Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Hampshire County Council good practice guidance for schools and other support agencies

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Contents

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. Many of the strategies that schools will be familiar with around anxiety will be applicable for supporting these pupils, this is true for the full age range from early years to secondary.

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; Gulliford & 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).

Although data is incomplete, Hampshire would seem to follow this pattern with most schools having at least one pupil experiencing difficulties in line with EBSA. Across Hampshire, this would equate to over 500 pupils at any one time. Often the condition is not specifically recognised: the presenting behaviours are sometimes simply viewed as an 'attendance problem' which may lead to interventions that do not work to promptly support the underlying anxiety as a key factor.

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 as difficulties may spiral and even require inpatient treatment (Blagg, 1987 and Walter et al., 2010).

Hampshire has not previously produced any substantial guidance on EBSA or school 'refusal' therefore this paper is in response to both individual cases and a growing awareness of the extent of this need. We are deeply indebted to West Sussex Educational Psychology Service who have allowed us to draw upon their extensive work and EBSA guidance.

The original West Sussex guidance was 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)

Contributors

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A special thank you to Rachel Wood for pulling together the production of these booklets.

What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance?

Definition

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. A clear distinction is made between those that are absent from school due to truanting 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 Silverman'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; Gulliford & 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).
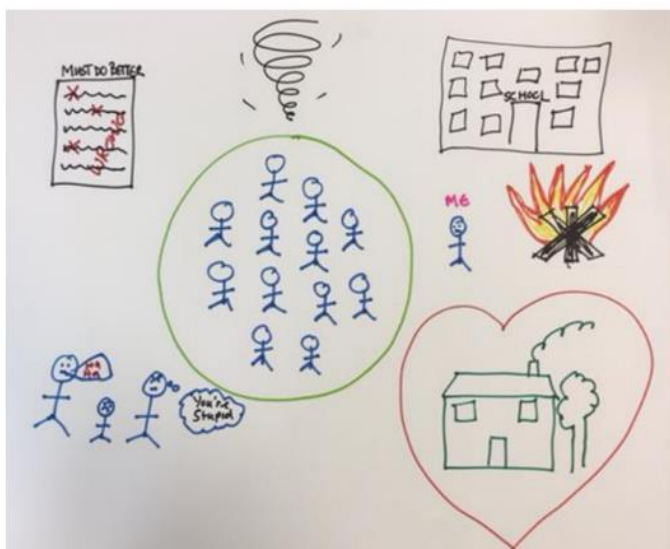

Figure 1
Picture from a 14 year old: her feelings are like a whirlwind where she is not in control, that the school is not a safe place, she worries something bad might happen, she sees school as having lots of people in it, but she is on the outside and that people are making fun of her. She has also 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.
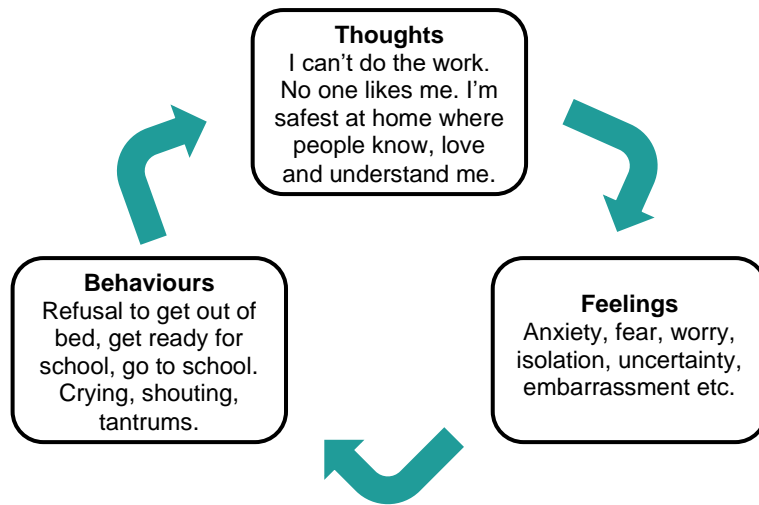
When the anxiety is linked to school avoidance, the young person may experience anxious and fearful thoughts around attending school and their ability to cope with school. These feelings may also be accompanied by physiological symptoms of anxiety such as nausea, vomiting, shaking, sweating, and may start the night before, or even a few days before school.

