

# What to Do When Things Go Wrong

and

How to Stop Them Before  
They Do

## **Code of Conduct for Parental Communication with College**

### **Please do...**

1. Contact us if you have a question, concern, query or complaint. We want to know if you feel unhappy about a situation or incident; we are keen to resolve these.
2. Tell us what you understand has happened and how this has made you or your child feel.
3. Help us to resolve the situation efficiently by addressing your concern to the person who is best placed to deal with it which will be the person most heavily involved in the issue or incident. Please be guided by the summary flow chart on who to communicate with.
4. Recognise that there could be different perspectives or additional information that need to be understood before you have a complete picture of what has happened. In other words, approach incidents "seeking first to understand before seeking to be understood."
5. Address concerns to staff at college during the working week (and not at weekends), rather than through social media or out of college.
6. Expect a reply within 2 working days. A same day response may well not be possible and should not be expected. Concerns around child safety and child protection will be prioritised. Some of our staff are part-time and so 2 working days may not equate to two actual days of a standard working week.
7. Speak to members of staff politely and courteously.

### **Please don't...**

1. Arrive at reception without an appointment, expecting an immediate meeting.
2. Use sarcasm or aggressive words and phrases to try to make staff feel guilty, ashamed or stupid e.g. appalling, pathetic, disgraceful, ridiculous, disgusting.
3. Use legal terms without legal advice or use them outside their correct legal context in order to add weight to arguments e.g. harassment, negligence, discrimination.
4. Threaten staff either through physical intimidation, aggressive hand gestures, swearing or with the threat to involve Ofsted, the press, the Department for Education, the police, governors, solicitors or the local authority.
5. Make complaints personal by calling into question staff's motives, competency, professionalism, integrity or honesty.
6. Post derogatory comments online about staff: the college takes legal and police advice if comments amount to defamation or cyber-bullying.
8. Demand to speak to the Headteacher: by not getting involved immediately, he can review your concern objectively if you feel college staff have not handled it appropriately.

### **Please be aware that...**

1. The college will return unanswered any correspondence that doesn't conform to these expectations with a request for it to be amended and re-sent in order for it to be answered.
2. Staff will similarly, end phone calls and meetings for the same reasons.
3. The college will restrict access to the campus site and/or to the staff for those who seriously or persistently breach the code of conduct.

# Absence due to Illness

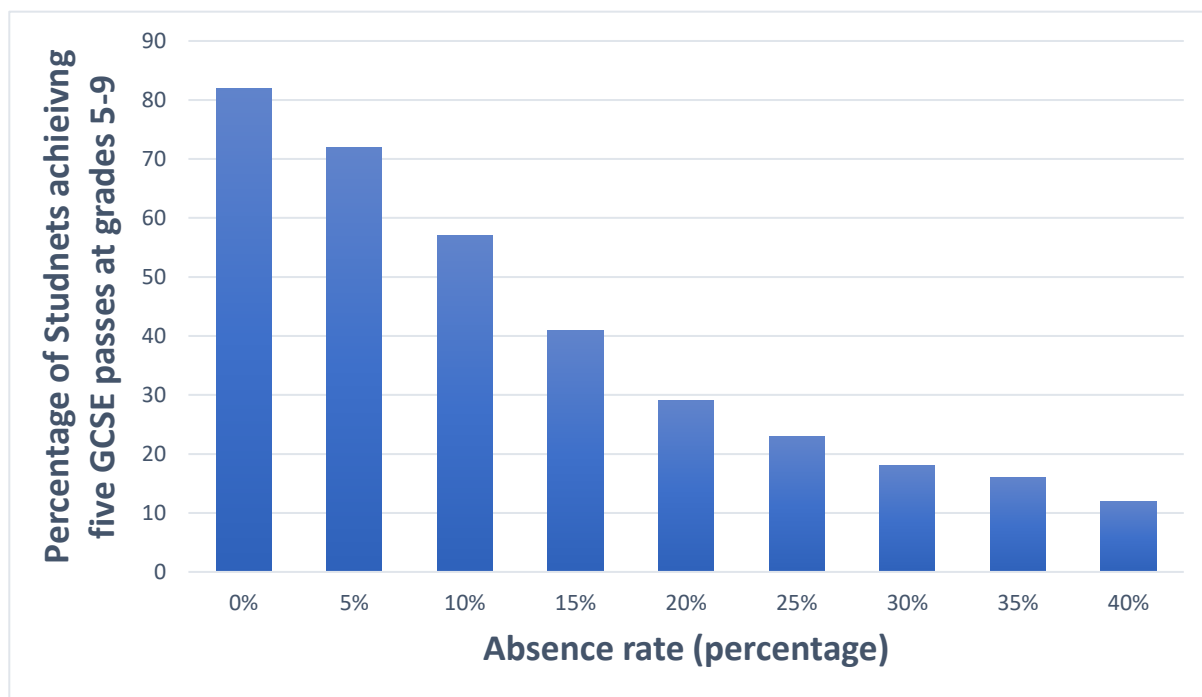
## What it is

Children can suffer all sorts of illness which range in seriousness from those that are simply inconvenient to those which are life threatening. There are also illnesses which do not need to keep children from attending school; there are others where it would place the child – or other children at risk if they did attend. So, it is a bit of a mindfield trying to work out whether to send a sick child into college or keep them at home.

