**JIGSAW**  
Young people's  
health in mind



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education  
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais  
National Educational Psychological Service



Seirbhís Tacaíochta  
Oideachais Tusla  
Tusla Education Support Service



Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Services



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

This resource is based on current knowledge in this area. It is intended as a guide only. Not all the suggestions provided here will apply to all students or situations.

# Acknowledgements

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School avoidance is a challenge encountered by some students and parents and many schools. To help with the coordinating of supports and navigating the system, a number of agencies in Fingal have worked together to produce this toolkit for schools.

We acknowledge with gratitude the contribution of all agencies. However, particular mention must be made of the significant contribution made by the FCYPSC coordinator, Jigsaw, DDLETB, NEPS, HSE Primary Care Psychology, the School Completion Programme and the Educational Welfare Service (TESS).

We also gratefully acknowledge the authors of the Roscommon, Louth and Wicklow 'School Refusal Pack', who allowed us to borrow heavily from their documents, as well as the authors of 'Emotionally Based School Avoidance. Good practice guidance for schools and support Agencies'<sup>1</sup> on which the above packs drew extensively.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance Good practice guidance for schools and support agencies West Sussex Educational Psychology Service

## Foreword

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School avoidance often causes high levels of distress for families and can be very difficult for schools to manage. Early recognition and intervention, planned and coordinated by schools, are essential to a prompt resolution. Good communication between the school, families and professionals is also key. Where the problem persists or becomes complex, schools often seek the advice and support of outside agencies, yet navigating the system (for example, knowing who to contact and when) can pose its own set of challenges.

Services working with students have developed this toolkit for schools to use when supporting students and their parents/guardians. The views of young people who have had difficulty attending school were sought in the creation of this resource, and examples of their experiences have been included in the document. The toolkit provides schools with practical guidance on getting started with intervention from within their own existing resources and also on seeking additional supports from external agencies.

A pathway is included to help schools to plan and review their interventions. The pathway recognises the importance of early intervention and the key role that a school has in identifying and intervening in this issue. It also guides schools on how to progress with early intervention, what to do if this intervention isn't working and when professional support is required.

The suggestions and strategies outlined in this toolkit are not exhaustive. However, it is hoped it will provide some guidance and support to students, parents and teachers.

<sup>1</sup> <https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Pages/Download/6bfa216d-d74f-4510-aca8-408e7a5ef949/PageSectionDocuments>

# Glossary of Terms

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**CAMHS** – Child and Adult Mental Health Service

**CYP** – Child Young Person

**CYPSC** – Children and Young People’s Services Committee

**DDLETB** – Dublin & Dún Laoghaire Education & Training Board

**EWO** – Educational Welfare Officer

**EWS** – Educational Welfare Service

**HSCL** – Home School Community Liaison

**HSE** – Health Service Executive

**ISS** – Inclusion Support Service

**NEPS** – National Educational Psychological Service

**NCSE** – National Council for Special Education

**NDRDTF** – North Dublin Regional Drugs Task Force

**4** **PC Psychology** – Primary Care Psychology

**SAMH** – Substance Abuse and Mental Health

**SCP** – School Completion Programme

**SENO** – Special Educational Needs Organiser

**SNA** – Special Needs Assistant

**TESS** – Tusla Education Support Service

**TUSLA** – Child and Family Agency



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# Introduction

## Language

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Language matters when considering students who avoid school. It is important that the language used is non-judgmental and aids in the understanding of the student's situation and behaviour.

Acknowledging that behaviour is a form of communication is a helpful start. A term such as 'emotionally-based school avoidance' (EBSA) aims to do just this as it recognises the role of emotions in the challenge of school attendance. It is also a term commonly used in documents similar to this one, such as those produced by the West Sussex Educational Psychology Service. EBSA differs from truancy in that parents usually know that the student is not attending school. Students who find it difficult to do so may also be referred to as 'reluctant school attenders' in some of the literature.

## Life through a lens

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When young people stop attending school, this can be really challenging for everyone involved. The student may be in distress, which can be difficult for their parents and teachers to witness. Parents and school authorities may be under pressure to ensure the student returns to school within a specific time frame or attends on a certain number of days. This pressure can take its toll on all. It can also be tempting to think that one party has more responsibility for either the problem or the solution than others. In reading this guide, it may be helpful to keep the following assumptions in mind:

- Everybody usually wants the same outcome, i.e., the student to attend school and be happy doing so. It may seem that the student does not want to return to school, but in fact they often want to return to their normal routine, to feel safe and secure, and progress with their education
- Everybody is doing their best within the resources that they have

- Everybody has a unique perspective both on the situation and on potential solutions
- Solutions will best be found by all parties listening to and respecting each other and collaborating on the most helpful way forward

In addition, the evidence base to date identifies the following factors as contributing to the most successful outcomes:

- working in a flexible manner – paying attention to the individual student and identifying the function served by the school avoidance
- facilitating a rapid return to school alongside good support and adaptations within the school environment
- emphasising the strengths of the student, school supports and family and celebrating all progress towards the goal of full school attendance

# What is school avoidance?

School avoidance is a significant difficulty affecting many students, families and schools and refers to a student's difficulty attending school or remaining in classes for an entire day. It includes the difficulty of students who may attend late and under stress following a morning of pleading with parents for permitted absence.

School avoidance differs from truancy in that the student is at home with the knowledge of the family despite the latter's efforts to enforce attendance. Students with this difficulty are also distinct both from those students whose parents/guardians withdraw them from school and from those experiencing difficult circumstances such as homelessness that prevent school attendance.

School avoidance may happen at any age but is likely to peak at transition points<sup>2</sup>. Starting school, moving home and other stressful life events may trigger the onset of school avoidance. Generally, the student refuses to attend school and experiences significant distress about the idea of doing so.

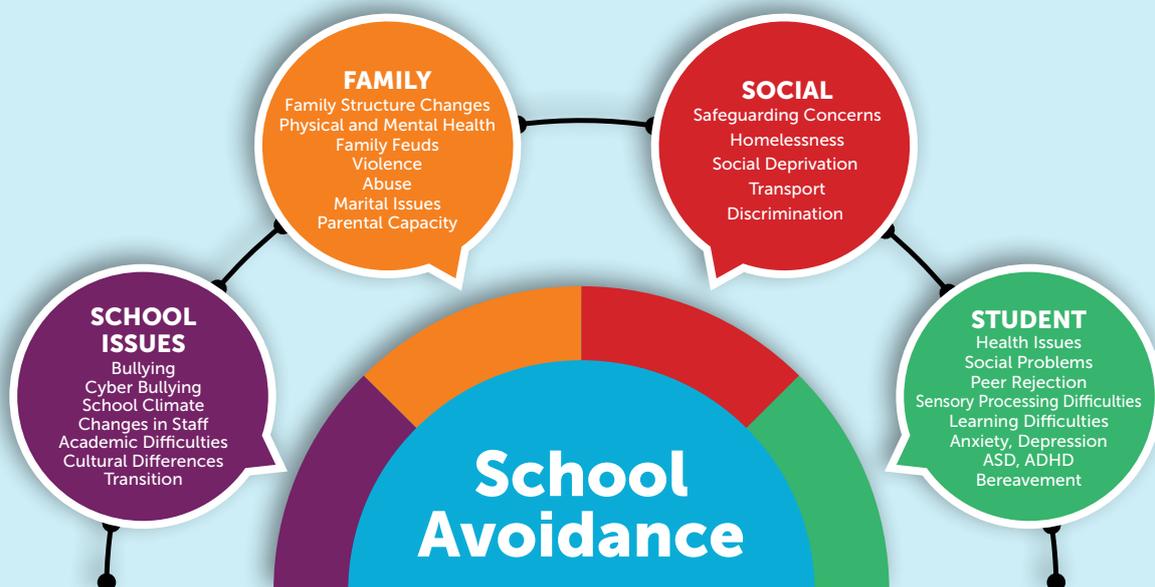
There are many reasons why a student may avoid school. A child or student may be anxious that something will happen to a parent while he/she is in school, fear that they won't do well in school or be avoidant of another student. The student may possibly want to do something perceived as more enjoyable outside of school, e.g., practise hobbies, play computer games, watch movies, meet with friends etc.

School avoidance is a serious issue that is best managed early. Long absences mean that students miss out on important parts of the curriculum, which is detrimental to their learning and development.

# What factors contribute to school avoidance?

There is no single cause of school avoidance, which research recognises is often underpinned by complex and interlinked issues, including family, school and student factors (Thambirajah et al., 2008)<sup>3</sup>. Family factors, for example, may include parental illness, separation or moving home. School factors may include school climate, bullying or academic pressure. Student factors may include health issues, social anxiety, educational challenges,

isolation from peers or poor relationships with teachers. It is usually a combination of predisposing factors interacting with a change in circumstances which leads to the pattern of behaviour described as EBSA, so being alert to these factors in relation to absence from school can act as an early warning system for risk of school avoidance, enabling early action to be taken. It may not always be possible or necessary to identify the unique interaction of factors at play, but it is important that schools recognise that, when a student is avoiding school, it is likely that something is not right for them in one of these areas.



<sup>2</sup> Pellegrini, D.W. (2007). School non-attendance: Definitions, meanings, responses, interventions. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 23(1), 63-77.

<sup>3</sup> Thambirajah, M.S., Grandison, K.J. & De-Hayes, L. (2008) *Understanding School Refusal: A Handbook for Professionals in Education, Health and Social Care* (London, UK: Jessica Kingsley).

## Functions of school avoidance

According to Kearney and Albano (2007),<sup>4</sup> children generally avoid school owing to one or more of four reasons/functions.

The first two reasons can be seen as avoidance of school due to **negative reinforcement**, i.e., to avoid/escape from something unpleasant. These are:

1. To avoid school-related stimuli that provoke negative feelings or stress (e.g., toilets, noise, crowds, corridors, tests).
2. To escape aversive social and/or evaluative situations at school (e.g., feeling left out, reading aloud, peer group challenges, working in a group).

A further two functions can be seen as avoidance of school for **positive reinforcement** or to pursue something outside of school. These are:

3. To receive or pursue attention from significant others outside of school (e.g., being at home with parent/guardian or getting reassurance from them).
4. To obtain or pursue tangible rewards outside of school (e.g., TV, Internet, gaming, staying up late).

Some comments from young people in Fingal who had difficulties attending school included the following:

*None of my friends go to this school*

*The teachers expect too much*

*I have no friends*

## Resilience factors

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When working with individuals, it is also important to identify and build areas of strength and resilience for the student, family and school which may help 'protect' the student and promote school attendance. These may include:

- Developing ambition, aspiration and motivation
- Increasing confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Developing feelings of safety, security and a sense of belonging
- Having positive experiences where they can succeed
- Enjoying positive relationships with peers or staff
- Feeling listened to and understood
- Understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Willingness to work in partnership between school, family and external professionals
- Developing parenting skills and understanding



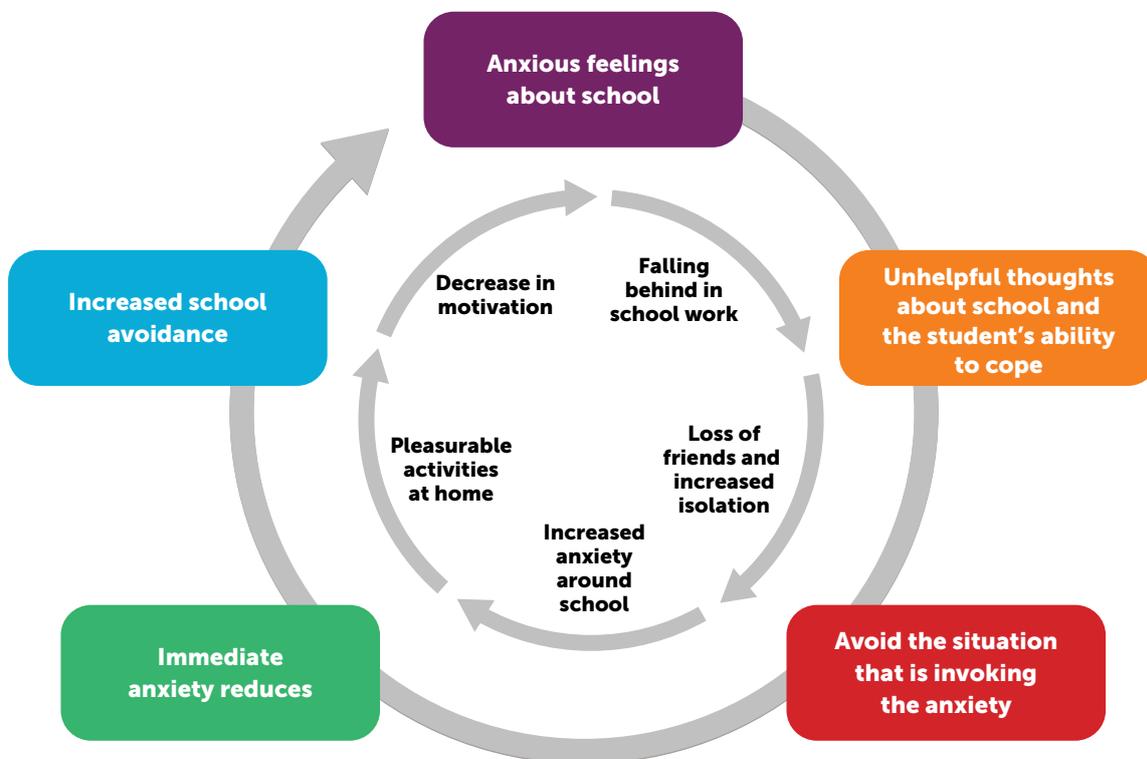
# Anxiety and school avoidance

Anxiety plays a key role in school avoidance for young people. Indeed, it may be the primary reason that a student avoids school initially. Equally, absence from school can create anxiety about potentially returning to this environment. Thus, a cycle of avoiding school due to anxiety is instigated and perpetuated. A student may also become despondent about their situation and find it difficult to think clearly and logically in order to work out a solution to the challenges they face.

