

Next steps

Careful assessment of the contributing factors for non-attendance is required before implementing any of these steps. However the following strategies may be considered:

Young Carer & Family Issues

- Allow access to phone contact in school
- Suggest referral to Young Carers
- Offer a safe haven at break times
- Provide a 'gentle' start to the day

School Factors

- Consider ASfL assessment
- Consider adjusting timetable
- Inform staff of support strategies that can be deployed
- Work to reduce any known sources of stress

Peer relationships

- Ensuring anti-bullying policies are robust and implemented fully
- Provision of a safe haven
- Use strategies such as peer mediation and restorative approaches
- Encourage participation in school activities and extra curricular activities
- Consider using older pupils as a buddy

Parental control issues

- Encourage a firm approach from parents
- Support parents to have a positive approach i.e. to focus on when things have gone well
- Encourage parents to reduce 'attractive' activities on offer at home

Illness & returning to school after illness

- Send work home
- Consider home tuition
- Encourage contact with peers
- Consider phased return to school

Who to contact for further advice

- Home School Link Worker
- School nurse
- Educational Psychologist
- GP
- Rowan Centre (CALM)
- Social Work
- Inclusion & Support Service



Educational Psychology Service



Attendance Difficulties

Information for schools

About school refusal

School refusal is a term that is used when a child or young person starts to miss school frequently.

The causes are often complex and there can be a single factor causing non-attendance or a combination of factors.

Most common factors

- Peer relationship issues and/or bullying
- Young Carer (e.g. looking after a parent who has health issues)
- Difficulties with learning either in general or in specific subjects
- Relationships with teachers
- Anxiety about particular school subjects, teachers or areas of the school
- Issues such as low self-esteem, lack of confidence or potential mental health issues such as depression
- Returning to school after illness
- Family issues such as divorce, illness or bereavement
- Lack of parental control

Signs of school Refusal

The signs of school refusal are determined by the causes and not all of these points will apply in all cases. However staff should remain vigilant for:

- A pattern of non-attendance is often evident e.g. missing certain classes or not attending on a Monday morning
- May appear anxious, agitated or upset as they come into school and for periods through the school day
- Appear extremely tired as they may have difficulties settling to sleep on school nights.
- May appear quiet or withdrawn
- May be isolated from peers
- Will often complain of sore stomach, headache, nausea general illness and want to go home
- A child or young person who has a genuine fear of attending school often wants to be on their own at home or outside school.
- Generalised worrying – often about what appears to be trivial

General Advice

- Listen to the child or young person to find out if there is anything specific that is troubling them at school, for example exam stress or bullying.
- Adopt a non blame and supportive approach with both parents and the young person.
- Identify a key person within the school who is available to provide emotional support.
- Try to help the young person resolve any specific reasonable worries they have about home or attending school.
- Give parents the information leaflet about school refusal and discuss with them how they are dealing with their child's reluctant to attend school.
- Explain to parents that allowing their child to stay off school is likely to increase the child's reluctance to attend and make the problem considerably worse.
- Keep a diary of the child or young person's reluctance to attend school. Encourage the parents/carers to do the same.
- Try not to reinforce 'psychosomatic' complaints by sending pupils home.