## Why it's a problem

For students to be successful at school, they need to be in school. Any time students are not present, they risk falling behind. Students who do not attend regularly underperform in their school work.

Attendance rates are the most significant factor in determining how well students do at GCSE, even more significant than their previous test scores, grades and marks. This is true of students in any year group, not just year 11. Even if GCSEs seem a long way off for your child, absence from lessons at any time and for any reason creates gaps in their learning. This makes it harder for them to understand the work when they return from their absence because this work builds on the learning they have missed. Learning gaps therefore grow and increase. This in turn affects their motivation, their confidence and desire to attend school.



## How to prevent it happening

Don't let your child take time off school for minor illnesses: particularly those that would not stop you from going to work.

Develop your child's resilience by encouraging an attitude of "what am I still fit and well enough to do" rather than one of "what can't I do?"

Ensure your child has got good diet, is physically active, has healthy sleep and good hygiene routines.

Talk to your child's GP when there are patterns of illness to see if there is something more underlying that needs diagnosis and treatment.

To minimise the need for your child to be sent home from college when feeling unwell at college, please give us permission to give your child medicines such as antihistamines and pain killers.

### How to deal with it when it happens

Covid created a stigma about sending an ill child to school and rightly so as it is a contagious illness which was dangerous to most people and still is for those with underlying medical conditions. However, the government guidance here is clear that you should send your child to school when they have certain illnesses:

Illness	Stay at home	Attend college	Further Guidance
Chickenpox	✓		Keep your child at home until all the spots have crusted over.
Common cold		✓	Keep your child at home if they also have a fever.
Conjunctivitis		✓	Get advice from a pharmacist about how to manage.
Cough		✓	
Ear Infection			If severe or with a high temperature, keep your child at home.
Hand, foot, mouth disease		✓	
High temperature or fever	✓		
Impetigo	✓		Needs anti-biotics from a GP. Can go to college 48 hours after treatment starts.
Ringworm	✓		See a pharmacist unless it's on their scalp – see a GP. Can come to college once they've started their treatment.
Scarlet Fever	✓		Needs anti-biotics from a GP. Can come to college 24 hours after starting anti-biotics.
Sore throat		✓	If they have a high temperature with it, then keep at home.
Threadworms		✓	Get advice from a pharmacist.
Vomiting and diarrhoea	✓		Only come back to college after 48 hours since the last episode of vomit or diarrhoea,

If your child is too unwell to come to college then please let us know via Edulink.

If your child has underlying health conditions then follow the guidance of the medical practitioner who oversees their condition and keep them informed of any changes to it. Send any medical diagnoses or guidance to us at college using the welfare email above.

### How not to deal with it when it happens

Please do not ignore illness – check your child's symptoms and assess how unwell they are. If you are unsure whether your child is seriously unwell, then call 111 or your child's GP and keep your child off college until you have sought advice.

Please do not leave your child at home by themselves if they are seriously unwell, including when they have a high temperature.

Please do not incentivise "sick days" by letting your child spend the day on their xbox or going out. This can encourage them to take more time off school.

# Anxiety

## What it is

Anxiety can be positive, causing our bodies to release a quick burst of the chemical adrenalin that produces extra energy, more muscle power and speeds our brain up. That can help us in things like school tests or escaping from physical danger.

When anxiety interferes with everyday life, especially socialising or going to school, people give it various names like 'anxiety disorder', 'social phobia', 'agoraphobia', 'school phobia' or 'emotional based school refusal'. Whatever we call it, it all comes down to having high levels of anxiety lasting a long time that are unhelpful and interfere with everyday life. When anxiety moves beyond short-lived experiences and begins to interfere with everyday life, we need to know how to help.

## Why it's a problem

Anxiety can cause a wide range of problems:

Emotional	Physical	Thinking	Behavioural
Panic	Headache	Believing the worst	Unable to concentrate
Nervous	Feeling sick	You think "what if...?"	Biting nails, chewing lip
Anger	Loss of appetite	Can't think of anything else	Running away
Fear	Tense muscles	Pessimism: only see negatives	Hiding
Sadness	Shallow breathing	Unable to enjoy things	Self-harming
Shame	Feeling thirsty	Seeing yourself negatively	Eating disorders
Guilt	Increased heart beat	Needing to punish yourself	Swearing
Hate others	Feeling dizzy	Believing you are a failure	Doing drugs or alcohol
Hate yourself	Feeling hot or cold	Thinking others hate you	Hurting other people
Low mood	Sweating	Thinking you're not good enough	Being aggressive
Depression	Shaking		Freezing – can't move
	Tummy ache		Unable to speak

## How to prevent it happening

As a parent, model to your child how to manage anxiety. Reinforce the idea that anxiety is normal that we all suffer from it at times but that they possess what it takes to overcome it. Build your child's self-esteem so they feel good about themselves and know their talents and skills. Do this by encouraging them to be active physically, socially and mentally. Limit screen time and talk about how social media can cause problems. Set a good example by limiting your own screen time. Do things with your child which takes them out of their comfort zone socially. Praise their efforts and when they achieve things remind them they did this because of the effort or preparation they put in.

