



Anxiety in the Classroom Fact Sheet

Anxiety is....

- ✓ a fight or flight **reaction to stress**.
- ✓ feeling a **lack of control** that makes pupils **worried and afraid**.
- ✓ associated with something **specific**, like algebra or a more **general sense of uneasiness**.

Anxiety can **freeze the brain**, making it difficult to **focus on learning** new material, but also draw **on past experiences and material** that they have already learned. As you can imagine, this can make everyday classroom experiences a **challenge**.



Signs of anxiety in the classroom:

- **worrying about school performance**, to the point of **perfectionism**
- **difficulty speaking in front of** peers or teachers
- compulsive **rituals** to alleviate stress or socializing with peers
- **irrational fears**.



Anxiety is not ...

- ✗ a **behaviour problem** but might lead to:
 - Attendance problems
 - Frequent trips to the toilet or first-aider
 - Disruptive behaviour
 - Inattention or restlessness
 - Difficulty answering questions
 - Struggles in specific classes/subjects
- ✗ a **core feature of other special educational needs and disabilities**, but, for example, at least 40% of pupils with ASC have heightened levels of anxiety.
- ✗ within the pupils' **control**.

Physical symptoms of anxiety can include:

- **heart racing**
- feeling **sweaty, shaky or short of breath** and **restlessness**
- **changes in behaviour**, such as becoming **overly careful** or **work avoidance**
- **Stomach upsets** and frequent visits to the **toilet**.



Anxiety in the classroom

Anxiety can trigger '**anxiety attacks**'/ '**panic attacks**'. They usually last **5 to 30 minutes**. They can be very frightening, but they're **not dangerous**. They are a type of **fear response**; an **exaggeration** of your body's normal response to **danger, stress** or **excitement**.

Ways to help pupils with anxiety...

Be aware that **telling students to relax** is **ineffective**. **Positive change** will only be achieved over **time**.

Classroom accommodations : Calming strategies e.g. taking deep breaths; identify triggers to anxiety and plan lessons to avoid them (e.g. not 'cold calling' pupils to answer questions in front of the whole class).

Pupils can be referred to **Forward Thinking Birmingham** for support and advice. Direct them to drop into the **Pause clinic in Digbeth** as and when needed (link to website opposite). Give pupils opportunities to **talk** through their anxieties, support them to find their **own ways** to manage anxiety and make them feel **listened to**.

They may need **extra time** to complete exams and a **separate room**.



Other Information ...

<https://www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk/services/13-pause>

<https://www.understood.org/pages/en/friends-feelings/managing-feelings/stress-anxiety/>

https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/?gclid=Cj0KCCQjwiYL3BRDVARIsAF9E4GcdqVDAKztq2MYGv_thZJqTs7KZrUQINQYsjn96qCUSx5AVgIDAH6laAspgEALw_wcB#what-is-anxiety?