



Hertfordshire

# Guide for Parents

## Emotionally Based School Avoidance



**ISL** Integrated  
Services for  
Learning

*working together locally*

Integrated Services for Learning

Hertfordshire County Council

11/11/2021

**This document was developed by the Educational Psychology Learning Set on Emotionally Based School Avoidance, with input from the Attendance Team, Education Support for Medical Absence (ESMA) Team, the Advisory Teacher Service and DSPL8.**

## Contents

Purpose of this document.....	2
Understanding anxiety and school avoidance .....	2
EBSA and Special Educational Needs.....	5
Working together with the school.....	6
What you can expect your child’s school to do .....	6
General strategies for how you can help your child at home .....	7
How you can help if your child has separation anxiety .....	13
How you can help if your child is at home during the school day and engages in lots of pleasurable activities .....	14
Book List.....	16
Sources of Information and Support.....	19
Acknowledgements .....	23

# Purpose of this document

If you're reading this booklet, the chances are you are the parent or carer of a child who is anxious about attending school. This is sometimes referred to as a child having emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA).

This guidance is primarily aimed at parents and carers of children who are at the early stages of EBSA – those for whom school is just beginning to be a major source of anxiety and attendance a cause for concern. The strategies discussed may be less relevant to children who have not attended school for considerable periods of time due to their very severe anxiety. These young people may need the support of health professionals to manage their anxiety before they are able to make a successful return to education.

We have written this booklet to:

- help you understand more about anxiety and school avoidance;
- help you understand the link between EBSA and special educational needs;
- let you know why it is so important for you to work together closely with your child's school
- help you understand what your child's school can do to support your child;
- let you know what you can do to support your child to feel better about going to school;
- share information about other services that can support you and your child through this difficult time.

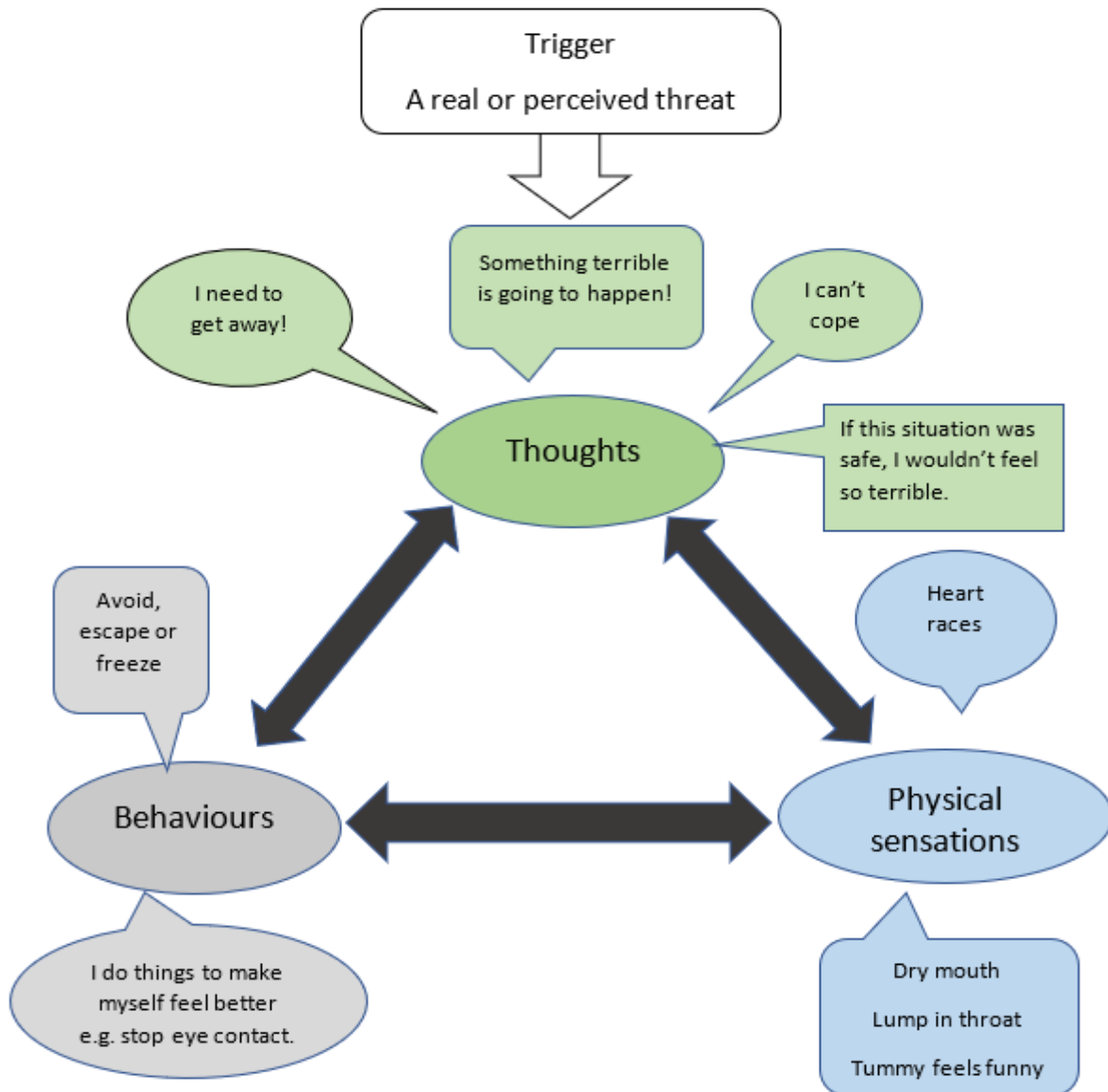
## Understanding anxiety and school avoidance

Everyone experiences anxiety and often anxiety is a healthy and helpful response. People feel anxious when they believe they are under threat. When someone thinks something bad is going to happen, their bodies release adrenaline which helps them prepare to physically deal with the threat by running away or fighting. This is sometimes known as the Fight or Flight response. These chemicals cause physical sensations in their body, such as sweating, a dry mouth, a fluttering tummy and a fast heartbeat.