## How to deal with it when it happens

### Stepped exposure

The process of facing fears is called EXPOSURE, which involves gradually and repeatedly going into feared situations until your child feel less anxious. However, this needs to be stepped. If they face something too scary too soon, they will simply make their fear worse, not better. The key is to take small steps which build up towards overcoming what makes them anxious. So, for example, if they're anxious about swimming, you could break things down for your child into these steps, with each step taking place on a different day:

- Step 1: : get changed into swim wear and watch others swimming in the pool.
- Step 2: get changed and sit on the side of the pool, with their legs in the water, watching others.
- Step 3: stand in the shallow end of the pool, keeping the top half of themselves dry.

Then discuss with them what step 4 or 5 might be.

## How not to deal with it when it happens

### **Avoid avoidance!**

The most obvious thing is to avoid the situation, person or thing that makes your child anxious. However, this “solution” does more harm than good. It is true that your child will feel a strong sense of relief when you avoid what makes them anxious. But that relief is only short lived and the problem is that this short term relief makes them always want to avoid the thing. This approach means they swap feelings of anxiety for feelings of relief. The sense of relief that comes from avoiding the situation acts as a powerful re-enforcer for the avoidance of anxiety. The relief ‘rewards’ the avoidance behaviour while at the same time convincing them that they do not have the ability to handle the situation.

Over time, this increases the fear of the thing they are avoiding. What was once a genuine but small concern or worry about something grows out of all proportion to a huge dread where they have convinced themselves of the awfulness of the thing were once only were a bit worried about. When parents say things like, “I’m keeping my child off school until the college sort this out,” this simply makes their child anxious. Don’t promise a child that what they fear won’t happen — e.g. that you know they won’t fail the test — but do express confidence that they’ll be able to manage whatever happens.

## What the college can do

College staff will be keen to listen to your child’s anxieties and discuss these with them or you. We will acknowledge without validating their anxiety. We will listen to how they are feeling and be keen to plan with them, how we can support them to do the thing that makes them anxious. We will be prepared to offer them a stepped approach to doing the things that make them anxious. We will encourage them by reminding them they can overcome their anxiety.

## What the college won’t do

The college will not remove the source of your child’s anxiety. We will not remove a child from a subject, change their class or teacher or exempt them from an event which they feel anxious about unless there is a safeguarding reason or issue to address.

# Bullying

## What it is

At Wyvern, we use the Diana Award definition of bullying:

**“Bullying is repeated negative behaviour that is intended to make others feel upset, uncomfortable or unsafe.”**

## How it Works

**All** unpleasant and hurtful behaviour is unacceptable and should be reported to a member of staff. However, for it to be bullying, the behaviour needs to have three key features:

- 1) REPEATED – it takes place more than once; it is not just a one-off.
- 2) HURTFUL – it makes others feel upset unsafe or uncomfortable.
- 3) INTENDED – it is targeted against a person with the intention to make them upset, uncomfortable or unsafe.

The table below shows the 4 negative behaviours which we want you to report to us and which we will sanction. The first of these behaviours is bullying, which has all the parts to the definition above – repeated, hurtful, intended. Sometimes negative behaviour does not have all three of these things: it might be one off, hurtful and intended. Or it might be repeated and hurtful but not intentional. So, the table helps you understand the behaviours that have some but not all three of the features that make up bullying (hurtful, repeated, intended to hurt). We distinguish between these 4 behaviours because how we respond to them will be different.

<b>BULLYING</b>	Several times on purpose	One person hurts another	Planned and deliberate
<b>MEANNESS</b>	Once on Purpose	One person hurts another	Planned and deliberate
<b>UNKINDNESS</b>	Once not on Purpose	One person hurts another	Unplanned: said in the moment; thoughtless
<b>CONFLICT</b>	Once or more on purpose	Two people hurt each other	Planned or unplanned

## How to prevent it happening

We work hard on preventing bullying. In tutor time in the first term of year 7 we teach students how to identify, report and prevent bullying. This unit of work helps them develop a strong understanding of the following: what bullying is and the devastating effects it can have on victims; the ways in which good friends differ from toxic friends; how cliques, banter and peer pressure can lead to bullying within friendship groups; the reasons why bullies bully; how students can respond appropriately to it and report it safely without fear of reprisal; how by becoming upstanders rather than bystanders students take away bullies' power and opportunity to bully.

We need to your help to prevent bullying from happening in college. You can help us in the following ways.

- 1) Physical appearance is the most common theme of bullying comments. Encourage your child to have a healthy attitude to physical appearance and challenge them when they say things that suggest person's value or worth is dependent on how attractive they are. Help them develop a self-worth that is not based on how they look but on their personal qualities and talents.

- 2) Challenge your child when they describe others as weird or freak; help them understand that other students are different for reasons your child does not know and can't understand and that difference is good.
- 3) Minimise the chances your child will be picked on by developing their resilience, positive self-worth and confidence. The most powerful way you can do this is by encouraging them to take part in extra-curricular activities and clubs either in college or outside where they can achieve well and will make good friends on the basis of shared interests.
- 4) Encourage your child to be an upstander – to report things on behalf of others. The victims of bullying often do not report anything for some time as they think and hope it will go away. They also fear making things worse if they do report it. When we have a culture where students report things on behalf of others, bullies are less likely to bully; indeed their power comes from knowing, no-one will say anything.
- 5) Help your child understand the difference between “snitching” and “safeguarding”. We will teach them this and it is really helpful if you reinforce it. Bullies thrive when students believe that helping others is snitching. This word has been invented by bullies for this purpose. This is what we teach your child:

<b>1. Snitching</b>	<b>2. Safeguarding</b>
Telling a member of staff about someone you don't like to get them into trouble for things that don't affect anyone else.	Telling a member of staff about yourself or someone else who is in danger or in trouble and who needs help in order to be kept safe from hurt or harm.

