

Back to school

An example of an EP working with a child refusing to go to school

The situation

A primary school head teacher rang the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) Duty Call Helpline to discuss Harry, a year 5 boy whose school attendance had gradually deteriorated and had now reached the point where he was not going to school at all. The head teacher felt that the boy and his family would benefit from support.

What happened...

The Educational Psychologist (EP) visited the boy and his mother at home to discuss the kinds of things that might be getting in the way of him attending school and to gain his views about school. The EP, Harry and his mum made a plan that included supporting Harry to come to terms with his parents splitting up, to support him in sorting out some of his worries about friendships and to focus on positive aspects of his life. In addition, it was clear that Harry's parents were struggling to work together in parenting Harry and the EP looked at ways of providing support to them both.

What happened next...

The EP suggested that Harry's mother might attend a parenting course. This might give her some support with the frustration that she was feeling in trying to get her son to school and the feelings she had about her relationship breakdown. The EP met Harry weekly at home to give him time and space to explore his thoughts and feelings about his new family structure, his friends and his own self image. The sessions were also used to focus on Harry's self-image and to identify things that Harry felt positive about currently and his hopes for the future.

The EP liaised with Harry's mother and father in order to help them understand his feelings better. The school worked really hard to support both Harry and his mother with the morning routine and getting to school.

The result

Harry built up his school attendance until he was attending regularly: he took part in lessons and achieved well in the end of year assessments; he also joined some after school clubs which he enjoyed.

Harry started to talk more openly to both his mum and dad and they began to work together in supporting Harry and made sure that he did not feel caught in the middle of their differences.

Psychology used

Cognitive-Behavioural Psychology
Positive Psychology
Social Psychology

