

Appendix D: Advice for teachers when supporting a student showing anxiety based school avoidance

When teaching a student in your class who has demonstrated anxiety based school avoidance, a key step is to talk to the member(s) of staff who know the student best, which is often a member of support or pastoral staff. Each student is different and so it will be important to look at the individual's personalised plan carefully and understand what it is they find difficult and what helps them. If you have any queries, seek advice from those members of staff responsible for the plan.

Although approaches will need to be personalised to the individual, below is a list of more general strategies and things to think about that may help to support a student with anxiety based school avoidance in your class.

- Calm and positive approaches are often best, avoiding confrontation and power battles.
- Authoritarian management styles often can increase anxiety and so attempt techniques that focus on establishing a positive relationship with the student.
- Prepare work for students when not in lesson and be sure to mark and return this as it shows it is being valued.
- Be welcoming and accepting and reassure the student (at an appropriate time) that they will not have to catch up on all the work missed through absence.
- Ensure a sense of normality and consistency, avoid asking where the child has been.
- Performance-orientated classrooms can increase anxiety by creating a sense of pressure and expectation. Be aware of this and notice how the student may be feeling.
- If the student has been absent, it may be appropriate to talk to the class and tell all pupils not to ask the student where they have been. However, check with the person coordinating the support plan before doing this and someone should gain the student's view on this.
- Be aware of signs of anxiety and be flexible to respond to this. Talk to the young person about a plan if necessary, e.g. 5-minute time-out or seating arrangements.
- Consider a buddy system if appropriate and pair with a suitable student in any group situation.
- Use praise and reward but not excessively
- Work needs to be achievable and delivered at an appropriate level. Anxiety can have a dramatic impact on performance and the student's attention and speed of work may be affected. This often needs to be taken into consideration.