When students report bullying they are not snitching, they are safeguarding.

### How to deal with it when it happens

Double check which of the four negative behaviours from above is actually taking place – is this a case of friends being mean to each other because they have fallen out? Is it an ongoing conflict where your child has also been involved in doing and saying mean things? Or is it actually bullying? All of these should be reported but these are different behaviours that need handling differently.

If from what your child has told you, it is clear they are being bullied, please reassure them they have done the right thing. Praise them for telling you – it is a brave thing to admit. You will probably feel very angry yourself but try not to show this to your child. Instead, explain calmly, that bullying can be sorted out and that you will need to let the college staff know. Your child wants reassurance and solutions from you. We do understand why they and you might be cautious about reporting: bullies usually choose to pick on people who they believe won't speak out.

The college provides students with a range of different reporting methods so they can choose the one that they are most comfortable with.

- through a parent or friend,
- in person,
- via an Anti-Bullying Ambassador,
- by the buttons in Edulink or on the school website
- by email ([bullying@wyvern.hants.sch.uk](mailto:bullying@wyvern.hants.sch.uk)).

Also discuss with your child how they can remove the opportunity for the bully to bully them again. Find out where and when the bullying takes place. Discuss with your child how these times and places can be avoided. Remind them that some places in college are especially safe – being with a group of friends, standing near where staff are on duty – there are 16 staff on duty every break with high-vis jackets on. Any space near these staff is extra safe. Think about your child's journey to and from college – how can they feel safest?



## How not to deal with it when it happens

Our own research shows that students who did not report bullying, often did not do so because they were worried about what their parents' reaction would be. They worried their parents would get angry, would make things worse by taking matters into their own hands or would cause a scene at college.

Please do not make the situation worse by telling your child they are not safe at college and keeping them at home "until it gets sorted out". Although you will feel protective of your child, this simply reinforces their fear and anxiety, makes your child distrustful of college staff and gives the bully a very visible victory – that they have power over your child – which will increase not decrease the likelihood they will bully again.

## What the college can do

We will follow up on reports of the 4 negative behaviours. With bullying we will do these things:

### **SANCTIONS**

We decide on sanctions depending on how serious and how repeated the bullying is. The sanctions are tough, including: 75 minute detentions, days sent in isolation (IER), suspensions and permanent exclusion (expulsion). We also can get the person doing the bullying behaviours to sign a behaviour contract and warn them of how the sanctions will get tougher and tougher until they stop the behaviour. We can, have, and will, permanently exclude any student who repeatedly bullies others. If a criminal offence has been committed we support parents in reporting the incident to the Police.

### **SUPPORT**

We support the person who is the target of the bullying behaviours by creating a safe and supportive environment around them. We provide safe spaces and safe people such as their Pastoral Leader, Pastoral Assistant and Anti-Bullying Ambassadors to help them. We may enforce a separation strategy where the person doing the bullying behaviour is not allowed in certain parts of the college and may be moved out of the target person's classes.

### **MONITOR**

Once we have dealt with the reported incident of bullying, we make sure that we continue to monitor the situation so that we can act quickly and more firmly if it happens again. We ask people who have been the target of bullying behaviours, and their parents, to report any further instances. We also arrange for the target's tutor to regularly check in with them to make sure that they bullying has stopped.

### **EDUCATE**

Often people bully others because there is a problem in their own life. We interview the person doing the bullying behaviour to try to understand why they acted the way they did and if they need support with a problem in their own life we help if we can. We also educate them on the negative effects that bullying can have on people. These are all things we do to try to prevent the bullying from happening again.

## What the college can't do

The college cannot guarantee that bullying will never take place. We can guarantee that we will work very hard to prevent it and to deal with it when it does happen.

We cannot just expel every student who bullies. Expulsion is a legal process which has to go through a set process and meet certain criteria. What we can do and have done is expel students or refer them to a pupil referral unit where they have not responded to the anti-bullying interventions we have done with them and have sustained their bullying.

We cannot tell you what sanctions we have given to any child who is not your own child. This includes students who have bullied your child – in the same way that we would not tell other parents what sanctions your child has got for things that have done wrong.

# Concentration and Attention Difficulties

## What it is

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder which affects the functions of the brain that control emotions, concentration, organisational skills, memory and motivation. However, many people incorrectly assume that if their child has some of these problems then they must have ADHD. ADHD behaviours can be caused by a number of lifestyle factors which when addressed can remove these behaviours. However, in cases of true ADHD lifestyle changes cannot cure or stop ADHD, although they do help the child manage them. We have included it here in this booklet because we have seen an increase in the number of parents who think their child does have ADHD when their child has in fact got ADHD behaviours due to lifestyle issues. ADHD can only be formally diagnosed and medicated by a child mental health specialist (from CAMHS).