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 to avoid the threatening situation and to try and control what feels like a very 'out-of-control' situation (Thambirajah et al., 2008). They may also seek high levels of reassurance that then does not appear to reduce their anxiety.

These behaviours, and the avoidance of school, may then contribute to the maintenance of EBSA over time. It is important to note that avoidance and reassurance can be maintaining factors for anxiety as one does not learn to overcome challenges. In essence, anxiety relates to the fear of potential threat and trying to find ways to cope with this. Avoidance and reassurance can provide temporary relief from anxiety; however, in the long-term, both can have an adverse effect as it provides evidence that one is unable to cope or manage themselves. 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.

The diagrams below show the cycles of thoughts and feelings that may (i) initially lead to school avoidance behaviours and (ii) over time, maintain school avoidance behaviours. As these behaviours continue, they can become interlinked, increasing their complexity, shown in the final diagram.

(i)   Initial avoidance behaviours

Thoughts
I can't do the work.
No one likes me. I'm
safest at home where
people know, love
and understand me.

Feelings
Anxiety, fear, worry,
isolation, uncertainty,
embarrassment etc.

Behaviours
Refusal to get out of
bed, get ready for
school, go to school.
Crying, shouting,
tantrums.

(ii)   Maintenance of behaviours

Thoughts
Everyone will ask questions
about where I've been. My
friends will have forgotten
about me. I've missed so
much work I won't know
what to do. The teachers
will be angry with me.

Feelings
Anxiety, fear, worry,
isolation, uncertainty,
embarrassment etc.

Behaviours
Refusal to get out of
bed, get ready for
school, go to school.
Crying, shouting,
tantrums.

Anxious feelings
about school

Negative thoughts
about school and
one's ability to cope

Avoid the situation
that is invoking
the anxiety

Immediate
anxiety reduces

Increased school
avoidance

Decrease in
motivation

Falling behind
in school work

Pleasurable
activities
at home

Loss of
friends and
increased
isolation

increased
anxiety
around
school

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.
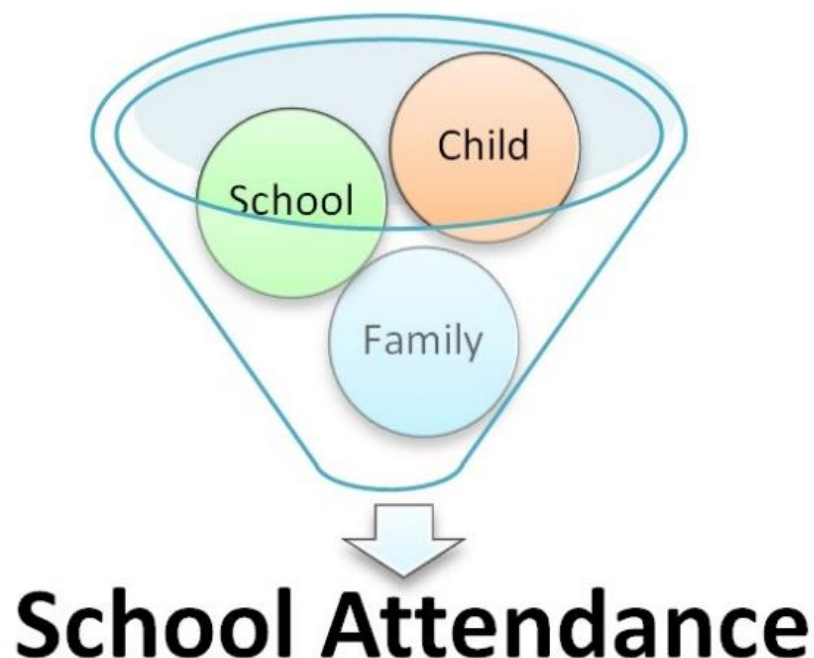
The exact nature of the predisposing vulnerability and the precipitating events will vary according to an individual child's unique set of characteristics, circumstances and experiences, but it is still possible to identify factors associated with that vulnerability and the potential triggers leading 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) • Difficulties in specific subject • Transition to secondary school, key stage or change of school • Structure of the school day • Academic demands/high levels of pressure and performance orientated classrooms • Transport or journey to school • Exams • Peer or staff relationship difficulties	• Separation and divorce or change in family dynamic • Parent physical and/or mental health problems • Overprotective parenting style • Dysfunctional family interactions • Being the youngest child in the family • Loss and bereavement • High levels of family stress • Family history of EBSA • Young carer	• Temperamental style – reluctance to interact and withdrawal from unfamiliar settings, people or objects • Fear of failure and poor self confidence • Physical illness • Age (5-6, 11-12 & 13-14 years) • Learning Difficulties, developmental problems, or Autism Spectrum Condition if unidentified or unsupported • Separation anxiety from parent • Traumatic events