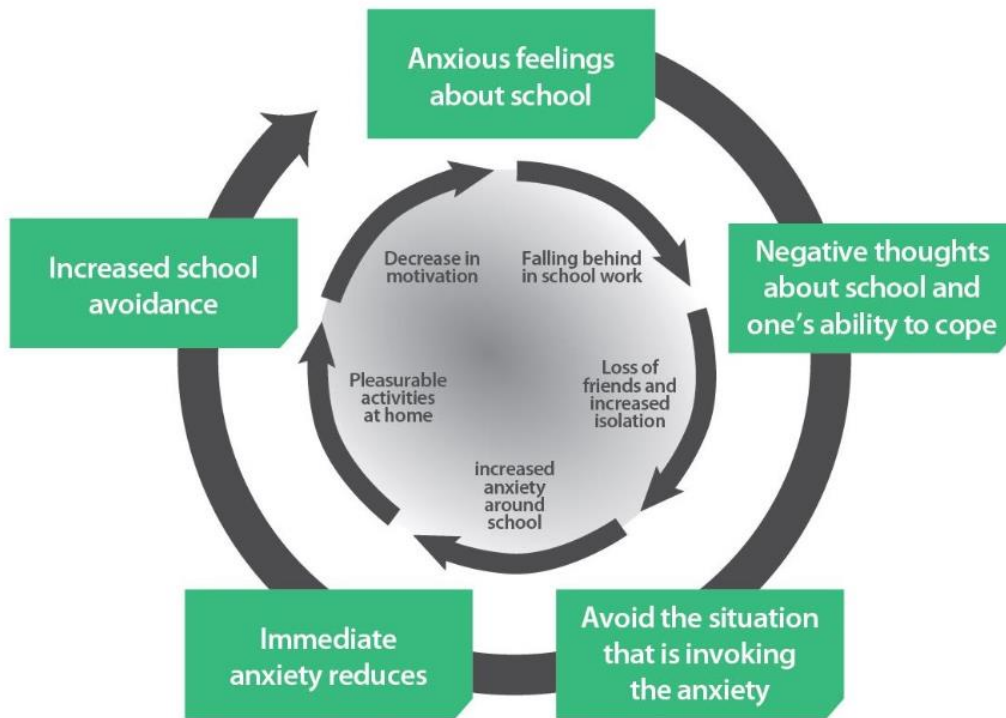
However, sometimes we think things are dangerous, even when they are not. When we **think** we are in danger, our body produces adrenaline just as if the danger was real. This is a false alarm as there is no real danger and we don't need to run away or fight. The physical sensation is uncomfortable, but it is temporary and harmless.

When we feel anxious sensations in our bodies, we naturally want to avoid the situation that is triggering the anxiety. But every time we avoid the thing that we are worried about, it reinforces the belief that we need to avoid the scary thing to make ourselves feel safe. We do not get the chance to learn that we are able to cope or that the situation is rarely as bad as we think it will be.

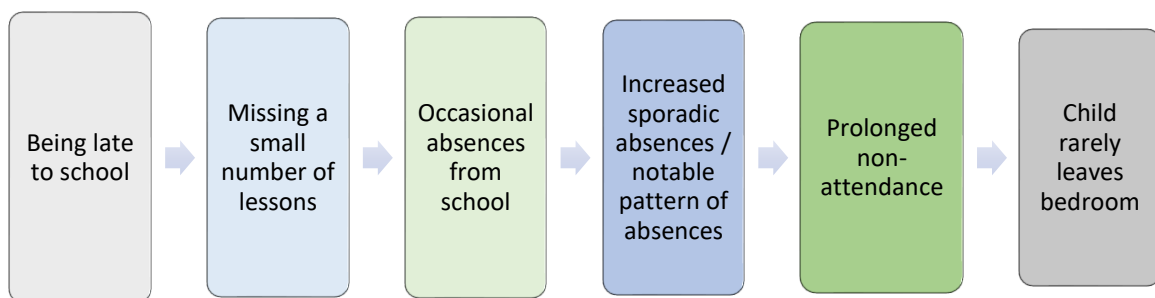
Figure 1. Interaction of thoughts, physical sensations and behaviours when anxious.



If not addressed, anxious feelings about school can become entrenched in a cycle of avoidance. The diagram below focuses on school attendance<sup>1</sup>. It shows how anxious thoughts and feelings can lead to a child avoiding school. The immediate reduction in anxiety that results from the child not attending school can end up reinforcing their desire to avoid school. This then increases the anxious feelings about school and in turn, the school avoidance.