## Why it's a problem

Although ADHD brains have the ability to do some things more brilliantly than others, they do make some things very difficult for learning. Typical behaviours associated with ADHD are:

- Physical restlessness – struggling to sit still, needing to fiddle and move.
- Impulsiveness – calling out, butting in, interfering with what others are doing, talking over others.
- Difficulties concentrating or focusing on the same thing for long; getting distracted easily.
- Short term memory difficulties – forgetting instructions, information of organisational routines.
- Students tend to live in the present and struggle to bring the experience from the past to decision-making today, nor are they able to think

## How to prevent it happening

ADHD cannot be prevented. However, ADHD type behaviours caused by lifestyle issues can be. If a parent refers their child to CAMHS for an ADHD test or diagnosis, CAMHS will first require parents to undertake a parenting course. This is designed to help parents understand how lifestyle factors can cause ADHD behaviours, to eliminate these lifestyle issues and to see if they ADHD behaviours remain or not.

**Sleep:** Teenagers need more sleep than adults: 8-10 hours. A lack of sleep makes it much harder for students to focus, concentrate, pay attention, stay work focused and process information in the classroom. It often leads to hyperactivity and irritability. It prevents students from processing their emotions, as well as their thoughts and this can mean they quickly become angry and aggressive in their response to others. Without being able to process thoughts and emotions effectively, they are more likely to take part in anti-social and risky behaviours.

**Diet:** keeping blood-sugar levels stable throughout the day by reducing sugar and increasing protein with each meal will prevent the blood-sugar rollercoaster which can affect your child's moods and behaviour. Blood sugar highs can lead to impulsivity and hyperactivity and lows present as irritability and anger.

**Water:** the brain needs water to work; even a slight lack of water can affect a person's ability to pay attention, remember, focus and concentrate. It also affects people's mood, making them more irritable.

**Exercise:** exercise helps people sleep better at night. Exercise promotes dopamine in the brain, which improves attention, concentration and focus, while decreasing aggression and impulsiveness. The ADHD Association recommends that people with ADHD exercise twice a day for 30 minutes in order to reduce their symptoms.

**Screen Time:** frequent use of digital media overstimulates the brain and causes problems that look like ADHD: inattention, including difficulties in organising and completing tasks. It can also cause hyperactivity: especially behaving more impulsively; being less able to control impulses, needing instant fulfilment and gratification. The blue lights from screens have been proved to sap the body of melatonin which we need to help us sleep so evening screen time will affect a child's ability to get to sleep and the quality of their sleep.

### How to deal with it when it happens

If you notice that your child has ADHD behaviours then assess their sleep, diet exercise, hydration and screen time lifestyle. Try to improve these things first and see whether the behaviour change.

If these lifestyle factors are all healthy and there is still a problem with ADHD style behaviours then you can refer to CAMHS but CAMHS will require you to complete a parenting course to better distinguish between ADHD and other causes of ADHD behaviours.

### How not to deal with it when it happens

Please do not self-diagnose your child with ADHD and please do not tell your child they have undiagnosed ADHD. Do talk to your child about the lifestyle factors which can cause ADHD style behaviours.

Whether or not your child has ADHD, please do not give them the message that this will mean they behave badly or give them the impression that this excuses bad behaviour.

### What the college can do

Only when parents have tried to improve the lifestyle causes of ADHD-style behaviour, will we undertake a screening of ADHD – this is not a diagnosis but simply a consultation with teachers on whether we are seeing ADHD in college.

For students who do have a diagnosis of ADHD or who have had a positive screener undertaken by Wyvern staff, we can make reasonable adjustments to their daily routine. We can offer the use of movement breaks, the use of fidget toys, the use of the all-weather pitch for exercise in both breaks and adjustments to the length of tasks and the pace of learning in lessons.

We may ask you whether your child has suffered any trauma or ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) such as bereavement, abuse, violence etc. The behaviours associated with post-traumatic stress are very similar to those caused by ADHD.

### What the college won't do

We will not give a diagnosis of ADHD – only CAMHS can do that.

We will not allow ADHD to be used as an excuse for poor behaviour when adjustments and help have been put in place to support the student.

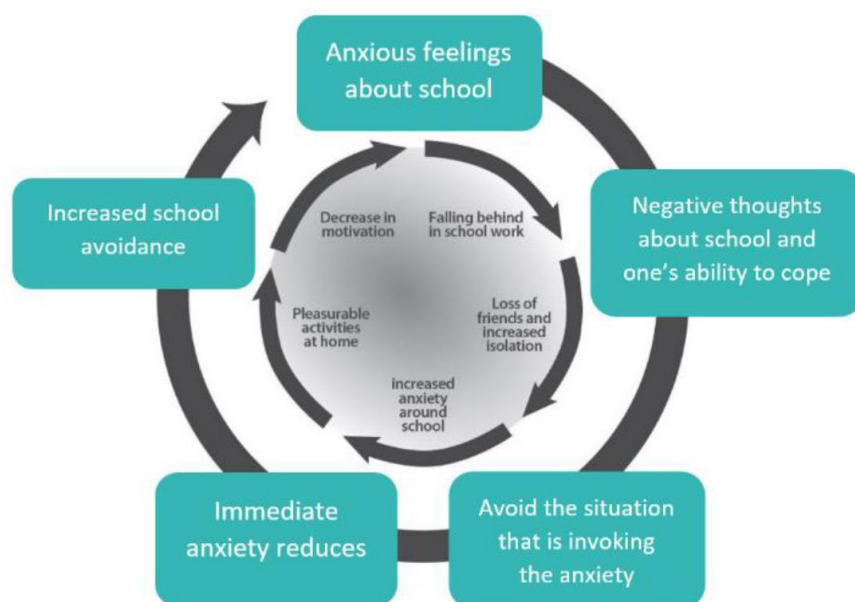
# Emotional-Based School Avoidance (School Refusal)

## What it is

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors. The phrase 'school refuser' is no longer used as it implies that the young person has control over their non-attendance when actually they struggle to have control over the emotions which prevent them from attending. Sometimes EBSA is caused by factors at school; sometimes by circumstances at home. It is a form of anxiety – please do read the section in this booklet on anxiety.

