

# Back to school after lockdown

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**S Q U A R E P E G**

# Square Peg & Not Fine In School



**S Q U A R E P E G**

Works to effect change for  
children with school attendance  
difficulties & their families



**Not Fine in School**

Supports & empowers parents,  
and provides information for  
parents & schools

# Not Fine In School

Closed Facebook Group for parents

170 members in January 2018

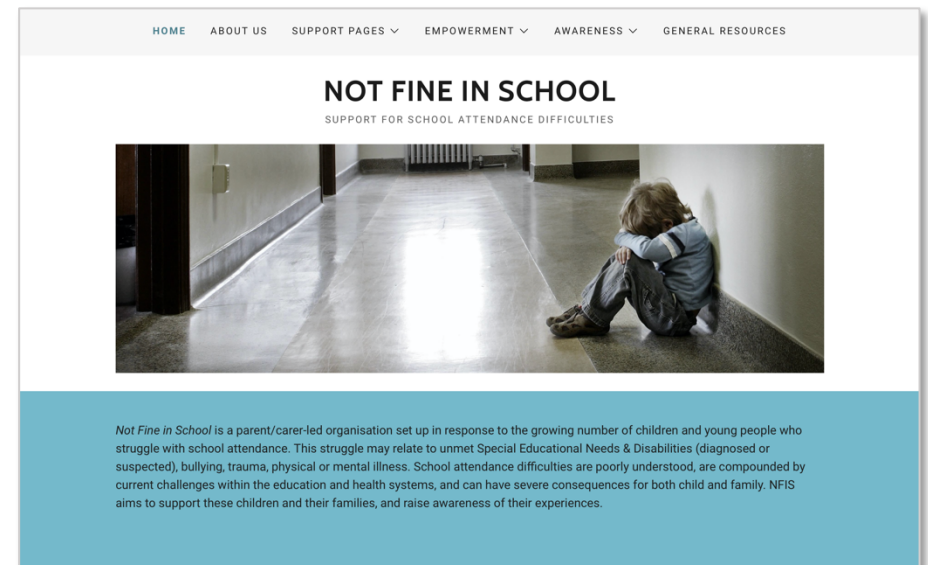
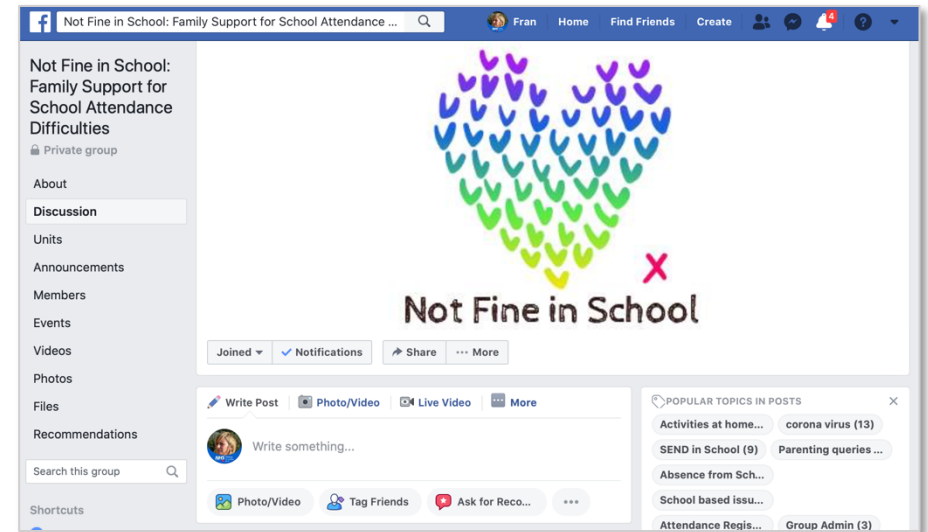
11,800 members today

Closed Facebook Group for professionals

Website

[www.notfineinschool.org.uk](http://www.notfineinschool.org.uk)

Lots of resources for parents & schools



# School 'refusal'

Not 'refusal'; it's about can't not won't

Already a growing problem pre-Coronavirus, for many reasons

Absence and exclusion are two sides of the same (unmet need) coin

The response to school 'refusal' often exacerbates problems

The statistics only measure persistent absence, and not the underlying reasons (which are often complex), the numbers are significant