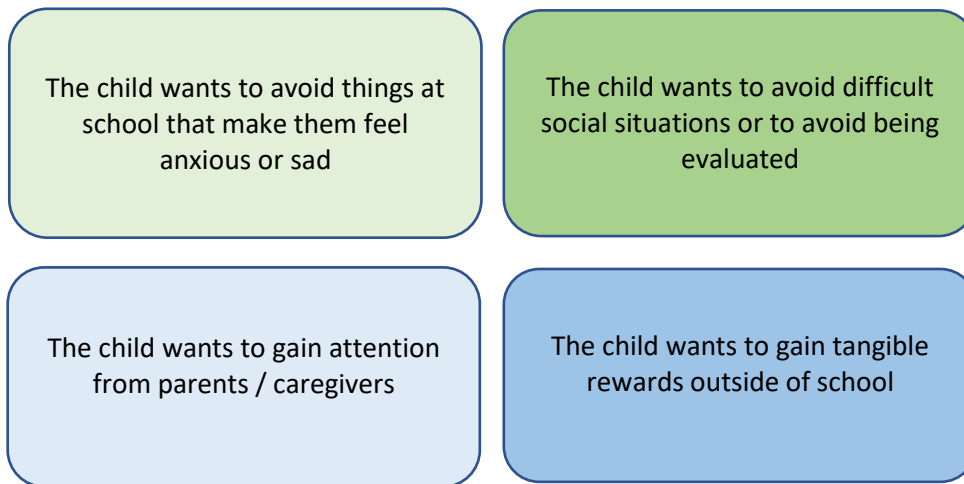


School avoidance may start gradually. This can make it hard to spot when things are beginning to go wrong. It is easier to make change if you intervene early, at the first sign of difficulties. The diagram below shows the different stages EBSA can move through, although a child may not go through all the stages.



<sup>1</sup> West Sussex EBSA guidance

Some researchers<sup>2</sup> have identified that the reasons why children are reluctant to attend school can generally be categorised into four main areas:



## EBSA and Special Educational Needs

Children and young people on the autism spectrum are more vulnerable to anxiety than typically developing children. They are more likely to experience higher levels of general anxiety daily as they navigate a complicated and often confusing sensory and social world. In the school setting, even the smallest changes can trigger anxiety, for example, moving desk or a change in teacher.

We know that some children have unidentified special educational needs which may contribute to EBSA. Once a child is identified as having EBSA, or of being at risk of EBSA, it will be important for families and staff to work together to further explore whether the child has any special educational needs and how these can be supported.

You can find more information about the support available for children with special educational needs and disabilities at [The Hertfordshire Local Offer](#).

You can find information [here](#) about schools' and local authorities' responsibility to support children when illness prevents them from attending school.

---

<sup>2</sup> "A Preliminary Analysis of a Functional Model of Assessment and Treatment for School Refusal Behavior", Kearney and Silverman (1990)

# Working together with the school

School staff can support children with anxiety when they are on the school site, but they cannot support them when they return home after the school day or in the morning before school starts. At these times, worries can be addressed in the home setting. Consequently, both school staff and parents / carers have vital roles to play in helping children experiencing EBSA. Close collaboration is likely to lead to the best outcome for the child.

## What you can expect your child's school to do

You should expect your child's school to:

- Identify a key member of staff to take the lead on supporting your child. It is really important that you know who the key member of staff is and how to contact them;
- Gather further information from you, your child and staff to find out why your child is so worried about attending school;
- Work in partnership with you and your child to come up with a plan to support your child to manage their worries and to feel better about coming to school. The plan should identify some short-term goals and should state explicitly what school staff, you and your child are going to do to help your child meet these goals. The plan should be regularly reviewed.

Hertfordshire Educational Psychology Service has developed guidance for schools on how to support children with EBSA. You can see the executive summary of the document [here](#).

# General strategies for how you can help your child at home <sup>3</sup>

## 1. Develop a plan for the evenings and mornings before school

If your child is attending school, it is helpful to have calming evening and morning routines. Preparing as much as possible the night before will limit the opportunities for excuses and delays and allow for the morning to run more smoothly and calmly.

### **Things to Consider on the Evenings Before School<sup>4</sup>**

Here are some suggestions about how you can support your child in preparation for school. It is important to consider a plan that will suit the needs of your child. The plan could be made with your child so they can contribute their ideas and thoughts. The following suggestions have been adapted from Tina Rae's Sunday Evening/Monday Morning work.

Soothe	Think of some calming activities you can do with your child before bedtime e.g. gentle music, talk about three good things before bed.
Understand	Let your child know you understand their feelings and you do not negate or dismiss them. Reassure them you understand how hard this is.
Neutralise	Encourage your child to record any worries in a worry book and talk through each one, helping them to see solutions or identify if they are catastrophising. Show them the evidence against any irrational thoughts.
Decide	Establish what a successful day would look like and decide with your child what needs to happen the evening before to make this happen. Go through their schedule step by step and ensure that everything is ready (e.g. books, bag, PE kit) and laid out for the morning. Make this plan visual if necessary.
Attend	Be aware of your child's emotional state and provide more time and attention if needed. Consider giving a transitional object to a younger child.
Yourself	Make sure that you feel calm yourself. If necessary, take time out to use your own self-calming strategies.

<sup>3</sup> Several strategies in this section are taken from "Exposure Therapy for Treating Anxiety in Children" by Raggi et al.