## Why it's a problem

EBSA is a vicious cycle of problems:



## How to prevent it happening

Look for and tackle the early warning signs: negative talk about school, reduced engagement in school activities worsening punctuality at school – is there change to arriving late or “just in time”?

Help your child develop a sense of belonging at college by encouraging them to take part in extra-curricular activities, to develop their interests and to meet people with the same interests as them.

Don't let your child avoid situations that make them anxious. Sometimes parents try to reduce their child's exposure to things that they find distressing, even when these things are in fact safe. For example, they may write a letter saying that their child is sick on a day they have a test their child is worried about. This gives the child the message that the distressing feelings are too hard for them to cope with and that it is better to avoid situations that make them scared. This can increase the child's anxiety.

Encourage your child to focus their attention on positive aspects of school (e.g. their friends, their favourite lesson/teacher, activities they enjoy doing) instead of the negatives (i.e. why they are finding it difficult to attend).

Talk about the importance of school to your child e.g. consider how attending school ties in with their own personal goals and ambitions, for example, having friends, getting qualifications, pursuing interests, moving towards a career they want.

## How to deal with it when it happens

One of the most important ways you can support your child is to calmly listen to them and acknowledge that their fears are real to them. Remind them how important it is to attend school and reassure them that you and the college staff work with them to make school a happier place for them.

Reassure your child that anxiety is a natural, normal feeling that everyone experiences. Irrespective of your own thoughts and feelings about school, ensure your child receives positive messages that school is safe and supportive.

Speak with your child to identify particular situations or events in school which seem to underpin their anxiety: is there a reason for wanting to be at home? Try to pinpoint any reasons for wanting to avoid college: busy corridors, toilets, changing rooms; particular subjects or teachers; other students; the work?

Provide highly structured and consistent morning and evening routines even if they are not in college, waking up at the time they would usually wake up to go to college.

Establish positive and individual time to spend with your child outside school hours and limit the attention they receive during the day when they do not attend school.

During school time, when your child is at home, ensure that the day represents school as much as possible so that home does not become a motivating factor. For example, sticking to school timings and completing activities at a table, whilst removing motivating activities such as TV or computer games

Ensure they are not spending time having 'fun' when at home.

If you can, try to get them to take small steps to coming back to college. For example, you might get them to get up at the same time as they would if going to college and put on their college uniform for the day. On the next day, you might want to get them to do that again but this time also get in the car just after college has started and spend 5 minutes watching the college from the road.

Encourage them to keep in touch with their friends from college in the evenings and weekends.

You should consider discussing any health concerns with your child's GP. This may be appropriate if their anxiety impacts upon regular attendance at school or if it occurs on top of other psychological concerns.

## How not to deal with it when it happens

It is important to avoid the cycle of blame between home, college and child. In addition to not blaming your child for their absence, please do not blame the college staff as this will heighten your child's anxiety by making college seem scary and unsupportive to them.

Do not incentivise absence from college by giving your child lots of attention during the day and by allowing your child to do fun things on the day they are not in college.

You will probably be anxious too and it's important not to transfer this anxiety onto your child.

Do not say to your child that they shouldn't feel worried. This will make them think their feelings are not valid.

Do not allow them to talk endlessly about their anxiety in depth. Doing so may inadvertently give them more attention for being anxious than for being brave;

Children can sometimes become “hooked” on adult reassurance to make them feel safe. When anxious children ask for and receive reassurance from their parents, this creates shortterm relief. However, soon the child starts to feel worried again and they ask for reassurance again. For some children, this can become a never-ending cycle, with the child relying on reassurance from their parents, instead of using their own skills to help them calm down, ultimately increasing the negative emotions. If your child asks for reassurance repeatedly, try to help them to realise that their questions are driven by anxiety. You could say things like, “ I understand you are feeling scared”. Start with acknowledging the child’s feelings.

### What the college can do

Pastoral staff can meet with you and your child to assess the causes of the anxiety; to plan the steps that will help them return to college and the adjustments that can be put in place to make this return more achievable. Your child’s return should be gradual and graded with recognition that a ‘quick fix’ is not always possible.

# Fighting and Physical Contact

## What it is

At Wyvern, we sanction the following behaviours:

- Physical contact intended to hurt or harm: this includes fighting or physically attacking someone
- Behaviour which incites physical hurt or harm e.g. pushing, shoving, tripping, bumping, play fighting (because this often escalates into actual fighting),
- encouraging fights; cheering and filming fights

We teach students that self-defence is made up of the following behaviours: blocking, pushing away, parrying, pinning students (arms to their sides – pinning to the floor or wall) when attacked. Self defence is not hitting back.

