



When School Feels Hard

A simple guide for families when worry starts getting in the way

Worry is real. With the right support, your child can keep moving forward.

Acting early can stop worry becoming a pattern of absence - and make it easier to stay connected to school.

If you are noticing...



Mornings are getting harder

Tears, arguments, feeling sick or repeated requests to stay home.



A pattern is appearing

Worry on particular days, lessons or after weekends and holidays.



Something at school feels difficult

Friendships, learning, crowds, transitions or a particular part of the day.



Your child is saying “I can’t”

Even when they cannot explain exactly what feels wrong.

What happens next?

1 Tell us early You do not need to wait for your child to miss school. Contact us when you first notice things becoming difficult.

2 We listen We work out what is making school feel difficult.

3 We plan We agree a small number of practical things that could help.

4 We keep going The plan helps your child return, attend and rebuild confidence.

5 We review We notice progress, adjust quickly and add more support if needed.

The destination remains full attendance. The route back may sometimes need to be built one successful step at a time.

Progress might look like...

Getting through the gate

A difficult morning that still ends with your child coming into school.

Building from a smaller step

A supported lesson or part of the day may be the starting point. We then build towards more.

Needing less support

Confidence grows as routines become familiar and normal attendance becomes manageable again.



Helping at Home

You do not need to have all the answers. A calm, consistent approach helps.

What happens when I contact school?

We'll listen first. Contacting us does not automatically mean meetings or referrals. We will start by understanding what is happening and agreeing the next helpful step.

At home

- ✓ Listen and acknowledge the worry.
- ✓ Keep the morning predictable.
- ✓ Be warm but clear that the plan is still school.
- ✓ Notice every successful step.
- ✓ Tell us quickly when something is not working.

Words that can help

- "I can see this feels hard."
- "You don't have to solve the whole day right now."
- "School knows, and there is a plan."
- "Let's focus on the next step."
- "You did something difficult today."

We will include your child's voice.

We might ask: What feels hardest? What makes it a little easier? Who helps you feel safe? What would make tomorrow more manageable?

What school can put in place



A familiar adult

Someone to check in with.



A calmer start

An agreed arrival or morning routine.



A safe base

Somewhere to reset briefly, then return.



Lesson support

Help with a specific lesson, transition or worry.



Friendship support

Pastoral help where relationships are part of the problem.



A short review

A clear point to check whether the plan is helping.



A school counsellor drop-in

We can arrange a drop-in session with one of our school counsellors.

Please contact us early

Before absence becomes the routine.

If mornings are becoming difficult, worry is increasing or you can see a pattern developing, contact your child's Head of Year or pastoral team. We would much rather talk early.

The goal is progress, not a perfect morning.

A child can feel worried and still take a successful step. We will work with you to make the next step feel possible.

Small steps. Calm support. Back to belonging.