One student in Fingal expressed the following:

*I don't think there is anything school can do to help me attend*

## Anxiety and School Avoidance Cycle



Firstly, it is worth considering that anxiety is an emotion that exists in order to ensure our survival and is therefore an adaptive response to a threatening situation. Equally, it can serve as a motivation for action, such as prompting us to study ahead of an exam or interview. However, anxiety can often be triggered in a situation in which we are not actually in danger. Additionally, young people may experience high levels of anxiety that can impact negatively on their ability to engage and function in the school environment. In other words, rather than helping us to perform to our optimum level, anxiety can make doing so more difficult and result in poorer performance.

There are a number of different aspects to anxiety as outlined below. It is important to remember that the body and brain respond in the same way to a perceived threat as to a real one. Examples of this include when we are scared or anxious as a result of a memory, by imagining something or by watching a film.

Some comments from young people in Fingal who had difficult attending school included the following:

*The work is overwhelming. I can't keep up and I am never going to pass my exams.*

*I feel anxious when I am in school. I feel people are looking at me and judging me.*

*I get anxious and depressed sometimes and don't want to get out of bed*

## Triggers for anxiety

Any situation in which an individual feels inadequately prepared for or feels they cannot meet the demands of the situation can cause anxiety. Common school examples include:

- Feeling anxious about performing in front of a class group through a presentation, reading aloud, being asked a question to which the student does not know the answer, sports/drama performances etc.
- Feeling overwhelmed by the sensory aspects of school, such as the number of people in corridors or circulating the school to get to classrooms
- Feeling pressure to look or dress a certain way
- Expectations around engaging in certain 'peer-pressured' activities such as dating, social events outside of school or drinking alcohol, as well as worries about being quizzed about these at school

## Aspects of anxiety

**Thoughts** – These are usually future-focused, involving a prediction about the future and/or often centre around an individual's perceived inability to meet the demands of the environment, e.g., 'I won't be able to answer the question', 'I won't be able to cope if people laugh at me', 'I will be lonely/embarrassed etc. in a social situation', 'I will make a show of myself'.

**Physical** – When a fear response is triggered in the body, many physical sensations can be experienced. This is due to the body's 'fight or flight' response in which the body prepares to escape the situation or 'fight' the danger. As a result, blood is diverted from the digestive system, which can lead to feelings of 'butterflies' in the stomach, nausea, vomiting or other digestive disturbances. As a result, young people who are feeling anxious may often complain of feeling sick or having stomach pains or digestive difficulties. An urge to urinate, sweating palms, clenched teeth/jaws/fists and muscular tension (readiness to fight) can also be experienced. In order to pump fuel and oxygen to our muscles, our rate of breathing increases and our heart beats faster. Thus, we can experience 'heart palpitations' and dizziness or fainting. These physical symptoms can be very frightening and can exacerbate thoughts of being out of control and/or feelings of anxiety and panic.

**Emotions** – Young people may experience anxiety to a greater or lesser extent. Emotions similar to anxiety include panic, terror, fear, worry, stress, nervousness, overwhelm and fright. An individual may also experience a secondary emotion, i.e., an emotion about the initial emotion (anxiety). For example, a person may feel embarrassed, sad or ashamed that they feel anxious.

**Behaviour** – The student may demonstrate increased vigilance – being on the lookout for any threats in the environment that can lead to distressing thoughts or feelings – and find it very difficult to relax. They may also experience a ‘freeze’ response in which they are unable to speak or respond to demands. In order to avoid these unpleasant thoughts, feelings and physical sensations, the student may then choose to avoid the perceived trigger – being in school. By avoiding the situation, however, the student is denied the opportunity to learn that they can cope with the distress; instead, they learn that avoidance results in the anxiety dissipating. Although this is true in the short-term, in the long-term it perpetuates anxiety.

#### **What does a student experiencing anxiety need?**

You can support a student using some of these principles:

- Validating a student’s experience by indicating that how they feel is understandable. Acknowledging and responding to their distress is a helpful start.
- Naming the experience as anxiety (or a word that resonates with the student such as ‘worry’, ‘feeling scared’, ‘butterflies’ etc.) can reduce the intensity of feelings
- Working through the above sections can help the student to identify and recognise their own experiences of anxiety
- Educating the student about the physical symptoms of anxiety can help to reduce anxiety overall as this prevents the escalation of further worry
- If one aspect of the above cycle can be managed, it will affect the whole cycle

Thus, the following interventions can be helpful:

- Supporting the student to focus on their breathing during times of anxiety (see [www.jigsaw.ie/managing-anxiety](http://www.jigsaw.ie/managing-anxiety) for examples of breathing exercises)
- Helping the student to focus their attention on the present moment rather than worrying about the future
- Working with the student to support them to face the things they have been avoiding one by one

#### **Physical responses to anxiety**



## Resources

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There are many online resources providing further information and suggestions for managing anxiety, including

- a video on the Jigsaw website: 'Watch: Managing Anxiety | Advice for Young People | Jigsaw'
- a blog by a local clinical psychologist, Mark Smyth: School Anxiety & Avoidance – Wandering Minds <https://wanderingmindofapsychologist.com/2021/01/17/school-anxiety-avoidance/>
- 'Looking Back Looking Forward', a transitions booklet developed by the education sub-group of FCYPSC for use with sixth class students
- NEPS have developed a number of resources on anxiety to support parents, students and schools: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/af24b-wellbeing-guidance-documents-for-parents-students-and-schools/>



# Information for Schools

Schools are central to the prevention, early identification and continuing management of school avoidance

## Signs that may be observed in schools

Most young people are occasionally reluctant to go to school or have some anxiety about certain school activities. It is also normal to miss some school days during the year, e.g., due to illness. School avoidance, however, is a more persistent problem that might be characterised by some of the following signs:

- Reluctance to separate from parent/guardian
- Frequent complaints of illness before or during school, such as stomach aches, headaches, dizziness or fatigue which fade if the student is allowed to stay at 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 a student who misses the bus every day
- Difficulty attending full days
- Stress during breaks and lunch times



# School-based programmes and interventions

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

### Promotion of parental involvement

An active and positive relationship between parents/guardians and the school is essential to ensure a quick collaborative response when difficulties occur. Channels between parents/guardians and the school should remain open in order to share information 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/guardians may sometimes feel it is hard to connect with the student around school issues. Some ways in which parents/guardians 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 student's class teacher/year head in the form of a communication notebook or through 1:1 face-to-face meetings. Being invited in to help in the class with making resources, career days or assisting on school tours
- Supporting attendance of after school activities
- Communicating with the Home School Liaison Officer and School Completion Staff (where available)

It is also important that parents/guardians receive consistent information and advice in regard to encouraging regular school attendance, and initial steps that can be taken should a decrease in attendance be noted.

## Primary schools

NEPS documents to support primary schools with identifying students' needs and tracking progress using the Continuum of Support include:

1. Special Educational Needs – a Continuum of Support
  - Guidelines for Teachers
  - Resource Pack for Teachers
2. Student Support Files
3. Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties – A Continuum of Support

These documents are available here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>

## Post-primary schools

NEPS documents to support post-primary schools with identifying students' needs and track progress include:

1. Special Educational Needs: A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools
  - Guidelines for Teachers
  - Resource Pack for Teachers
2. Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools
3. Student Support Files

These documents are available here:

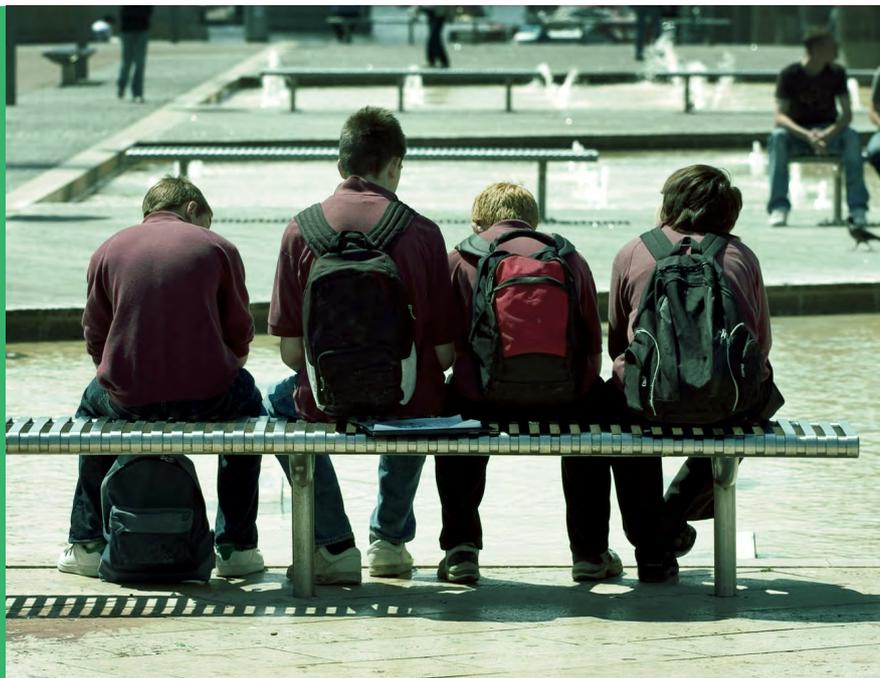
<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>

# Attendance

Monitoring attendance is crucial in terms of identifying early warning signs for school avoidance. Since this is an area to which all schools are obliged to adhere<sup>5</sup>, it is important that this information is utilised effectively.

## Areas which may need checking include:

- Medical difficulties – are there underlying medical reasons for the student avoiding school?
- Social reasons – gaining a greater understanding of the student's social circle or lack of
- Educational reasons – is the student having difficulty in particular subjects or overall difficulty?
- Environmental reasons – is there something in the environment causing distress for the student?
- Functions of school avoidance – are there other reasons the student is avoiding school?



Collecting information and assessing the above areas can lead to a more in-depth, focused intervention which is tailored to the individual needs of the student. The NEPS Continuum of Support<sup>6</sup> documents aim to assist schools in developing plans that support students.

