



Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Good practice guidance for schools and
support agencies

West Sussex Educational Psychology Service



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Introduction

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school.

It is difficult to estimate the prevalence of EBSA. The UK literature reports that between approximately 1 and 2% of the school population, with slightly higher prevalence amongst secondary school students, are absent from school due to emotional reasons (Elliot, 1999; Guilliford & Miller, 2015). It is reported to be equally common in males and females with little evidence of a link to socioeconomic status (King & Bernstein, 2001).

The impact of EBSA on young people is far reaching. Outcomes for young people who display EBSA include poor academic attainment, reduced social opportunities and limited employment opportunities (Garry 1996, Pellegrini 2007 and Taylor 2012). EBSA is also associated with poor adult mental health, difficulties can often quickly spiral requiring inpatient treatment (Blagg 1987 and Walter et al 2010).

A previous West Sussex County Council Guidance on Emotionally Based School Refusal was produced in 2004. A multi-agency group requested that this guidance was reviewed and updated to reflect recent research and the services and support currently available.

This guidance has been produced by the Educational Psychology Service and is based on the current evidence base of the factors which are associated with positive outcomes. These include:

- intervening early
- working with parents and school staff as well as the young person
- working in a flexible manner paying attention to the individual case and function served by non-attendance
- emphasising the need for rapid return to school alongside good support and adaptations within the school environment
(*Baker & Bishop 2015*)

The Educational Psychology service has also produced information booklets for parents, children and young people and are holding a series of training events for school staff and other professionals to supplement this guidance with a practical 'toolkit' enabling them to work effectively with children and young people and their families.

This guidance, leaflets and information regarding training can be found on the West Sussex Local Offer and West Sussex Services for Schools.

<https://westsussex.local-offer.org/>

<http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Services/3282>.

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What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance?

Definition:

Emotionally Based School Avoidance is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school. A clear distinction is made between those that are absent from school due to truancing and those that are absent from school due to the specific emotional distress that they experience around attending school (Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes, 2008).

Although the literature in this area often cites the phrase *School Refuser*, this terminology could be considered misleading as the term 'refuser' implies that the young person has control over the school non-attendance. This is problematic as this terminology locates the 'problem' within the young person and detracts from environmental factors that could be considered instrumental in supporting a young person back to school:

"School refusal occurs when stress exceeds support, when risks are greater than resilience and when 'pull' factors that promote school non-attendance overcome the 'push' factors that encourage attendance"

(Thambirajah et al, 2008: p. 33).

Cause:

There is no single cause for EBSA and there are likely to be various contributing factors for why a young person may be finding it difficult to attend school. It is well recognised in the research literature that EBSA is often underpinned by a number of complex and interlinked factors, including the young person, the family and the school environment (Thambirajah et al, 2008).

However Kearney and Silberman's (1990) review of the literature indicates that there tends to be four main reasons for school avoidance:

1. To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school, such as feelings of anxiety or low mood.
2. To avoid situations that might be stressful, such as academic demands, social pressures and/or aspects of the school environment.
3. To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others, such as parents or other family members.
4. To pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time.

According to this model, the avoidance of uncomfortable feelings or situations described in the first two points could be viewed as negatively reinforcing the EBSA, whereas in the second two points, the EBSA could be seen as being positively reinforced by factors outside of school (Kearney & Spear, 2012).

Prevalence

The UK literature reports that between approximately 1 and 2% of the school population, with slightly higher prevalence amongst secondary school students, are absent from school due to emotional reasons (Elliot, 1999; Guilliford & Miller, 2015). It is reported to be equally common in males and females with little evidence of a link to socioeconomic status (King & Bernstein, 2001).

Difficulties children have in articulating their distress and the difficulties that parents and school staff have in understanding the young person's emotional experience of school are often key barriers in identifying and supporting young people at risk of EBSA (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

For some young people, the distress may be obvious in their presentation and chronic non-attendance. However for others, these difficulties may not be so easily identifiable. These young people may demonstrate sporadic attendance, missing the odd day here and there or particular lessons, or may only be able to attend school when provided with a high level of support and a modified timetable.

The onset of EBSA may be sudden or gradual. The literature suggests that there tend to be peaks in EBSA corresponding to transition between school phases (King & Bernstein, 2001).

It is also important to highlight that some young people with EBSA may appear to recover relatively quickly from the initial upsets of the morning and this can lead school staff and others to question the legitimacy of the EBSA; however it is important to hold in mind models of anxiety, as it is not unusual for the anxiety to quickly dissipate once the perceived threat is removed (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

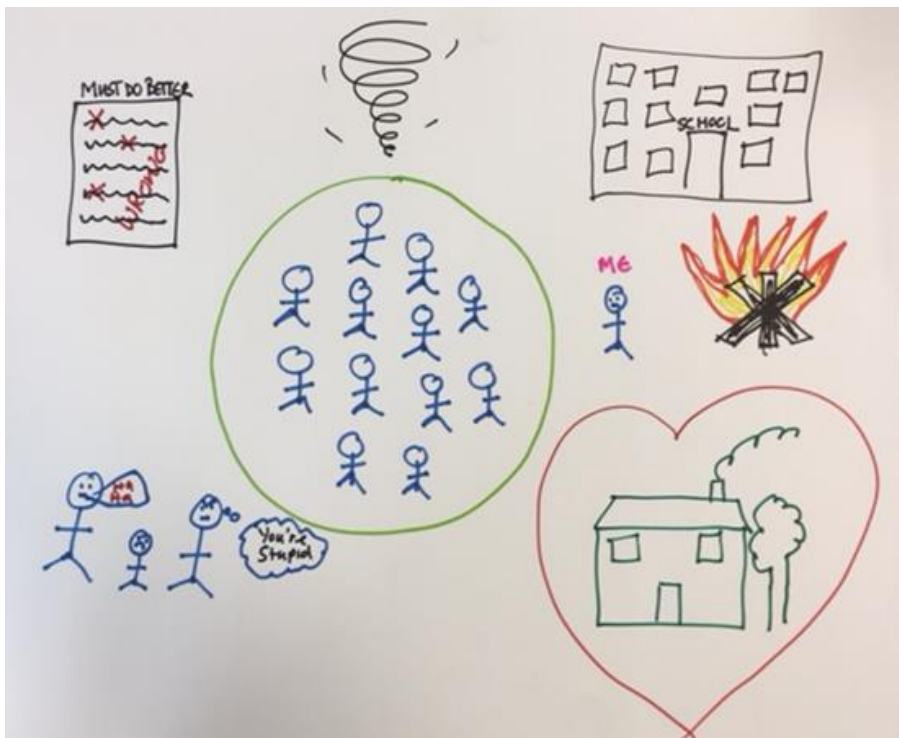


Figure 1.

Picture of a 14 year old her feelings are like a whirlwind where she is not in control, that the school is not a safe place, she worries something bad might happen, she sees school as having lots of people in it, but she is on the outside and that people are making fun of her. She has also indicated that she feels she is not doing well with her work and she loves being at home.

Anxiety and EBSA

Anxiety has also been identified as a key feature of EBSA. Although a certain level of anxiety is considered a normal and natural part of growing up, some young people may experience heightened levels of anxiety which impact on their functioning and school experiences.

When the anxiety is linked to school avoidance, the young person may experience anxious and fearful thoughts around attending school and their ability to cope with school. These feelings may also be accompanied by physiological symptoms of anxiety such as nausea, vomiting, shaking, sweating etc, and may start the night before, or even a few days before school.

In order to avoid these overwhelming emotions and the fear associated with school attendance the young person may withdraw from the situation, refusing to get ready for school or to leave the house or enter the school. The young person may also turn to hostile behaviours as a means to avoid the threatening situation and to try and control what feels like a very 'out-of-control' situation (Thambirajah et al., 2008).

These behaviours, and the avoidance of school, may then contribute to the maintenance of EBSA over time. Heyne and Rollings (2002) suggest that it is crucial to consider the child's perceptions of their ability to cope, including perceived social and academic competence, as negative thoughts about one's ability to cope can lead to further feelings of worry and if left unaddressed, may undermine attempts to improve attendance.

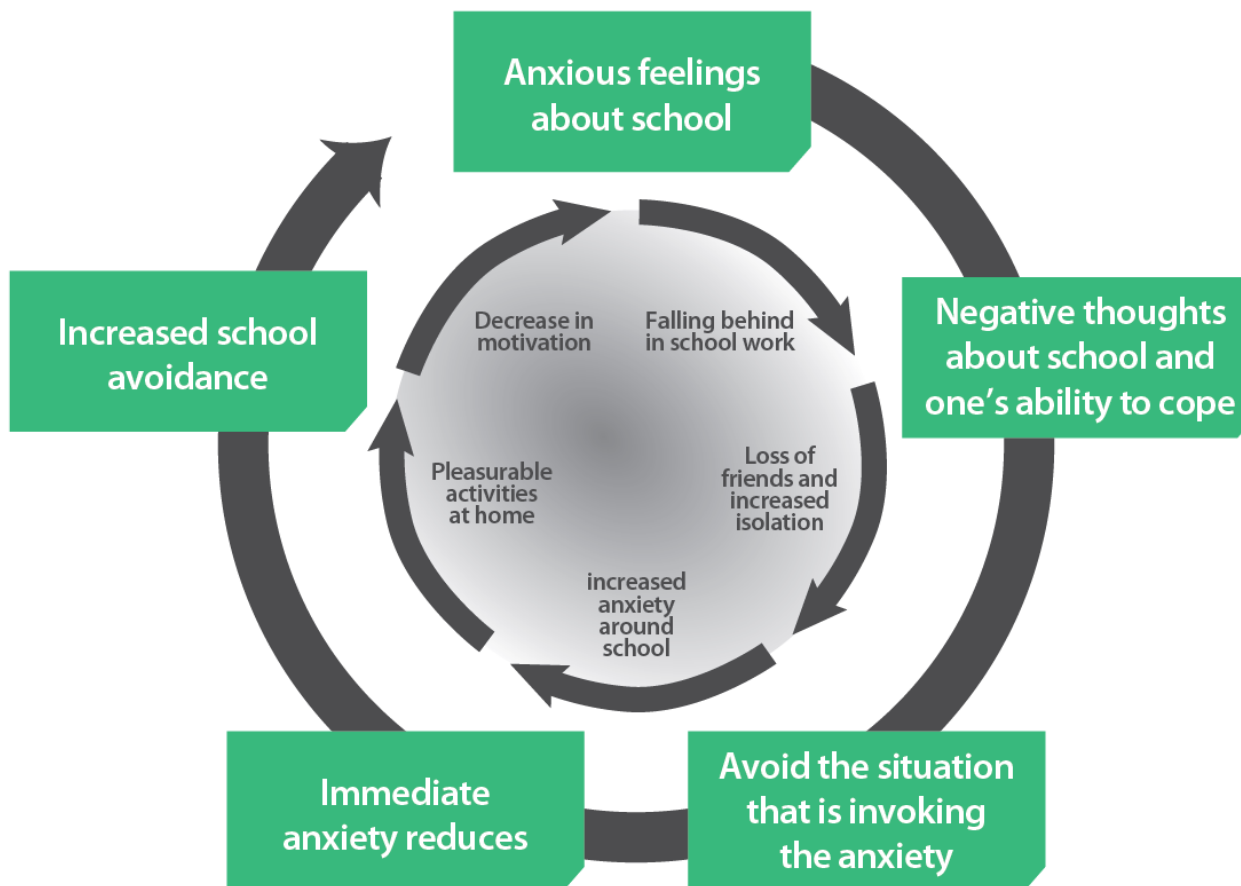
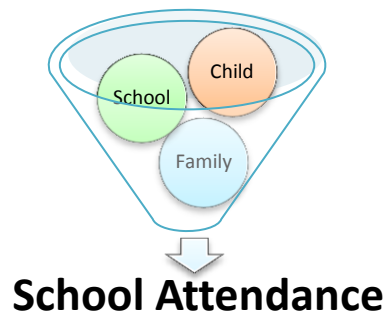


Figure 2. Diagram showing the initial anxiety causing the non-attendance and the secondary maintenance factors.

Risk and Resilience factors of EBSA

EBSA is a heterogeneous concept (Maynard et al, 2015). This means that it cannot be treated as a single condition. Different children will be hesitant to attend school for different reasons. It is usually a unique combination of various factors and their interaction rather than a single cause that leads to EBSA.

Risk: Just as with general mental health there have been factors identified that place children at greater risk of EBSA. It is usually a combination of predisposing factors interacting with a change in circumstances which leads to the pattern of behaviour described as EBSA. The predisposing factors may be present in the nature of the school, the child's family or the child themselves.



The exact nature of the predisposing vulnerability and the precipitating events will vary according to an individual child's unique set of characteristics, circumstances and experiences, but it is still possible to identify factors associated with that vulnerability and the potential triggers leading to EBSA. Being alert to these factors in relation to an absence from school can act as an early warning system enabling preventative action to be taken.

