



Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools
'A place to belong, grow and succeed'

A Parent/Carers' Guide to Anxiety



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This guide is designed to help you support your child, whether they are experiencing social anxiety or general worries. At Harlington and Sundon Lower Schools, we understand that anxiety can present differently at home and at school. We are on your team to ensure your child feels safe and successful.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural human response—it is our ‘fight, flight, or freeze’ system acting to keep us safe. However, for some children, this ‘alarm’ goes off too easily or stays on too long. Common signs include:

- **Physical Symptoms:** Tummy aches, headaches, rapid breathing, or feeling ‘butterflies.’
- **Avoidance:** Trying to avoid specific social situations, school, or new experiences.
- **Emotional Changes:** Being extra tearful, irritable, or ‘clingy.’
- **Reassurance Seeking:** Asking the same questions repeatedly (e.g., ‘What if you forget to pick me up?’).
- **Social Withdrawal:** Finding it difficult to make eye contact or speak in groups.

What does the school do that supports children with anxiety?

Many of the things that we do in our schools as common practice for all children also benefit children with anxiety. We prioritise creating a predictable environment where every child has a ‘trusted adult’ they can turn to:

- **Predictability:** We use visual timetables and clear routines to reduce the ‘fear of the unknown.’
- **Safe Spaces:** We provide ‘calm zones’ and use ‘Worry Monsters’ where children can record their fears or worries.
- **Safety Displays:** Posters around the school remind children who is responsible for keeping them safe.
- **Time to Talk:** We offer small group or 1:1 sessions for children to discuss their worries in a low-pressure setting.
- **Active Listening:** Our staff are trained to listen to your child’s concerns without judgment, reflecting back what they hear to ensure the child feels understood.

What else can the school do?

If your child requires more tailored support, we can offer further specialised interventions:

- **MHST Involvement:** We can share support from the Mental Health Support Team (MHST), including programmes like 'Helping Your Child with Anxiety.'
- **Gradual Exposure:** Helping children face small fears in a controlled, supportive way.
- **Check Ins:** Organise regular check-ins with a teaching assistant or our Social, Emotional and Mental Health worker.

What can I do at home?

- **Be Ready to Listen:** Explore what your child is worrying about and how it presents.
- **Validate, Don't Dismiss:** Instead of saying "There's nothing to worry about," try: "I can see you're feeling worried, and I'm here to help you through it."
- **Avoid 'Surprise' Reactions:** Sometimes children behave differently at home than at school. Share these differences with us so we can see the whole picture.
- **Model Calm:** Children often pick up on adult emotions. Practise calm breathing techniques together.
- **Establish Routines:** Just like at school, a consistent 'Now and Next' routine at home can make the world feel much safer.





What might the next steps be?

- If concerns persist despite the strategies put in place, please arrange a meeting with your child's class teacher. They may then refer the child to the school's SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator).
- We may complete a consultation request for the Mental Health Support Team and/or to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for specialist support.

Where else I can get support?

- **YoungMinds:** Excellent advice for parents on childhood anxiety (www.youngminds.org.uk).
- **Childline:** A safe place for children to talk about their feelings (www.childline.org.uk).
- **Anna Freud Centre:** Resources for supporting mental health in families (www.annafreud.org).

We are on your team! Our goal is to make sure your child feels supported and empowered to manage their worries. Please share what you are seeing at home so we can build a consistent bridge of support. Please know that we are here to support you just as much as we are here to support your child. Our shared goal is to see your child thrive.