## School-based programmes/curriculum

There are a number of school programmes and interventions available which can assist in either the creation or implementation of a plan for early or established school avoidance. 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
- School-based Resilience Training Programmes such as Friends for Life (FFL)<sup>7</sup>
- Teaching Mindfulness to all students
- School Completion Programme supports and interventions (where available)

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

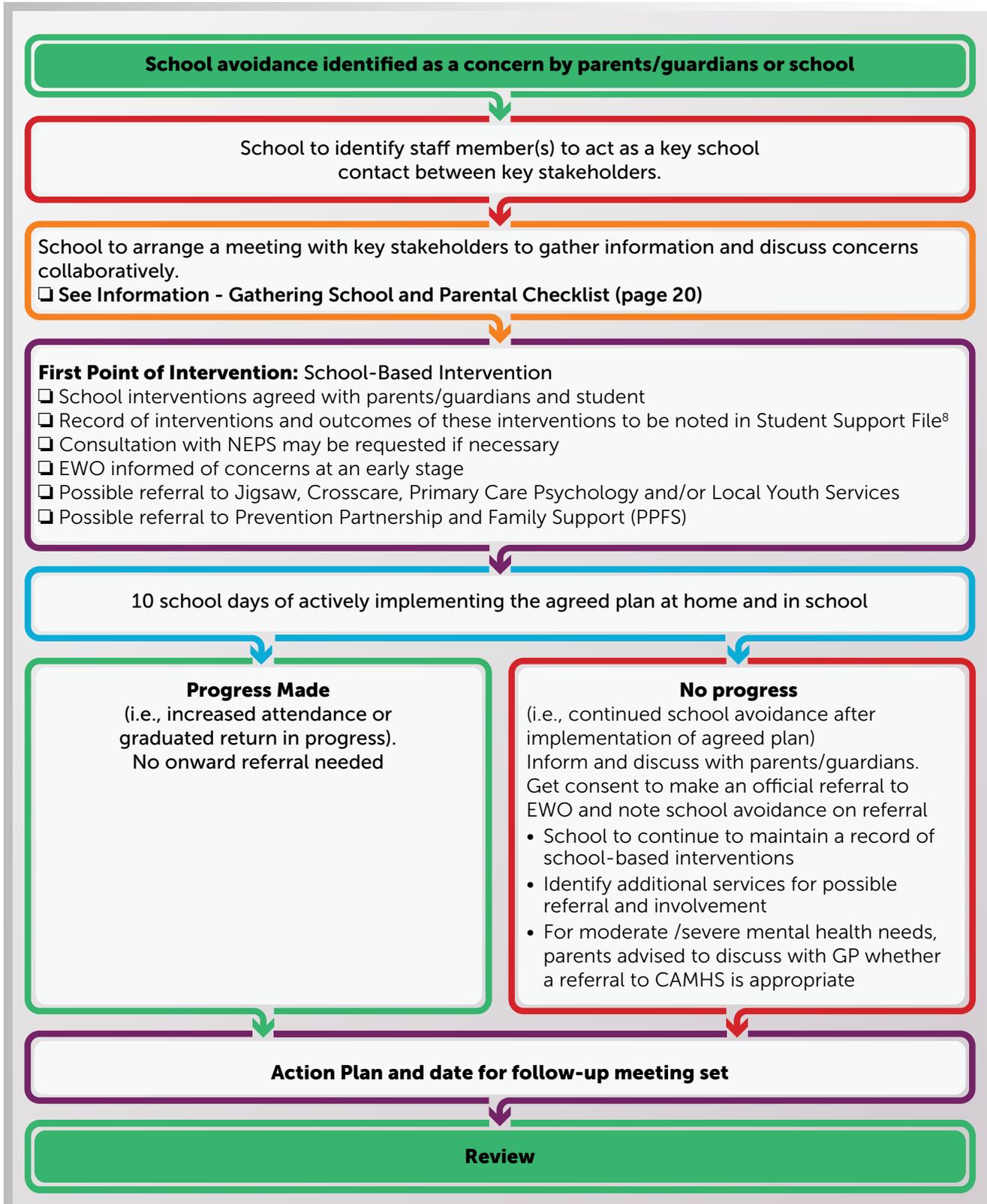
<sup>5</sup> Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/#special-educational-needs>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nbss.ie/interventions-and-projects/wellbeing/friends-for-life>

# Fingal school-avoidance pathway

As soon as a school becomes aware that a student is experiencing school avoidance, interventions should be planned and implemented in a timely manner to support their return to school. The following pathway is intended to guide schools with planning and reviewing early school-based interventions and deciding if, when and which professional supports are required. This pathway is not necessarily 'linear', i.e., not all steps will be necessary/appropriate in every case.



<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/#special-educational-needs>



## Guidance for following the pathway

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When a student is identified as having difficulties in attending school, it is imperative to implement interventions as soon as possible. These steps will assist schools, parents and young people in building a robust pathway to the return to school.

### Gathering information

- The identified school contact should arrange to meet with stakeholders to gather information and discuss concerns collaboratively. A key objective of this meeting will be to try to identify the cause of the school avoidance or any specific barriers about returning to school. The school and parent checklist overleaf will be useful.
- When gathering information from parents, a full understanding of the family's context and the student's developmental/educational history should be sought. Information should be gathered about the specific nature of the difficulty, when and how it first emerged and the student's routines and presentation on days they are in school and days they are not. It is also useful to ask about any support networks they have or any supports they have found helpful now or in the past.
- Staff should be mindful that parents may find it hard to talk about the difficulty they are experiencing in getting their child to attend school. They may also be concerned they will be blamed for their child's absence or judged about their parenting skills. This needs to be dealt with in a sensitive way.
- Gathering more detailed information about the function of school avoidance will enable support to be tailored to address the specific maintaining factors identified. The School Refusal Assessment Scale in Appendix A will facilitate gathering this more detailed information from parents and the student.
- Gathering information from within school is also important, e.g., observations of strengths, difficulties, friendships, academic ability and current supports etc. For post-primary schools, the Subject Teacher Survey form in the NEPS post-primary continuum will help with collating this information from subject teachers.

# Information Gathering: school & parent checklist

A high number of 'yes' responses indicate a greater risk of school avoidance

Name of Student	
Date	

## ATTENDANCE

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Reluctance to leave the house in the morning				
Late for school				
Absent for part of day				
Absent for full day				

## ENVIRONMENTAL

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Significant life events, e.g., moving house/ school, separation of parents/family members, addiction, additions to the family, death of a pet (please specify)				
Student living in more than one home/temporary accommodation				
Parental involvement with education, e.g., homework, parent-teacher meetings, good communication with school				
Practical/financial challenges in getting to school				

## LEARNING NEEDS

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Inability to problem solve				
Organisational difficulties				

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Homework not done/ incomplete on a regular basis				
Difficulties working under pressure/processing difficulties				
Specific learning difficulty & general learning difficulty (please specify)				
Avoidance of particular school activities/subjects				

**SOCIAL**

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Bullying				
Fallen out with friends/ difficulties with peer relationships				
Social/communication difficulties				
Not independent for age				
Struggles during unstructured time				
Lack of active engagement with social and leisure outlets				

**EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Often appears tired				
Often appears to be lacking in interest/ motivation				
Demonstrates low self- esteem				
Shy, quiet or passive				

### EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Appears worried or anxious				
Displays challenging behaviours				
Lack of involvement in school life				

### PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

	YES	NO	N/A	COMMENTS
Has a serious illness or medical condition				
Complains of sickness or headaches				
Had rapid weight gain or weight loss				
Changes in eating habits				
Known use of drugs/ alcohol				
Other				

Completed by:  
Please include school, parent/guardian  
and student's name as appropriate

\_\_\_\_\_

School Representative

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_

Student

# Subject Teacher Survey<sup>9</sup>

Subject Teacher Survey							
Student	Teacher			Subject			
This section is to record factors that may affect a student's ability to learn. The number circled allow for comparisons over time.							
Area of Concern	Scoring Criteria						Comments
Attitude towards staff	Negative -----			Positive and appropriate			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Co-operation with peers	Unable to share ---			Enjoys sharing and working with others			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Motivation	Very little -----			Self-motivated			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Participation and oral response	Withdrawn -----			Keen to take part or shy			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Enthusiasm for written work	Seldom wants -----			Works hard/most pride in work			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Presentation of work	Takes little care in work -----			Always takes pride in work			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Following verbal instructions	Needs further direction -----			Can work alone			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Following written instructions	Unable to work alone -----			Can work alone			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Group size required	Needs constant one-to-one -----			Can function in any group			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Behaviour in class	Disruptive -----			Never disrupts most lessons			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
General progress	No progress -----			Skills/knowledge increasing			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Creativity and innovation	Shows little imagination -----			Creative and innovative			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Aggressive towards staff and peers				Assertive and fair		Passive	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Tantrums/Sulks				Copes with failure appropriately		Depressed and withdrawn	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	

# First point of intervention

1. The key school contact should use the information gathered to help prioritise and plan which identified areas of need the school-based interventions will target and support. The NEPS resource 'Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour Information for Teachers and School Staff' (see Appendix D) supports schools in intervention planning. An important consideration is the function of the behaviour. For example, if it is to avoid an anxiety-provoking situation, educating the student about anxiety and how to manage it will be a necessary element of the school intervention. However, if the function of the student's behaviour is to gain access to something rewarding when off school, it may be more useful to begin with supporting parents in establishing routines and limiting items that may reward staying at home.
2. Other identified barriers should be addressed, such as learning or social needs, e.g., through offering learning support or linking with the SCP.
3. Schools should advise parents on interventions that may support their child to re-establish attendance, using strategies from the parents' section of this toolkit or from the NEPS resource 'Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour Information for Parents and Guardians' (see Appendix E)
4. A plan of interventions should be agreed with the student, their parents/guardians and the school. The sample support plan template on p.26/27 may be useful. The agreed plan should be recorded in the Student Support File and a review date set.
5. Where anxiety is an issue for students, handouts such as 'Managing Stress and Anxiety. A Guide for School Staff' or 'Self-Regulation for Pupils. A Guide for School Staff' are available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/af24b-wellbeing-guidance-documents-for-parents-students-and-schools/>
6. The following resources in the [West Sussex Pack](#) will help when speaking to students about their thoughts and feelings around school attendance:  
[Do you worry about going to school? Information booklet for young people](#)  
[Are you feeling sad or worried about school?](#)
7. Full school attendance may be appropriate for younger students or those in the early stage of school avoidance, while a gradual return plan is often recommended for older students or students who are experiencing more severe or long-standing difficulties. The primary objective is a gradual increase in the hours that the student spends in the school environment. All relevant parties should follow the new Department of Education guidelines: "The Use of Reduced School Days"
8. While the student is not yet attending for full days, time at home should be structured as if they were in school (e.g., uniform on, working on timetabled subjects, homework, reduced screen time).
9. The school may wish to contact their EWO and NEPS psychologist for advice at this point.



## Ten days of school activity implementing the support plan

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- 10.** Relevant teachers and school staff should be briefed about the support plan and what agreed supports are being implemented and by whom. Staff should be advised not to quiz the student about absences or question why the student has not been in class. Sharing the NEPS resource [Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour Information for Teachers and School Staff](#) (see Appendix D) will provide further guidance.
- 11.** Any additional support strategies should be implemented as soon as the student begins the return to school, e.g., social skills programmes or extra tuition to catch up on missed work.
- 12.** There may be a peer who can be identified as a buddy or mentor for the return plan and could be asked to meet with the returning student to help re-integrate them in school life. If the student has missed school time, a return to social activities can be daunting, and a peer may help with this.
- 13.** Where possible, a quiet supervised space should be designated for the student to attend during periods when they feel like they cannot stay in school, with the aim of encouraging them to remain in the school rather than leave because anxiety is high. A designated staff member may be available to help calm the student (SCP staff or members of the care team where SCP support is not available). Break cards may be a useful strategy to trial with the student, which permit a student to leave the classroom without significant disruption. If they are in possession of this card in the hallway during class time, they can show it and avoid being unduly questioned.
- 14.** A record of attendance and time spent in school should be kept by the school.
- 15.** A review of the plan should be made ten school days from the start of the interventions, ensuring all steps were implemented over this period. When reviewing the plan, the strategies that have proved helpful and are working well should be identified. Additionally, barriers that have impeded progress should also be identified and solutions to these barriers sought. If additional supports are needed, they should be identified and implemented as soon as possible.
- 16.** A record of intervention should be kept.

## Involvement of outside agencies and support services

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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, e.g., where there are challenges in the home environment or where the student and/or parent(s) 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, advice should be sought from the EWO, and a referral to the EWS should be made when a student has missed 20 days. NEPS should also be consulted in this regard. A student may be referred to Primary Care Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and/or other agencies depending on the specific presentation. Where there is uncertainty as to which service is most appropriate and/or where there are unmet needs for the student, a request can be made directly to the Meitheal Process.<sup>10</sup> A referral can also be made to Child Protection Social Work (Tusla)<sup>11</sup> if it is deemed that the student's needs are not being met by the parent(s)/guardians.

Linking with local Youth/Community Agencies to provide out of school supports can be beneficial in supporting the student. Youth Work organisations provide personal and social development programmes that can complement a student's formal, academic or vocational education/training.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/guidance-documents/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/contact-a-social-worker/dublin/dublin-north/>

# Sample Support Plan

## SUPPORT PLAN

Name:

Date:

Class/Year:

At school these things can make me feel upset:



My key adult(s) in school is/are:

When I can speak to my key adult(s):

Where I can speak to my key adult(s):



My return to school plan includes the following changes to my attendance:

Days:

Times:



Changes to my timetable include:

(Identify any changes needed and what should happen/where they should go instead)



Any other changes include:

Identify any other changes to routines (break, lunch times, changes between lessons etc.), classroom expectations (not expected to read aloud, work in pairs etc.) or homework



When I start to get upset, I notice these things about myself:



When I start to get upset, others notice these things about me:



Things I can do to make myself feel better when I'm at school:



Things that other people (staff and peers) can do to help me feel better when I'm at school:



Things that my family can do to support me to attend school:



Places in the school I can go to where I feel safe and supported:



This plan will be reviewed regularly so that it remains helpful.

Review date:

My signature	Key adult's signature	Parent's/Guardian's signature
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Other people who have access to the plan are:

(adapted from WSCC Educational Psychology Service EBSA Guidance)

# Special Educational Needs

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Students who have Special Educational Needs (SEN) may face challenges that add additional layers of anxiety to their school experience. Factors influencing their anxiety can be numerous and complex, with each student's experience being unique to them. The school day involves using skills that students with SEN may struggle to develop. For example, the day requires:

- sustained attention and concentration
- language processing/comprehension and expressive/communication skills
- memory of new concepts and rules
- applying literacy and numeracy skills
- understanding of social norms and using social skills (e.g., playing games at break time, contributing to group work, asking for help etc.)
- motor skills and coordination
- executive functioning skills (e.g., orientation to the building, organising books and equipment, seeing a task through)
- processing sensory experiences (e.g., busy corridors, bright lights display and uniforms)

Situations involving these skills can be unpredictable, which can be difficult to tolerate. Intolerance of uncertainty can also cause anxiety, so that home may feel like a safer place in which stress/anxiety dissipates. At home, demands are typically lower. This results in less uncertainty, and therefore school avoidance can become a coping mechanism that becomes positively reinforced because it leads to lowered stress levels.

