

# Absence from school and anxiety

## My child is anxious and not attending school, how can I help?

### Information for parents/carers

#### Facts

- Most children worry about school at some time or another
- There are times when they would prefer to stay at home
- You may have had similar feelings when you were at school.

#### As a parent/carer you could help.

Ask them whether there is anything worrying them, e.g.:

- At home - changes, family life
- At school – worried about their school work or the school environment
- Difficulties with friendships/ relationships.

Once they share the problem, you may be able to resolve it early. On the other hand, you may feel you would like some support.

#### Signs of anxiety affecting school attendance

- Stomach aches
- Headaches
- Feels sick and/or is sick when it's time to go to school
- Tries to stay in bed
- Is tearful or unhappy
- Is 'ill' following weekends and holidays
- Doesn't want to leave you.

#### What you can do

- Stay calm
- Listen to your child
- Acknowledge the anxiety
- Reassure and encourage them

- Check there is no obvious underlying reason, e.g.: friendship difficulties, not being able to do the work, or a health problem
- Find someone to talk to – a friend or a member of your family
- Tell the school there is a problem
- Work in partnership with the school to try to get your child to attend
- Keep in constant touch with the school
- Respond positively to any suggestions.

### **What can you expect the school to do?**

- Listen to you and your child
- Make constructive suggestions
- Hold meetings to plan and review progress
- Try to find ways of making school a happier experience for your child
- Continue to monitor attendance
- Suggest a key worker to support you and your child
- Suggest that they refer you and your child to other professionals if the problem persists
- Re-introduce your child back into school with adjustments to their timetable if appropriate.

### **Others who can help in and out of school**

Members of your family - encourage other members of the family to help integrate your child into school.

Your child's friends - involve their friends, try to get one of them to call and collect her/him on the way to school.

### **Points to remember**

- Progress may be slow.
- Be persistent and remain positive about school to your child.
- Work in partnership with the school and other professionals.
- Let your child know that you are all working together to help.
- Try to remain focussed on the issue in hand. Do not worry too much about other issues going on in the school, e.g.: class tests, exams, coursework, deadlines, homework, etc.

### **For further information and advice contact**

- your child's school
- the South Gloucestershire Council Access and Response team, Tel 01454 866000
- your local health centre or doctor