<sup>4</sup> Tina Rae's "Sunday evening / Monday morning" plan is described in her YouTube video "CPD coffee time with Tina Rae 21. Supporting those with emotionally based school phobia in Covid", <https://youtu.be/iqMRYAKBRsU>.



## Things to Consider on a School Day Morning

Manage	It is difficult to support your child if you are feeling stressed and anxious. Take time out to manage your emotional state by using self-calming strategies.
Organise	Get everything ready (e.g. your own bag packed, breakfast already set out etc.) so that you can attend to your child in a calm way.
Neutralise	Spend some time with your child talking through their worries and helping them to see solutions or identify if they are catastrophising. Show them the evidence against any irrational thoughts.
Decide	Go through the plan for the morning to get them into school. Tell them clearly how they are going to get to school (for example, how they will get there, who they will go with, what music they might listen to in the car etc.), so feel prepared for every step. It might be worth considering if they could travel with a friend or meet a friend on the journey or at school as this may distract them from their worries. Alternatively, you may wish to consider another adult taking your child to school.
Accept	Accept your child's emotional state and reassure them you love them and care for them, so they feel nurtured and safe. Give reassurance and a transitional object for your children. Tell them it is OK to feel anxious and you will help them to manage their worries.
Yourself	Look after yourself and make sure you are calm. If necessary, make sure you do some self-calming strategies. Remember, it's OK to feel worried, but try not to let it overwhelm you. You can use a script "If I stay calm, I will make him / her feel safe".

## 2. Listen to your child and acknowledge their feelings

Children are more likely to talk to their parents or carers about their worries than anyone else.

Things you should do when talking to your child about their worries:

- Show them you are actively listening through your body language, facial expressions, eye contact and saying things such as 'hmmm' and 'yeah';
- Give your child time to say what they want to say in their own words;
- Sometimes when our children talk about their worries, this makes us feel very anxious. It's important that you try to stay calm throughout the discussion;

- Acknowledge that your child's fears are real to them to empathise with how they are feeling. For example:

*"I can hear that you're feeling really worried about going back into school on Monday. I'm sorry. That must be really tough for you".*

Things you shouldn't do when talking to your child about their worries:

- Say your child shouldn't feel worried. This will make them think their feelings are not valid;
- Allow them to talk endlessly about their anxiety in depth. Doing so may inadvertently give them more attention for being anxious than for being brave;
- Argue about the anxiety or try to 'jolly' them out of the emotion.

It may be enough for you to just sit with your child and listen. You do not have to 'fix' the problem for your child there and then.

Some children may not openly say that they feel anxious about school, but they may show it in their behaviour. If this is your child, it may be helpful for you to start the conversation with them, for example:

- *It sounds like you're feeling worried about going into school today. Am I right?*
- *You're upset thinking that you might meet Joe in the playground. Tell me a bit more about that.*
- *You're feeling scared about me dropping you off at school and leaving you. Am I right?*

### 3. Encourage your child to use their coping skills

When your child begins to show signs of anxiety, ask them what they think could help them cope with their feelings or what would make things feel better. If your child has been learning some calming strategies in school, now is the time they could use them. It is best to avoid telling your child exactly what to do, as this can make them resistant or passive. However, if they can't think of anything, it would be OK to offer suggestions. You should praise your child for joining in this discussion. Some example of things you could say include:

- *What could you do to help you handle these feelings?*
- *Which one of the calming strategies you've been learning about could you have a go at?*
- *Have you thought about trying....?*
- *Well done. You came up with some great ideas.*

It may be helpful for you to talk about times when you have been anxious and how you coped with those feelings. For example, for a child who is worried about making mistakes, it is helpful for you to acknowledge when you make a mistake and what you are going to do to repair the situation, such as apologise and correct the mistake.

## 4. Reduce attention for anxious behaviours

Children work for adult attention, positive and negative. Whatever you give attention to, they will do more of.

Parents and carers need to listen carefully to their child and acknowledge their worries. However, sometimes the balance between paying attention to their child's worries and helping their child to manage their anxieties becomes skewed in an unhelpful way. Parents /carers should make sure that they aren't inadvertently giving more attention to anxious behaviours (for example, by reassuring, hugging, coaxing, pleading), than to times when their child is trying to be more confident.

If your child starts to display anxious behaviours, you should try to limit attention you give to behaviour such as whining, complaining and yelling. Instead, acknowledge the anxious feelings and encourage your child to use their coping strategies.

## 5. Limit verbal reassurance

Children can sometimes become "hooked" on adult reassurance to make them feel safe. When anxious children ask for and receive reassurance from their parents, this creates short-term relief. However, soon the child starts to feel worried again and they ask for reassurance again. For some children, this can become a never-ending cycle, with the child relying on reassurance from their parents, instead of using their own skills to help them calm down, ultimately increasing the negative emotions.

If your child asks for reassurance repeatedly, try to help them to realise that their questions are driven by anxiety. You could say things like, "I understand you are feeling scared". Start with acknowledging the child's feelings.

## 6. Give frequent, specific praise for brave behaviour

It is important that your child feels like their efforts are recognised, and you may need to point out when your child made progress. For example:

- *Wow, I'm so proud of you that you put on your school uniform today without a fuss;*
- *You did such a great job of thinking of things you could do to calm down;*
- *I could see you were scared, but you hung on in there and didn't try to run away. Amazing!*

## 7. Manage your own emotions in front of their child

Children look to their parents / carers to see how they respond to situations and are very good at reading their parent's / carer's cues. If you look anxious, your child will interpret this

as a sign that they should be worried (or confirm their worried feelings) and it will make them feel that the situation is not safe.