When a student avoids or is reluctant to attend school, it is important to try to understand what is underpinning this behaviour. While it can be difficult to identify the exact source, the following initial questions directed to the student may help:

- What are your three favourite things about school?
- What three things bothered you recently?

The following document also contains useful visual prompts to help a student identify what specific aspects of school they may find difficult:

- <https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483>

## How schools can help

- Appointing a link person who will maintain contact with the student and their family through meetings or phone calls, even during an extended absence. The key link person should identify who will meet with the pupil at the school at agreed times when they arrive
- Listening carefully to the challenges being faced by the student. Take time to understand any known or identified needs, e.g., Autism, Dyslexia, Developmental Co-ordination Disorder, Developmental Language Delay
- Finding out from parents/guardians about how this diagnosis or need impacts on the individual student and enquiring about coping strategies or approaches to managing anxiety that have been helpful in the home or community situation

- Helping the student to identify what constitutes a 'better day' and what makes them happy
- Drawing up an individual plan that incorporates practical steps the student will take to return to school and agree what accommodations can be put in place for them, e.g., coming in when school is quieter, meeting a key person at the door, carrying out a particular task at break times so they have predictability
- Raising awareness of the complexity of school avoidance with staff by sharing the NEPS resource [Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour Information for Teachers and School Staff](#) (see Appendix D)
- Ensuring that teachers are aware of the pupil's anxiety around school attendance as needed and that undue attention is not brought to the pupil's school absence on their return. Teachers can help to manage comments/reaction of peers when the student returns to school after a period of absence
- Considering how the pupil's friendship group can be sensitively involved in supporting the pupil's return
- Planning ahead for uncertainty and preparing the student for transitions and changes in the daily schedule. Considering how predictability in general might be increased, e.g., visual timetables, visual cues, organisational checklists
- Identifying with the student how they will indicate they need a break if stressed (e.g., via a break card), how this will work and where they can go to calm down to establish a sense of control
- Ensuring low arousal approaches are used in school, e.g., reducing language demands, ensuring demands are within tolerance limits, allowing personal space, remaining calm in your interactions
- Examining the day/environment with particular challenges in mind and agreeing in advance how particular situations will be managed before communicating this plan to staff. For example, using a 'sensory lens' to do a virtual or real walk through the school and classroom to identify what sensory challenges may exist for a student who struggles to process sensory information, then put in place and communicate across staff necessary adaptations/good practice strategies, e.g., a quieter bell, uniform concessions, movement breaks etc. Similarly, through a 'language lens', consider what aspects of school are likely to be challenging, e.g., complex instructions, being asked unpredictable questions, answering in front of others
- Addressing any other school-based needs, e.g., academic difficulties, coordination, social skills, bullying issues (consider using the acronym MATCH: **M**odify the task; **A**lter your Expectations; **T**each Strategies/Skills; **C**hange the Environment; **H**elp by Understanding)
- Identifying any skills the student needs to develop, e.g., emotional regulation, social skills. Model, explicitly teach, practise and prompt these skills
- Ensuring all staff, teachers and SNAs have been briefed about particular difficulties/barriers to attendance and the plan in place to address them, e.g., anxiety-related difficulties such as reading aloud in class, social difficulties, (e.g., bullying), learning difficulties or changes/challenges at home, (e.g., bereavement/separation), sensory needs etc.

### Other resources

- Middletown Centre for Autism designs and delivers training programmes cognisant of the needs of Parents, Education Professionals and those who traverse these groupings (<https://www.middletownautism.com>). These courses are delivered to teachers in conjunction with training offered by the National Council for Special Education ([www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie))
- AsIAM is Ireland's National Autism Charity & Advocacy organisation, whose website provides a range of resources for young people with ASC and their parents and teachers (<https://asiam.ie>)

# Information for Parents

## What is school avoidance?

Worrying or anxiety is a normal feeling that we all experience from time to time. It can even keep us safe from harm or help us perform in difficult situations.<sup>12</sup> There is nothing unusual about your child worrying about school. If you think about it, there were probably times when you were also anxious or worried about school, and you learned to deal with it. However, if your child's worries become too great and they have difficulty attending school, this is called Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA).



## Behaviours to be on the lookout for

- Frequent signs of upset (e.g., tearfulness, tummy pains, bedwetting, headaches) on Sunday nights or Monday mornings
- Complaints of feeling sick when returning to school after a school break, e.g., a long weekend or school holidays
- Frequently asking the teacher to ring home from school, wanting to go home or complaints of feeling sick
- Challenging behaviour/tantrums when school is mentioned or before school in the morning. (This may be more common in children who have just started in school, i.e., junior infants, but normally settles after a few weeks)
- Difficulties or anxieties when mixing with others (e.g., going outside to play, attending after-school activities, parties, etc.). This may be common in children who have not mixed with other children before starting school but tends to settle after a short while.
- Worrying or being anxious about school
- Sleeping difficulties
- Change of mood or being negative about school, subjects or teachers
- Being more self-conscious than usual
- Not taking part in school activities, outings, trips

## What can you as a parent/guardian do to help with early signs of school avoidance?

Work with the school to manage your child's difficulties attending school. Make contact with the school to share your concerns and what you have been doing to support attendance. NEPS' advice, [Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour Information for Parents and Guardians](#), is also included in Appendix E and explains more about this difficulty and what parents can do to support their children.

<sup>12</sup> [Emotionally Based School Avoidance Good practice guidance for schools and support agencies West Sussex Educational Psychology Service](#)

## Tips for speaking with your child/a young person

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- Wait for a time when you are both calm and able to think clearly. When your child is distressed, the main thing they need is support to express themselves and to feel calm. No one can think and have helpful conversations when they are stressed
- Listen to your child's reasons for not wanting to go to school. Let them know you understand. Encourage them to talk to you about how they feel
- Make sure there is nothing medically wrong and that they are not being bullied or hurt
- Speak calmly. Ask open questions such as 'How are you feeling?' rather than 'Yes-No' questions like 'Are you worried?'
- Acknowledge your child's feelings, offer support, and reassure them, e.g., 'I know that you feel \_\_\_\_\_, but we will work on it together'
- Speak positively about school and help your child to think and talk about what they like about school life
- Give your child some positive self-statements such as 'I can do this' and 'I went to school yesterday, and it was fine.'
- Help them to remember other times when they did not want to do something but did it anyway and how they felt afterwards when it turned out okay
- Be consistent and ensure both parents give the same message
- Ignore what is safe to ignore, e.g., shouting, bargaining
- Once you have reassured them and helped them to take some slow deep breaths, be persistent and bring your child to school
- Praise them for being brave and making the effort to go to school

## Practical supports

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- Keep good routines for bedtime, getting up, breakfast, organisation of uniform, school bag and equipment. See page 34 for morning and night-time checklists
- Try to give choice to your child, e.g., bringing/buying lunch, what to have for lunch, walking or cycling to school etc.
- Help them to find things they enjoy about school, e.g., friends, PE, art, lunchtime
- Check if a different parent or friend bringing your child to school helps
- For an older child, a friend meeting them on the way can help ease them into school
- Keep a record of your child's school attendance

## Remember:

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- If you are not sure about when to keep your child at home due to illness, check the school's policy, public health guidelines, or contact your GP
- Difficulties with attending school can be stressful for the whole family. Acknowledge this and remember to be kind to yourself





## When the difficulty does not improve:

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Setbacks will happen and for some school avoidance will persist. The following advice may be helpful:

- Continue to start each day with the expectation that your child will go to school, though there may be times that this will not happen
- Continue with good routines for getting up, going to bed, eating, homework and fitting in some rest and relaxation time
- On days when your child does not go to school, the following may be helpful
  - It is important that the day at home is not more appealing than being in school
  - Get up at the usual time and get dressed
  - Home activities should match the school timetable
  - There should be a quiet workplace available for doing school work
  - Devices should be removed, including access to Wi-Fi, phones and screens
  - Ask the school to send home homework
  - Attention from parents and others can be rewarding for your child. Limit any extra attention that they may get while they are at home, e.g., extra time with you, visits from neighbours etc.
- Help your child to keep in contact with school friends outside of school hours
- Explain to them that you are working with their school and teachers to work out how to help him/her
- Support them to be open and honest with the school about difficulties going to school or staying in school
- Your child/young person will look to you for guidance on how to cope. Tell them about times when you felt worried and coped with something difficult. Reassure them that many pupils have successfully returned to school with support
- Normalise fears and worries, but promote coping strategies. Keep calm in front of your child, work through ways to help them cope with difficult aspects of school, and problem-solve what might work
- Keep in contact with the school and attend any meetings to gather information or planning interventions
- If your child has questions about school attendance, rights and responsibilities, the FAQs on page 37 may be useful
- The school will help advise you to find services that may be helpful. School may be able to refer you to certain services. For others, you will need to attend your GP to be referred
- Follow up on any referrals agreed with the school

# Information for Students

When you think about school, do you feel worried, scared, sick or anxious? Many students can feel like this from time to time. This can be school-related or it may be due to things that are happening outside of school.



## What is the outcome of not attending school?

Sometimes you might feel that staying away from school is the answer as doing so gives you relief. However, this is only a temporary fix. Missing out on friendships, learning and schoolwork will not help in the long run. It is important to talk to a trusted adult about what is worrying you so much that you can't attend school. The adult will help you work through what is bothering you and plan your return to school.



# Some ideas that might help

Write a list of or draw the things that worry you. Which of these things are big worries and which are not so big or difficult worries?

<i>Most worried about</i>	<i>Least worried about</i>



## DID YOU KNOW

Morning routines and attendance patterns are set in September, so set yourself up for success by getting off to a smooth start in September!



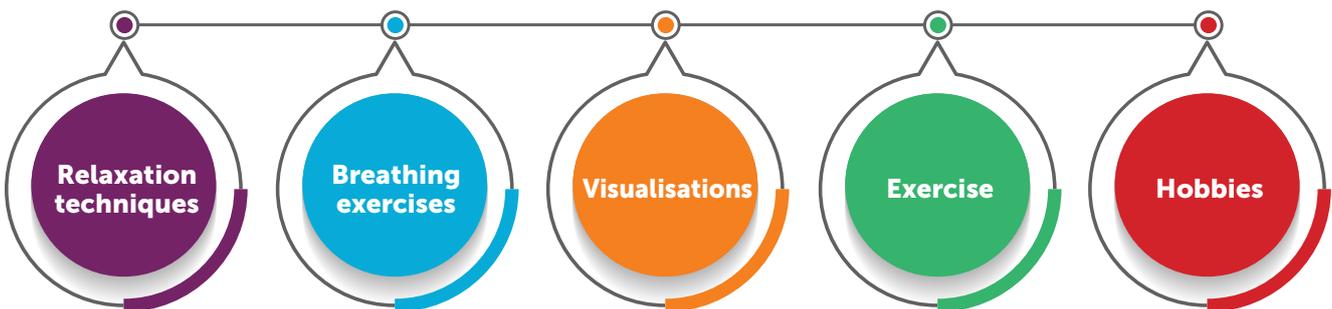
### Here's a 'Night-time Checklist' that you might find useful:

NIGHTTIME CHECKLIST	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose and lay out clothing and shoes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Put any items you need for school in your school bag (e.g, permission slips, books, journals, homework)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make your lunch
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set your alarm!