Factors associated with vulnerability of EBSA

School Factors	Family Factors	Child factors
Bullying (the most common school factor)	Separation and divorce or change in family dynamic	Temperamental style- reluctance to interact and withdrawal from unfamiliar settings, people or objects
Difficulties in specific subject	Parent physical and mental health problems	Fear of failure and poor self confidence
Transition to secondary school, key stage or change of school	Overprotective parenting style	Physical illness
Structure of the school day	Dysfunctional family interactions	Age (5-6, 11-12 & 13-14 years)
Academic demands/high levels of pressure and performance-orientated classrooms	Being the youngest child in the family	Learning Difficulties, developmental problems or Autism Spectrum Condition if unidentified or unsupported
Transport or journey to school	Loss and Bereavement	Separation Anxiety from parent
Exams	High levels of family stress	Traumatic events
Peer or staff relationship difficulties	Family history of EBSA	
	Young carer	

Resilience: When working with individuals it is really important to also identify and build areas of strength or resilience of the child, family and school which may help to 'protect' the child and promote school attendance.

This may include:

- Developing ambition, aspiration and motivation
- Increasing confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, value in themselves
- Developing feelings of safety, security and a sense of belonging
- Having positive experiences where they can succeed
- Holding positive relationships with peers or staff
- Feeling listened to and understood
- Understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Willingness to work in partnership between school, family and external professionals
- Developing parenting skills and understanding
- Flexibility of approaches within school, person centred listening to the voice of the child

Case study: Identifying risk and resilience factors

Alison has not attended school for three months. When the school nurse visited Alison, she locked herself in the bathroom and refused to answer any questions. The last time that she left the house was one month ago and her parents are becoming increasingly concerned about how isolated she is becoming.

On reflection, Alison's parents thought that her problems began when she made the transition to secondary school. Alison had always been one of the most academically able in her class in primary school, but now she found herself in the top classes where there were many more bright students to compete against. Alison's friends from primary school had gone to another secondary school in the area. Being a shy individual, Alison had not developed close friendships with any of her peers and she tended to tag along with a group of girls from her year instead. However, she was beginning to form a close friendship with one of these girls. Alison often complained of stomach aches and would ask to stay home from school or come home early. Soon before she had stopped coming to school altogether, Alison had discovered that some of the other girls in the group were making fun of her behind her back and leaving her out of social events.

The previous year, Alison's mum had received chemotherapy after a cancer scare. Although she had now been given the all-clear, she had noticed that Alison had become much more protective of her. She constantly checked where her mum was and became distressed if she was late coming home from appointments. She frequently woke up in the middle of the night after having nightmares about her mother getting into serious difficulty or becoming ill again and dying.

Now Alison stays at home all day. She does not do any work apart from some household chores for her mother. She enjoys playing with her younger brother when he returns from school and sometimes will help him with his homework. Recently, Alison's mum arranged for Alison's friend from secondary school to visit the house. This meeting went well, with Alison smiling and laughing a lot, nearly behaving like her old self.

'Push' and 'Pull'

The literature suggests that these contributory factors of 'risk and resilience' can also be divided, and understood, in terms of 'push' and 'pull' factors.

- 'Push' factors (i.e. those that push the child towards attending school)
- 'Pull' factors (i.e. those pull the child away from attending school)

The literature indicates that Emotionally Based School Avoidance is most likely to occur when the risks are greater than resilience, when stress and anxiety exceeds support, and when the 'pull' factors that promote school avoidance overwhelm the 'push' factors that encourage school attendance.

Example of 'Push and Pull' factors for Alison's case study

School	Home
<p><i>Push (towards attending school)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Academically bright- Beginning to form a friendship	<p><i>Pull (away from school, home factors)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Change in family dynamics,- Mum diagnosed with cancer- Difficulties sleeping, night mares about mum dying- Separation anxiety from parent
<p><i>Pull (away from school, school factors)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Prolonged period of absence from school- Isolated, not leaving the house- Difficult transition to secondary school- Academic demands- Social difficulties, possible bullying- Separation Anxiety	<p><i>Push (towards staying at home)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reduce anxiety around separating from mum- Reduce anxieties around attending school- Not having to complete school work

Identification, information gathering and planning

School plays a key role in the identification of children and young people who are currently experiencing, or at risk of EBSA. It is important for schools to develop effective whole schools systems to support young people, be vigilant to early indicators and employ a thorough assess, plan, do and review cycle placing the young person at the heart of the interventions.



Potential indicators

It is very important to be proactive with EBSA. The longer the problems remain unaddressed the poorer the outcome, as the difficulties and behaviours become entrenched. Schools need to be vigilant in monitoring attendance of young people noticing any patterns in non-attendance or changes to behaviours.

A Profile of Risk of EBSA can be found in **Appendix 1 Profile of Risk of EBSA**. This can help practitioners identify areas of risk. The PRE schedule looks at 5 key risk areas for EBSA. The checklist is for use alongside the usual attendance monitoring systems in school, e.g. SIMS and consideration of patterns of attendance, to screen for possible EBSA in relation to non-attendance.

Possible indicators of EBSA include:

Difficulty attending school with periods of prolonged absence

Child reluctant to leave home and stays away from school with the knowledge of the parent/carer

For younger children reluctance to leave parents or get out of the car

Regular absence without indication of anti-social behaviours

Frequent absences for minor illnesses

Patterns in absences, for example, particular days and/or subjects, after weekends and holidays

Reluctance to attend school trips

The young person expresses a desire to attend classes but is unable to do so

Anxiety on separation and inappropriate dependence on family members e.g. worry expressed about the safety of those at home

Evidence of under-achievement of learning potential

Social isolation and avoidance of class mates or peer group

Challenging behaviours, particularly in relation to specific situations at school

Severe emotional upset with excessive fearfulness, outbursts of temper and complaints of feeling ill on school days

Depression and sense of isolation resulting in, low self-esteem and lack of confidence

Confusion or extreme absent mindedness shown in school due to lack of concentration resulting in, lower attainments

Physical changes i.e. sweating, sickness, aching limbs, headaches, panic attacks, abdominal pain, rapid weight loss or gain

Where significant risks of EBSA are identified, it's really important to gather further information from the young person, parent and school staff involved with the young person and put into place strategies to support the young person as soon as possible. Swift action can prevent EBSA from becoming entrenched and result in much better outcomes. School should follow a thorough assess, plan, do and review cycle placing the young person at the heart of the planning and interventions.



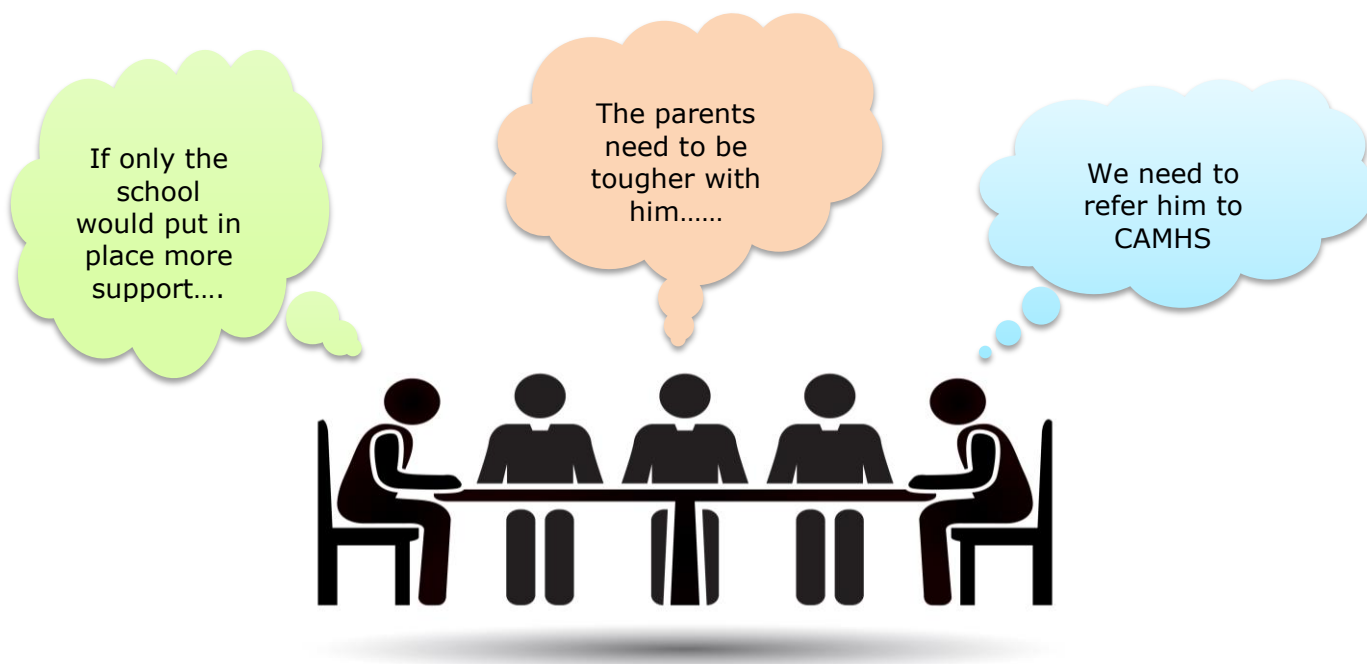
Information gathering and analysis

Once a difficulty has been identified there should be a prompt investigation into the reasons for the difficulties. In order for any intervention or support plan to be successful it is essential to gain an understanding of the various aspects causing and maintaining the EBSA behaviours.

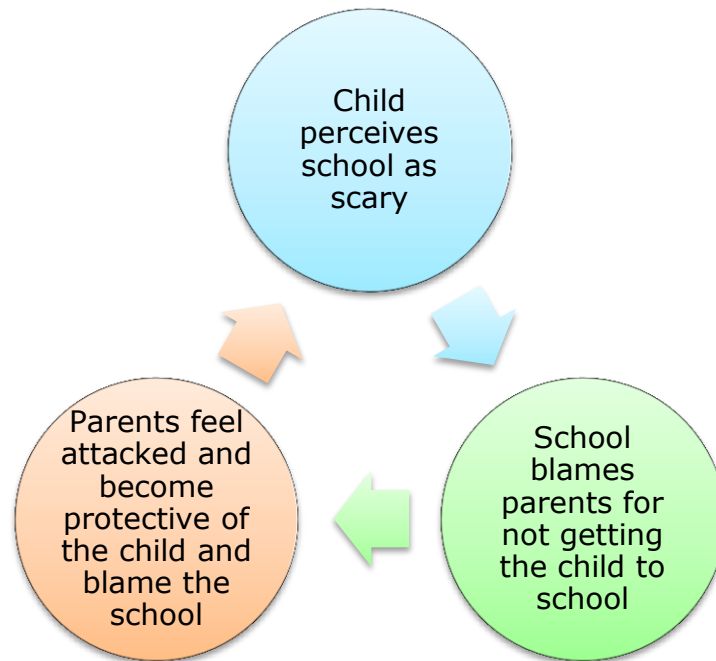
Thambirajah et al. (2008) state that the main aims of this analysis is to:

- To confirm that the child is displaying EBSA as opposed to truancy or parentally condoned absence
- To assess the extent and severity of (a) a school absence, (b) anxiety and (c) ascertain the types of anxiety
- To gather information regarding the various child, family and school factors that may be contributing to the EBSA in a given child
- To integrate the available information to arrive at a practical working hypothesis as a prelude to planning effective interventions

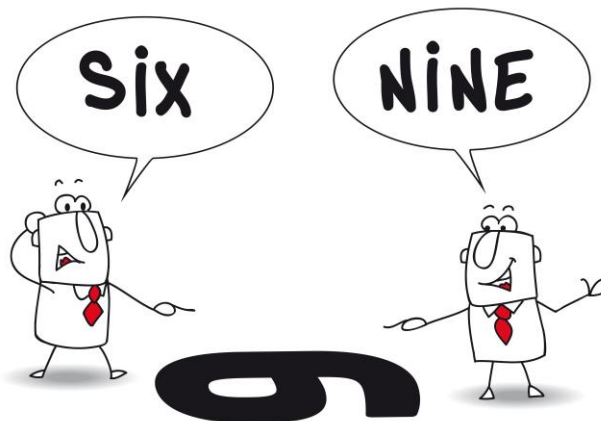
It is often tempting to try to locate a simple reason and simple solution for the behaviour



However as identified earlier it is often an interaction of a number of factors and trying to find simple causation often encourages blaming and individuals can then become anxious and defensive. Parents may feel blamed for the absences, feel that their parenting skills are being criticised and they may be fearful that they will get into trouble or even prosecuted for non-attendance. Children may feel guilty or scared that they will be forced to attend school.



Each person may have a different perspective on EBSA and have a different story to tell. It is essential that different people's views are respected and differences in views are acknowledged. When there is a difference of views it is often more helpful to focus on how the behaviour is occurring rather than why.



Due to the complex nature of EBSA no fixed 'assessment process' can be followed. However in all cases it is essential that the views of the young person, the family and key school personnel are gathered and listened to.

Working with the child

Any child currently avoiding school will become anxious when asked to discuss returning. They currently manage feelings of anxiety by employing the avoidant behaviour of not going to school, so any talk about going back to school is going to raise their anxiety as you are proposing to take away their way of coping with their fears. A good place to start any assessment with a young person is to acknowledge it may be difficult but you would like to know what they think and feel. It is important that the adult does not dismiss anxieties or worries the child has, empathise with the young person but do not collude or promote the EBSA.