It is important that you try to remain calm as much as possible, so that your child does not get the impression that the situation is unmanageable. You should also try to remain positive and give the impression that you believe the situation can get better. It can be very hard to remain calm and upbeat when you see your child is anxious and upset. You may find it helpful to share how you are feeling with someone you trust so that you can get support for yourself in managing your emotions.

## 8. Don't let your child avoid situations that make them feel anxious

Sometimes parents try to reduce their child's exposure to things that they find distressing, even when these things are in fact safe. For example, they may write a letter saying that their child is sick on a day they have a test their child is worried about. This gives the child the message that the distressing feelings are too hard for them to cope with and that it is better to avoid situations that make them scared. This can increase the child's anxiety.

It's helpful for you to give a consistent message that everyone is working towards your child attending school and you feel your child can handle things. At the same time, you should reassure your child that you will work together with the school to make school a happier place for them. You can tell your child that you are proud of them for being brave and trying to return to school, as you know they are scared. This will require you to have a strong will, determination and persistence!

## 9. Be positive about school

Encourage your child to focus their attention on positive aspects of school (e.g. their friends, their favourite lesson/teacher, activities they enjoy doing) instead of the negatives (i.e. why they are finding it difficult to attend). When they start to attend school, get them to complete a simple gratitude journal or encourage them to identify one thing that has gone well at school each day, recording this visually in a book or chart to be referred to later (e.g. see [this page for information on how to start one](#)).

Remind your child that although school can be hard, there are lots of fun and interesting things to do at school. For example, there might have been a new experience they had because of going to school, or particular lesson(s) that they liked.

You could encourage your child to consider how attending school ties in with their own personal goals and ambitions, for example, having friends, getting qualifications, pursuing interests, moving towards a career they want.

However, sometimes reminding a child that it is important to attend school can add too much pressure, too quickly. If this is the case, instead talk about taking things slowly and how you are there to support them.

## 10. Keep clear and predictable routines if your child is not at school

If your child is not attending school, it is still important to maintain structure and routine as this will help to reduce their anxiety.

- You could use a visual timetable to explain what activities your child will be doing in the day;
- Encourage your child to get dressed into their school uniform (even if they don't end up going to school);
- Tell your child that you expect them to complete any work set by their teachers;
- Encourage your child to make sure they get enough sleep, exercise and eat a healthy diet, as these will impact on their physical and mental well-being. It is also important for them to spend time outside as this can support positive mental health.

## 11. Consider seeking medical advice and support

You should consider discussing any health concerns with your child's GP. This may be appropriate if their anxiety impacts upon regular attendance at school or if it occurs on top of other psychological concerns (self-harm, depression, suicidal thoughts or eating concerns etc.). The GP may request a referral to CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services) for specialist mental health assessment and support if they feel that this is appropriate and necessary.

The GP may suggest signing off your child from school for a period of time due to anxiety. Avoidance tends to make fear stronger. It is usually better for the family and school to work proactively together to make your child feel less anxious about coming into school.

# How you can help if your child has separation anxiety

## 1. Have a set routine for dropping off your child

The following suggestions could be considered depending on the age and developmental level of the child:

- Pass your child to a trusted adult;
- Have a clear routine for saying goodbye to your child (e.g. a kiss on the head and a clear goodbye) so they know exactly what is going to happen. This could be a game (e.g. “how many kisses and squeezes would you like today, 2 or 3?”);
- Reassure your child that you will see them later, including being explicit about when that will be and what you will do together;
- Give the message you believe your child can cope;
- Be kind but firm, and stay positive if your child becomes upset;
- Leave quickly without drawing out the goodbyes. Don’t “sneak away”.

## 2. Give your child a transitional object

A transitional object is something that can be used to remind your child that you continue to think about them and are connected to them even though you are apart.

Examples of transitional objects include: a bracelet; a photo of you; a note in your child’s lunchbox; a cuddly toy or other comforter; or a small item of clothing belonging to you. Equally, it could be something intangible, like a kiss (or something else) drawn on a hand (e.g. [the hug button](#)) or perfume sprayed on your child’s shirt. You and your child could also take the same thing to school and to work to show that you are thinking about each other (e.g. a special button sewn inside a jumper).

# How you can help if your child is at home during the school day and engages in lots of pleasurable activities

Some children engage in lots of pleasurable and rewarding activities while they are at home during the school day. This can inadvertently reinforce their desires to avoid school. This can happen when:

- parents and children spend more quality time together during school hours than outside school hours;
- the child spends a lot of time during school hours engaging in highly motivating, unthreatening and possibly addictive activities such as gaming.

## 1. Try to make home boring during the school day.

During school hours, try to ensure activities are restricted to ones that your child finds boring and limit screen time. Take away phones, TVs and computers except for schoolwork. If necessary, you may need to place parental controls onto devices and/or turn off the Wi-Fi.

For some children, screen time is a way to manage their anxiety. Online, they can engage in a world where they feel safe and in control. Telling these children to stop using their screens can sometimes trigger stress responses that can result in violence and abuse against parents. This can be very distressing for parents. The following strategies are referenced in Yvonne Newbold's blog on how to get the [balance right in screen-time with children with special educational needs](#).