### And here's a 'Morning Checklist':

MORNING CHECKLIST	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Get out of bed when your alarm goes off.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have a good breakfast
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leave yourself plenty of time to get to school
<input type="checkbox"/>	Walk or cycle to school if you can

Try some of the following to help you cope with your worries or anxieties



# List of places to get support

Resources from NEPS to support student in managing their thoughts, feelings and anxiety are available:  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/af24b-wellbeing-guidance-documents-for-parents-students-and-schools/>

Agency	Information and contact details
Jigsaw	T: 01 890 5810 E: <a href="mailto:dublin15@jigsaw.ie">dublin15@jigsaw.ie</a> W: <a href="https://jigsaw.ie/location/dublin-15/">https://jigsaw.ie/location/dublin-15/</a>  North Fingal T: 01 960 3020 E: <a href="mailto:northfingal@jigsaw.ie">northfingal@jigsaw.ie</a> W: <a href="https://jigsaw.ie/location/north-fingal/">https://jigsaw.ie/location/north-fingal/</a>
Pieta House	T: 01 884 0532 Appointments: 0818 111 126
Crosscare	T: 01557 4705 Monday to Friday 9am–5pm
Teenline Ireland	T: 1800 833 634
SAMH Counselling Service	T: 086 781 5072 E: <a href="mailto:samhcounselling@gmail.com">samhcounselling@gmail.com</a>
Belong to Youth	T: 01 670 6223 E: <a href="mailto:info@belongto.org">info@belongto.org</a>
ReachOut.com	T: 01 764 5666
Bodywhys	Office: 01 283 4963  Helpline: 01 210 7906  Office: <a href="mailto:info@bodywhys.ie">info@bodywhys.ie</a>  E-Mail Support Service: <a href="mailto:alex@bodywhys.ie">alex@bodywhys.ie</a>
Gay Switchboard Ireland	01 872 105 <a href="mailto:ask@gayswitchboard.ie">ask@gayswitchboard.ie</a>
ISPCC	01 234 2000
Turn2me	<a href="https://turn2me.ie/">https://turn2me.ie/</a>
The Dare Response App	<a href="https://www.darerresponse.com/app-2/">https://www.darerresponse.com/app-2/</a>
Spunout	<a href="https://spunout.ie/">https://spunout.ie/</a>
Social Anxiety Ireland	<a href="https://socialanxietyireland.com/">https://socialanxietyireland.com/</a> 085 185 6582/185 6581

# FAQs

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

## Do I have a right to an education?

Yes, the Government must make sure you receive a certain standard of education.

## Do I have to go to school?

Yes, from the age of 6 to 16 years and until you have finished 3 years of post-primary school.

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

Yes, but your parent/guardian must register you with the Alternative Education Assessment Registrations Service (AEARS) Tusla to ensure your education meets the required standard.

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

Yes. Your parent/guardian must make sure that you go to school every day.

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

Your parent/guardian should contact the school to explain why. If you miss 20 or more days in a school year, the school must tell the Educational Welfare Service. (EWS). The EWS works with children, young people and their families who are having trouble with school attendance. If there is no clear reason for your absence, the EWO may visit your home to help you improve your school attendance.

## Do I have to do homework?

Each school sets its own rules and policies for homework.

## Do I have to do tests and exams?

The law does not say that you must sit the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate. However, both are state-recognised and the most common pathway to further education.

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

By law, 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. The school must act fairly and give you a chance to have your say. Breaking school rules can result in detentions, temporary exclusion from class or suspension.

## What happens if I am suspended?

Suspension means you are not allowed to attend school for a set number of days. Students have a right to appeal any suspension over a period of 20 consecutive days.

## What happens if I am expelled?

Expulsion means you cannot attend this school again. The Board of Management must inform EWS and wait 20 days. The EWO will make sure you still receive an education during this period.

## Can I appeal my suspension or expulsion?

Your parents/guardian appeal on your behalf, first to the Board of Management and, if unsuccessful, to the Department of Education and Skills. An appeals committee will write to your parents/guardian and to the school with the recommendations.

## What should the school do if I am being bullied?

Schools must have a policy for dealing with bullying that includes procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying, helping those affected by bullying and strategies to prevent bullying.

## What should I do if I am being bullied at school?

Tell your teacher, principal or trusted adult.

## 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. Schools can, however, search your bag if it's believed you are carrying illegal substances or alcohol with your consent and that of your parent/guardian. Your locker is school property, but you are entitled to privacy while the locker is assigned to you. However, a teacher may search your locker if they have a good reason, though they must tell you the reason for the search.

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

Yes, they have a right to be kept informed about your education and behaviour in school.

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

When you are 18, the school has to make your school records available if you ask for them. If you are under 18, your parent/guardian can access school records on your behalf.

A woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a white shirt with a black pattern, is shown from the side. She is holding a blue notebook and pointing her right hand towards a blurred background of people. The word "Appendices" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image. Below the text is a horizontal line with two purple dots.

# Appendices

# Appendix A – School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (Parent)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please select the answer that best fits the following questions:

- 1.** How often does your child have bad feelings about going to school because he/she is afraid of something related to school (for example, tests, school bus, teacher, fire alarm)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 2.** How often does your child stay away from school because it is hard for him/her to speak with the other kids at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 3.** How often does your child feel he/she would rather be with you or your spouse than go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 4.** When your child is not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how often does he/she leave the house and do something fun?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 5.** How often does your child stay away from school because he/she will feel sad or depressed if he/she goes?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 6.** How often does your child stay away from school because he/she feels embarrassed in front of other people at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**7.** How often does your child think about you or your spouse or family when in school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**8.** When your child is not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how often does he/she talk to or see other people (other than his/her family)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**9.** How often does your child feel worse at school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) compared to how he/she feels at home with friends?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**10.** How often does your child stay away from school because he/she does not have many friends there?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**11.** How much would your child rather be with his/her family than go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**12.** When your child is not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how much does he/she enjoy doing different things (for example, being with friends, going places)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**13.** How often does your child have bad feelings about school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) when he/she thinks about school on Saturday and Sunday?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**14.** How often does your child stay away from certain places in school (e.g., hallways, places where certain groups of people are) where he/she would have to talk to someone?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**15.** How much would your child rather be taught by you or your spouse at home than by his/her teacher at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**16.** How often does your child refuse to go to school because he/she wants to have fun outside of school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**17.** If your child had less bad feelings (for example, scared, nervous, sad) about school, would it be easier for him/her to go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**18.** If it were easier for your child to make new friends, would it be easier for him/her to go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**19.** Would it be easier for your child to go to school if you or your spouse went with him/her?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**20.** Would it be easier for your child to go to school if he/she could do more things he/she likes to do after school hours (for example, being with friends)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**21.** How much more does your child have bad feelings about school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) compared to other kids his/her age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**22.** How often does your child stay away from people at school compared to other kids his/her age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**23.** Would your child like to be home with you or your spouse more than other kids his/her age would?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**24.** Would your child rather be doing fun things outside of school more than most kids his/her age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

Do not write below this line

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1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_ 7. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_ 10. \_\_\_\_\_ 11. \_\_\_\_\_ 12. \_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_ 14. \_\_\_\_\_ 15. \_\_\_\_\_ 16. \_\_\_\_\_

17. \_\_\_\_\_ 18. \_\_\_\_\_ 19. \_\_\_\_\_ 20. \_\_\_\_\_

21. \_\_\_\_\_ 22. \_\_\_\_\_ 23. \_\_\_\_\_ 24. \_\_\_\_\_

Total Score = \_\_\_\_\_

Mean Score = \_\_\_\_\_

Relative Ranking = \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix B: School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (Child/Young Person)

Children sometimes have different reasons for not going to school. Some children feel badly at school, some have trouble with other people, some just want to be with their family, and others like to do things that are more fun outside of school.

This form asks questions about why you don't want to go to school. For each question, pick one number that describes you best for the last few days. After you answer one question, go on to the next. Don't skip any questions.

There are no right or wrong answers. Just pick the number that best fits the way you feel about going to school. Select the number.

Here is an example of how it works. Try it. Select the number that describes you best.

### Example:

How often do you like to go shopping?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

Now go to the next page and begin to answer the questions.



# School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (Child/Young Person)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please select the answer that best fits the following questions:

- 1.** How often do you have bad feelings about going to school because you are afraid of something related to school (for example, tests, school bus, teacher, fire alarm)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 2.** How often do you stay away from school because it is hard to speak with the other kids at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 3.** How often do you feel you would rather be with your parent/guardians than go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 4.** When you are not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how often do you leave the house and do something fun?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 5.** How often do you stay away from school because you will feel sad or depressed if you go?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 6.** How often do you stay away from school because you feel embarrassed in front of other people at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 7.** How often do you think about your parent/guardians or family when in school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 8.** When you are not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how often do you talk to or see other people (other than your family)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 9.** How often do you feel worse at school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) compared to how you feel at home with friends?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 10.** How often do you stay away from school because you do not have many friends there?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 11.** How much would you rather be with your family than go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 12.** When you are not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), how much do you enjoy doing different things (for example, being with friends, going places)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 13.** How often do you have bad feelings about school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) when you think about school on Saturday and Sunday?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 14.** How often do you stay away from certain places in school (e.g., hallways, places where certain groups of people are) where you would have to talk to someone?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

- 15.** How much would you rather be taught by your parent/guardians at home than by your teacher at school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**16.** How often do you refuse to go to school because you want to have fun outside of school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**17.** If you had less bad feelings (for example, scared, nervous, sad) about school, would it be easier for you to go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**18.** If it were easier for you to make new friends, would it be easier for you to go to school?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**19.** Would it be easier for you to go to school if your parent/guardians went with you?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**20.** Would it be easier for you to go to school if you could do more things you like to do after school hours (for example, being with friends)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**21.** How much more do you have bad feelings about school (for example, scared, nervous, or sad) compared to other kids your age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**22.** How often do you stay away from people at school compared to other kids your age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**23.** Would you like to be home with your parent/guardians more than other kids your age would?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

**24.** Would you rather be doing fun things outside of school more than most kids your age?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Half the Time	Usually	Almost Always	Always
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 6

Do not write below this line

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1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_ 7. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_ 10. \_\_\_\_\_ 11. \_\_\_\_\_ 12. \_\_\_\_\_

13. \_\_\_\_\_ 14. \_\_\_\_\_ 15. \_\_\_\_\_ 16. \_\_\_\_\_

17. \_\_\_\_\_ 18. \_\_\_\_\_ 19. \_\_\_\_\_ 20. \_\_\_\_\_

21. \_\_\_\_\_ 22. \_\_\_\_\_ 23. \_\_\_\_\_ 24. \_\_\_\_\_

Total Score = \_\_\_\_\_

Mean Score = \_\_\_\_\_

Relative Ranking = \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Scoring and Interpretation of the SRAS-R

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Scoring the SRAS-R is based on a 0-6 scale, with each question being scored as follows based on participant response:

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- 0 points: 0, meaning 'never'
- 1 point: 1, meaning 'seldom'
- 2 points: 2, meaning 'sometimes'
- 3 points: 3, meaning 'half the time'
- 4 points: 4, meaning 'usually'
- 5 points: 5, meaning 'almost always'
- 6 points: 6, meaning 'always'

Each item in the question set contributes to a different function which may be contributing to the child's school refusal behaviour. Total scores may be computed by adding the scores of each of four functions on both the parent/guardian and child versions. These function scores are each divided by 6 (the number of scores in each set). Parent/guardian and child function scores are then summed and divided by 2 to determine the mean function score. The function with the highest mean score is considered the primary cause of the child's school avoidance. The function divisions are as follows:

- Function one ('avoidance of stimuli provoking negative affectivity'): items 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, and 21
- Function two ('escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations'): items 2, 6, 10, 14, 18, and 22
- Function three ('attention seeking'): items 3, 7, 11, 15, 19, and 23
- Function four ('tangible rewards'): items 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, and 24

Scores within 0.50 points of one another are considered equivalent.

# Appendix D: Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour: Information for Teachers and School Staff



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

## Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour Information for Teachers and School Staff

Going back to school and adjusting to the routines involved will be challenging for all children and young people to a greater or lesser extent. For children and young people already experiencing difficulties before the summer holidays, being out of school for the summer period may exacerbate these difficulties. Some may find it difficult to separate from family members/carers and may worry about leaving people they love, particularly if they have seen these people get sick or if they have experienced a bereavement. Some may worry about having social contact or return to other worries they had about school before Covid-19.

This handout is about reluctant attenders and school refusal behaviour. It explains some of the reasons it occurs and offers suggestions for intervention which are based on psychological knowledge and good practice.

### What is reluctant attendance and school avoidance behaviour?

This refers to avoiding attending school or difficulties remaining in school for an entire day. It can result in a student missing school for lengthy periods of time or missing specific classes or particular times of the day. It can involve challenging behaviours in the morning as the child or young person attempts to miss school. This avoidance behaviour can range from mild sporadic difficulties with school attendance to severe and persistent difficulties that require collaboration with the family/carers and multi-agency input.

### What does it look like?

School avoidance behaviour often involves both 'externalising' and 'internalizing' behaviours.

**Externalising or acting-out behaviours** can include not complying with instructions, aggression, temper tantrums, running away, refusal to move, clinging to others, panic symptoms and threats of self-harm.

**Internalizing or acting-in behaviours** can include anxiety, worry, fear, low mood, tiredness, lethargy, self-consciousness and physical bodily feelings.

### What can trigger this behaviour?

There might be no clear or obvious trigger for trying to avoid going to school and staying at home. However being out of school due to Covid-19 school closures may have been a trigger for some. Other common reasons why school avoidance behaviour can start are family stress or transitions, child or parent illness, changes in classes or teachers, school-based difficulties, separation from parents/carers and extended legitimate absence from school. **If there are clear school-based causes that involve actual threats (e.g. bullying) these must be dealt with.** Sometimes it is the culmination of other factors (e.g. some anxiety about school work, a friendship

break-down, a grandparent becoming sick etc.) which are overwhelming and cause a stress response that manifests as school refusal behaviour.

**To plan an effective intervention it is important to understand the complex factors that contribute to school avoidance behaviour.**

**1. Consider the context of the school avoidance behaviour**

The child, family, school and community can all be relevant factors in school avoidance behaviour.

