

# EXAM ANXIETY

## Guidance for Parents

It's normal for children and teenagers to feel some nerves around exams.

But for some, that pressure builds into something more significant, and it doesn't always look like obvious worry or tearfulness.

## How exam anxiety can show up at home

Exam anxiety often shows up in the body first. You might notice your child:

- Complaining of stomach aches or headaches, particularly on school mornings
- Feeling sick or dizzy before or during the exam period
- Having difficulty sleeping or feeling unusually tired
- Becoming withdrawn, irritable, or reluctant to talk about school
- Avoiding revision or expressing strong fears about failing
- Reporting that their mind "goes blank" even when they feel prepared

These symptoms are real, **even when there is no physical cause** behind them. Taking them seriously is the first and most important step.

## How you can help at home

- **Keep communication open.** Let your child know you are there to listen, without pressure to talk. Sometimes just knowing support is available is enough.
- **Focus on effort, not outcomes.** Reassure your child that doing their best is what matters.
- **Help them look after the basics.** Encourage regular sleep, balanced meals, and time away from revision.
- **Acknowledge the pressure.** Validating how your child feels can go a long way in helping them feel understood.
- **Encourage breaks.** Short, regular breaks during revision are more effective than long, uninterrupted sessions.

## When to seek further support

If your child's anxiety is significantly affecting their sleep, appetite, attendance, or ability to sit exams, it may be time to seek additional support.

### Signs to look out for include:

- Persistent physical symptoms with no medical cause
- Reluctance or refusal to attend school or sit exams
- Signs of low mood, withdrawal, or hopelessness
- Any mention of self-harm or feeling unable to cope

### If you are concerned, consider:

- Speaking to your child's form tutor, head of year, or SENCO
- Contacting your GP for advice and onward referral if needed
- Reaching out to an external support organisation

We take pupil wellbeing seriously during the exam period. If you have any concerns about your child, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the school.



## Useful contacts:

- **Young Minds Parent Helpline:**  
0808 802 5544  
(Mon–Fri, 9:30am–4pm)
- **Childline:** 0800 1111 (free, 24/7)
- **YoungMinds:** [youngminds.org.uk](https://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- **NHS:** [nhs.uk/mental-health](https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health)

