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| **TO PERSONALISE THIS LETTER**  **BLUE TEXT** = fill in child’s name/ other details (and **delete the blue text**).  **RED TEXT** = choice of paragraphs (**delete those that are not applicable**)  **REMEMBER to DELETE this box before sending/printing** |

Your address

Date

RE: [Your child’s name and school class details]

[If emailing, do you need to ‘cc’ any other relevant people?]

Dear [name of SENCo / Head Teacher / Class Teacher - as appropriate]

We are writing to request your support in relation to the current difficulties we are experiencing. It seems likely that [child’s name] is suffering from a Mental Health condition called School Refusal(also referred to as School Phobia, School Anxiety or Anxiety Based School Avoidance). School Refusal is a term that describes the reaction of children who experience extreme anxiety and distress in relation to attending school for a variety of reasons. Anxiety is a common emotion however, when a person is suffering with an anxiety disorder such as this, the feeling of anxiety is far more intense and long-lasting. Extreme anxiety of this sort can have an adverse effect on a child’s health and wellbeing and if not addressed can affect their academic progress, overall engagement with school, and lead to a gradual or sudden decline in attendance.

**[If you haven’t got a diagnosis of anxiety/SEN]**

We are doing everything we can to resolve [child’s name] difficulties however we need to acknowledge that due to the severity of the anxiety it may not be possible for [child’s name] to maintain full-time attendance until the underlying causes of the anxiety have been assessed and treated or addressed sufficiently.

We have noticed that the difficulties that are driving the anxiety and school refusal are related to

(STATE: what are the specific things that your child is anxious about)

[You could use this school stress survey and include a copy with the letter]

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/school-stress-survey-6386627>

**OR**

**[If an SEND is already diagnosed]**

We are doing everything we can to resolve [child’s name] difficulties however we think it is reasonable to conclude that [child’s name] anxiety is linked to his/her diagnosis of [……………..] and this could be a strong indication that his/her Special Educational Needs are currently not being met within the school.

**[If you want to apply for an EHCP]**

We have been advised by [IPSEA / SENDIASS / National Autistic Society / SOS SEN /other advisory source - delete as applicable] that it is advisable for us to begin the process of applying for an EHCP. According to IPSEA, Schools should trigger an EHC needs assessment where they cannot meet a child’s needs. They should do so if they don’t have the expertise or funding to identify those needs fully or to identify the provision/support the child requires. They should also do so when they know what the child’s needs are and what provision should be put in place, but they cannot make that provision. [If applicable, mention any interventions that have already been tried but not worked, discussions/meetings that have been held or other evidence you have that the school cannot meet your child’s needs]

To address anxiety effectively it is important to take advice from professionals with specific training in treating mental health difficulties in order to prevent an escalation of the difficulties, and further harm to a child’s wellbeing. To try to arrange this we have taken the following steps;

[list details of appointments with GP/ referral to CAMHS /

Paediatrician appointment / other medical evidence/involvement]

We have been informed that in addition, you should be able to arrange for the input of an Educational Psychologist. Therefore, we ask that an appointment with the Educational Psychologist linked to the school is arranged as soon as possible to assess [child’s name] difficulties and offer guidance on how school staff can offer effective support. Government guidance also recommends that schools involve their school nurse and other local specialist services who support social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

In considering how best to support [child’s name] please can we draw your attention to the following points in relation to the Disability Act, Equality Act, Children & Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice:

* Relevant mental health symptoms such as anxiety, panic attacks and depression are regarded as a mental impairment or disability under the Equality Act 2010.
* A child or young person has special educational needs (SEND) if they have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most other children and young people of about the same age. According to the SEND Code of Practice, these special needs do include social, emotional or mental health difficulties, and it is acknowledged that children who are extremely anxious need support and understanding as they will find it harder than other children to learn and access an education.
* The Department for Education has issued Statutory Guidance and non-statutory advice on *Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.* This states thatif a pupil’s absence is expected to last for more than 15 days then the school should inform the local authority who is under a duty to ensure that the child receives as normal an education as possible while he or she is absent. The local authority must start arranging the education from the first day that the school has notified them of the absence. A range of options can include home teaching, a hospital school or teaching service, or a combination of those options. A full-time education should be provided unless part time education is more suitable for the child’s health needs.

We are aware that it is our responsibility as parents to ensure our child receives an education that is suitable for his/her needs and abilities. We ask you to note that we are not preventing our child from receiving an education, it is the debilitating condition [he/she] is experiencing that is currently preventing their attendance at school. We hope that the detail of this letter offers evidence that we are doing everything possible to resolve these difficulties, and that this allows you to support us and authorise any absence on medical grounds.

**[If you want to arrange a meeting at this time]**

We would like to request a meeting so that we can discuss a suitable plan which will allow us to follow relevant statutory guidance in support of [child’s name] mental health needs and which will protect their educational progress,

Yours sincerely

Your name

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| For further information about school refusal/anxiety please see:   * <http://www.babcock-education.co.uk/ldp/absa> * <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/jcr:2fc6fd1f-ac72-447e-9130-d9cd5d0d1e2c/school-based-anxiety-information-for-schools>. * <http://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/mental-health-in-schools/> |

**Extra paragraph/s to insert if applicable**

**[If the school want to send staff to collect your child in the morning]**

We have considered your suggestion that it is necessary to come to our home in the morning to collect [child’s name] and we appreciate your attempts to help, however we are advised that this action is likely to increase the anxiety and negative feelings [child’s name] has about school and make the situation even more difficult to resolve.

We would therefore like to ask the following questions:

* Which school policies are being followed when deciding how to manage mental health difficulties in school?
* Are the suggested actions based upon advice from a mental-health professional and do you have evidence that they are recommended?
* Who will be accountable for any harm that results from actions taken by school staff?

We feel that this course of action is not the correct one to take at this current time and we ask that you take further professional advice before proceeding.