**Table 1 Context of Behaviour:**

Child	Family	School	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Temperamental style</li> <li>▪ Anxieties about relationships with other students</li> <li>▪ Fear of failure</li> <li>▪ Low self-confidence</li> <li>▪ Fear/difficulties with separation from family members</li> <li>▪ Worries about family members' wellbeing</li> <li>▪ Physical illness</li> <li>▪ Over-dependence on parent(s)</li> <li>▪ History of absenteeism</li> <li>▪ Trauma</li> <li>▪ Learning or developmental difficulties</li> <li>▪ Gender dysphoria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recent family changes due to e.g. illness, divorce, unemployment, moving house</li> <li>▪ Recent loss or separation</li> <li>▪ Mental/physical health difficulties in the family</li> <li>▪ High levels of family stress</li> <li>▪ Difficult family interactions</li> <li>▪ Parental over-involvement or under-involvement</li> <li>▪ Parent(s) easily stressed by young person's anxiety/protests</li> <li>▪ Parent work schedule</li> <li>▪ Parenting skills</li> <li>▪ Young carers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transition to new class/school</li> <li>▪ Difficulties in specific subjects</li> <li>▪ Difficulties with other students</li> <li>▪ Difficulty with staff member(s)</li> <li>▪ Bullying</li> <li>▪ Academic demands</li> <li>▪ Educational needs not catered for</li> <li>▪ Examinations/tests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of support services</li> <li>▪ Conflict, tension in neighbourhood</li> <li>▪ Geographical and economic factors</li> <li>▪ Cultural values</li> </ul>

Adapted from West Sussex Educational Psychology Service: Emotionally Based School Avoidance Good practice guidance for schools and support agencies

**2. Understand the function of the school refusal behaviour for the student**

Children and young people may try to avoid going to school for reasons involving **one or more** of the functions shown below. It may initially be to avoid feeling anxious but then enjoy the attention they get at home. They may miss school for a long time and then become anxious about returning to new classes or teachers.

**Table 2: Function(s) of Behaviour**

Function of Behaviour	Presentation in School	Intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To avoid uncomfortable feelings.</li> <li>▪ For example the student fears evaluation on entering classrooms, talking in front of other students, answering in class, going to lunch etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student feels a general dread, nervousness or sadness in school.</li> <li>▪ They may complain of feeling unwell or report physical symptoms.</li> <li>▪ Student may skip specific times in the school day by hiding in the bathroom, or</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Psycho-education about anxiety</li> <li>▪ Teaching relaxation techniques to manage body responses and unhelpful thoughts</li> <li>▪ Teaching social skills, problem-solving and coping skills</li> <li>▪ Encourage practices to gradually confront feared situations. Start with most manageable situations</li> </ul>

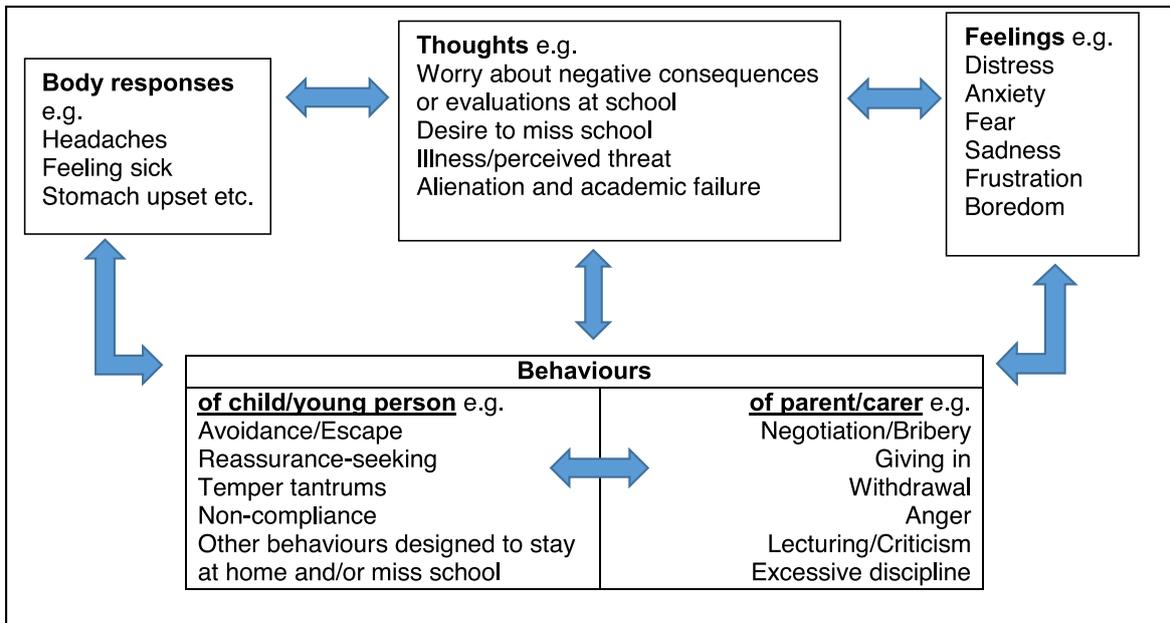
	may choose to sit near an exit or back of the room.	and use techniques to support the student to self-regulate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To get rewards that are more powerful than school attendance. e.g. getting attention from significant people or staying at home to make sure that people are safe and well and avoid the anxiety of separating from them.</li> <li>Gaining something rewarding outside of school and engaging in preferred activities e.g. online gaming/shopping being with friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Even in school these students may want to call their parents/carers, they may run out of the school, or 'act out' in the morning or during the day to get sent home.</li> <li>They often miss sections of the school day or the entire day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with parents/carers to work out how they can encourage the student to attend school</li> <li>Support the parents to establish morning routines</li> <li>Focus on positive behaviours.</li> <li>Regular positive contact with parents to celebrate successes</li> <li>Limit rewards and attention child receives during non-attendance</li> <li>Help the child or young person to view school as a rewarding place that supports the student's values and future goals</li> <li>Collaborate with other agencies.</li> </ul>

**Intervention planning**

School avoidance behaviour can be complex. Where possible, it should be addressed by a collaborative partnership between school and parents/carers. Have conversations with the child or young person **when they and you are calm.**

**Engage the young person** and help them feel listened to and understood. Ask them to describe what happens in terms of **thoughts, feelings, physical bodily responses and behaviours**, for example:

**Table 3 Children/Young People's Thoughts/ Feelings/ Physical Responses/ Behaviours:**



The sequence of these components can vary but can typically involve:

- a) Initial physical anxiety symptoms
- b) Distress
- c) Desire to miss school
- d) Non-compliant behaviour
- e) Parental acquiescence

**OR**

- a) Initial specific worries about school
- b) Physical anxiety symptoms
- c) Reassurance-seeking behaviours

1. Identify the **triggers** and any **behaviours that** keep the school avoidance behaviour going (see table 1). Bear in mind the school refusal behaviour may be justified in some way, for example bullying. However, in many cases, the triggers for school refusal are unclear.
2. Think about the **impact of contextual factors** e.g. parents' work schedule, recent bereavement, parental separation as well as **any protective or supportive factors or strengths** there may be e.g. the child's or young person's interests at school, their support network such as particular friendships with other children and important relationships with adults within and outside school.
3. **Develop positive relationships** at school. Consider providing **structured peer support** at school e.g. through a mentor system or using a **key adult**. Use these valued relationships as rewarding positive factors to encourage and acknowledge successful attendance especially if the function of school refusal is attention from significant people.
4. **Remove any obstacles that might prevent success** if you can e.g. ensure work and activities are provided that the student is motivated to try and is able to do.
5. **Collaboratively generate possible solutions** to problems with the student and a key family member. Acknowledge their feelings and their difficulty but convey a belief that they can cope and reassure them that the school will help them to learn to do this. This develops their sense of efficacy. The more the child or young person feels part of the plan and empowered to make changes the better.
6. Develop a **consensual timeline for return to school** by identifying more positive aspects of school for the young person and begin by asking them to attend for these parts of the day. This will reconnect them with school and social interactions that take place there.
7. If separation anxiety is a relevant factor consider using **transitional objects** to represent the important people to the child or young person when they are in school e.g. have a photo in their pencil case or an object belonging to their significant person to reassure them that the person is supporting them even if they are not physically with them.
8. Teach the child or young person about anxiety and **how thoughts, feelings, body responses and school refusal behaviours can be linked** and the function of these behaviours (see the previous section and diagram).
9. Support them to notice and monitor their own feelings, thoughts, body responses and behaviours (**self-monitoring**) and help them to develop **calming or self-regulation** skills in each of these areas:
  - a. Teach them emotional vocabulary to label and talk about their feelings.
  - b. Help them recognise that thoughts are just thoughts and they can come and go

like cars on a road or clouds in the sky. Help them to work out helpful ways of thinking about school.

- c. Provide them with strategies to help them calm their body responses.
- d. Encourage them to try difficult things rather than avoid them so that they learn to manage their anxiety and so they are exposed to situations they initially perceived as threatening and learn that the situations are not as bad as they thought they would be.

10. **Aim for early return to school**, even if only for a very short period each day and build from there. This is graded exposure and involves a graduated return to school.
11. **Enhance support and supervision** for the student in school from key adults and peers. Children and young people with **special educational needs** should have a suitable resourced and planned special education programme in place that is communicated to the student and family prior to returning to school.
12. **Establish routines** and **allow time** for preparation and transition - **be flexible**, allow for small delays. Expect some **set-backs** but do not give up.
13. Plan with the student and their family to **prevent relapse**. Ask parents/carers to work with you and tell you about any difficulties as soon as they occur.
14. Be **constructive in your feedback** to the student and their family and praise both effort and success. Support the parents/carers in developing their understanding and skills to help the young person.
15. Do not question the child or young person about the reasons for their absenteeism.
16. **Work collaboratively** with other agencies if they are involved.

**Table 4 Components of intervention:**

Components of intervention for school refusal		
Child/Young person	Parent/caregivers	School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Engagement</li> <li>▪ Problem solving skills</li> <li>▪ Relaxation training</li> <li>▪ Social skills training</li> <li>▪ Focus on helpful thoughts</li> <li>▪ Graduated return to school</li> <li>▪ Relapse prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussing concerns</li> <li>▪ Problem-solving</li> <li>▪ Psycho-education</li> <li>▪ Practice morning routines and coping behaviours</li> <li>▪ Strategies to manage parents/carers own emotions-identify unhelpful thoughts of parents/guardians</li> <li>▪ Relapse prevention-review and plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepare behaviour management strategies for return to school</li> <li>▪ Supportive member of staff to greet and help student settle</li> <li>▪ Other students identified as support</li> <li>▪ Curriculum/ timetabling adjustments</li> <li>▪ Create positive reinforcing experiences in school</li> <li>▪ Staged reintroduction to classes</li> <li>▪ Monitoring attendance</li> <li>▪ Maintain regular contact with family/carers</li> <li>▪ Keep a record of attendance and interventions</li> </ul>

**Have hope-** there may be setbacks but with the right support to develop skills and with supportive relationships in school, children and young people can successfully return to attending school full-time.

# Appendix E: Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance: Behaviour Information for Parents and Guardians



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais  
National Educational Psychological Service

## Managing Reluctant Attendance & School Avoidance Behaviour Information for Parents and Guardians

This handout is about understanding and supporting young people **who are reluctant to attend or try to avoid going to school**. It explains some of the reasons it occurs and offers suggestions to parents/guardians on what they can do to help.

### What is reluctant school attendance and school avoidance behaviour?

This is when a young person is reluctant to attend school, tries to avoid going to school or has difficulties staying in school for the full school day. The young person may show very challenging behaviours in the mornings as they try to avoid going to school. They may end up going to school distressed and upset.

### What does it look like?

They may shout, swear, refuse to do what they are asked, run away, hide, and cling to someone or something.

They might look sad, worried, and afraid. They might cry or complain that they are too tired because they didn't sleep the night before, or they might say they have a tummy ache, headache, a sore throat, 'feel sick' etc. These behaviours might get worse again after a weekend or holiday.

### How does it start?

There are many reasons for reluctant attendance and school avoidance behaviour, sometimes we don't know why it starts but it is more likely to happen after times of stress in the family, if someone has been ill or died or if there has been a separation. It can also happen if a child has seen others in their family not go to school. Given the summer holidays and the length of time young people have been at home it may be difficult for some to get back into a school routine and leave their family and home environment.

**If your child is reluctant to attend school or is trying to avoid going to school, it means they are stressed about something. That may be because of any of the following reasons:**

- During the summer holidays your child may have had little contact with teachers and peers and may feel disconnected from the school community
- They may want to stay with people they love because they are afraid something will happen to them while they are at school
- They may want attention from someone at home
- They may be worried about leaving a family member alone at home for the day

- They may enjoy and want to do things at home or outside of school more than they want to go to school
- They might be afraid that they are going to be judged, rejected, shamed, humiliated or criticised by someone in school. If they are being bullied this must be reported to and dealt with by the school
- They may be anxious about a particular subject or teacher.