This ideas may help your child to accept limits on screen time more readily:

- Give lots of warning that it's time to stop screen time;
- Give them some choice about when to finish. For example, do you want to finish in two minutes or five minutes?
- Consider joining in with their screen time for the last couple of minutes;
- Move onto another enjoyable activity;
- Let your child know when they will be able to access screen time again.

Some parents experience high levels of violence from their children when they try to impose limits on behaviour. Child on Parent Violence (CPV) or Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (APVA) is any behaviour used by a young person to control, dominate or coerce parents. It is intended to threaten and intimidate and puts family safety at risk. Whilst it is normal for adolescents to demonstrate healthy anger, conflict and frustration during their transition from childhood to adulthood, anger should not be confused with violence. Violence is about a range of behaviours including non-physical acts aimed at

achieving ongoing control over another person by instilling fear. Most abused parents have difficulty admitting even to themselves that their child is abusive. They feel ashamed, disappointed and humiliated and blame themselves for the situation, which has led to this imbalance of power. There is also an element of denial where parents convince themselves that their son or daughter's behaviour is part of normal adolescent conduct. There are organisations who can support you if you are experiencing violence from your child. See the [Resources section](#) for details.

## 2. Make school seem more appealing to your child

You could suggest to staff that they use your child's interests to engage them in work or encourage your child to attend lessons they particularly enjoy, even if they are out of school for most of their lessons.

You may want to consider giving your child rewards for attending school (for example, an extra 30 minutes on the X-box if they go into school for the target amount of time on that day).



# Book List

Books for children/ young people to read

For younger children/ (early) primary:

- [When My Worries Get Too Big!: A Relaxation Book for Children Who Live With Anxiety](#) by Kari Dunn Buron.
- [The Huge Bag of Worries](#) by Virginia Ironside.
- [Have You Filled A Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids](#) by Carol McCloud). Encourages positive behaviour and expressing kindness and appreciation
- Puppy mind is a story to help young children manage their thoughts, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xd7Cr265zgc>
- [The Way I Feel](#) by Janan Cain is a book to talk about emotions with young children.
- [The Goodnight Caterpillar: A Relaxation Story for Kids](#) by Lori Lite.
- [Mighty Moe](#) by Lacey Woloshyn. Free download of anxiety workbook for children aged 5-11.
- [The Koala Who Could](#) by Rachel Bright.
- [Silly Billy](#) by Anthony Browne.
- [Willy the Wimp](#) by Anthony Browne.
- [How to Catch a Star](#) by Oliver Jeffers.
- [Willy and the Wobbly House](#) by Margot Sunderland.
- [A Boy and a Bear](#) by Lori Lite.
- [Starting School](#) by Allan and Janet Ahlberg.
- [Back to School Tortoise](#) by Lucy M. George.
- [The Gotcha Smile](#) by Rita Philips Mitchell.
- [Halibut Jackson](#) by David Lucas.
- [Giraffes Can't Dance](#) by Giles Andreae.
- [Hey Warrior](#) by Karen Young.
- [Little Meerkat's Big Panic](#) by Jane Evans.
- [Ruby's Worry](#) by Tom Percival.
- [Wilma Jean and the Worry Machine](#) by Julia Cook.
- [On Monday When It Rained](#) by Cheryl Kachenmeister.
- [My Many Coloured Days](#) by Dr Seuss.
- [Listening to My Body](#) by Gabi Garcia.
- [How to be a Superhero Called Self-Control](#) by Lauren Brukner.
- [Presley the Pug Relation Book: A Therapeutic Story with Creative Activities to Help Children Aged 5-10 to Regulate their Emotions and to Find Calm](#) by Karen Treisman.
- [Binnie the Baboon Anxiety and Stress Activity Book: A Therapeutic Story with Creative and CBT Activities to Help Children Aged 5-10 Who Worry](#) by Karen Treisman.
- [How Are You Peeling: Foods with Moods](#) by Saxton Freymann.
- [Materials and worksheets from 'Anxiety'](#) by Paul Stallard

For older primary/ secondary-aged children and young people:

- [What To Do When You're Scared & Worried: A Guide for Kids](#) by James Crist.
- [What To Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide To Overcoming Anxiety](#) by Dawn Huebner.
- [Starving the Anxiety Gremlin](#) by Kate Collins-Donnelly.
- [Outsmarting Worry: An Older Kid's Guide to Managing Anxiety](#) by Dawn Huebner.
- [Help! I've Got an Alarm Bell Going Off in My Head! How Panic, Anxiety and Stress Affect Your Body](#) by K.L. Aspenden.
- [What To Do When Mistakes Make You Quake: A Kid's Guide To Accepting Imperfection](#) by Claire A.B. Freeland and Jacqueline B. Toner.
- [What To Do When Bad Habits Take Hold: A Kid's Guide To Overcoming Nail Biting And More](#) by Dawn Huebner.
- [What To Do When Your Brain Gets Stuck: A Kid's Guide To Overcoming OCD](#) by Dawn Hueber.
- [Mindfulness For Teen Anxiety: A Workbook For Overcoming Anxiety At Home, At School And Everywhere Else](#) by Christopher Willard.
- [Get Out Of Your Mind And Into Your Life For Teens](#) by Joseph V. Ciarrochi , Louise Hayes and Ann Bailey.
- [The Thriving Adolescent: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Positive Psychology to Help Teens Manage Emotions, Achieve Goals, and Build Connection](#) by Louise Hayes.
- The free booklet "[Doing what Matters in Times of Stress](#)" by the World Health Organisation explains how to manage stress in easy to understand cartoons. It uses an approach called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.
- [My Anxiety Handbook: Getting Back On Track](#) by Bridie Gallagher, Phoebe McEwen & Sue Knowles (for secondary-age children).
- [Cutters Don't Cry and Kaylee, The What If Game](#) by Christine Dzidrums and Joseph Dzidrums. Aimed at teenagers.
- [Managing Your Mind: The Mental Fitness Guide](#) by Gillian Butler and Tony Hope (for older young people).
- [Stuff That Sucks: Accepting What You Can't Change And Committing To What You Can](#) by Ben Sedley.
- [Finding Audrey](#) by Sophie Kinsella. Novel for teens.
- [Materials and worksheets from 'Anxiety'](#) by Paul Stallard