**783,000**

persistent absentees  
(10%+ absence)

**385,000**

missing almost half a term  
(12.7%+ absence)

**53,700**

missing about  
half a year  
(50%+ absence)

# What helps?

1. Establishing trusted relationships; **trust** is key
2. Acknowledging that school attendance difficulties are **real**, and the level of **difficulty**, **stress** & **worry** for all concerned
3. Identifying the **underlying causes**, if possible
4. **Working in partnership with child & family** to find helpful strategies/ interventions
5. Recognising that **small things** can make a **BIG difference**
6. Being **supportive**, and realising that it might be **2 steps forward, 1 step back** at times
7. Being **flexible** and **creative** in your support strategies
8. A **whole school, ACEs-aware** approach, which will benefit ALL children

# Returning to school: a survey

790 (anonymous) respondents over 3 days in April 2020. Mainly parents, and probably parents of school 'refusers'

We asked about:

- their concerns
- what options or support they would like to see
- and about future changes or educational reforms

# Returning to school: concerns

**50%**

put the possibility of their child catching Covid-19 as their no.1 concern when schools reopen

**32%**

rated the need for mental health support as a no.1 or no.2 concern when schools reopen

**37%**

expect their child will definitely struggle to return to school, while another **18%** expect their child will be anxious to begin with

# Returning to school: support

## **flexibility**

was the predominant request for the future – with flexi-schooling, community learning hubs, online school, home education and a more flexible attitude in schools and academies

## **mental health support, testing & contact tracing, & a vaccine**

were seen as the most important options to support the return to school

**5%** of respondents said they home educated before lockdown, however

**23%** said they

intend to home educate after lockdown ends

# Returning to school: the future

**90%**

would like to see a broader  
range of educational provision  
on offer

**73%**

would like to see radical reform  
to the education system, with  
**23%** hoping for small  
improvements

**84%**

would like to see the new online  
resources made permanently  
available

# Covid-19 survey on the reopening of schools

22 April 2020



Widespread concerns are being expressed by parents & teachers in relation to the reopening of schools during the current COVID-19 pandemic. This survey was created to identify what the most significant concerns are, and which provisions will help people feel it is safe to return to school. We also included questions that could aid understanding of how the pandemic may have altered people's attitudes to our education system. Between April 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2020, 790 people responded to the survey.

## 50%

put the possibility of their child catching Covid-19 as their no.1 concern when schools reopen

**mental health support, testing & contact tracing, & a vaccine**

were seen as the most important options to support the return to school

## 32%

rated the need for mental health support as a no.1 or no.2 concern when schools reopen

## 37%

are concerned about missed transition preparations, reflecting expectations that current year 6 pupils will struggle more than other years to return

## 67%

of those who work in a school are extremely worried about returning to work (rating it 5 on a scale of 1 – 5)

## 37%

expect their child will definitely struggle to return to school, while another **18%** expect their child will be anxious to begin with

## 18%

are concerned about threatened punishments on return for work not completed during the lockdown

## 84%

would like to see the new online resources made permanently available

**5%** of respondents said they home educated before lockdown, however

## 23%

said they intend to home educate after lockdown ends

## 90%

would like to see a broader range of educational provision on offer

## flexibility

was the predominant request for the future – with flexi-schooling, community learning hubs, online school, home education and a more flexible attitude in schools and academies

## 73%

would like to see radical reform to the education system, with **23%** hoping for small improvements

# A time to reassess/1

This could be the opportunity for a much-needed **new normal**:

1. Recognise the **reality** of school 'refusal'. It's a **complex, global** problem – there are no quick fixes
2. Prioritise a **Recovery Curriculum/trauma-aware** whole school approach
3. Concentrate on **relationships**; more than ever we need **honesty** and **trust**
4. Treat the return to school as another **emotional transition**. The lack of time to prepare & the focus on practicalities are a huge concern
5. Develop online provision as a more permanent complement to school-based learning but: **equity of access, engaging content** and **interactive**

# A time to reassess/2

6. Support teachers and parents with their own stress/anxiety; this will go a long way to reducing children's anxiety
7. Be flexible and supportive. Zero-tolerance policies will not work
8. Expect masking and challenging behaviour
9. Equip individual teachers to play a crucial role in school attendance difficulties, but they will need training and agency
10. Everyone involved will need to weigh up the risks/benefits and make individual, informed decisions



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