The approaches taken will depend on the child's age, level of understanding and language. Even if they are able, often children find it difficult to verbalise what they are thinking and feeling and they may prefer to draw what they are feeling or have visual prompts.

Some example activities or questions could include:

Think about your thoughts and feelings about school and what these would look like if they could be drawn?

It also helps to externalise the anxiety:

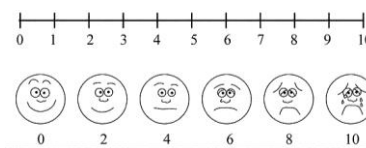
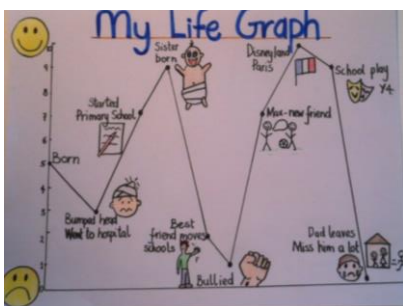
- What name would you give the feeling that you experience when you think about going to school?
- If it was a thing, what would it look like? What would it say?
- How does the get in the way of you attending school? When is in charge and when are you in charge?

Ask them to draw how their body feels when they are worried.

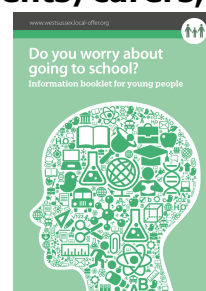
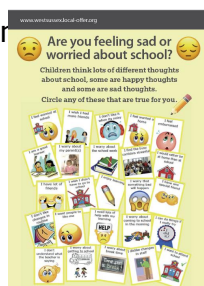
Use an anxiety thermometer or a scale to ask the child what aspects of school they find difficult some areas to consider include:

- The physical environment e.g. toilets, corridors, assembly hall.
- Times of the day or social interactions e.g. arriving at school, play and breaktimes, lining up to go into school or classroom, lunchtimes, going home, changing for PE
- Particular lessons or activities within lessons e.g. writing, working as part of a group, reading aloud, verbally answering a question

A life graph or path can help them tell you their 'story so far' and what they would want in the future.



We have also produced **Information booklets for parents/carers, children and young people.** which can support conversation



The Educational Psychology Service has developed a range of tools to help schools and professionals access pupil's views regarding school. These can be accessed via training.

EBSA Risk and Resilience cards ~ West Sussex Educational Psychology Service



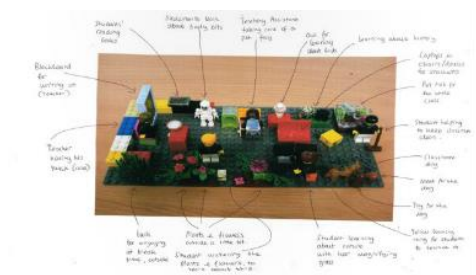
These cards can be used to flexibly explore the young person's perception of themselves in relation to school and to identify potentially helpful environmental factors which informs a support plan for the young person.

Landscape of Fear ~Kate Ripley



Mapping the Landscape of Fear is a useful tool that can be used by school staff and others to explore sources of anxiety around school attendance. It examines young person's beliefs about the physical environment, the social environment and the learning environment in school. West Sussex Educational Psychology Service has developed a visual version of this assessment.

Ideal Classroom ~Williams and Hanke & Lego classroom ~ Faye Morgan Rose



This tool uses Personal Construct Psychology. Using either Lego or drawing it elicits the child's views about school

Attendance Risk Monitoring (ARM) Schedule Pupil Interview ~West Sussex Educational Psychology Service

For more verbal young people this questionnaire helps identify possible underlying functions of the non-attendance.

Person Centered Planning



This range of approaches and tools based upon a shared set of values that can be used to plan with a person- not for them. These tools can be used to help the person or organization think about what is important in their lives and also think about what would make a good future.

Working with parents

As mentioned previously parents may find it difficult to talk about the concerns they have and the difficulties they experience in trying to get their child into school. It is important that school take time to build a collaborative partnership working together in the best interest of the child. Sometimes parents may have had similar experiences to their child and may experience their own anxiety making it especially difficult for them.

During the initial meeting it is important to gather background information, establish the current situation and the parent's views. Questions should be sensitive and the person asking should employ active listening skills, examples of questions can be found on page 16. It is advised that regular contact is made with parents; school staff should identify who will be the key person to communicate with parents and agree how they will do this.

Working with parents is essential to successful outcomes. While the focus is on the child it is also important to remember that parents may need their own support and consideration should be made to referrals to services such as Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help Service or Special Educational Needs Information, Advice and Support Service, details can be found in the **Further local support & resources** section.



Areas to cover	Example questions
Developmental and educational history	What was <i>s/he</i> like as a young child? Can you tell me about <i>their</i> early experiences at school? The primary school, at the start of secondary school?
Strengths, interests and aspirations	What is <i>s/he</i> good at? What do they like doing? Do they have any hopes for the future? Do they know what they want their life to be like when they are an adult?
Any potential changes or losses within the family or child's life	Can you tell me about your family? Who is in it, who is like whom. Who is <i>s/he</i> closest to? Have there been any changes within the family recently? (You could ask them to draw a family tree/genogram).
Relationships	Does <i>s/he</i> talk about any other children? What does <i>s/he</i> say? Does <i>s/he</i> talk about any adults within school? What does <i>s/he</i> say? Who does <i>s/he</i> get on with...who doesn't <i>s/he</i> get on with?
Academic progress	School should be aware if the young person has identified SEN needs and should ask about these needs and the support in place. If there is no identified SEN school should ask if they have any concerns, or if the child has spoken about difficulties.
The child's view what are their specific fears/worries	Has <i>s/he</i> spoken to you about what <i>s/he</i> finds difficult about school? What do they say?
The child's views, what is going well in school	Has <i>s/he</i> mentioned anything that is going well in school? (e.g. teachers, lessons, friends)
Behaviour and symptoms of anxiety	When <i>s/he</i> is worried what does it look like? What do they say they are feeling?
Typical day – when they go to school and when they don't go to school	Please describe a typical day when <i>s/he</i> goes to school from the moment <i>s/he</i> ...gets up until <i>s/he</i> goes to bed..... and when <i>s/he</i> doesn't go to school? What does <i>s/he</i> do when they do not go to school? What do other family members do?
Impact on various members of the family	How does <i>their</i> non-attendance impact on you? And on other family members? Who is better at dealing with the situation? Why?
Parental views on the reasons for the EBSA	Why do you think <i>s/he</i> has difficulty attending school? (ask each parent separately) If (other parent/ sibling/Grandparent) were here what would they say? Are there any differences of views about the reasons and what should be done within the family?
Exceptions to the problem	Have there been times when <i>s/he</i> managed to get into school? What was different about those times?
Previous attempts to address the problem	What has been the most helpful thing that someone else has done in dealing with the problem so far? What has helped in the past when things have been difficult? What strategies have been most helpful so far in managing their anxiety?

Working with school staff

It is essential that representatives from schools seek information from members of staff who work most closely with the child or young person. We all respond differently according to the environment, situations or task and with different people. Each member of staff may have valuable information to help identify triggers for anxiety and strategies the young person responds positively to. In particular it is important to seek out the views of any members of staff the young person speaks positively about and any member of staff where relationships may be more difficult.

Key information to gather includes:

- The young person's strengths?
- What is going well
- Any difficulties they have noticed
- Peer relationships
- Relationships with adults
- Response to academic tasks
- If they have witnessed emotional distress what did this look like and what caused it.
- What support or differentiation is put in place and how the young person responds to this
- Any ideas for further support.

An example of a 'round robin' form can be found in **Appendix 2 Information gathering from school.**

It is also essential to consider whether the child has unidentified special educational needs, medical needs or a disability. If they are not already involved school staff should consult with the school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO).

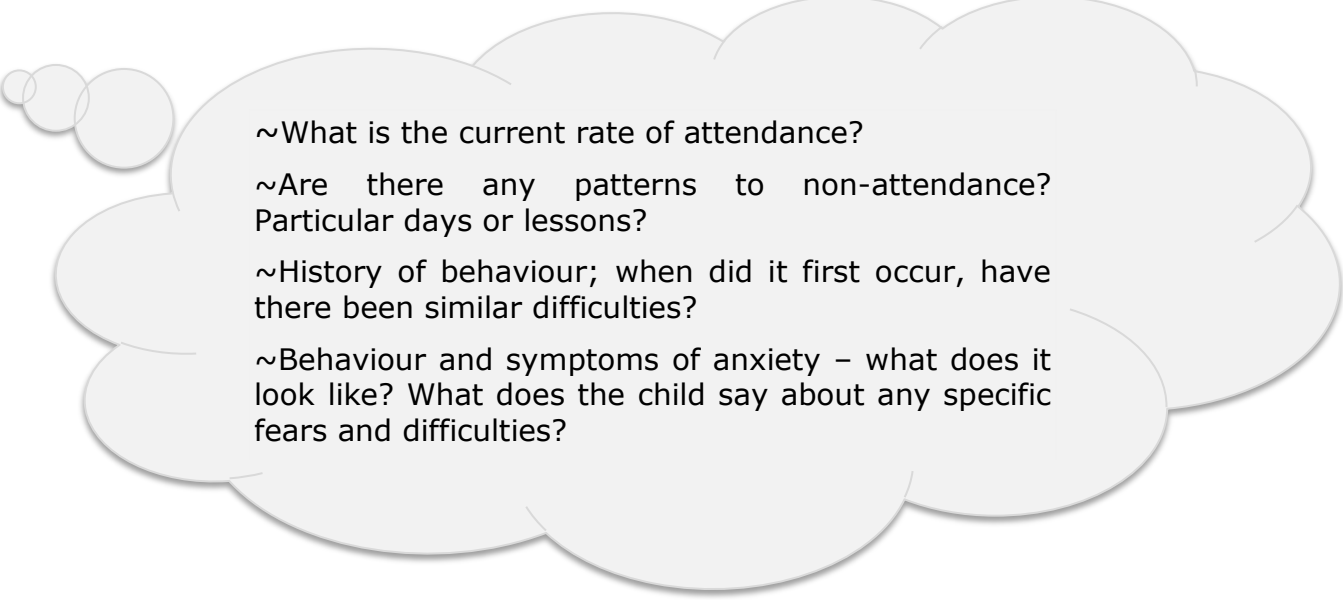
Interpreting the information and planning

Following the gathering of information from the child, family, school and any other professional it is essential that this information is gathered together and 'sense' is made of it. That an overview of the whole picture and various factors involved are obtained and potential hypothesis are formed. These should then inform the return to school support plan.

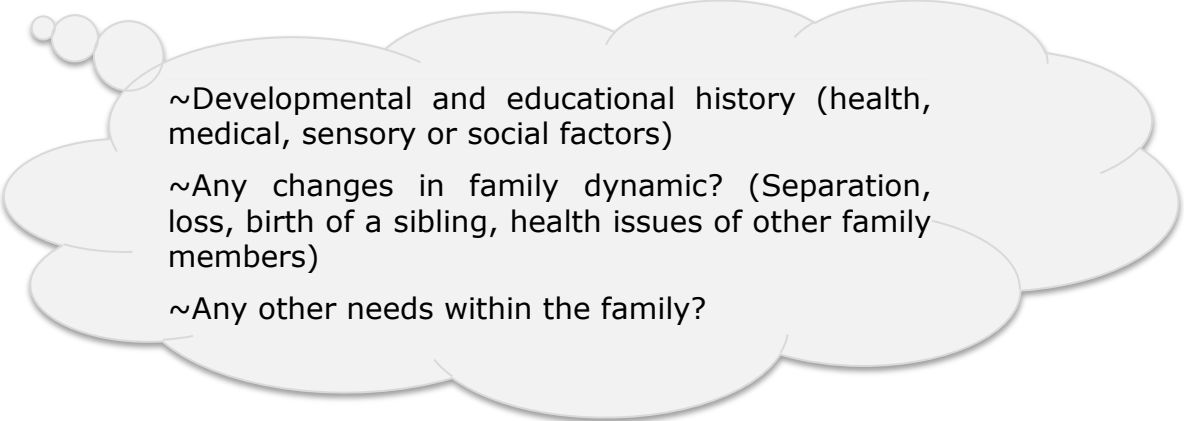
The form below is designed to help you integrate the information gathered from the young person, school and family. It is not designed to be a questionnaire but a tool to be completed after the information gathering to help you collate, integrate and analyse the information gathered from a variety of sources. A blank copy can be found in **Appendix 3 Information gathering and integration**.

At the Formulation and Integration Stage schools can access telephone consultation support from the Educational Psychology Service to assist in the identification of function of the EBSA behaviour and inform the subsequent action planning and intervention.

Description of Behaviour

- 
- ~What is the current rate of attendance?
 - ~Are there any patterns to non-attendance? Particular days or lessons?
 - ~History of behaviour; when did it first occur, have there been similar difficulties?
 - ~Behaviour and symptoms of anxiety – what does it look like? What does the child say about any specific fears and difficulties?

