



Section 3

Checking in with a young person: reflecting and exploring the broader issues that are leading to the avoiding behaviour



Practitioner tips

Anxiety-based school avoidance can often develop as a result of a variety of challenges facing a young person. To successfully support a young person, it is crucial to develop an understanding of the various factors impacting their motivation to attend school. The worksheets listed in this section will help you to explore these issues further.

Once you have identified the key issues causing the young person to avoid school, you can select any relevant topics in Section 2 to work on the issues in a more targeted way.

Tune in

Exploration of the root causes of a young person's anxiety has the potential to be upsetting, painful and frightening for them. You may be met with significant resistance in the form of aggression, sadness, refusal to engage, or criticism. It is important to meet the young person – however they present – with compassion, understanding and patience.

It is therefore crucial that the person completing these worksheets has a positive and trusting relationship with the young person. If you are unfamiliar with the young person, you may need to work on building a relationship first or identify another suitable adult to complete this piece of work.

“Communication”

You can support your young person with school-related anxiety by talking positively about school and the benefits of education whilst also acknowledging that it can be difficult to be in school for several reasons.





Practical tips for practitioners

Some of what they say may seem minor or unimportant, but it is very important to listen to the young person and not to dismiss anything they are saying. You can show you care and are really listening by validating their feelings and experiences.

“Communication”

Worksheet: You and school (positives)

- See Appendix A, Worksheet 8.
- This worksheet can be used to explore the positive school experiences that may encourage a young person to attend school.
- Throughout the discussion, encourage the student to record any key positives they identify. This worksheet can be very useful if designing a Return to School Plan.

Worksheet: Working on solutions

- See Appendix A, Worksheet 9.
- This worksheet can be used to explore potential solutions and identify people in a position to help the student. This worksheet can also be very useful if designing a Return to School Plan.

Worksheet: You and school (parent)

- See Appendix A, Worksheet 25.
- This worksheet can be used to exploring school avoidance further with the parent.



Practitioner tips

The purpose of these worksheets is to encourage discussion and exploration with the young person. There is no recommended completion time - they can be completed in a single session or spread out over a number of sessions. The young person may want to complete them alone and bring them back to discuss on a later date. In order to gain the trust of the young person and explore these issues well, it is important to proceed at a pace they are comfortable with.

Worksheet 8:

You and school (positives)

Think of a great day in school. What did that look like? What makes you want to go to school? Look at the list of words below and explore what memories, feelings and words come to mind. You can add your own words and ideas if you like. As you discuss, write the main things that make you want to go to school (positives) in the spaces provided below.

Friendships	Value of Education		Future Career		
Transport	SNAs	Fun	Teachers	Achievement	
Lunch/food	PE/Sports		Relaxing/Rest	Safety	
Joking	Rules	Yard	Homework	Trips	Exams
Students	Interesting	Fair			

Positives

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What can be done to make school a more positive place?

If you were principal, what would you change?

Worksheet 9:

Working on solutions

What are the three biggest reasons you do not want to attend school?
Write them in the spaces provided below.

3 main barriers

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Think about each barrier. Is there anything that can be done to remove this barrier? Explore all solutions you can think of, no matter how unlikely. Write any solutions you think might work in the space below:

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Can you think of any people who can make this solution happen?
Write their names beside the bubbles on the top of this worksheet.
(e.g. a key worker, a particular teacher, Year Head, Principal, family member, SNA, You, Friends, teammates, any other person)

Worksheet 25:

Communication between you and school (parent)

Thinking about your relationship with your child's school how would you rate the following statements?

I am confident about communicating with my child's school.

 

Not confident

Very confident

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I am happy with the way my child's school communicates with me.

 

Not happy

Very happy

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I understand my role and responsibilities as a parent in relation to my child's educational needs.

 

Not managing

Managing well

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I am confident about using the apps and technology used by the school (e.g. Aladdin, Teams, Seesaw, VSware)

 

Not confident

Very confident

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Worksheet 25:

Communication between you and school (parent)

Thinking about your relationship with your school (i.e. teachers, principal, SNAs) how would you rate the following statements?

I know who I can contact in school if I am worried about my child or need to inform school about my own concerns about my child.



I don't know



I know for sure

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

One small change I would like to make in relation to the communication between me and my child's school is...

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One thing that would help me support my child's educational needs more effectively is...

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