#### What can you do?

- Make sure there is nothing medically wrong with your child and that they are not being bullied or hurt. **Make sure they are safe.**
- Understand that reluctance to go to school is because they feel stressed about something that is real and important to them. **Listen and understand the reasons** they have for not wanting to go to school.
- Help them **to problem solve about their worries**, what they can do, what might help but **only do this when you and the child or young person are calm**. No one can think and have helpful conversations when they are highly stressed.
- **Reassure** them. Remind them that they can cope and that **you and their teachers will help them sort out any problems.**
- **Talk positively about school and encourage them to think about things they like about school.**
- Remember the way you talk about the school, the teachers, their friends etc. is really important.
- **Stay positive-** don't feel guilty about insisting they go to school! You are doing this because you love them. If you feel upset try not to show it. **Believe they can cope and that you can cope.** Remind them of other times when they have done something difficult and it turned out ok in the end.
- **Model how to cope** - they are looking to you to show them how to do it. Tell them about times when you felt worried and coped with something difficult. Know that they can learn to cope with and manage this stress but this takes time and needs patience, understanding and support from you - **stay hopeful.** There may be set-backs but many pupils have successfully returned to attending school regularly with **support to develop their skills and supportive relationships** at home and in school.
- Have a **regular bedtime and morning routine** before school.
- Get school bag and uniform ready the night before - **help them be organised.**
- **Ignore behaviour that is safe to ignore** e.g. shouting, swearing, pleading.
- **Tell them you understand** it is difficult and that they feel worried but do not get into long discussions about their feelings just before school.

- **Be clear, firm and kind** “I know this is difficult. I need you to go to school and you need to go to school. We can talk about it later and you’ll tell me how it went. I know you can do this; you are strong and I am here for you.” Repeat if needed.
- If it helps suggest they **go to school with another person** e.g. a friend and their parent or carer or another adult.
- Try changing who drops your child to school.
- Try and **distract them** by talking about something they are interested in or about nice things you can do together.
- **Don’t give up. Keep going** and get them to school.
- When you get to school- **say goodbye**, smile, say that you look forward to seeing them later then **leave quickly**.
- At the end of the day **tell them how proud you are that they went to school** and stayed there and they did it **even though it was really difficult** to do. This shows they can cope and are strong and it will get easier.
- **Do something enjoyable together** after school or at the weekend.
- If they stay at home when they should be in school try not to make it rewarding. **Try and keep to the routine**; get up, get dressed and expect them to get their school books out and attempt some work. Do not let them watch T.V, stay on their phone or gaming all day. Make sure that they don’t get lots of attention for staying at home.
- Contact the school for daily schedule of work, which can be completed at home. This can be reassuring for the student, that they’re not missing part of the curriculum.
- **Encourage contact** with other young people and activities **outside of school** if the young person wants it.
- **Talk to a member of staff** in the school regularly to share your successes and difficulties. Be honest and let them help and support you. There are likely to be set-backs, especially after weekends or holidays. This does not wipe out the successes.
- Even though this is very stressful for parents or carers **be very calm – stay strong – do not give in – you are the adult**. Young people need an education and need experiences with other young people to help them grow and learn for their adult life.
- If the problem continues following much time and effort by you and the teachers consider asking for a **consultation with the school’s NEPS psychologist** or whether a **referral** is needed **to HSE services**.

# Appendix F: Step by Step Meitheal Guide

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A Meitheal is a meeting process where all the services working with a family come together. Its purpose is to support a parent and student in identifying what they would like to be different in their lives so the student can reach their full potential. It creates a team around the student to agree a plan in which everyone is invested and works together to achieve it. The parent leads the meeting with support from Tusla.

## Stage 1: Preparation

- Consider whether a Meitheal is necessary. Talk to the student/parents using the Meitheal Parents Information Leaflet ([https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/4189\\_TUSLA-Meitheal\\_DL\\_PARENTS\\_LR1.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/4189_TUSLA-Meitheal_DL_PARENTS_LR1.pdf)) and the Meitheal Children and Young People's Information Leaflet ([https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/4189\\_TUSLA-Meitheal\\_DL\\_YP\\_LR3.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/4189_TUSLA-Meitheal_DL_YP_LR3.pdf))
- Secure written consent by completing the Meitheal Request Form and returning it to the Senior Child and Family Support Network Coordinator<sup>13</sup>
- Liaise with the CFSN Coordinator for support

## Stage 2: Discussion

- With the parent and student, complete the Strengths and Needs form, and identify the strengths, needs and desired outcomes that will inform an outcomes-focused action plan for the student
- Use the 'My World Triangle' to guide the discussion
- Keep the identification of strengths and needs concise. Use clear and simple plain English
- Parents and student will identify who they want to attend the Meitheal meetings, e.g., a representative from the school (year head guidance counsellor, SCP, HSCL, Principal etc.), EWO, family support worker, CAMHS, addiction support worker etc.

## Stage 3: Delivery

- Assign a facilitator/chair/minute taker. Contact your CFSN coordinator for support if needed
- Meitheal support meetings provide an opportunity for practitioners and families to discuss and identify additional needs and develop an action plan to meet them
- These meetings should lead to less duplication of services and more effective integration of services
- The plan will be monitored and reviewed at regular intervals appropriate to the needs of the student's progress (usually every 6 to 8 weeks)
- A Planning and Review form will be completed and distributed following each meeting
- The number of meetings will depend on the needs of the student, and the Closure and Feedback form will be completed at the final meeting

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/child-and-family-support-network-co-ordinators/#DNE>

# Appendix G: Health Service Executive Psychology Advice Clinics

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Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive West

## Psychology Advice Clinics



**Are you concerned about yourself, a child or another family member and would like some advice?**

**THE HSE PSYCHOLOGY ADVICE CLINICS MAY BE ABLE TO HELP**

**When?** The second and fourth Tuesday of each month

**How?** Contact reception by phone between 9am and 9.30am on the morning of the clinic only to register for a 30-minute telephone or video appointment with a psychologist.

*Please note we do not provide assessment or therapy at the advice clinic, but we can discuss onward referral if this is required.*

**Numbers to call for your area:**

Blanchardstown Primary Care 01 829 7233

Corduff Primary Care 01 795 6700

Balbriggan Primary Care 01 921 3204

## Appendix H: Useful Contacts

NAME	ADDRESS	CONTACT DETAILS
<p><b>Educational Welfare Officers</b></p> <p>(EWOs) are employed throughout the country to offer advice, support and guidance to parents who need support in ensuring that children attend schools regularly.</p> <p>Region 5: Fingal, Louth, Meath, Cavan, Monaghan</p>	<p>Educational Welfare Service Tusla Education Support Service Child and Family Agency LMETB Chapel Street Dundalk Co. Louth</p>	<p>Fiona Boylan T: 042 941 9017</p> <p>Agnieszka Slotwinska T: 042 941 9027</p>
<p><b>National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)</b></p> <p>NEPS psychologists work with both primary and post-primary schools and are concerned with learning, behaviour and social and emotional development.</p>	<p>NEPS Head Office Department of Education and Skills Block 1, Floor 2 Marlborough St. Dublin 1 D01 RC96</p> <p>Dublin Region NEPS Floor 4 Metropolitan Building James Joyce Street Dublin 1 D01 KOY8</p> <p>Local Office NEPS Block 3, Floor 1 Grove Court Blanchardstown Dublin 15 D15 HNT2</p>	<p>T: 01 889 2700 E: neps@education.gov.ie W: www.education.ie</p> <p>T: 01 865 0660</p> <p>T: 01 865 0673</p>
<p><b>JIGSAW Fingal</b></p> <p>Jigsaw is a free, confidential service for young people aged 12–25 who live, work, study or attend a GP in Fingal. It provides guidance and support for young people who are experiencing distress. Jigsaw offers up to 8 sessions of 1:1 support to young people to help manage common concerns and mild to moderate mental health difficulties.</p> <p>A young person (over 18) can refer themselves, and parents of under-18s can refer directly via a phone call or email, or a professional can also complete a referral form.</p>	<p>Jigsaw 2nd Floor Blanchardstown Library Blanchardstown Shopping Centre Blanchardstown Dublin 15</p> <p>Jigsaw North Fingal St. George's Square Balbriggan Co. Dublin</p>	<p>T: 01 890 5810 E: dublin15@jigsaw.ie W: <a href="https://jigsaw.ie/location/dublin-15/">https://jigsaw.ie/location/dublin-15/</a></p> <p>T: 01 960 3020 E: northfingal@jigsaw.ie W: <a href="https://jigsaw.ie/location/north-fingal/">https://jigsaw.ie/location/north-fingal/</a></p>



<p><b>CHO 9 Community Psychology for Children &amp; Adolescents</b> HSE Primary Care: Child, Adolescent &amp; Family Psychology Service provides a service for 0–18 year olds and their families experiencing mild to moderate psychological difficulties. These may include some of the following: Emotion Regulation (e.g., anxiety, low mood, behavioural difficulties); Relationship Difficulties (e.g., with parents, siblings, peers); and Trauma (e.g., bereavement, loss, a traumatic event).</p>	<p>For Primary care psychology in Dublin North (e.g. Balbriggan, Swords, Coastal networks):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coolock Primary Care Centre, Cromcastle Road, Dublin 5</li> </ul> <p>Or for Dublin 15 only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corduff &amp; Roselawn Primary Care Centres, Dublin 15</li> </ul>	<p>You can find information on any HSE service by calling HSE Live on 1800 700 700 or 01 240 8787, or tweeting @HSELive.</p> <p>For Dublin North residents, please call the Psychology Administrator at Coolock Health Centre on 01 921 4445 (Dublin North covers Balbriggan, Swords, Coastal, Edemnore and Coolock networks).</p> <p>For Dublin 15 residents only, please call Trish on 01 897 5132 who can find your nearest psychology service.</p>
<p><b>Dublin Dún Laoghaire Education Training Board (DDLETB)</b> Youth Advocacy Service for young people aged 16–20 years. Career guidance and counselling for early school leavers aged 15–21.</p>	<p>Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board 1 Tuansgate Belgard Square East Tallaght Dublin 24 D24 X62W</p>	<p>T: 01452 9600 E: info@ddletb.ie W: www.ddletb.ie</p>
<p><b>Community Training Centres</b> Providers of training and development opportunities for people who are economically, socially, geographically or educationally disadvantaged. All learners participating in Community Training Programmes are offered the opportunity to complete a QQI Major Award at level 3, 4 or 5.</p>	<p>Baldoyle Community Training Centre Baldoyle Industrial Estate Baldoyle Dublin 13</p> <p>Blanchardstown Community Training Centre 107–108 Coolmine Industrial Estate Blanchardstown Dublin 15 D15 WKR1</p>	<p>T: 01 816 7400 F: 01 816 7401 E: blrecruit@ddletb.ie</p> <p>T: 01 803 5016 E: manager@blanchardstownctc.ie</p>

<p><b>Youth Reach</b> Youth Reach is an education, training and work programme for early school leavers aged 15–20 years of age. It offers support to young people to help them identify what they would like to do in adult life and allows them to gain a certificate. It operates on a full-time basis and takes in new students all year round.</p>	<p>Balbriggan Youth Reach Co-ordinator: Frances Killeen 1st Floor Sarsfield House Mill Street Balbriggan Co. Dublin</p>	<p>T: 01 968 0600 E: info@balbrigganyr.ie</p>
	<p>Blanchardstown Youth Reach Co-ordinator: Tracy Philips The Brace Centre Main Street Blanchardstown D15 C6VE</p>	<p>T: 01 821 7007 E: info@blanchardstownyr.ie</p>
	<p>Rush Youth Reach Co-ordinator: Christine Hughes Convent Lane Rush Co. Dublin K56 K761</p>	<p>T: 01 843 9161 E: info@rushyr.ie</p>
	<p>Swords Youth Reach Co-ordinator: Eddie Manning North Street Swords Co. Dublin K67 YE62</p>	<p>T: 01 840 8253 E: eddiemanning@swordsyouthreach.ie</p>
	<p>Swords ALP Swords Youth Service 17 Main Street (Rear) Swords Co. Dublin</p>	<p>Geraldine Scott E: gscott@crossscare.ie T: 086 130 0209/01 840 5100</p>
	<p>Balbriggan ALP Castlemill Education Centre Balbriggan Co. Dublin K32 P237</p>	<p>Aisling O`Connell E: aisling.oconnell@foroige.ie M: 086 892 9703</p>
<p><b>Daughters of Charity Family Centres</b> A not-for-profit voluntary organisation supporting children (0–18 years) and their parents/ carers through a range of evidence-based therapeutic interventions and an approach to working with families that is needs-led, solution-focused, strengths-based and outcome-focused.</p>	<p>Aistear Beo-Connaught Street Family Centre 1st Floor Commercial House West End Village, Blanchardstown Dublin 15 D15 XY0F</p>	<p>T: 01 885 2680 E: aisterbeo@docharity.ie</p>
	<p>Unit 7 Level 1 Millfield Shopping Centre Balbriggan Co. Dublin K32 PK51</p>	<p>T: 01 841 4122 E: bfc@docharity.ie</p>