Risk factors school, child and family

- 
- ~Developmental and educational history (health, medical, sensory or social factors)
 - ~Any changes in family dynamic? (Separation, loss, birth of a sibling, health issues of other family members)
 - ~Any other needs within the family?

Strengths and protective factors

- ~What strengths do they have?
- ~Do they have any aspirations or ambitions?
- ~What positive relationships do they have at home and at school (peers and staff)?
- ~What positive experiences have they had at school?
- ~What was different about the times when the young person was able to get into school?
- ~What has been helpful in the past?

Formulation & integration of various factors

- ~What is people's understanding of why the young person is demonstrating these behaviours?
- ~Are there any differences of views?
- ~What risk factors have been identified (child, school and family)?
- ~What strengths have been identified that can be built upon?

What is the function of the behaviour – is it:

~To avoid something or situations that elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress (e.g. fear of the toilets; the noise in the playground; lots of people moving all together in the corridors between classes, tests/ exams)

~To escape difficult social situations (e.g. feeling left out at playtime; reading out loud in class or other public speaking/group task; working as part of a group)

~To get attention from or spend more time with significant others (e.g. change in family dynamic, concerned about the well being of parent).

To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends).

Are there any maintaining factors?

Action Planning

After the information gathering and analysis process has occurred a return to school or support plan should be made.

All plans need to be co-produced with parents, the child and any other appropriate agencies. All parties need to be signed up.

Each plan will be different according to the actions indicated by the assessment, what worked with one child will not necessarily work with another.

The plans should always be realistic and achievable with the aim of reintegrating the young person. An overly ambitious plan is likely to fail. The return should be gradual and graded and recognition by all that a 'quick fix' is not always possible. A part time timetable may be necessary as part of this process but this should always be temporary and not seen as a long term option as all children are entitled to a full time education.

All parties should be aware that there may be difficulties implementing the plan and these should be anticipated and solutions found. An optimistic approach should be taken, if the child fails to attend school on one day, start again the next day. Parents and school should anticipate that there is likely to be more difficulty after a school holiday, period of illness or after the weekend.

At the start of the plan the child is likely to show more distress and all should be aware of this. School staff and parents need to work together to agree a firm and consistent approach. Any concerns about the process should not be shared with the child a 'united front' is recommended. Any concerns should be communicated away from the child.

Schools should take an individual and flexible approach to the young person's needs. All school staff that will come into contact with the young person should be aware of the return to school plan and any adaptations to normal routines or expectations that are in place to support the child.

Once actions on a support plan are agreed with a young person, e.g. returning to school in very finely graded steps, stick to what has been agreed for that week, even if things seem to be going really well, as pushing things further than agreed can heighten anxiety, reduce trust and backfire overall.

The format of the support plan should be flexible. If appropriate a young person's version should be created. Examples of a support plan can be found in **Appendix 4 Example support plans**.

Literature has identified key elements of support that should be in place in order for re-integration action plan to be successful.

Key elements of any plan

Direct telephone contact between parent/carers and key workers in school. Agree expectations regarding frequency of contact and set realistic response times.

A return to school at the earliest opportunity.

Early home visits if appropriate to discuss the young person's reluctance to attend school.

All parties to agree to actions and keep to them until the next review period.

A personalised programme for each young person. (e.g. flexible timetable, arrangements for transport, buddying, and provision of a safe haven).

Ensuring the young person has access to an identified member of staff who can be approached if anxiety becomes temporarily overwhelming in school (i.e. a key worker).

Ensuring all staff (including supply staff) are informed about the young person's difficulties, particularly during changes of classes/key stages.

Identifying a safe place or base in school that the young person can go to if needed

Identifying a member of staff for the young person to 'check in' with throughout the day

Considering whether or not a family assessment such as an Early Help Plan would be helpful to identify whole family support

Interventions and strategies

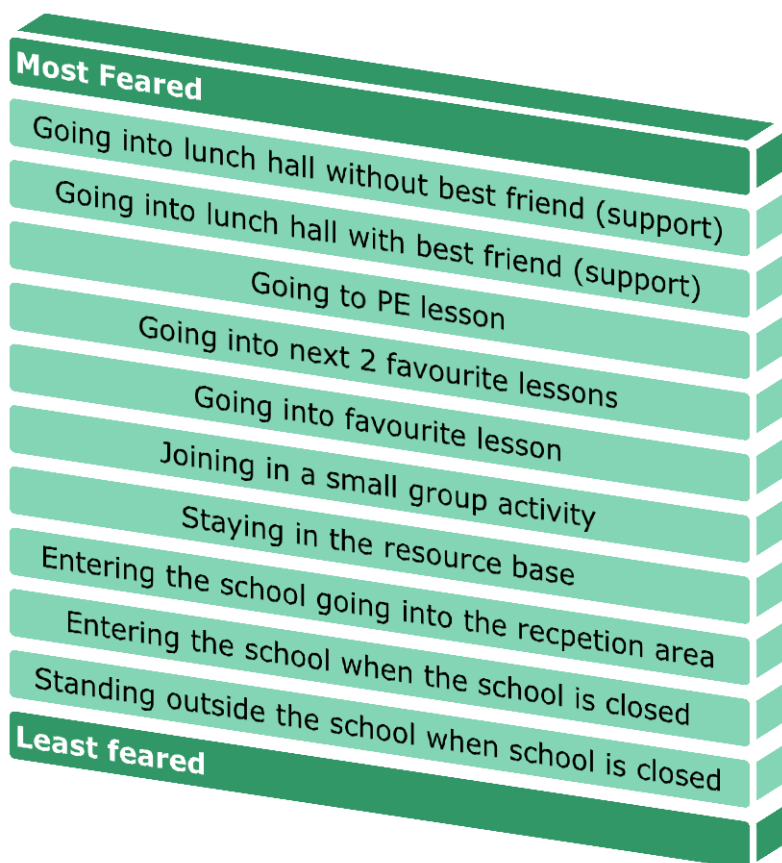
Kearney and Silverman (1990) suggest that choice of intervention should be governed by a careful functional analysis of school avoidance behaviour. They describe four types of variable which can maintain school avoidance behaviour, however several of these may be involved and their effects will be interactive. Interventions should be bespoke to the individual and based upon the information which was gathered in the assessment and integration stage.

1. To avoid something or situations that elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress (e.g. fear of the toilets; the noise in the playground; lots of people moving all together in the corridors between classes, tests/ exams)

Interventions should include learning about anxiety and worrying, how it affects our thinking, feeling and behaviour. How avoidance of the feared situation makes things worse. The child should be taught anxiety management techniques such as relaxation training and deep breathing. Links to resources to support schools in this can be found in the Resource Section.

There should be a gradual re-exposure to school setting using avoidance hierarchy created with the young person from least feared school situations to most feared. School should consider the provision of safe spaces that pupils can go to, such as pastoral zone, and library, these may be less stigmatising for some pupils than learning support area for some pupils.

Anxiety / avoidance hierarchy



For each situation the young person will need to be supported to think about:

What **coping technique** they will use (e.g. relaxation, thinking, distraction)

What **support** will be in place (e.g. key worker available, time out card, access to secure/ quiet base)

Some situations may need to be broken down into even smaller steps

To create an anxiety/avoidance hierarchy, the young person can be asked to name situations (or shown cards representing possible fears) and asked to rank them in terms of how they feel about that situation or object from least worried about to most worried about. When thinking about next steps it is important to start with the item that causes the least amount of anxiety, helping them think about how they will cope with this situation and what support they will need. When they have overcome this fear and consolidated this a number of times then they can begin to work his or her way up the hierarchy.

2. To escape difficult social situations (e.g. feeling left out at playtime; reading out loud in class or other public speaking/group task; working as part of a group)

As with the first function intervention should include learning about anxiety and worrying, how it affects our thinking, feeling and behaviour. How avoidance of the feared situation makes things worse. The child should be taught anxiety management techniques such as relaxation training and deep breathing. In addition the child should be taught social skills and given opportunities to practice coping skills in real-life social and evaluative situations, starting small and building up to most challenging. There could be pre teaching of key work missed, buddying, peer mentoring and role playing what they are going to say when peers ask about their absence from school.

3. To get attention from or spend more time with significant others (e.g. change in family dynamic, concerned about the well-being of parent).

Intervention would usually include work with care-givers supporting them to develop skills and techniques to:

- Manage the school avoidance behaviours such as tantrums or physical/ somatic complaints
- Establish morning routines
- Use problem solving techniques
- Establish positive and individual time to spend with the child outside school hours
- Focus on positive behaviours
- Limit the attention the child receives when they do not attend school
- Establish rewards for when they attend school and where appropriate consequences if they do not.

4. To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (watch tv, go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends).

Intervention would usually include:

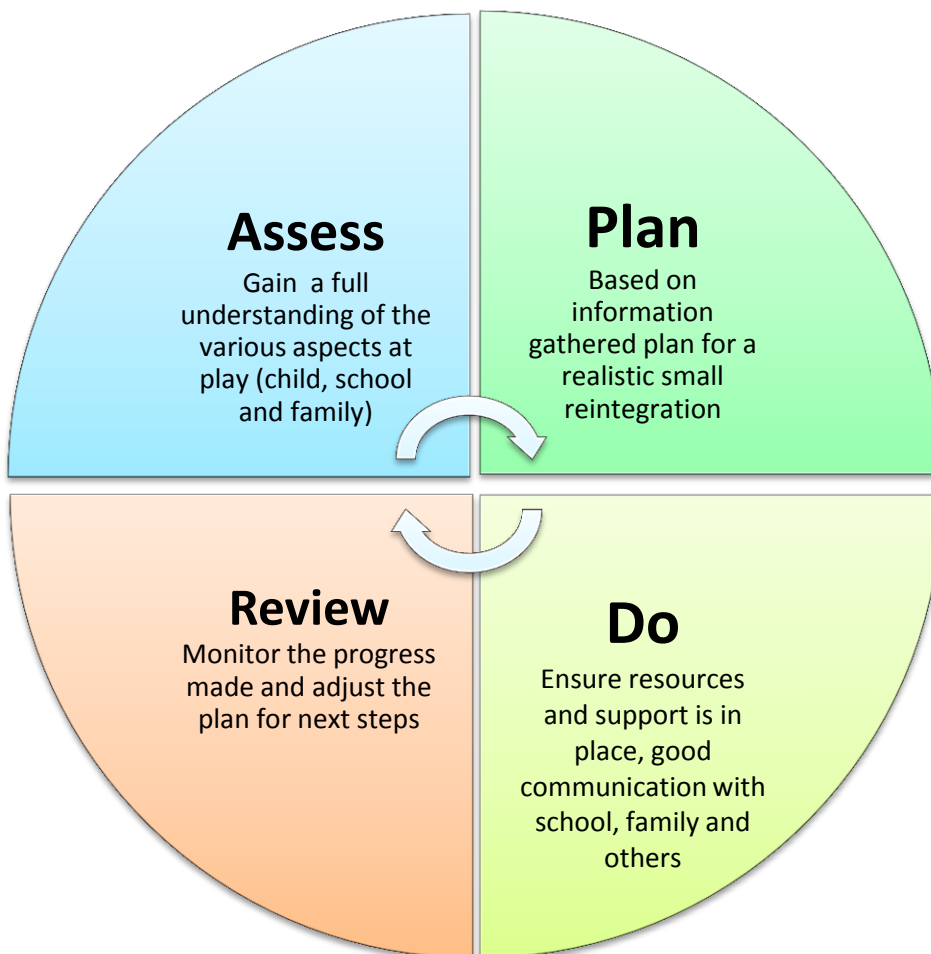
- Increasing "rewards" for attendance and disincentives for nonattendance i.e. laptop time, access to internet, phone credit, time with friends in town etc.
- Limit the attention a child receives during non-attendance
- If possible take away the more stimulating activity
- Support their travel to and from school
- Teach them how to refuse offers from peers
- Make school as stimulating as possible, find out the child or young person's interests and if possible apply this to the work completed in school.

Review

It is essential that any plan is regularly reviewed. There should be set dates for reviewing how any support plan is progressing and key personnel to attend identified. It is essential that the young people and parents are actively involved in the review.

The review should identify and celebrate any progress made, review whether further information has come to light to help inform clear next steps. These next steps can include:

- consolidating and maintaining the current support plan,
- setting new outcomes and or actions for the young person, school and parents.
- Identifying that further consultation with other agencies needs to occur which may, if necessary, lead to a referral to other services.



