

# SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DIFFICULTIES



## Define Fine

Parent Peer Support for School Attendance Difficulties



This resource is based on current relevant government guidance, to help parents and carers to work with professionals to assess then plan appropriate timely support relating to a child or young person's SEND and health needs and attendance difficulties .

School Attendance Difficulties are complex but all too often these children are described as being "fine in school ". We need to DEFINE FINE and acknowledge barriers to attendance at the earliest signs.

### Support Mental and Physical Health

Schools and colleges should develop an environment where all pupils with mental and physical health conditions feel properly supported so that they can play a full and active role in school life, remain healthy and achieve their academic potential.

### Referrals to CAMHS and other Health Professionals

A child or young person may need support through referrals to CAMHS, paediatricians, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists or specialist coaches. Schools do not have to wait for a formal diagnosis before providing support to pupils but should follow advice from health professionals, and value the views of parents and pupils.

### Referral to an Educational Psychologist

An Educational Psychologist can assess a child or young person's barriers to learning and recommend appropriate interventions. This input can be useful as being unable to attend school or college is often a symptom of a significant need perhaps not yet identified.

### Assess and Acknowledge Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

SEND children and young people are more likely to struggle with attendance, especially those with needs not yet fully assessed, understood and supported. SEND includes ADHD, Autism, PDA, Sensory Processing Difficulties, Dyslexia, executive functioning, processing and working memory, learning differences, and social, emotional, mental and physical health conditions. These may affect their ability to learn, to communicate or regulate emotions, or lead to masking. Missing the signs of these needs or focussing on emotionally and/or parenting based factors can cause delays in appropriate support. Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure SEND pupils can fully participate in school life .

### Early Help and Social Services Referrals

Some families may benefit from Early Help or social care assessments, but school attendance difficulties are not necessarily safeguarding or parenting issues. It is vital that there is multi-agency understanding of the issues and guidance surrounding these difficulties. Any interventions should be led by professionals who are qualified and experienced in SEND, mental health and attendance difficulties.

### Collaborate on Individualised Evidence Based Plans

It is important that children and young people, their parents, school or college and other professionals work together to develop a flexible, tailored, evidence based action plan, SEND support plan and/or an individual health care plan to remove barriers, provide support and set targets.

Plans should be shared with all staff and include training and resources.

An \*EHC needs assessment may be necessary for a child or young person who is struggling with school attendance and "has or may have special educational needs and may need special educational provision to be made through an EHC plan\* ", or an early review if they already have an ECHP. They may need specific support, or an alternative to their current provision. Parents can make the application to the LA for an EHC needs assessment. \*or statement in Wales or Scotland.

• [www.definefine.org.uk](http://www.definefine.org.uk) Find us on Facebook email [contactus@definefine.org.uk](mailto:contactus@definefine.org.uk) •

## BASED ON THE FOLLOWING CURRENT GUIDANCE & STATUTORY GUIDANCE

- THE SEND CODE OF PRACTICE
- WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE (DFE 2023)
- SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS AT SCHOOL (DFE)
- EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH HEALTH NEEDS WHO CANNOT ATTEND SCHOOL (DFE)
- SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES WHERE A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE IS AFFECTING ATTENDANCE (DFE 2023)
- REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS FOR DISABLED CHILDREN
- EQUALITY ACT TECHNICAL GUIDANCE EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
- PREVENTING AND TACKLING BULLYING
- KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION (2022)
- HOME EDUCATION GUIDE (2019)
- AND NHS EVERY MIND MATTERS

## Authorising Absence

Schools must record absences as authorised where pupils cannot attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related). There is no need to routinely ask for medical evidence to support recording an absence as authorised.

## Provide Learning and Connections While Absent

Children unable to attend school should be able to access a broad and balanced education suitable for their needs to enable them to maintain academic progression and allow them to thrive and prosper. Schools should welcome pupils back following an absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps in learning. LAs must look at the evidence for each individual case, even when there is no medical evidence, and make their own decision about alternative education.

The LA are responsible for arranging education for children who, because of illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education, as soon as it is clear that the child will be away from school for 15 days or more.

## Respond to all incidents of Bullying and Assault

Schools, colleges and Local Authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. Schools' anti-bullying policies should set out the actions which will be taken to prevent or address all forms of bullying.

## Home Education

Parents have a right to educate their children at home. This works well when it is a positive, informed and dedicated choice. Pressure should never be put on parents to remove a child from a school roll as they then become solely responsible for their child's education.



Your Local Offer should provide information and contact details of for advice including [Send IASS](#) and local support groups.

## Parental Mental Health and Self Care

Parenting or caring for a child or young person struggling with school attendance can be difficult. It is important to make sure you look after your own mental wellbeing and seek support for yourself.



DO YOU HAVE A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOL DISTRESS OR BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE ?

**PLEASE JOIN US AT DEFINE FINE**



Define Fine is led by a small team of parents and professionals with lived experience of school attendance difficulties. Parent Carers are welcome to join our supportive [Define Fine Facebook group](#) where we share advice, signpost to support and coordinate our peer support training on how to use our resources. We also provide consultancy, training and case management to professionals in schools, Local Authorities, PCFs, SENDIASS and other organisations.