Books to support children who are shy or have social anxiety

- [What to Do When You Feel Too Shy: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Social Anxiety](#) by Freeland and Toner. For primary aged children.
- [The Shyness and Social Anxiety Workbook for Teens: CBT and ACT Skills to Help You Build Social Confidence \(An Instant Help Book for Teens\)](#) by Jennifer Shannon. For secondary aged pupils

## Books to support with separation anxiety

- [The Kissing Hand](#) (The Kissing Hand Series) by Audrey Penn.
- [The Invisible String](#) by Patrice Karst.
- [Owl Babies](#) by Martin Waddell.
- [The Kiss Box](#) by Bonnie Verburg.
- [The Huge Bag Of Worries](#) by Virginia Ironside.
- Zou and the Box of Kisses by Michel Gay.

## Books for parents

- [10 Steps to Reduce Your Child's Anxiety on the Autistic Spectrum: A CBT-Based "Fun with Feelings" Parent Manual](#) by M. Garnett, T. Attwood, L. Ford, J. Cook & S. Runham.
- [Overcoming Your Child's Fears And Worries: A Self Help Guide Using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques](#) by C. Creswell and L. Willetts.
- [Helping Your Anxious Child: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents'](#), by Ronald M. Rapee.
- [Helping Your Child Overcome Separation Anxiety or School Refusal: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents](#) by Linda Engler.
- [Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway](#) by Susan Jeffers. Aimed at adults but could be useful for older teens.
- [Overcoming Your Child's Shyness and Social Anxiety: A Self-Help Guide Using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques](#) by Lucy Willetts and Cathy Creswell.
- [The Anxious Child: A Booklet for Parents And Carers Wanting to Know More About Anxiety In Children And Young People - free download from Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents: 7 Ways to Stop the Worry Cycle and Raise Courageous and Independent Children](#) by Reid Wilson and Lynn Lyons
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2268-mindfulness-for-parents>

# Sources of Information and Support

## Hertfordshire County Council Support Services

### Education

- The [Attendance Team](#) offer support to schools regarding CYP where there are concerns regarding their attendance. They have a duty line that can be called to talk about a situation prior to a referral.
- The [Specialist Advisory Teachers for Communication and Autism](#) can offer advice for supporting CYPs in school who have a diagnosis of autism, or are on the diagnostic pathway.
- The [Educational Psychology Service](#) can offer schools advice and support regarding a range of needs that impact on a CYP at school.
- The [Education Support Centres](#) in Hertfordshire offer advice through outreach services and temporary off-site support for CYPs whose behaviour is giving cause for concern. They also provide full-time education for CYPs who have been permanently excluded from secondary school (KS3 and 4) or those who don't have a school placement because of social/emotional needs.
- The [Education Support for Medical Absence](#) (ESMA) team supports schools that have children who are unable to attend school for medical reasons.
- [YC Herts](#) offers services and information for young people in Hertfordshire.
- Each of the 9 [Delivering Specialist Provision Locally](#) (DSPL) areas in Hertfordshire commission their own services for schools and families in their area. Many include family support workers, some of whom may provide support for families whose children have additional needs (e.g. autism). Each area has its own website, which can be found on the main site above.
- The Access to Education team (Travellers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers) service can offer support for CYP who meet their criteria.

### Social Care

- [Family Centres](#) (see also [here](#)) can offer advice and support. Many schools will have their own Family Support Workers, who can support parents.
- Families can access support through [Families First](#), an Early Help service.
- For concerns regarding Child Protection, schools and other professionals should contact [Children's Social Care](#). For urgent concerns, this should go to [MASH](#).
- For CYPs who are registered young carers, they can access support from the [Hertfordshire Young Carers Support Service](#). There is also a [Young Carers in Hertfordshire](#) charity.

## NHS Support Services

- The [School Nursing service](#) work with CYPs aged 5-19, after they transfer out of the [Health Visiting service](#). They accept referrals for CYPs requiring support for low-level mental health, emotional and wellbeing concerns including anxiety, low mood, anger, behaviour, and self-esteem, stress and sleep issues. Information on their services can be found on their website.
- [Step 2](#) is a service to young people aged 0 to 19 who have a mild to moderate mental health difficulty which is causing distress and impacting on day to day life. Information on their services can be found on their website.
- [PALMS](#) (Positive behaviour, Autism, Learning disability and Mental health Services) provides support for children and young people aged 0-19 who have a global learning disability and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder, and their families. Information on their services can be found on their website.
- There is a [National Centre for Behavioural Addiction including Gaming Disorder Service for Young People aged 13 to 25](#).