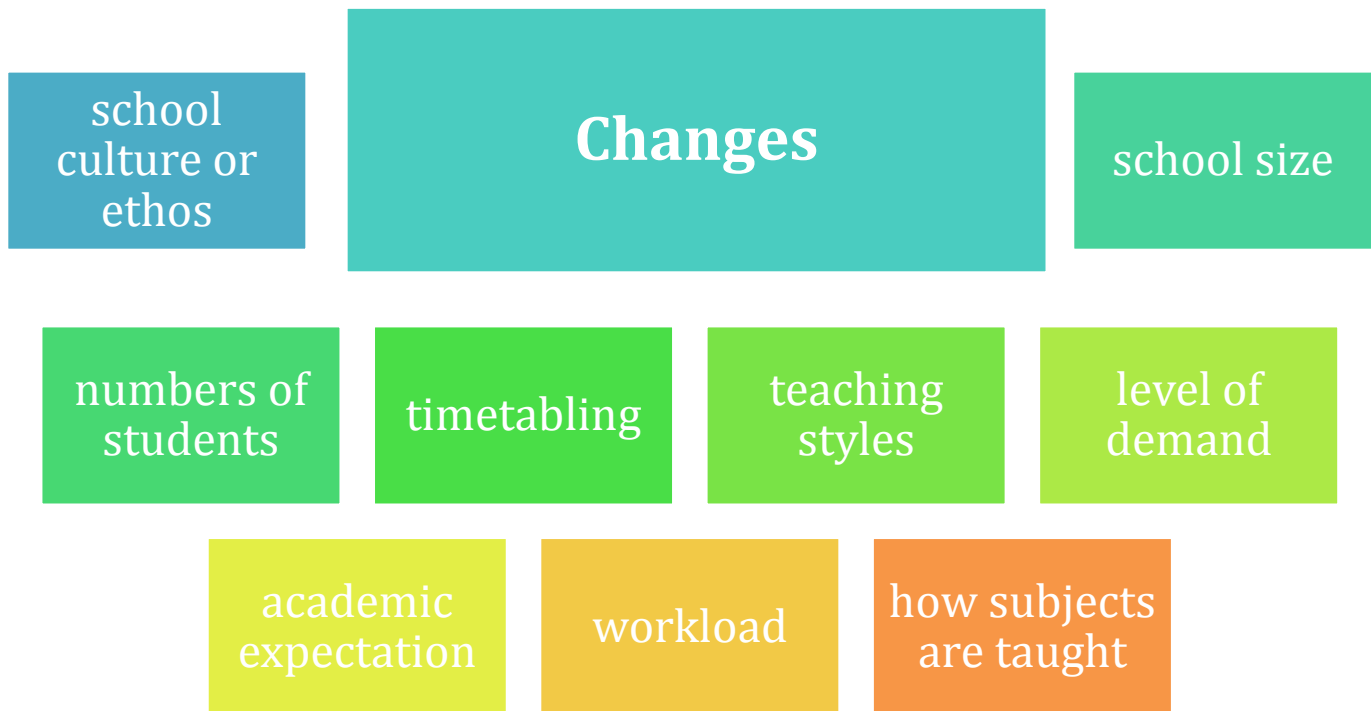
Whole school good practice

Any successful work with an individual needs to be embedded in whole school systems. General good practice for promoting emotional well-being and positive mental health also applies to EBSA. The figure below outlines the culture, structures, resources and practice within a school that can promote wellbeing of staff and young people, with particular reference to EBSA. A whole school audit can be found in Appendix 5.

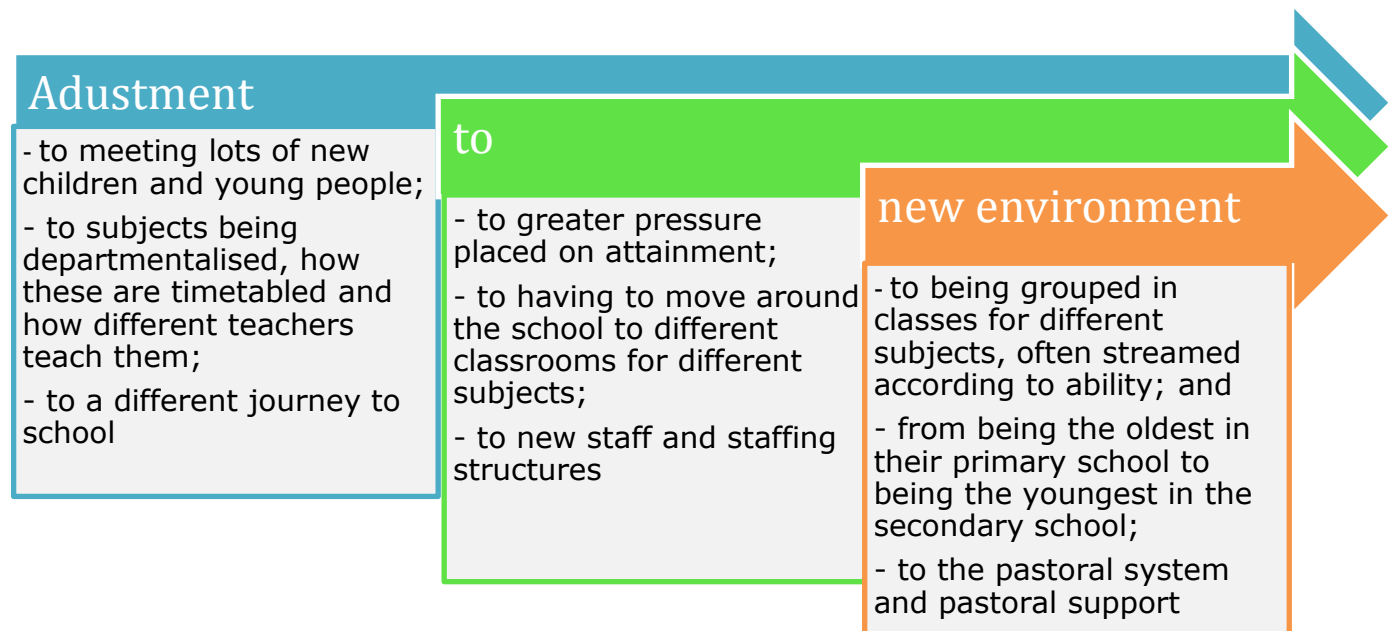


Transition

Literature has shown that peaks in the number of young people with EBSA correspond with transition in educational phases. This is not surprising as young people face significant changes.



Successful transition involves the young person being supported to be able to make adjustments to fit in with their new environment.



Most children adjust to these changes over time. However young people who experience higher levels of anxiety or who have experienced loss and separation may be vulnerable to developing or experience an exacerbation of EBSA behaviours. It is important that schools and parents provide appropriate support and any vulnerable young people are flagged up early by the feeder school and an individual approach is taken.

Good transition practice involves effective exchange of information both pastoral and academic from primary to secondary school. It is really important if feeder schools flag up any early separation difficulties and past EBSA even if the issues were mild and attendance is now fine. We advise that secondary schools should specifically ask this information on any transition gathering forms.

Good transition also involves good communication with the young person and their parents. Key to this is giving the young people and their parent's practical information.

Key information required	Practical supports
Travel to school – how will they get there	⇒ Go through journey to school, practice this, identify any companions
Key people in school	⇒ Give a simplified structure chart, provide photos, identify a key person
Environment	⇒ Layout of school – map, tour, quiz colour coding Provide maps, give tours, quiz, colour code subjects to building areas
Structure of the day timetables, break and lunchtime systems	⇒ Provide timetables, colour code these, break and lunchtime systems
Social time – supporting social interactions and those more vulnerable, bullying policies	⇒ Identify how pupils will be supported to make new friendships, access to supported social activities
Academic demands – how lessons are structured. Homework	⇒ Give information about how lessons are structured, homework expectations
Support systems in place – pastoral SEN support	⇒ Set out how young people will be supported provide one page profile
Equipment needed	⇒ Provide checklist for each day

Familiar school staff should discuss with young people and their parents what are they are looking forward to and what they are worried about and this should be individually addressed. An example of support for this are 'What if cards...'

If I don't know where my classroom is...

I will get my plan from my student planner and see if I can work it out

I will try and ask someone in my class

I will ask my teacher

If someone calls me an unkind name...

I will try and walk away and not swear or shout.

I will tell a teacher why I feel upset

My teacher will deal with it and talk to that person

What if I have nothing to do at breaktime...

I could go to the library

I could buy a snack and eat it in the dining hall

I could find my buddy

EBSA and Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)

It is well documented that anxiety and poor stress management are common in children with autism and that anxiety may worsen during adolescence, as young people face increasingly complex social interactions and often become more aware of their differences and interpersonal difficulties. As yet, there is little research into the prevalence of those with ASC and EBSA but evidence and experience suggests that due to the anxieties that the children with ASC experience they are at increased risk of EBSA.

The factors which influence levels of anxiety in those with ASC, as with any child, are multiple and often complex; associated with context blindness, executive functioning, limited theory of mind, difficulties processing language, focus on detail, sensory processing differences (Ozsivadjian and Knott 2016; Gaus 2011; McLeod et al 2015; Ting and Weiss 2017). Recent research also considers intolerance of uncertainty (IU) as a key contributing factor to anxiety in children with ASC.

Schools will be aware that they are complex social environments that children with autism can find exhausting; they are spending cognitive energy managing this social experience and can become overloaded. Indeed, their anxiety may become 'overflowing' as depicted below and place them at risk of EBSA.



Given the increased risk of a child with ASC experiencing high levels of anxiety that may lead to EBSA it is essential that there is early attention and intervention given to developing the child's social skills, emotional literacy, resilience and their ability to self-regulate. Steps to address these are set out below.

Working with the child

Evidence and experience demonstrates that anxiety levels in children with ASC can be reduced by adopting good practice approaches that are individualised to the child's specific needs including visual supports, structure, managing change and generally increasing the certainty of the school day. Further details of good practice strategies can be found in **Appendix 6 – Strategies for Young people with ASC** and should include all adults working with a child being made aware of the affect their communication style can have.

All adults working with the child:

- **Use child's name before** delivering any instructions so that they cue into you speaking to them and recognise the instructions applies to them.
- Allow additional time for the child to process verbal information and instructions (at least **10 seconds**) and avoid repeating verbally within this time.
- If repetition of the information/instruction is necessary **use exactly the same wording** as initially used.
- Use **explicit, concise language** when addressing the child as this is likely to enable them to process the information correctly.
- Use **short simple instructions**. Give them in order that they are to be completed. Check for understanding. Ask the child to repeat them back to you

Steps to Support Reducing Anxiety

Step One

Ensure that all adults working with the child have an understanding of ASC and communicate appropriately and that adults have implemented general autism 'good practice' strategies e.g. the child uses and is engaged with a visual timetable, relevant visual supports, calm space – see **Appendix** for further suggestions.

Step Two

Key to the effectiveness of any intervention is having a sound understanding of the child's needs and how ASC specifically affects the child. Consider using a tool such as;

- Pupil Progression tool - Autism Education Trust (AET 2017):
<http://www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Progression-framework.xls>
- Autism from Diagnostic Pathway to Intervention by Kate Ripley

Step Three

Plan and implement individualised, strategies to develop the emotional and social skills identified in step two. These may include those identified for children in previous chapters of the guidance or more specific strategies such as those included in the resources section.

Step Four

Review the impact of the interventions using the Pupil Progression Tool (AET) or similar. It may be that, despite the good practice and interventions, the child's anxiety continues to increase placing them at risk of EBSA and additional interventions will require implementation.

Please note that the advice in previous chapters regarding Action Planning are also relevant here and should be followed.

If there are indications that the child is at risk of EBSA it will be important to build up a clear picture of exactly what elements of attending school are increasing their anxiety in order that best endeavours can be made to alleviate the anxiety. It is recommended that the tools in Autism from Diagnostic Pathway to Intervention by Kate Ripley are used. In particular, Mapping the Landscape of Fear and planning solutions.

Schools should also consider incorporating supports based on modified cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). CBT is based on the notion that our thoughts mediate our emotional and behavioural response, implying that it is not external events such as people or situations that cause our responses, but rather our thoughts about those events. NICE (2013) recommend that CBT is considered for children and young people with autism anxiety who have the verbal and cognitive ability to engage and there is emerging and growing evidence that CBT could reduce anxiety in children with 'high-functioning' ASD.

Schools could consider using resources such as:

- The Homunculi Approach to Social and Emotional Wellbeing: A Flexible CBT Programme for Young People on the Autism Spectrum or with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties by Anne Greig
- Starving the Anxiety Gremlin by Kate Collins-Donnelly

It may also be appropriate to seek specialist, outside agency support such as The Autism and Social Communication Team.

Working with Parents

Recent studies, (Reaven et al 2012; Steensel, Zeger and Bogels 2017, Ting and Weiss 2017) emphasise the importance of the relationship between parental anxiety and anxiety in children and young people. Many parents of children with autism report that they notice their own emotions have an impact on their child's emotions and vice versa. Therefore, it important to emphasise the need for school to build a collaborative partnership with parents in the best interest of the child, as described previously.

Parents may have received minimal guidance regarding strategies to support their child and schools should consider training courses that may be available to parents e.g. **EarlyBird Plus** and **AScSURE**. In addition, the transactional nature of anxiety highlights the need for parents and carers to pay attention to their own mental health needs and parent support programmes such as the **Early Bird Healthy Minds Programme** teaches parents to take care of themselves, in order to be in the best physical and mental health to help their child, whilst also teaching them strategies to develop their child's emotional resilience. Further details available from the Autism and Social Communication Team.

EBSA, school attendance and the law

The Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on all parents to ensure that their child has an education. When this education is provided in a school setting parents must ensure their child attends regularly. If the parent is unable to ensure this they can be held accountable for an offence under S.444 Education Act 1996; failure to secure the regular school attendance of a child. The term regular has recently been defined to mean 'as prescribed by the school'. For the majority of pupils, this means attending school full time. Any unauthorised absence is therefore irregular attendance.

