Systemic Practice

Types of Change

North West Children's Safeguarding Partnership

First & Second Order Change: A Script for Practitioners

"When we think about improving attendance, it can help to understand that there are two types of change we can make together.

The first is what we call first-order change.
These are the small, practical tweaks we can try straight away—like adjusting the morning routine, offering a reward, or sending reminders.
They can be helpful in the short term, but they don't usually get to the heart of what's making school hard for your child.

The second type is second-order change.
This is where we work together to understand the bigger picture—what your child is feeling, what mornings are like at home, what school feels like for them, and any pressures or worries sitting underneath the behaviour.

Once we understand that, we can make deeper changes, like adjusting parts of the school day, creating a calmer start, or changing how we communicate and support each other.
These changes take a little longer, but they're the ones that usually lead to lasting improvements.

So in our plan today, we'll aim to include both:

- something small and practical that might help quickly, and
- something deeper that helps shift the pattern and supports your child in a more meaningful way.

We'll keep reviewing together to see what's working and what needs adjusting.
Our goal is to make school feel more manageable and supportive—step by step."