<p><b>Dublin Safer Families Service</b> A service for families experiencing domestic abuse, violence and/or coercive control.</p>	<p>Dublin Safer Families Service Claidhe Mór Swords Road Santry Dublin 9 D09 NY65</p>	<p>T: 01 862 7700 E: dsf.office@docharity.ie</p>
<p><b>Family Resource Centres</b> The principal objective of the FRC programme is to combat disadvantage and to strengthen and empower children, families and communities to achieve the five National Outcomes. The programme involves local communities in addressing the issues they face and creates meaningful partnerships for social change between voluntary and statutory agencies.</p>	<p>Wellview Family Resource Centre 17/18 Wellview Green Mulhuddart Tyrrelstown Dublin 15 D15 H7EV</p>	<p>T: 01 826 2878 E: evelyn.murphy2@tusla.ie</p>
	<p>Mountview Family Resource Centre 11 Whitechapel Crescent Mountview Dublin 15 D15 R6FX</p>	<p>T: 01 820 6171 E: margaret@mountviewfrc.iw</p>
	<p>Baldoyle Family Resource Centre Murray House Grange Road Baldoyle Dublin 13 D13 TE80</p>	<p>T: 01 832 6115 E: reception@bfrs.ie</p>
	<p>Aster Family Resource Centre 1 Georges Square Balbriggan Co. Dublin K32 WK51</p>	<p>T: 01 841 4463 E: frcinfo@asterfamilysupport.ie</p>
<p><b>Pieta House</b> Provides a professional one-to-one therapeutic service to people in suicidal distress, those who engage in self-harm and those bereaved by suicide. All services are provided free of charge, and no referral is needed.</p>	<p>309 Collins Avenue Whitehall Dublin 9 D09 DX53</p> <p>Unit 22 Santry Avenue Santry Dublin 9 D09 R2PS</p> <p>T: 01 883 1000</p>	<p>T: 01 884 0532 Appointments: 0818 111126 Helpline: 1800 247 247</p>
	<p>17, Thomas Hand Street Town Parks Skerries Co. Dublin</p>	<p>T: 01 883 1000</p>
<p><b>Blakestown and Mountview Youth Initiative (MBYI)</b> A community project dedicated to the intensive, holistic support of a number of young people (13–18) and their families in the Blakestown and Mountview area.</p>	<p>Blakestown Road Clonsilla Dublin 15 D15 HW53</p>	<p>T: 01 821 0055 F: 01 821 0677 E: youth@bmyi.ie</p>

<p><b>Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDP)</b></p> <p>There are five GYDP in Fingal. They are community-based multi-agency crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people who have become involved in crime/anti-social behaviour and to support wider preventative work within the community and with families at risk.</p>	<p>ORB Garda Youth Diversion Project Phibblestown Youth and Community Centre Phibblestown &amp; Hunstown Community Centre Hunstown Dublin 15</p>	<p>T: 086 780 0119 E: naomi.basdeo@foroige.ie</p> <p>T: 086 780 0105 E: jordan.dunne@foroige.ie</p>
	<p>BEAT Garda Youth Diversion Project Parslikstown House Mulhuddart &amp; Corduff Sports Centre Corduff Dublin 15</p>	<p>T: 086 601 7961 E: katie.geaney@foroige.ie T: 086 820 9891 E: deborah.stack@foroige.ie</p>
	<p>WEB Garda Youth Diversion Project Fortlawn Facility Fortlawn Park Dublin 15</p> <p>Tyrresstown Community Centre Tyrrelstown Dublin 15</p>	<p>T: 086 818 0896 E: kieron.cummins@foroige.ie T: 086 008 1183 E: ashleigh.merrin@foroige.ie</p> <p>T: 086 780 0158 E: nadine.cleary@foroige.ie</p>
	<p>North Fingal GYDP Castlemills Education Centre Flemington Balbriggan Co. Dublin</p> <p>Mourne Community Centre 32 Mourne Park Skerries Co. Dublin</p>	<p>T: 086 822 4313 E: eva.doyle@foroige.ie T: 086 410 6296 E: amanda.cullen@foroige.ie</p>
	<p>Jets: Swords Baldoyle Youth Service 17 Main Street (Rear) Swords Co. Dublin</p>	<p>T: 086 780 2469 T: 086 781 4223 E: swhelan@crosscare.ie E: kmcdermott@crosscare.ie</p>
<p><b>The National Council for Special Education (NCSE)</b></p> <p>The NCSE was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children. The local service is delivered through a network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) who interact with parents and schools and liaise with the HSE in providing resources to support children with special educational needs. There are four SENOs covering the Fingal area.</p>	<p>1st Floor Block 3 Grove Court Blanchardstown Dublin 15 D15 HNT</p>	<p>E: mark.reddy@ncse.ie T: 01 603 3415 W: www.ncse.ie</p>
	<p>1st Floor, Block 3 Grove Court Blanchardstown Dublin 15 D15 HNT</p>	<p>E: paula.gormley@ncse.ie T: 01 603 3312</p>

	<p>1st Floor Block 3 Grove Court Blanchardstown Dublin 15 D15 HNT</p> <p>4<sup>th</sup> Floor Metropolitan Building James Joyce Street Dublin D01 KOYB</p>	<p>E: <a href="mailto:mary.hughes@ncse.ie">mary.hughes@ncse.ie</a> T: 01 603 3330</p> <p>E: <a href="mailto:paula.cashin@ncse.ie">paula.cashin@ncse.ie</a> T: 01 603 3248 (covers part of D15)</p>
<p><b>Drugs task force</b> There are three task forces operational in Fingal. North Dublin Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (NDRDATF) covers all of North County Dublin, Dublin North East Drugs &amp; Alcohol Task Force covers Howth and parts of Baldoyle, and Blanchardstown Drugs Task force covers D15. The task forces work in partnership to provide and maintain a system of supports and services for individuals, families and communities through which existing and future problem drug use is prevented, reduced and managed.</p>	<p>NDRDATF 32–33 Main Street Malahide Co. Dublin K36 EE72</p>	<p>T: 01 223 3493 E: <a href="mailto:info@ndublinrdtf.ie">info@ndublinrdtf.ie</a> Facebook: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/northdublinrdtf">www.facebook.com/northdublinrdtf</a> W: <a href="http://www.@ndublinrdtf.ie">www.@ndublinrdtf.ie</a></p>
	<p>DNEDATF The Mornington Centre 44A Malahide Road Artane Roundabout Artane Dublin 5</p>	<p>T: 01 846 5070 E: <a href="mailto:reception@dnetaskforce.ie">reception@dnetaskforce.ie</a> W: <a href="http://www.dnetaskforce.ie">www.dnetaskforce.ie</a></p>
	<p>BDTF 37a Coolmine Industrial Estate Blanchardstown Dublin 15</p>	<p>T: 01 824 9590 E: <a href="mailto:jim@bldtf.ie">jim@bldtf.ie</a></p>
<p><b>ASIAM</b> Ireland’s national Autism charity works to create a society in which every autistic person is empowered to reach their own personal potential and fully participate in society.</p>	<p>Rock House Main Street Blackrock Co. Dublin A94 V9P1</p>	<p>T: 01 445 3203 E: <a href="mailto:info@asiam.ie">info@asiam.ie</a> W: <a href="https://asiam.ie/">https://asiam.ie/</a></p>
<p><b>The Irish Society for Autism</b> A national organisation that provides a wide range of services such as information, education programmes, training and much more.</p>	<p>Unity Building 16/17 Lower O’Connell Street Dublin 1 D01 E9WO</p>	<p>T: 01 874 4684 E: <a href="mailto:admin@autism.ie">admin@autism.ie</a> W: <a href="https://autism.ie/">https://autism.ie/</a></p>
<p><b>Snowflakes</b> A charity for children on the Autism spectrum started in January 2012 by a group of parents, in which parents work together to create an environment of support for the whole family.</p>	<p>Holywell Community Centre Swords Co. Dublin K67 P8P9</p>	<p>T: 086 138 5364 E: <a href="mailto:info@snowflakes.ie">info@snowflakes.ie</a> W: <a href="http://snowflakes.ie/">http://snowflakes.ie/</a></p>
<p><b>Gheel Autism Services</b> Supports autistic people in the greater Dublin and North Kildare regions. They provide day, residential, supported living and outreach services, with the goal of maximising independence and enhancing quality of life.</p>	<p>Level 3 Unit 501 Northwest Business Park Mitchelstown Road Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 Y00V</p>	<p>T: 01 629 1596 E: <a href="mailto:info@gheel.ie">info@gheel.ie</a></p>

<p><b>Middletown Centre for Autism</b> Supports development and co-ordination of education services to students with autism.</p>	<p>35 Church Street Middletown Northern Ireland BT60 4HZ</p>	<p>T: 0044 (0)28 3751 5750 E: admin@middletownautism.com</p>
<p><b>Not So Different</b> Not So Different addresses the lack of appropriate employment and educational opportunities for people who are neurodiverse (including those with Autism), increasing social inclusion by delivering training and supports that develop and highlight the unique abilities of neurodiverse individuals.</p>	<p>1<sup>st</sup> Floor Blanchardstown Library The Blanchardstown Centre Blanchardstown Dublin 15</p>	<p>T: 086 045 0999 E: info@notsodifferent.ie</p>
<p><b>Skerries Youth Support Service (SYSS)</b> A youth-focused community organisation that promotes positive wellbeing and offers support to local young people and their families who experience challenges.</p>		<p>W: www.syss.ie Facebook: Skerries Youth Support Services Instagram: skerriesyouthsupportservices</p>
<p><b>Youth Services</b> Provide targeted youth activities and supports for young people in the 12–24 age range, including Youth Information, Outdoor Learning, After Schools Groups and drop ins, Drugs Education and Prevention, Garda Youth Diversion Programmes, Counselling and one to one supports and employability programmes.</p>	<p>Crosscare Youth Service Rear 17 Main St. Swords Co. Dublin</p> <p>Foróige Youth Service Main St. Blanchardstown Dublin 15</p> <p>Coastal North County Dublin Mourne View Community Centre 32 Mourne Park Townparks Skerries K34 RX40</p> <p>Balbriggan Youth Services Castlemill Education Centre Flemington Lane Balbriggan K32 P237</p>	<p>T: 01 840 5100</p> <p>T: 01 821 2012/821 2077</p> <p>T: 086 606 0735</p> <p>T: 086 771 0790</p>

# Appendix I: Further Reading

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- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Operational Guideline – Second Edition, June 2019. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/camhs/operational-guideline/camhs-operational-guideline-2019.pdf>
- Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (DCAP) Waterford, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Waterford, 2015. School refusal, Good practice guide for schools.
- Every Day Matters  
<https://www.every-day-matters.org/tool-kits/families>
- Fremont, W. (2003) School avoidance in children and adolescents. *American Family Physician*, 68(8), 1555–1561.
- Gregory, I. & Purcell, A. (2014) Extended school non-attenders' views: developing best practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 30(1), 37–50.
- Kearney, C.A. & Albano, A.M (2007) *When Children Refuse School: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Kearney, C.A. (2008) School absenteeism and school avoidance behavior in youth: A contemporary review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 28(3), 451–71.
- Kearney, C. A. (2001). What is school refusal behavior? In C. A. Kearney, School refusal behavior in youth: A functional approach to assessment and treatment (pp. 3–24). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10426-001>
- Lyon, A.R. & Colter, S. (2007) Toward reduced bias and increased utility in the assessment of school avoidance behaviour: The case for diverse samples and evaluations of context. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(6), 551–565.
- Miller, A. (2008) School phobia and school avoidance. In N. Frederickson, A. Miller & T. Cline (Eds.), *Educational Psychology*. London: Hodder, pp. 215–234.
- Murray, D.W. and Rosanbalm, K. (2017) Self-regulation snap shot #3: A focus on elementary-aged children. OPRE Report #2018-12, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- National Educational Psychological Service (2010). Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A continuum of support guidelines for teachers. Department of Education and Skills. <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/#behavioural-social-emotional-difficulties>
- School Avoidance Assessment Scale  
<https://www.oxfordclinicalpsych.com/view/10.1093/med:psych/9780195308297.001.0001/med-9780195308297-interactive-pdf-004.pdf>
- Self-Regulation  
<https://self-reg.ca/reframe-friday-you-are-the-strategy/>

- Tina Rae (2020) *Understanding & Supporting Children & Young People with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)* Hinton House Publishers
- Kate Collins-Donnelly (2013) *Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A cognitive behaviour therapy workbook on anxiety management for Young People*





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Young people's  
health in mind



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education  
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais  
National Educational Psychological Service

**tess**

Seirbhís Tacaíochta  
Oideachais Tusla  
Tusla Education Support Service



Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Services



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

# BACK ON TRACK

Fingal Schools Toolkit for Supporting Students  
Who Avoid School