As with any law, the parameters are firm and the Education Act 1996 goes further as the offence is one of strict liability. This means there are only certain permitted defences the parent can use for their child missing school. One such defence is the child was unfit to attend school due to ill health. The parent must prove this to be the case. Only a Head Teacher can authorise absence from school. They may request supporting medical evidence from the parent which shows the pupil is unfit to attend school.

This request is often made to avoid the matter moving into a legal process. Medical evidence can include appointment cards; prescriptions, reports from medical professionals etc. The weight and value of the evidence is one for the Head Teacher to consider in their decision making of whether an absence is to be authorised or not.

When unauthorised absence occurs, dependent on the length and reason for the absence, the school has the option to refer to the Local Authority via Pupil Entitlement: Investigation for consideration of intervention. Pupil Entitlement discharges the Local Authorities statutory duties associated with school attendance. On receiving the referral Pupil Entitlement Investigation will gather evidence from all involved before making a decision on next steps within the legal framework. All cases are considered on a case by case basis at the point of referral and throughout the process. If there is no evidence to support a statutory defence, a case is presented to the Pupil Entitlement legal panel where a judgement is made about the most suitable form of legal intervention.

Interventions are offered within a legal framework with an investigation to establish if an offence can be proven. This can lead to a variety of actions including the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) and/or Court action both in the criminal court (offences under the Education Act) or in the Family Court when seeking an Education Supervision Order.

If the decision is made to go forward with a prosecution, consideration is given as to whether this will be the fast track pathway, a normal or an aggravated offence. The fast track route is generally deemed appropriate when support is in place for the family from other agencies, and provides a further 12 week period in which the parent is expected to demonstrate a significant improvement in their child's school attendance. Alternatively, an Education Supervision Order may be considered appropriate.

An application is made to the family court for a one year supervision order. A supervising officer is identified and their role is to befriend, advise and support the pupil and parent, in order to significantly improve school attendance. If the parent fails to meet the expectations and directions of the order, a prosecution may follow.

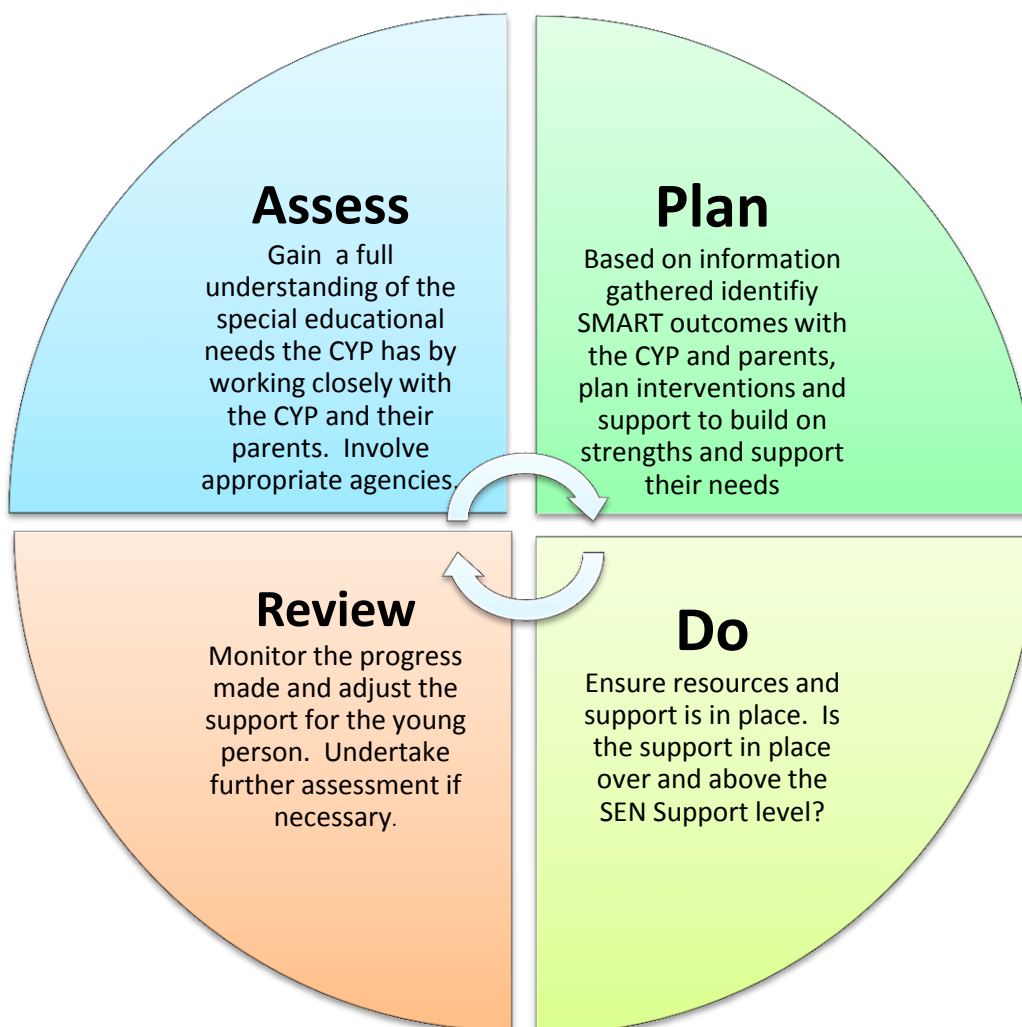
For schools with young people experiencing EBSA and struggling with attendance, it is the Head Teacher's decision whether to authorise absence or not. If a school decides to refer a student to Pupil Entitlement Investigations the expectation would be that the school will have tried an array of strategies to encourage and support the young person's attendance such as those as outlined in this document as well as requesting any supporting information from medical professionals.

EBSA and Requests for Education Health Care Needs Assessments

Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) are for children and young people who have a special educational need or disability that cannot be met by the support that is available at their school or college setting. Most children and young people with special educational needs will have help given to them without the need for an EHC Plan at the SEN support level.

In some cases children who display EBSA behaviours may have underlying special educational needs and require support above the SEN support level. If this is the case schools or parent can request that the local authority undertake an Education Health Care needs assessment.

In order to be able to decide whether an assessment should occur the Local Authority will need to see evidence that the school or college have taken appropriate action following the assess, plan, do and review cycle and there is evidence that the child or young person has not made adequate progress or has only made progress because of a very high level of support.



When a child has been displaying EBSA behaviours, the local authority will require evidence that the school has sought and followed advice from:

- outside agencies that advise schools
- health professionals
- professionals that work with families.

Examples of the services this may include can be found in the **Further local support & resources** section of this guidance.

Before making a request for an EHCNA schools should refer to:

The West Sussex Guidance and Criteria for EHC Needs Assessments.

<https://westsussex-local-offer.s3.amazonaws.com/public/system/attachments/398/original/WestSussexGuidanceandCriteriaForEHCNeedsAssessmentsRevisedDec2015.pdf>

The West Sussex Graduated Approach Guidance Document

https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information_pages/326-overview-to-the-graduated-approach

The SEND Code of Practice 2014 can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Children and young people with medical needs schools must have regards to the new DfE guidance (2015): 'Supporting children at school with medical conditions:

Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England. '

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>

Further local support & resources

Information regarding local services and organisations can be found on the West Sussex Local Offer.

<https://westsussex.local-offer.org/>

Below are key Local Authority services who can offer support to schools families and young people who may be experiencing EBSA.

Autism and Social Communication Advisory Team

We are a team of Advisory Teachers who promote the educational, social and emotional development of children and young people with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) and Social Communication Difficulties (SCD). Through partnership with parents, professionals within the educational setting and others involved with the child's development; we aim to maximise high quality local, inclusive educational opportunities for all children with ASD and SCD.

We are all qualified teachers and have additional qualifications in Autism. We provide training opportunities for schools and parents in understanding and supporting those with ASC and SCD.

The team support children and young people who are experiencing emotionally based school avoidance.

How we support EBSA

School staff can access the Autism and Social Communication Team service advice by making a request for either a telephone or face to face consultation.

How to access support

A request form is available via the West Sussex Local Offer or by emailing SchoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk.

Community Mental Health Liaison Service

The CHMLS provides an early intervention and prevention service for professionals who work with children and young people under the age of 18 who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

The team consists of qualified mental health practitioners, support workers and assistant psychologists and is managed by Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust.

The service delivers support through consultation, direct work including enhanced consultation and therapeutic intervention and specialist training.

How we support EBSA

We offer consultation to professionals from a trained mental health practitioner who can offer

advice and support where there are concerns about a child or young person's mental health. These consultations can occur through our telephone consultation line or through a consultation clinic.

In some cases an enhanced level of consultation may occur which involves a joint meeting with the child, young person and/or their family.

Some young people experiencing EBSA may benefit from direct work with the young person and their family alongside the professional using evidence based interventions such as low intensity psychological interventions. All interventions are goal based.

In addition children under 12 may benefit from a small group anxiety based intervention.

How to access support

Request for consultation are only accepted from people working with CYP not CYP themselves or their families/carers. Consultation can be accessed in the following ways:

- Consultation telephone line: 03003040304 – open Monday to Friday 12-5pm or request a call back via spnt.cmhlconsultationline@nhs.net
- Contacting your named CHML practitioner
- Booking into a consultation clinic
- Early Help Family Support Network forums

Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) promotes the development and learning of all children through the application of psychology. Educational Psychologists work at the level of the educational organisation, with individuals and groups of children, teachers and other adults in schools, families, other local authority officers, health, social and care and other agencies. Educational Psychologists have competencies in consultation, assessment, case formulation, and intervention related to children's learning, developmental, behavioural, emotional and mental health needs.

How we support EBSA

Consultation

School staff can access Educational Psychology advice via planning meetings or telephone consultation. It is suggested that after staff have gathered information they can access telephone consultation support at the **Interpreting the information and planning** stage to assist in the identification of function of the EBSA behaviour and inform the subsequent action planning and intervention.

Chargeable Services

The Educational Psychology Service can deliver training and ongoing supervision for both school and multi-agency staff on working with children and their families who display EBSA. This includes information covered within the good practice guidance and tools for working with young people and families.

How to access support

Full details on how to access the service and book on to telephone consultations can be found on the West Sussex Services for Schools Website

<http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Services/3282>

Telephone 01903 839308

Email

Area A: EPSTeamA@westsussex.gov.uk

Area B: EPSTeamB@westsussex.gov.uk

Area C: EPSTeamC@westsussex.gov.uk

Area D: EPSTeamC@westsussex.gov.uk

Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help Service (IPEH)

IPEH team delivers vital early help support and Universal services to children and families across West Sussex. The activities and staff in the IPEH services have a 'whole family' approach to support, ranging from pre-birth to 19 years old (and up to 25 years old) with families having one main contact when they need additional support. IPEH is an amalgamation of former WSCC services including:

- Early Childhood Service, including Children & Family Centres
- Think Family & Early Help
- Youth Emotional Support (YES)
- Youth Offending Service • Young Carers
- Young People's Service • Worth Services
- Healthy Child Programme (Public Health Community Nursing Service for families).

There are six geographical areas or 'Hubs' in the county, that are supported by a centrally based team, working from various venues and locations such as 'Find It Out' shops for young people and existing Children and Family Centres.

How we support EBSA

1. Advice and signposting to schools – access duty teams or attend local forum meetings to discuss how concerns relating to children, young people and families.
2. Access to a range of group offers and one to one targeted intervention through an Early Help Plan.
3. Drop in services for young people and families.

How to access support

Information regarding referral routes and contact details

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-and-health-information-for-professionals/children/early-help/>

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/childcare-and-early-education/search-for-family-activities-and-support/>

Adur & Worthing AdurFSN@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk or WorthingFSN@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk
Duty Line 07841 867340 (Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 9.00-16.00)

Arun ArunFSN@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk
Duty Line 07860858654 (Tuesday to Friday 10.00-16.00)

Chichester ChichesterFSN@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk
Duty Line 07860858616 (Wednesday & Thursday 10.00-14.00)

Crawley CrawleyFSN@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk
Duty Line 07542856334 (Monday – Friday 9.00-16.00)

Horsham HorshamFSN@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk
Duty Line 07525 211177 (Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9.00-16.00)

Mid-Sussex MidsussexFSN@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk
Duty Line 07561845187 (Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9.30-11.30)

Learning and Behaviour Advisory Team

We are a team of Advisory Teachers who provide expertise in special and additional educational needs to children, young people, families and schools in order to improve children's educational outcomes and emotional well-being.

We are all qualified teachers and have additional qualifications, experience and knowledge in communication, interaction, cognition, learning, social, emotional and mental health needs and removing barriers to learning. We provide training opportunities for schools in all areas of our expertise, for example dyslexia, dyscalculia, Team Teach, speech and language, Down syndrome, ADHD and behaviour.

How do we support EBSA

School staff can access the Learning and Behaviour Team service advice by making a request for either a telephone or face to face consultation.

How to access support

A request form is available via the West Sussex Local Offer or by emailing SchoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk

Pupil Entitlement: Fair Access

The fair access team is the gatekeeper of commissioned places at the West Sussex Alternative Provision College. WSAPC offer home based learning, (Blended Learning) usually computer based learning program supported by visiting mentors. School remain very much in contact with the pupil through an initial planning meeting and regular half termly review meetings. Integration back to school is supported by WSAPC.