## National Organisations

- Not Fine in School (<https://notfineinschool.co.uk>) – parent / carer led organization set up to support families and young people who struggle with school attendance.
- Health for Kids (<https://www.healthforkids.co.uk/>) and Health for Teens (<https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/>) – content produced by school nurses with information about physical and mental health, aimed at young people but also has a section for adults.
- Kidshealth ([www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)) – advice and information about common worries for children and young people including sections on divorce and separation.
- Time To Change (<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>) – focus on supporting mental health, aimed at professionals (schools and employers).
- NSPCC (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>) – aimed at adults to support children to feel safe.
- Childline (<https://www.childline.org.uk/>) – provided by NSPCC, aimed at children to access advice and support.
- Child Mind (<https://childmind.org/>) – has a lot of information on supporting children and yourself, although it is American.
- Mind (<https://www.mind.org.uk/>) – supporting mental health for all. Aimed at adults.
- Charlie Waller Memorial Trust ([www.cwmt.org.uk](http://www.cwmt.org.uk)) – provide free training & resources in mental health issues.
- Hands On Scotland (<http://handsonscotland.co.uk/>) – has information on a number of mental health issues, which is accessible to parents.
- Mind Ed (<https://www.minded.org.uk/> and <https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/>) – provides free educational resources to support CYPs' mental health needs. There are e-learning modules available that may be helpful for parents who want to learn more about mental health.

- Anxiety UK ([www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)) – has information and resources for parents of children who are experiencing anxiety. Includes a guide for supporting children who are anxious in relation to school.
- No Panic (<https://nopanic.org.uk/>) – is a charity that helps people who experience panic attacks, phobias, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and other related anxiety disorders. They have some information and resources on their website, including [information on school anxiety](#). They also have a [helpline](#) and email address where you can access direct support.
- Young Minds ([www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)) – is a website with information, advice and publications on mental health with sections for young people, parents/carers and professionals. A few key links:
  - They have [a page about school refusal](#);
  - They have a [parent survival guide](#);
  - The publication [‘In School Stay Cool’](#) aimed at young people.
- Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) ([www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)) – independent national advice centre for parents and carers, provide guidance on school problems including attendance.
- Anti-Bullying ([www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)) – providing advice for parents, young people and schools. A free helpline is available.
- Bully Online ([www.successunlimited.co.uk](http://www.successunlimited.co.uk)) – information about bullying for children, parents and school staff.
- Kidscape ([www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)) – advice about bullying and protecting children from abuse, aimed at parents and teachers.
- Royal College of Psychiatrists ([www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)) – website contains downloadable leaflets and fact sheets about a range of problems and mental health issues affecting children and young people.
- There is a [National Centre for Behavioural Addiction including Gaming Disorder Service for Young People aged 13 to 25](#).

### For children and their families

- Kooth (<https://www.kooth.com/>) is an online counselling service for anyone aged 10-25 in Hertfordshire. You can access a chat/messenger service, discussion boards, goal setting tools and a journal and a magazine containing a number of articles and some specifically about coronavirus and the impact on children and young people. The website is moderated by trained professionals. You need to register but it is anonymous.
- [Family Lives](#) – is a national family support charity offering help to families who are struggling.

## Local Organisations

- Healthy Young Minds in Herts Website ([www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk](http://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk)) has a number of resources on their website, including an Anxiety Toolkit [need to register to access].
- Herts Mind Network (<https://www.hertsmindnetwork.org/>).
- Just Talk Herts (<https://www.justtalkherts.org/just-talk-herts.aspx>) – is a multi-agency campaign with the aim to reducing mental health stigma through raising awareness, as well as helping young people develop positive coping strategies and providing information and resources about talking about mental health and self-help support.
- [ADD-vance](#) is a charity that supports families with children who have autism and / or ADHD.
- Health for Teens has a local page (<https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/hertfordshire/>).
- <https://www.hertsparentcarers.org.uk>

## Resources and organisations that support with child on parent violence

- [www.reducingtherisk.org.uk/cms/content/child-parent-violence](http://www.reducingtherisk.org.uk/cms/content/child-parent-violence)
- <https://www.pac-uk.org/our-services/cpv>
- <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/training/cpd-courses/child-parent-violence-skills-tools-awareness/>
- <https://whosincharge.co.uk/>

# Acknowledgements

- We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following educational psychologists, psychology assistants and trainee educational psychologists who were part of the Hertfordshire Emotionally Based School Avoidance Learning Set (2019-21): Tammy Bloom, Nikki Collingwood, Sophie Fanshawe, Laura Gosling, Steph Holt, Marion Money, Becky Mulhall, Nicky Odgers, Erika Payne, Katie Paxton, Rachel Sawyer, Saffron Steele, Verena West.
- We are indebted to the following colleagues from the Attendance Team, SEND SAS, ESMA and DPSL8 for their collaboration and advice: Sharon Coubray, Tracy Haase, Ruth Mason, Karen McAllister, Chris Thomas, Laura Wilson.