



Access to Education Guidance

Purpose

This document is intended to support schools in considering the range of interventions, adjustments and support available for children and young people experiencing barriers to attendance. Prior to making a referral to the Access to Education Service, schools should demonstrate that they have explored, implemented and evaluated appropriate strategies in line with the Department for Education's attendance guidance and Wirral's graduated response to attendance. The examples below are intended to support professional discussion and planning. Not every action will be appropriate in every case, and schools should provide evidence of the approaches considered, the rationale for decisions made, and the impact of support provided.

Key Principles

- Attendance difficulties should be explored through a child-centred and strengths-based approach.
- The views of the child or young person and their family should inform planning and intervention.
- Schools should evidence the support offered, the outcomes achieved and any ongoing barriers.
- Referrals to Access to Education should demonstrate that appropriate school-based and multi-agency support has been considered where relevant.
- Professional judgement should be applied when determining which interventions are appropriate for an individual child or young person.

Areas for Consideration Prior to an Access to Education Referral

The guidance below identifies key areas that schools would ordinarily be expected to consider prior to referral. Items shown in *italics* represent additional desirable actions that may be appropriate depending on the needs and circumstances of the child or young person.

Support and Intervention Considered	Further Actions Where Appropriate	Evidence and Impact
Weekly home visits completed by school		

Consider the family's history, circumstances and any barriers to attendance		
Evidence reasonable adjustments and adaptations implemented by school		
<i>Consider whether a part-time timetable is appropriate and compliant with guidance</i>		
Seek advice from the school attendance officer/advisor and record outcomes		
Attendance Support Meeting referral and completion of agreed actions		
Referral to Educational Psychology drop-in session via epresponse@wirral.gov.uk		
Severe absence action plan in use		
Consider whether an Early Help assessment would be beneficial		
Explore counselling, ELSA, HATCH, CAMHS or other wellbeing support		
Ensure discussion with the SENCO regarding potential SEND needs and support.		
Consider whether SEN register placement is appropriate		
<i>Consider ND pathway referral where appropriate</i>		
Seek external professional advice and provide evidence e.g. EP, Speech and Language		

Consider requesting an EHC needs assessment		
Consider off-site direction where appropriate		
Gather and evidence parent/carer and child or young person's views.		
Consider whether alternative provision may be appropriate.		
Attend EBSA Network and implement relevant learning		
Implement learning from EBSA delegate training		

Local Support Services and Resources

Branch Wirral: Online mental wellbeing hub providing self-help tools, service matching and links to support. <https://branch-wirral.co.uk/>

Caritas Wirral Family Support Services: Family support, parenting groups, counselling, bereavement support, domestic abuse, mental health and advice services. <https://www.caritasshrewsbury.org.uk/>

Koala North West: Parenting, autism and sleep support services for children and families. <https://koalanw.co.uk/>

Useful Resources

- NHS - [Working with EBSA Video](#)
- Young minds - [information and advice about school refusal](#).
- IPSEA - [school refusal](#) advice.
- The [Not Fine in School - School Refusal, School Attendance](#) website.
- Mindmate - [website](#)
- Autism Education Trust - [school refusal](#) downloadable resource
- The [DFE school attendance](#) guidance.
- [School is not my enemy](#). A video made by researchers at the University of Ghent in Belgium, talking to young people who had struggled to attend.
- [Teach me](#). - An animation created by a student at Met Film School.
- The [mental health and behaviour in school](#) guidance. This guidance states that the on-roll school setting should have a whole school approach to creating a safe calm environment where mental health problems are less likely to develop, recognise emerging issues as early as possible and help pupils to access support at an early opportunity.

- Legal duty under the [Children's and families Act 2014](#), to work with you to identify and support any special needs that your child may have.