

NFIS PARENT SURVEY (May 2018)

1,661 parent responses

Attendance: 25.6% of parents have children attending school with anxiety/mental health difficulties. A further 18.4% have children attending with SEND difficulties.

Influences: Inadequate SEND support (73.7%), Cognitive Difficulties (60.9%) & Pre-existing Anxiety Disorders (51.8%) are considered highly influential.

Social Anxiety and Friendship Difficulties are a concern for 70.2% of parents. Other significant influences are the School Environment (73.7%), School Culture (62.3%), Academic Pressure (62.4%) & Bullying (44.3%).

Educational Provision: School adaptations (reduced timetable or changes to the environment) have been tried by 67.9% of parents and schools. 34.7% of parents had been provided with homework by school. Alternative provision has been provided – via home tuition (11.6%); hospital school (4.1%); PRU (4.7%); SEN school or unit (12.2%) and funded online school (4%). 6.4% of parents are funding online school themselves, while 22.3% are home educating. 17.8% of parents have children not currently receiving any educational provision, and 12.4% have children currently too unwell to access any education.

Fil: Almost a fifth of parents (18.4%) report they have been accused of Fabricating or Inducing Illness (Fil) in relation to their child's difficulty with school attendance.

Forced Attendance: Almost half (45.5%) of parents in the survey state that they have forced their child to attend school as they felt under pressure to do so. 21.2% felt this pressure but had refused to force attendance. When asked if they use of force had been helpful, 36% said no, and 59.1% said it has made things much worse. Only 0.4% of parents thought forcing attendance did help and 4.5% thought it might have helped.

Blame: The results show a tendency to blame school attendance difficulties on poor parenting (55.5%) and/or a child's negative attitudes towards school (60.8%).

NFIS WEBSITE

<http://notfineinschool.org.uk>

- * 'CONTACT US' form
- * Resources for Families
- * Resources for Professionals
- * Articles written by Parents, Young People & Professionals
- * Information, Action, & Research Pages
- * Surveys and Petitions

FACEBOOK

Not Fine in School: Family Support for School Refusal & Attendance Issues

('closed' peer support group)

www.facebook.com/groups/NFISFamilySupport/

Not Fine In School - Public Page - School Refusal / Attendance Difficulties

<https://www.facebook.com/NotFineInSchoolPublicPage/>

TWITTER

NotFineInSchool

@nfis_tweets



Not Fine in School

ACTION & SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL REFUSAL & ATTENDANCE DIFFICULTIES

School Attendance

is not an achievement to be rewarded or measured -
Non-attendance often relates to **circumstance** not choice

including Illness * Anxiety * SEND * Bullying



notfineinschool.org.uk

NOT FINE IN SCHOOL has been created in reaction to the growing number of children who are struggling to attend mainstream school.

Whether their struggle is due to anxiety, unmet Special Educational Needs, physical illness, bullying or academic pressure, many children are experiencing increasing difficulties within education systems in the UK, and in other countries around the world.

We provide support and information for families, to help them obtain appropriate provision for children & young people struggling in school.

We aim to promote policies and practices that allow parents and professionals to work in partnership.

We aim to ensure the individual needs of children and young people are recognised and met within suitable educational environments.



Most school-anxious/school refusing children **WANT** to attend school however their difficulties and anxiety have become overwhelming.

These children care about their education and want to succeed, however they need understanding and support at home and at school. They may need adjustments to their daily routines, timetables, or even their school environment.

Pressures to focus on attendance rather than the child's needs can make things even harder to fix.

School Refusal

- Signifies a breakdown in a child's sense of trust in the adults around them
- This can occur when a child is physically forced to attend while anxious and distressed
- It can also be a result of significant breakdown in trust amongst peers (e.g. through bullying), which is intensified when the adults involved do not remedy the problem
- This breakdown eradicates the sense of safety and security a child has at school; thus activating survival behaviours (fight/flight/freeze) which lead to avoidance/refusal
- This breakdown in relationships disrupts a child's attachment development
- Where such a breakdown is significant, ongoing or severe it is classed as trauma



Let's work together to resolve school attendance difficulties - early intervention is crucial!

Ask a Professional

Is This Child Really 'Fine' in School?

If you are a professional who is describing a child or young person as 'fine in school' please ensure:

- * You have a good **working definition** of the word 'fine'
- * You have **gathered evidence** as to why you make this assumption
- * You have listened to and considered descriptions of their difficulties by **someone who knows them well**
- * You have considered the impact of any **diagnosed or undiagnosed / suspected SEND**
- * You have considered the possibility that s/he may be **masking their difficulties at school** ('Masking' is common as children try to fit in and not risk drawing attention to their distress)
- * Also consider the relevance of the '**Fight, Flight, Freeze or Submit**' range of reactions to stress and anxiety
- * You have considered the impact of your assumption on the child or young person's **overall well-being**

Please consider the implications of describing a child or young person as 'fine' when they may not be.

This could include them being:

- * Less likely to be able to attend school regularly
- * Less likely to be diagnosed or receive treatment
- * More likely to be harmed by inappropriate expectations
- * More vulnerable to bullying
- * More vulnerable to deteriorating mental/physical health.
- * At risk of further long term difficulties

Please remember:

- * Any difficulties are unlikely to go away without the use of **reasonable adjustments** or **specific interventions**
- * Disputing their difficulties denies the child and family **access to relevant support**, including SEN funding, top up funding, an EHCP, and ultimately a suitable education
- * The SEND Code of Practice emphasises the need to **listen to and work with children and their parents**