



## **ALDER COPPICE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

*Achievement through  
Commitment*

If you have a concern we're here to help.

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads are



**Mrs Randall**  
Key Stage 2



**Mrs Bown**  
Key Stage 1 and EYFS

## **ALDER COPPICE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

*Achievement through Commitment*

### **September 2026 SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER**

Welcome to our first monthly Alder Coppice Safeguarding Newsletter, brought to you in association with Services for Education.

Each monthly newsletter will have a different focus which we hope you will find helpful with its information, advice and signposting to further support about a range of safeguarding topics.

## **Anxiety and School Avoidance**

In this issue we will look at:

- **What's the issue?** – Understanding school anxiety and school avoidance
- **Common reasons behind school avoidance** – understanding the causes of school-related anxiety
- **Talking about anxiety** – supportive tips for talking to your child about their worries.
- **Building confidence and coping skills** – empowering your child to manage their anxiety.
- **Supporting regular school attendance** – creating routines that foster a positive view of school.
- **Signs to watch for** – identifying the early signs of school avoidance.
- **Resources and signposts** – where to find further information and advice.



## **What's the issue? Understanding anxiety and school avoidance.**

School-related anxiety and avoidance are the challenges which some children face, and they can range from mild morning reluctance to more intense feelings of distress about attending school. While occasional nervousness about school is normal, ongoing anxiety can impact a child's learning, social development and well-being. Addressing these feelings early and with support can help children feel more secure, resilient and ready to engage with school positively.

School avoidance, sometimes called "school refusal" refers to persistent reluctance or refusal to attend school. It's often rooted in anxiety or fear and can become more difficult to manage if not addressed early. Children may show avoidance in different ways, from frequent complaints of physical discomfort to more open resistance to attending school.

## **Common reasons behind school avoidance**

Understanding the root cause of your child's anxiety can make it easier to support them, effectively. Here are some of the common reasons children may feel anxious about school:

- **Separation Anxiety:** Particularly common in younger children, separation anxiety involves distress about being away from parents or caregivers. This type of anxiety is normal in the early years but can require extra support if it persists.
- **Social Pressures:** Friendships and social dynamics can be tricky for children to navigate. If a child feels left out, is experiencing conflicts with peers (or is being bullied), dislikes speaking in class or feels uncertain in social situations, they may develop anxiety about being at school.
- **Academic Pressure:** Some children may worry about meeting expectations in class, completing homework or performing well in tests. These concerns can sometimes feel overwhelming.
- **Changes in Routine:** New teachers, transitioning to a new school, or changes in home life (like moving house or a new sibling arriving) can all create anxiety as children adjust to new settings and dynamics.
- **Perfectionism:** High-achieving children who set unrealistic standards for themselves may develop anxiety, fearing they won't meet their own or others' expectations.
- **Health-related anxiety:** Especially after the pandemic, some children have heightened concerns about health, illness and hygiene, which can increase school avoidance.

## Talking about anxiety

Having open, supportive conversations about anxiety can help children to feel understood and reassure them that they are not alone in their feelings. Here are some tips to get started:

- **Create a calm space for talking:** Let your child know it's okay to share their worries and their feelings are valid. Stay calm and listen with interrupting or judging.
- **Name the feeling:** Help children to label their emotions. This can give them a better understanding of what they are feeling and a sense of control.
- **Share your experience:** Share a time when you felt anxious or nervous and explain how you managed it. This can help children to see anxiety is normal and can be overcome.
- **Reassure and support:** Let your child know it's okay to feel anxious and that there are ways to manage these feelings.
- **Get creative:** Some children often find it easier to open up through drawing, painting or making things. You could also create visual representations of emotions to encourage conversations.



## Building confidence and coping skills

Developing coping skills can empower children to manage anxiety when it arises. Here are some strategies you might try at home:

- **Create a comforting morning routine:** Consistent morning routines provide a sense of security and predictability. Incorporate a calm activity like reading a book or doing just a short activity your child enjoys to set the tone for the day.
- **Use visual clues:** For younger children, visual clues like stickers, charts or drawings can help them feel prepared for the day. A morning “countdown” chart for instance, can guide them through each step to get ready to make the transition smoother.
- **Practice Relaxation Techniques:** Teach your child some simple relaxation techniques like deep breathing, visualisation or gentle stretching. These can help calm the body and mind before school.
- **Encourage positive self-talk:** Guide your child to replace negative thoughts (“I can’t do this”), with positive affirmation (“I’ll try my best” or “I can handle this”). Positive self-talk will boost their confidence and feeling of control.
- **Break down the day:** Help them view the school day in manageable chunks rather than one overwhelming event. This may make it feel less daunting.
- **Focus on strengths:** Reinforce your child’s abilities and interests, whether they are academic, athletic, or artistic, it will help to build their self-esteem.
- **Reach out:** Whether it is your child’s teacher or a member of our Pastoral Team, we have experience of supporting children and different methods that may work for you and your child.

## Supporting Regular Attendance

Attending school does not only support your child's academic achievement, ensuring that their education is in line with national expectations, but it also builds and develops social skills and positively impacts upon their own mental and emotional health. It is therefore important to reduce any existing anxiety and encourage regular attendance.

- ✓ Stay positive about school
- ✓ Collaborate with staff
- ✓ Set realistic goals and expectations
- ✓ Encourage developing friendships
- ✓ Celebrate any achievements, no matter how small



## What to look out for

Early recognition of school avoidance and help parents to intervene constructively.

Here are some of the signs which may indicate school-related anxiety:

- Physical complaints: Children may report frequent stomach aches, headaches or nausea, especially before school. If these symptoms disappear at the weekend, this is a good indication.
- Resistance to getting ready for school: Reluctance to get dressed, eat breakfast or leave the house may indicate underlying anxiety about school.
- Mood changes: Increased irritability, clinginess or sadness in the morning or as the school week approaches can be linked to school avoidance.
- Withdrawing from school discussions: If your child seems unusually quiet or disinterested when discussing school or upcoming school activities. It may signal anxiety.

If any of these signs are consistent, consider starting a gently conversation and reach out to school for further help and support.

### Further resources

- Young Minds – <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/school-anxiety-and-refusal/>
- Action for Children: Parent Talk - <https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/school-life/school-behaviour-wellbeing/coping-school-refusal/>
- NHS information and advice - <https://londonwaitingroom.nhs.uk/school-anxiety-and-refusal>