How we support EBSA

If a pupil's non-attendance is medically based and pupil is supported by a consultant, school can apply to the Fair Access Team for Blended Learning.

How to access support

School needs to complete a fair access referral form and evidence with a consultant's letter indicating the pupil is too sick to attend mainstream, giving a diagnosis, treatment plan and recommendations for the provision required with timescales.

fairaccess@westsussex.gov.uk

Pupil Entitlement: Pupil Investigation

The Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team's role is primarily to discharge the Local Authorities statutory duties associated with school attendance.

We offer advice and guidance to schools and families on attendance matters and investigate referrals made by schools to consider if a child's poor attendance should lead to legal action.

In addition, the Elective Home Education (EHE) team sits within Investigations. EHE is where a parent removes a young person from the roll of a school to take responsibility for all aspects of the child's education themselves.

The EHE team offer basic advice on guidance to parents on how to provide a suitable education provision and will determine at a later date if that provision is effective.

How do we support EBSA

We can advise both parents and schools on the legal framework around any associated school absence.

We can offer parents considering Elective Home Education the opportunity to discuss this option to ensure they are able to make an informed decision.

How to access support

General questions around school attendance, including the use of penalties, can be answered by Pupil Entitlement Investigation (PEI).

Email: pei@westsussex.gov.uk

Tel: 0330 222 8200

For questions or advice regarding Elective Home Education;

Email: ehe@westsussex.gov.uk

Tel: 0330 222 3300

Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service - SENDIAS

The West Sussex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS) provide impartial information, advice and support to parents and carers of children who have special educational needs and/ or a disability. The service aims to encourage partnership between parents, school, social care, LA, health and other agencies.

How we support EBSA

Impartial advice, information and support to parents/carers of pupils with SEND. Service also has YP advisers who can work directly with YP and their families as appropriate.

How to access support

Helpline : 03302228555 Mon – Fri 9-4 pm

Email: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk (parents) CYP.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk (Young people)

Youth Emotional Support - YES

YES offer a voluntary service for young people (11 – 18th birthday) that help them to identify, acknowledge and work through difficulties they may be facing that are having a negative impact on their emotional wellbeing.

How do we support EBSA

“Yes” promote emotional wellbeing in young people supporting them to develop strategies to better manage anxiety using a variety of different techniques/ tools which are tailored to young people. Alongside one to one support “Yes” provides anxiety workshops that run in school holidays. They are part of the offer to those young people referred to our service.

How to access support

Information regarding referral routes and contact details

Website: www.yourspacewestsussex.co.uk

Duty line: 033302226711 Mon – Fri 9.30 – 4.00

Referrals via GP, school nurse, CAMHS and self-referral through our Find it out Centres

Further resources

Anxiety Management

- **Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People** By Kate Collins-Donnelly
- **What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety** By Dawn Heubner
- Information about Anxiety Young Minds
https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI0NyXycXX1wIV7LDtCh0sBQ5pEAMYAyAAEqKEWfD_BwE
- **Mighty Moe** by Lacey Woloshyn
<http://www.cw.bc.ca/library/pdf/pamphlets/Mighty%20Moe1.pdf>
- Worksheets for anxiety – Anxiety BC
<https://www.anxietybc.com/parenting/worksheets>
- Anxiety self help guide – Mood Juice
https://www.mcgill.ca/counselling/files/counselling/anxiety_moodjuice_self_help_guide.pdf
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Skills Training Workbook – Hertfordshire Partnership NHS
<http://inabook.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CBT-workbook-good-to-use.pdf>
- **Anxiety** by Paul Stallard -Examples of activities
<http://tandfbis.s3.amazonaws.com/rt-media/pp/resources/CBTCHILD/worksheets.pdf>
- Understanding anxiety and panic attacks Mind
https://www.mind.org.uk/media/1892482/mind_anxiety_panic_web.pdf
- The Anxious Child: A booklet for parents and carers wanting to know more about anxiety in children and young people.
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/anxious-child>

General Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Literature

- **Managing Your Mind: The Mental Fitness Guide** By Gillian Butler and Tony Hope (for older young people)
- **Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life for Teens** By Joseph V. Ciarrochi , Louise Hayes and Ann Bailey.
- **Stuff That Sucks: Accepting what you can't change and committing to what you can** By Ben Sedley
- Promoting Emotional Resilience - Toolkit
<http://hbtg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/KAN-Emotional-resilience-toolkit.pdf>
- **The Thriving Adolescent: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Positive Psychology to Help Teens Manage Emotions, Achieve Goals, and Build Connection** By Louise Hayes
- Feeling Good: Promoting children's mental health Centre for Mental Health
<https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=5614ec71-49db-46ca-9dfa-82a85f4ecdfc>

- Parent survival guide
<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-survival-guide/>
- **Dealing with Feeling** by Tina Rae. Published by Lucky Duck
- **I am special** by Peter Vermeulon. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- **A Volcano in My Tummy** by Elaine Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney.
- **Emotional Literacy assessment and intervention** by Southampton Psychology Service. Published by GL Assessment Limited. (Available for both Primary and Secondary)
- Online course on how to support young people with mental health difficulties
www.minded.org.uk
- MindEd for families :
MindEd for Families has online advice and information from trusted sources and will help you to understand and identify early issues and best support your child.
<https://www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html#/>
- MindED for professionals:
MindEd has e-learning applicable across the health, social care, education, criminal justice and community settings. It is aimed at anyone from beginner through to specialist.
<https://www.minded.org.uk/Catalogue/TileView>

Local Authority Guidance

- Devon: <http://www.babcock-education.co.uk/ldp/absa>
- <https://www.devonsafeguardingchildren.org/documents/2016/07/guidance-on-anxiety-based-school-avoidance.pdf>
- Derbyshire: <https://schoolsnet.derbyshire.gov.uk/site-elements/documents/keeping-children-safe-in-education/emerging-school-safeguarding-themes/emotionally-based-school-refusal-guide.pdf>
- North Somerset: <https://thinkleftdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/ebsr.pdf>

Books for young children

- **The Goodnight Caterpillar: A Relaxation Story for Kids** by Lori Lite
- **Huge bag of worries** by Virginia Ironside
- **The Koala that could** by Rachel Bright
- **Silly Billy** by Anthony Browne
- **Willy the Wimp** by Anthony Browne
- **Owl Babies** by Martin Wadell
- **How to catch a star** by Oliver Jeffers
- **Willy and the Wobbly house** by Margot Sunderland
- **The boy and the bear** by Lori Lite
- **Starting school** by Janet Ahlberg
- **Back to school tortoise** by Lucy M. George
- **Gotcha Smile** by Rita Philips Mitchell
- **Halibut Jackson** by David Lucas
- **Giraffes can't dance** by Giles Andreae

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Appendix 1 Profile of Risk of EBSA

The PRE Schedule consists of five key areas, each of which contain a number of items you are asked to consider in terms of their possible importance in influencing an emotionally based attendance problem. The rationale for the schedule content is based on risk factors identified in the guidance.

When completing the schedule, it is important to be as objective as possible, and to base assessments on evidence. Thus it is recommended that completion of the schedule is a joint venture, wherein checking and questioning can lead to the best judgements in terms of item importance.

During the process of completing the schedule, it may be useful to note factors associated with particular items, such as:

- This has been an issue in the past, but doesn't appear to be now.
- This has been an issue in the past and has persisted as an important item.

Items are not quantified by a typical rating scale. This is because it may be that one single item (e.g. death of a parent) is so important it cannot be rated numerically in the same way other items might be rated. Its influence could be proportionately much greater than a rating scale could accommodate. As such the schedule asks you to make notes on the key items of importance you identify. These can then be visually represented in the five overlapping circles that follow the schedule.

If the resultant profile suggests to you that the pupil is at risk of emotionally based school refusal, the next step is to obtain the views of the pupil, parents and other staff.

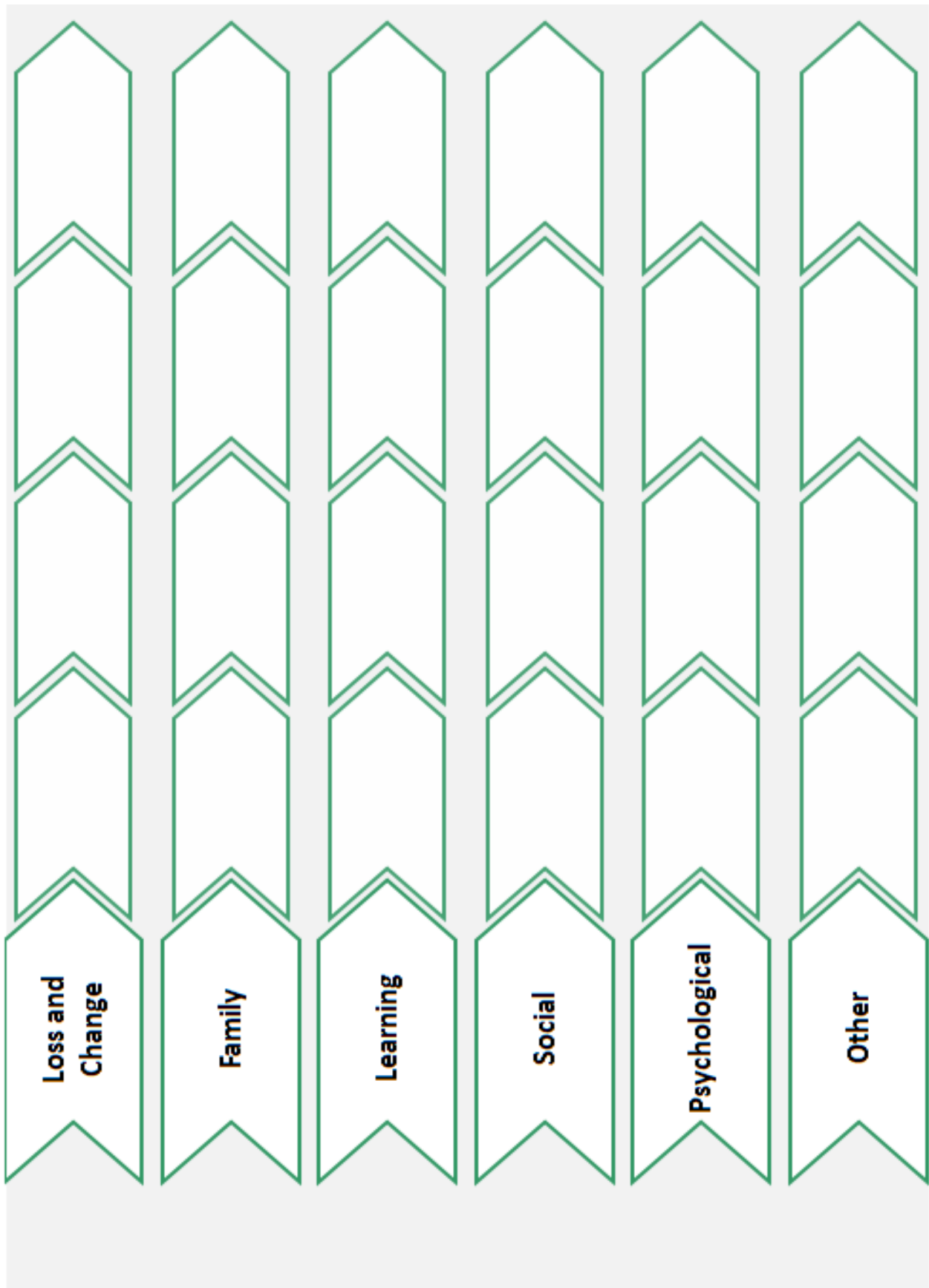
Profile of Risk of EBSA

	Level of concern				
Loss and Change	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Death of parent, relative, friend					
Death of pet					
Sudden traumatic event					
Sudden separation form a parent					
Moving house, school, area					
Loss of a classmate					
Parent, relative, friend illness					
Note on key items					
Family Dynamic	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Inappropriate parenting					
Birth of new child					
Parents separated					
Parents arguing/fighting					
Practical problems bringing the child to school					
Problems with parental control					
Jealous of sibling at home					
Note on key items					

Curriculum /Learning issues	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Low levels of literacy					
PE and/ or games issues					
General learning difficulties					
Specific subject difficulties					
Exam or test anxiety					
Difficulties with a particular teacher/adult					
Problems keeping up in lessons					
Note on key items					
Social Personal	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Being bullied					
Seems to have few friend/ firendship issues					
English as a second language					
Dislikes play/ break times					
Few leisure interests					
Note on key items					

Psychological Wellbeing	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Often seems tired					
Low self esteem					
Appears depressed					
Appears anxious					
Keeps feelings to themselves					
Has a pessimistic nature					
Note on key items					
Other issues	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Note on key items					

Overview of key risk factors actors identified



Appendix 2 Information gathering from school

_____ is currently experiencing difficulties attending school which we feel may be due to emotional distress. We would like to gain a picture of how they are in school. As an adult who works with _____ please complete the questionnaire below.

