



Home and School: Spotting the early signs

Have you noticed unexplained changes in a child in your classroom?

Has a parent/carer reported that their child has 'changed?' Red flags include an unexplained deterioration in academic work, social skills, behaviour, emotions and new physical issues. The **key is to note any new difficulties that represent a change from the child's** typical level of functioning.

What are PANS and PANDAS?

PANS Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome

PANDAS Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcal Infections

PANS and PANDAS are conditions that affect the physical and mental health of children and young adults. Considered to be post-infectious autoimmune and/or neuro-inflammatory events, they develop in the wake of common infections (such as Covid-19, chicken pox, influenza, or strep A in PANDAS cases).

Symptoms may begin incredibly abruptly with children changing, overnight, from being happy and healthy to being desperately ill. It may also be the case that parents observe 'soft signs' preceding onset. Either way, symptoms such as extreme obsessive-compulsive behaviours, motor and vocal tics, severe separation anxiety and behavioural regression (such as 'baby-talk') are very common. Rage,

restricted food intake, sleep disturbance and urinary problems are also frequently observed. Children with these conditions often suffer with sensory sensitivities, hallucinations, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts.

It is not unusual in PANS and PANDAS for children to present very differently at home and at school. Many of the signs may also be difficult to observe in a school setting or could be internal such as obsessive thoughts and mental compulsions. Some children also mask their symptoms in school, and then release the pressure once they arrive home. The signs of PANS and PANDAS also cover a wide range and severity. The shifting symptoms can be very confusing for educators and families alike.

This checklist will be helpful for educational professionals to share with parents/caregivers.

Checklist for Parents/Carers

Have you noticed **unexplained changes** in your child that are affecting them both at home and at school? The **key is to note any new difficulties that represent a change from your child's normal functioning.**

Please consider these questions and discuss them with an educational or health care professional. Not all of the questions will be relevant for every child. Children can present differently at home and at school.

These are not intended to be used as a diagnostic tool. PANS and PANDAS are medical conditions and can only be diagnosed by a medical professional.



Changes in school

- Has your child's attitude towards attending school changed, for example they were previously happy to go to school and are now struggling?
- Has there been a change in how your child manages their school routines, for example organising their school bag or completing their homework?
- Has your child's ability to manage their schoolwork changed?
- Has your child changed in their ability to follow and understand instructions?
- Have you noticed any changes in their reading and maths skills?
- Has your child's handwriting deteriorated and/or do their words drift to the side of the paper?
- Have their levels of concentration changed?
- Have you noticed any memory changes?

Emotional and Development changes

- Has your child changed emotionally for example, appearing very unhappy, and/or developing severe anxiety including separation anxiety?
- Has your child developed any new behaviours, for example aggressive outbursts or becoming overly compliant?
- Have you noticed any signs of behavioural regression, for example no longer being able to complete activities independently, using a 'baby voice' or playing again with toys from a younger age?

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- Has your child changed in terms of completing self-care skills such as dressing and washing?
- Has your child demonstrated any intrusive thoughts, compulsions, or rituals? These could include for example repeated thoughts about harm coming to their loved ones or counting/retracing their steps.
- Does your child feel that they are responsible for causing harm?
- Have the changes in your child's presentation impacted on the rest of the family?

Social and Communication Changes

- Have your child's social skills changed, for example their ability to enjoy activities with friends and family?
- Have there been any changes in your child's friendships for example, withdrawing, feeling paranoid or an increase in arguments and difficulties. Is your child complaining of feeling 'worn out' after spending short amounts of time with friends?
- Have your child's communication skills changed? Can they interact in ways that are age appropriate?
- Have there been any changes in their speech for example 'using baby talk' talking less or more, muddling/confusing words or stuttering?
- Have there been any changes with how your child spends their leisure time, for example attending extra curriculum groups or activities, and/or have the activities that they choose to do at home changed?



Physical Changes

- Is your child suffering from new-onset urinary frequency and toileting accidents and/or having the sensation that they need to continually wipe themselves?
- Has your child developed any unusual physical movements such as tics?
- Has your child's sleep pattern changed?
- Has your child experienced any recent onset sensory symptoms? These can include developing a heightened sensitivity to fabrics, lights, smells and noise.
- Can your child maintain their previous levels of physical and mental stamina?
- Have you noticed any changes around their eating behaviour?
- Has your child become increasingly clumsy and/or has changed in their ability to do up their own buttons, or to write and colour accurately.
- Has your child complained of headaches, stomach aches, joint pain, vision changes or any other physical issues?



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