## Why it's a problem

- Physical attacks on other students are against the law and categorised as “child on child abuse”.
- Students should feel safe in school and should not be at risk of physical pain and injury.
- There are many students who witness domestic violence and abuse – witnessing fighting is triggering from them and the witnesses of violence are also victims of the physical aggression – not just the person who has been attacked.
- Students with a reputation for fighting often get dragged into other students’ business because those students want their help in resolving their own friendship issues and conflicts. They therefore end up getting into lots more trouble with other students.

## How to prevent it happening

If your child is prone to physical aggression, please let us know so we can do some anger management work with them to identify their triggers.

Physical aggression is often presented in very positive ways in the media: TV, films, computer games etc. it is worth using these to start a conversation with your child about the use of physical force and find out what their attitudes are. This is a great way to also teach your child how to resolve conflict without fighting.

At Wyvern, fighting is a predominantly year 7 behaviour; fights in older year groups are very rare. We think this might be that some students think they will establish themselves as they join the school by displaying physical dominance. It is worth talking to your child about how they earn people’s respect – by getting on with others.

The college site is heavily supervised at break times with staff wearing high -vis jackets. Students if they feel unsafe at any time can socialise with their friends near these staff or discuss why they feel unsafe with their tutor.

Very rarely does fighting just happen. It is often a response to conflict that is taking place. It is important for you to remind your child that they need to behave safely to be safe, that verbal abuse of others is not safe behaviour

Please do let us know if your child has heard threats of physical aggression or plans of fighting so we can prevent this from happening.

## How to deal with it when it happens

- The physical and emotional wellbeing of any child involved in fights is the first priority.
- Encourage your child to talk about what happened and what led to it happening. The college will be wanting statements from the students and encourage them to write theirs.
- Although you will be feeling angry at what has happened, try to remain calm when talking to your child and reassure them that this will be sorted out and they will be safe to return to school.
- Because physical assault is a crime, some parents choose to report any incidents to the police when their child has been the victim of it. Unless there is a pattern of behaviour from a perpetrator, the police will want to manage the situation back down to school level and we will investigate and sanction rather than the police.

## How not to deal with it when it happens

- Please do not take matters into your own hands and go looking for the child at college in the community.
- Please do not keep your child off college until things are resolved – this simply increases your child's anxiety about the situation.
- Please do not encourage your child to fight back, get even or get revenge.

## What the college can do

Students are taught in assembly and tutor time about the rules regarding fighting and why they exist; they learn about the sanctions that are given for it. We use this matrix to decide what sanctions will be issued.

We will assess each child's involvement in fights and use this matrix to determine sanctions:

### High Culpability

- Pre-meditated - intention to cause harm.
- Length of attack – prolonged or persistent.
- Use of substantial force.
- Leading role in a group action.
- Deliberately breaking behaviour contract terms.
- Undertaken while on return from suspension report
- Significant risk of a further, repeated attack.
- Motivated by prejudice (eg misogyny, racism, homophobia etc)
- Use of objects as weapons to cause harm.
- Previous incidents of physical aggression.
- Threats to prevent victim reporting the incident or threat of reprisals.
- Refused to comply with staff efforts to end the fight.
- Once separated, student pursued for a further attack

### High Level of Harm

- Number of injuries
- Severity of injury and pain suffered; ABH, GBH?
- High level of distress and/or fear caused

### Low Culpability

- Self-defence when physically under attack
- Reaction to sustained and deliberate provocation.
- Low level of force used.
- Length of attack – momentary.
- No risk of a further, repeated attack.
- No previous incidents.
- Genuinely remorseful; honest and co-operative with investigation.
- Has a SEND which affects the way they have responded to situations or people.

### Low Level of Harm

- No/very low level of injuries.
- No/very low level of distress.

We use this matrix to determine sanctions:

- High culpability, high level of harm: multiple day suspension.
- High culpability, low level of harm: short multiple day suspension.
- Low culpability, high level of harm: single day suspension or day in the IER
- Low culpability, low level of harm: day in the IER
- Several incidents of high culpability, high harm will result in AP or expulsion

The college will also undertake other follow up work:

- Any prejudiced motivated activity will mean students undertake restorative work.
- Where appropriate, mediation offered to students to resolve issues if ongoing conflict.
- Where appropriate, behaviour contracts and/or zoning put in place to separate students if there's a risk of repetition or the victim is distressed.



# Grooming

## What it is

Grooming is when an adult or a group of adults builds a relationship of trust and friendship with a child in order to then take advantage of them - to control and manipulate them into doing what they want. This can be sexually, by getting them to send nude or semi-nude pictures and to meet up and touch them sexually. Or it can be to groom them into buying drugs; or to convert them to extreme ideas (radicalisation) or to join criminal gangs. Grooming usually takes place on social media but it can be done in person.

Child criminal exploitation is another form of grooming, where the groomer builds trust with the child and then gets them to commit crime for them. Groomers will build the trust and then get children to do things for them which take advantage of them; often these things are wrong or illegal or things which the child would be ashamed of if known by parents, teachers and friends. The groomer often then threatens to reveal these things if the child does not continue to do what they say.

## Why it's a problem

Some groomers get children to commit crimes for them, to steal and make money through illegal activities. Groomers will often operate in online platforms where they can access children and befriend them, before taking their communications to more private spaces. Groomers often work by alienating the child from their family and friends, by creating a special "them versus us" relationship (often by treating them as an adult) and using secrets to build trust and to isolate them from their friends. Once they have the child's trust, they will use bribery, blackmail, threats and intimidation to keep the child under their control.