Your name _____ Lesson/activity _____

Please describe _____.

What are _____'s strengths?

What is going well for _____?

What does _____'s find difficult?

How does _____ get on with their peers?

How does _____ get on with you and other adults?

Is _____ engaged and motivated with their learning. Are they making progress? If not why not?

Have you observed any emotional difficulties at school, what have these been, when did/do they occur?

What support to you provide for _____. How do they respond to this?

What is your understanding of _____'s attendance problems?

What do you think would help _____ in school?

Appendix 3 Information gathering and integration

Name		School	
Year group		Key School staff	
Other agencies involved			
Description of behaviour			
Risk factors school, child and family			
Strengths and protective factors			
Formulation & integration of various factors			

Appendix 4 Example support plans

Support Plan

Name:

Date:

At school these things can make me feel upset:



My key adult(s) in school is/are:

When I can speak to my key adult(s):

Where I can speak to my key adult(s):



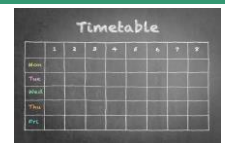
Until _____ my return to school plan includes the following changes to my attendance:

(Identify any changes to days or time they come in)



Changes to my timetable include:

(Identify any changes needed and what should happen/ where they should go instead)



Any other changes include:

Identify any other changes to routines, (break, lunch times, changes between lessons etc.) classroom expectations (not expected to read aloud, work in pairs etc.) or homework.



When I start to get upset, I notice these things about myself:



When I start to get upset, others notice these things about me:



Things I can do to make myself feel better when I'm at school:



Things that other people (staff and friends) can do to help me feel better when I'm at school:



Things that my family can do to support me to attend school:



Places in the school I can go to where I feel safe and supported:



This plan will be reviewed regularly so that it remains helpful.

Review date:

My signature

Key adult's signature

Parent signature

Other people who have access to the plan are:

Support Plan

Name

Date

At school these things can make me feel upset

My school support person/(s) is/are:

Details of checking in with my school support person (When, where)

Until _____ my return to school plan includes the following changes to my attendance

(Identify any changes to days or time they come in)

Changes to my timetable include

(Identify any changes needed and what should happen/ where they should go instead)

Any other changes include:

(Identify any other changes to routines (break, lunch times, changes between lessons etc) to classroom expectations (not expected to read aloud, work in pairs etc) homework

When I start to get upset, I notice these things about myself

When I start to get upset, others notice these things about me

Things I can do to make myself feel better when I'm at school

Things that other people (staff and friends) can do to help me feel better when I'm at school

Things that my family can do to support me to attend school

Places in the school where I can go to where I feel safe and supported

This plan will be reviewed regularly so that it remains helpful.

Review date:

My signature

School support persons'
signature

Parent signature

Other people who have access to the plan are?

Appendix 5 Whole School Audit

Whole school systems for promotion of emotional well-being and prevention of EBSA			
	Whole School Provision Currently Available	In Need of Development	Comments/Next Steps (Including by Whom and When)
School Culture and Ethos			
Committed and inclusive senior management team - values all students and allows them to feel a sense of belonging			
All staff working within school are valued. Clear protocols regarding emotional support and stress management for staff including supervision			
Continuous professional development for all staff which makes clear the promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing is everybody's responsibility (including EBSA)			
The importance of pupil voice and viewing the child holistically are approaches which are embedded within the culture of the school.			
Recognition of the importance of communication and partnership working with parents and external agencies			
School systems. policy and practice			
Clear policies on attendance, behaviour, bullying, equality and transition which sets out the responsibilities for all and the support in place			
Curriculum includes the teaching of resilience, coping and social skills.			
Curriculum appropriately differentiated according to individual need			

Whole school systems for promotion of emotional well-being and prevention of EBSA

	Whole School Provision Currently Available	In Need of Development	Comments/Next Steps (Including by Whom and When)
Promotion of supportive literature regarding emotional well-being and mental health for young people and parents.			
Clear roles and responsibilities for SENCo and emotional wellbeing leads.			
A member of senior staff is responsible for over-seeing arrangements for EBSA students			
Clear systems in place for the early identification of school avoidance.			
Nominated member of who has a responsibility to investigate and act on concerns			
Staff are aware as to whom they should convey any concerns regarding EBSA.			
Provision of interventions within a graduated response - assess, plan, do & review			
Staff are aware of the role of other agencies and local arrangements with regard to assessing and supporting students experiencing EBSA.			
Access to indicated provision e.g. safe places within the school, key person.			
All staff are aware of specific strategies and programmes in place to support those experiencing EBSA			

Appendix 6 – Strategies for Young people with ASC

General Strategies for Supporting Young People with Social Communication Disorder and Autism Spectrum Condition in the Classroom

All adults working with student should be made aware of the following:

- **Use student's name before** delivering any instructions so that they cue into you speaking to them and recognise the instructions applies to them.
- Allow additional time for the student to process verbal information and instructions (at least **10 seconds**) and avoid repeating verbally within this time.
- If repetition of the information/instruction is necessary **use exactly the same wording** as initially used.
- Use **explicit, concise language** when addressing the student as this is likely to enable them to process the information correctly.
- Use **short simple instructions**. Give them in order that they are to be completed. Check for understanding. Ask the student to repeat them back to you.
- **Do not** insist on **eye contact**, for many students with autism this can be uncomfortable and in extreme cases even painful. Instead consider agreeing a strategy with the student and all staff to enable them to indicate that they are listening.
- Be aware that direct answers from the student are often related to their **literal understanding** and lack of social awareness rather than due to **rudeness**.

Ideally consider developing a **pupil profile** to share with all staff, including office staff and mid-day meals supervisors to ensure awareness of the above.

Classroom Strategies to consider;

- Ensure the student understands how to use their planner; **colour coding the information including the map** will be beneficial. This will lower the anxiety levels associated with SCD/ASC and enable the student to predict what is coming next.
- Be aware that clear explanation needs to be provided, supported visually where possible, **to explain any unplanned changes of routine** to the student in **advance**.
- **Use visuals** to remind students of expected behaviours, classroom rules and routines for example, use symbols to indicate noise levels i.e. partner voices, group voices, classroom voice, social voices. This will also encourage independence.
- Provide the student with a **symbol card to display when he or she wants help**.
- Provide **an area of classroom** free from busy displays and distractions. Try to keep the area around the whiteboard / IWB 'clutter free'.
- Wherever possible provide the student with a **visual set of simple step by step instructions** that they can use as a tick list. This will also support independence.
- It is common for young people with SCD/ASC to be resistant to writing. There are numerous skills involved in writing from retrieving ideas/memories to fine motor skills. Therefore, consider **providing opportunities to complete learning objectives using alternative means of recording** e.g. scribe, keyboard, aural recording etc.
- Consider the use of **mind mapping software** to support students through visual learning. Various packages are available. E.g. Inspiration 9 from Inspiration Software Inc.
- Consider allowing the student to achieve the learning objective through writing about their own interest instead of the topic under consideration.
- The student will benefit from being given a clear indication of the expected outcome of a task before they start i.e. what finished will look like. **Set tasks with clear goals** e.g.

“Write ‘x’ number of sentences on” rather than “Write about...”, or the use of a green dot to indicate where the writing will start and a red dot where it will end or state the number of calculations etc.

Prevent repetitive questioning or commenting during class discussion by giving the students set number of cards (**talk tokens**) to give you each time they wish to contribute to discussion – when cards are gone, no more questions. Alternatively, use them to encourage participation from students who are reluctant to contribute

Managing sensory processing difficulties

- The student with sensory processing difficulties often struggles with the basic skills of managing his/her responses to ordinary sensations, of planning and organising their actions and of regulating their attention and activity levels. They may present sensory seeking or sensory avoiding behaviour. Completing a sensory checklist (available from the Autism and Social Communication Team) can help to identify such sensory responses.
- Sensory activities should be timetabled into the student’s day reflecting the needs identified in the sensory checklist.

Motivating the Student

- Use **incentives based on an activity that is personally motivating** to the student/their interests e.g. I.T. based activities/games, Dr Who, Pokemon Go.
- Use **individualised reward systems** e.g. collecting a number of points or ticks that achieve a personally motivating reward. Earned points/ticks should not be removed for poor behaviour. The collection of point/ticks should not be linked to specific periods of the day.

Self-regulation

- The student who has difficulties with self-regulation may have difficulty managing/moderating their behaviour, their emotions, their sensory reactions or the focus of their attention (cognitive self-regulation).
- It is important to observe students and use tools such the **ABC or STAR behaviour charts** to unpick where they may have difficulties in self-regulation then begin working with them to develop strategies to manage their difficulty including **traffic lights, scaling and self-advocacy**. Consider using resources such as ‘**The Incredible 5 Point Scale**’ – see below for details.

Developing Social Understanding

- A **small step target approach** should be taken using checklists/resources to set the targets and assess the Student (available from the Autism and Social Communication Team).
- Link any social target to a reward system that is personally motivating to the student.
- Use ‘**catch me cards**’ to target specific social targets throughout the school day e.g. ‘Catch me doing as I am asked’, – each time an adult witnesses the student achieving the target they initial or stamp the card so they can see their progress and it can be rewarded.
- Develop the student’s understanding of social rules and situations using **Comic Strip Conversations and Social Stories**; (<http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/strategies->

[and-approaches/social-stories-and-comic-strip-conversations/what-is-a-comic-strip-conversation.aspx](#) These will help the student to begin to understand how other people feel in different situations and provide them with strategies to use.

- Consider including the student in a **social skills group** that uses explicit teaching of the skills required to achieve their social target e.g. **Lego Therapy**. The Autism and Social Communication Team can provide training for staff to implement this.

Recommended Resources Autism

Books:

- **Autism from Diagnostic pathway to Intervention: Checklists to support diagnosis, analysis for target setting and effective intervention strategies** by Kate Ripley published by Jessica Kingsley.
- **Autistic Spectrum Disorders – Practical Strategies for Teachers and Other Professionals** by Northumberland County Council Communication Support Services UK. David Fulton Publishers
- **Autistic Spectrum Disorders in the Secondary School (Autistic Disorder Support Kit)** by Lynn Pimley published by Sage Publications Ltd
- **Autism in the Secondary Classroom** by Joy Beaney and Penny Kershaw published by The National Autistic Society
- **Understanding How Children and Adolescents Think and Learn** by Paula Jacobsen. Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- **Education and Care for Adolescents and Adults with Autism** by Kate Wall Published by Sage.
- **Exams: Guidelines for parents and teachers of young people with autism** published by The National Autistic Society
- **Autism: Supporting your teenager** by Caroline Hattersley published by The National Autistic Society
- **Understanding How Asperger Children and Adolescents Think and Learn** by Paula Jacobsen published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- **Sensory Strategies: Practical ways to help children and young people with autism learn and achieve** by Corinna Laurie. Published by The National Autistic Society
- **The Social Play Record: A Toolkit for Assessing and Developing Social Play from Infancy to Adolescence** by Chris White. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
-
- **Teaching children with Autism to Mind Read** by Patricia Howlin, Simon Baron-Cohen and Julie A. Hadwin. Published by Wiley-Blackwell
- **The Incredible 5-point Scale** by Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis. Published by Autism Asperger Publishing Company
- **Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People** (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) by Kate Collins-Donnelly
- **Starving the Anger Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anger Management for Young People** (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) by Kate Collins-Donnelly
- **Banish Your Self-Esteem Thief: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Building Positive Self-esteem for Young People** (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) by Kate Collins-Donnelly
- **Banish Your Body Image Thief** (Gremlin and Thief CBT Workbooks) by Kate Collins-Donnelly

- **Martian in the Playground: Understanding the Schoolchild with Asperger's Syndrome** by Clare Sainsbury. Published by SAGE Publications Ltd
- **The New Social Story Book** by Carol Gray. Published by Future Horizons Incorporated.
- **Comic Strip Conversations** by Carol Gray. Published by Future Horizons Incorporated
- **Time to Talk** by Alison Schroeder. Published by LDA
- **Talkabout: A Social Communication Skills Package** by Alex Kelly. Published by Speechmark Publishing Limited
- **Dealing with Feeling** by Tina Rae. Published by Lucky Duck
- **I am special** by Peter Vermeulon. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- **A Volcano in My Tummy** by Elaine Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney. New Society Publishers
- **Emotional Literacy assessment and intervention** by Southampton Psychology Service. Published by GL Assessment Limited. (Available for both Primary and Secondary)

Subject Specific Top Tips for supporting students with Autism – available from the Autism and Social Communication Team.

- **Inclusion Development Programme:** <http://www.idponline.org.uk/>
- **Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning:** <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Websites:

- **Do2learn** - www.do2learn.com/
- **Setbc** - <https://www.setbc.org/students/Pages/PictureSET.aspx>
- **Resources for Inclusion:** www.resourcesforinclusion.co.uk/
- **The Gray Center (Comic Strip Conversations and Social Stories):** www.thegraycenter.org/
- **Visual aids for learning:** www.visualaidsforlearning.com

<http://autismteachingstrategies.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CBT-Worksheets-Sets.pdf>

Information booklets for parents/carers, children and young people.
These booklets can be downloaded from
<http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Services/3282> or
<https://westsussex.local-offer.org/>

