



SUPPORT ATTENDANCE, LIMIT ABSENCE

Developing a greater understanding of school avoidance behaviours and increasing student resilience.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Shahista –Senior Leader in Primary Education

Deputy Headteacher, inner-city primary school in Birmingham

Over 12 years of experience in education

Recognised by Ofsted for inclusion, safeguarding, and curriculum development

Pursuing NPQH and a Masters in Educational Leadership

Passionate about outdoor activities, charity fundraising, and community engagement

Fluent in several community languages

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

01

Understand the different aspects of school avoidance behaviours.

02

Learn effective strategies to increase student resilience.

03

Explore actionable steps to encourage return to school.

INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOL AVOIDANCE



Definition: Refusal to attend school due to emotional distress.



School avoidant behaviour can show as any of the following;



Completely absent from school



Goes to school but leaves during the day or escapes to the nurse's office



May go to school, but only after crying, hiding in their bedroom, having an outburst, or refusing to move.



Has unusual distress about going to school and begs their parents to make them go back.

SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

Causes: Anxiety, depression, peer issues, academic pressures.

Impact: Academic decline, social isolation, long-term mental health issues.

EEF's *Supporting school attendance* Note: Accurate attendance tracking improves academic outcomes.

[Supporting School Attendance - Reflection and Planning Tool | Education Endowment Foundation](#)
([d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net](#))

Discussion point: What signs of school avoidance have you observed in your experience?

IDENTIFYING SIGNS OF SCHOOL AVOIDANCE



Emotional Signs: Increased anxiety, frequent somatic complaints.



Behavioural Signs: Consistent lateness, frequent absences, truancy.



Communication Signs: Reluctance to discuss school, expressing fear of school situations.



Discussion point: How do you currently identify these signs in your school?

MULTI-FACETED ASPECTS OF SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

Emotional Factors: Anxiety disorders, depression.

Social Factors: Bullying, breakdown in peer relationships.

Academic Factors: Learning difficulties, fear of failure, overwhelmed by workload.

Anna Freud: “Addressing mental health issues in schools can significantly improve both wellbeing and academic performance.”

Discussion Opportunity: “Can you share an example where you noticed a combination of these factors in a student?” [Pause for group feedback]

UNDERSTAND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES...

Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

54. Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly - in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future.

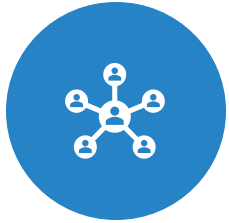
55. School staff play a critical role in communicating this expectation to parents. They should also work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in school as much as possible. Schools may also find it helpful to refer to DfE's non-statutory guidance on [mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance](#) for case study examples.

56. Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil but additional support may need to be provided.

DfE's working together to improve school attendance, which applies from 19 August 2024 as statutory guidance.

[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#)
publishing.service.gov.uk

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE STUDENT RESILIENCE



**POSITIVE
RELATIONSHIPS:** FOSTER
STRONG STUDENT-
TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS.



**SUPPORTIVE
ENVIRONMENT:** CREATE A
MENTALLY AND
PHYSICALLY SAFE SPACE.



INVOLVEMENT: ENGAGE
STUDENTS IN DECISIONS
AFFECTING THEIR SCHOOL
LIFE.



EEF: RESILIENCE
PROGRAMS LEAD TO
IMPROVED ATTENDANCE
AND ENGAGEMENT.



QUESTION: “WHAT
STRATEGIES HAVE YOU
USED TO BUILD RESILIENCE
AMONG STUDENTS?”

INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES

IEPs: Tailored support plans.

Regular Meetings: Consistent check-ins with parents, students, and counsellors.

Small Steps: Gradual return plans, starting with part-time attendance.

Statutory Guidance
Note: Follow DfE guidelines for personalised interventions.

Discussion
Opportunity: Can anyone share a successful intervention technique they've used?

ROLE OF TEACHERS AND STAFF

Monitor Attendance: Keep accurate records, identify patterns.

Open Communication: Listen to students' concerns without judgement.

Awareness Training: Train staff to recognise and address emotional distress.

Ann Freud: "A whole-school approach is key for mental health support."

Question: "What training do teaching staff at your school receive to deal with emotional distress?"

ENGAGE AND ENCOURAGE

Engage and Encourage

Incentives: Rewarding good attendance.

Enjoyable Learning: Interactive and engaging lessons.

Relevance: Linking curriculum to real-life applications.

Discussion Opportunity: What creative ways have you found to keep students engaged and motivated?

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

- **Education:** Inform parents about the importance of attendance and signs of avoidance.
- **Communication:** Regular and meaningful discussions about their child's progress.
- **Support Networks:** Help parents access community resources.
- **EEF Note:** Parental engagement improves attendance and achievement.
- **DfE Guidance:** Essential for effective support strategies.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Counselling

Services: Offer access to school psychologists or external counselling.

Peer

Support: Encourage peer mentoring and support groups.

Mental Health

Programs: Implement programs that promote mental well-being.

Anna Freud

Quote: “Whole-school approach essential for mental health support.”

Discussion

Opportunity: “What support systems do you have in place at your school to help students?”

CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES



Case Study 1: Year 9 student with anxiety. Gradual reintegration plan, involving staggered returns and peer support.



Case Study 2: Early intervention for a Year 4 pupil facing bullying - engaged in whole-class activities to build confidence.

Q&A/DISCUSSION



INTERACTIVE SESSION: ENCOURAGE
ATTENDEES TO SHARE EXPERIENCES,
ASK QUESTIONS.



PROBLEM-SOLVING: DISCUSS
SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FACED AND
SOLUTIONS.

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

- **Local Services:** Directory of mental health organisations, LA support.
- **Online Resources:** Anna Freud Centre, Education Endowment Foundation.
- **School Contacts:** List internal school support staff.
- [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-issues-affecting-a-pupil-s-attendance-guidance-for-schools)
- [School attendance and mental wellbeing | Anna Freud](https://www.annafreud.org/school-attendance-and-mental-wellbeing)
- [Attendance-Kings-Speech-Debate-Brief.pdf \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/attendance-kings-speech-debate-brief.pdf)
- [Children's mental health - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/childrens-mental-health/every-mind-matters)
- [School attendance and mental wellbeing 2024 \(595x841\) - Frontify \(annafreud.org\)](https://annafreud.org/school-attendance-and-mental-wellbeing-2024)
- <https://educationgateshead.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/3826-JH-EBSA-Strategy-2021.pdf>