## How to prevent it happening

Social media providers like TikTok, snapchat, Instagram, twitter Facebook, have a clear age requirement for people to use their apps – 13. And for Whatsapp it is 16. The reason why these companies have age restrictions is to protect young people from the high risk of students encountering difficulties which includes being groomed. If you allow your child to break these age restrictions, ensure you monitor their activity as a condition for using them.

Spend time together looking at the privacy settings that can benefit their online safety. It's always best to assume that default settings are public and need to be changed. Here is a brilliant step by step guide on establishing parental controls on the different social media networks: [Social Media Parental Controls and Privacy Settings | Internet Matters](#)

Set boundaries – for example, limit the time spent on social media, or who they can be friends with on Facebook. And be clear and transparent with the reasons why.

Review apps, sites and games they use. Use them yourself and set up your own account so you can experience what your child might see.

Talk to them about being cautious about what they share with people online. Remind them that even though people they've met online might feel like friends they may not be who they say they are.

Know who your child's friends are by showing an interest in them and asking about them. Ensure they do not meet up with someone they only know online without you knowing or being there.

Regularly check their phone to find out what sites they go to, where they meet their online friends, how they communicate, and what information they share.

### How to deal with it when it happens

You can report any concerns that you have about grooming or sexual abuse directly to CEOP.  
Report it to the police: call 101 for non-emergencies or 999 if you are worried your child's in immediate danger.  
CEOP is part of the National Crime Agency and helps keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse and grooming online. If you make a report you'll be contacted by one of the Child Protection Advisors.

Reassure your child that if they have done something wrong because the groomer persuaded them to, that they will not get into trouble; that they are a victim of grooming and that the authorities will view them as a victim and they will not be punished for things they've done that are illegal or wrong. Reassure them that everyone makes mistakes and this is not their fault.

Please inform the college safeguarding team so that appropriate support can be given to your child.

### How not to deal with it when it happens

It is important not to get angry with your child, to tell them how stupid they've been or to blame them for what's happened. Groomers are highly manipulative and clever about how they take advantage of children. Do not ignore it or simply tell your child to block the groomer. This needs to be reported.

### What the college can do

We educate students on what grooming is but children still trust adults who set out to gain their trust and children cannot always see when they need to apply what they've been taught.  
If your child discloses grooming to a member of staff, we will report it to the police and contact you.  
We will offer pastoral support and care for your child if they have been groomed.  
We will offer further e-safety advice so they can be safer online.

### What the college won't do

We will not ignore disclosures of grooming – we will always report this to the police.  
We will not investigate allegations of grooming – this is for the police to do.  
We will not blame or shame students who are the victim of grooming but support them as the victims they are.

# Negative Peer Pressure

## What it is

Negative peer pressure is when your child feels they have to do things which will get them into trouble in order to fit in and feel accepted. Peer pressure often occurs in friendship groups and even as an adult it can be hard to say no to your friend whilst remaining friends with the person who is pressuring you. The teenage brain is more concerned with peer acceptance than the adult brain and more worried about being left out or seen to be different. Teenagers are therefore more likely to be susceptible to peer pressure. Peer pressure often involves one person persuading another to do or say something they know is wrong. But it can also be less obvious; sometimes students behave in a way they think their peers will want them to without their peers even saying anything to them.

## Why it's a problem

Students who cannot resist peer pressure are more likely to get into trouble and this is not just in terms of breaking college rules and being issued with a sanction; this is also true of risky behaviours outside of college. Peer pressure is a safeguarding concern as it can lead to involvement in criminal activity such as banned substances, coercive sexual behaviour and anti-social behaviour.

## How to prevent it happening

Make your child "peer-pressure proof" by encouraging them to get involved in extra-curricular activities either in college or outside of college – they will meet friends with similar interests, will gain a positive self esteem and feel socially accepted by others.

Often parents only talk to their teenager about peer pressure when something bad has happened as a result of peer pressure. It is important to have this discussion with them before anything happens, in order to prevent it from happening. One way to do this is to talk about things you've seen in the news (vaping, drugs, anti-social behaviour) and then asking them what they would do if their friend asked them to it; you can then suggest some of these things to help your child say no:

Strategy for Dealing with Peer Pressure	Examples of What to Say
Give your friend a reason why you can't do what you want them to do. Whereas strategy 1 involves you saying you won't do what they want, with this one you are saying that you can't.	"I don't want to." "Definitely not." "No thanks."
Give your friend a reason why you can't do what you want them to do. Whereas strategy 1 involves you saying you won't do what they want, with this one you are saying that you can't.	"I have to look after my brother." "I've got... ( <i>football training, scouts, piano lessons.</i> )" "I've already told Abi I would meet her" "I've been grounded recently and don't want to end up being grounded again..."
Ignore what your friend has asked you to do and divert their attention onto some other subject of conversation, especially something you know will interest them.	"I meant to tell you, I found out that..." "Did you watch the match on Saturday?"
Here, you just have to think of something different to do that would ok. You are swapping their stupid idea with an idea that would be fun to do with them but which won't get you into trouble.	"We could. Or we could..." "Wouldn't it be better if we..."