Resilience

When working with individuals it is 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 1: 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 academic 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 EBSA 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 case study 1

School	Home
Push (towards attending school) • Academically able • Beginning to form a friendship	**Pull (away from school, home factors)** • Change in family dynamics • Mum diagnosed with cancer • Difficulties sleeping, nightmares about mum dying • Separation anxiety from parent
Pull (away from school, school factors) • Prolonged period of absence from school • Isolated, not leaving the house • Difficult transition to secondary school • Academic demands • Social difficulties, possible bullying • Separation anxiety	**Push (towards staying at home)** • Reduce anxiety around separating from mum • Reduce anxieties around attending school • Not having to complete schoolwork

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 school 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. To break the cycle, schools should be looking to recognise the early warning signs: a change in attendance and/or punctuality, reduced engagement or negative talk about school, a change in behaviour. Look at arrival at school – has it changed to 'just in time', does the child seem angry, anxious, worried? It is important that this includes front line and support staff, as well as parents and families, as they are most likely to experience early signs before it reaches Head of Year/SENCo/Headteacher etc. Therefore, it is important to talk to everybody about the signs (recognising them) and keeping open lines of communication.

| Whole school effective practice | Promote protective & resilience factors | Awareness of 'at risk factors' | Vigilance for possible indicators |

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 schedule (PRE-schedule) can be found in **Appendix 1 Profile of Risk of EBSA.** This can help practitioners identify areas of risk. The PRE-schedule looks at five 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 classmates 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 is 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. Schools should develop a clear protocol around potential risk factors and identifying factors. As early as possible, schools should also draw on advice from external services such as Hampshire & IOW Educational Psychology (HIEP) or Primary Behaviour Support (PBS) to support with understanding maintenance factors and developing evidence-based actions plans for support.

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

- 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 for 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.
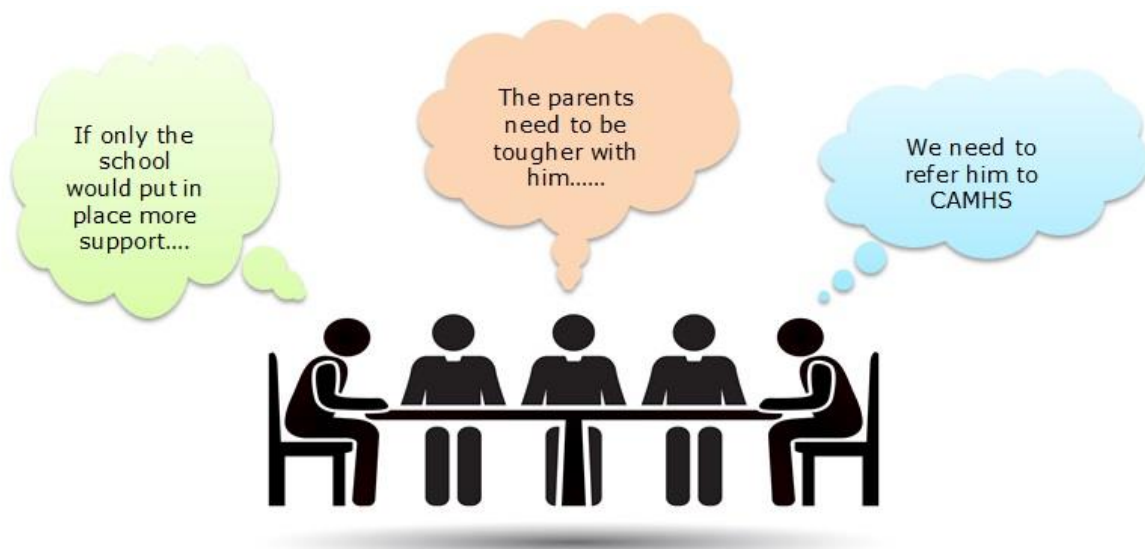
However, as identified earlier, it is often an interaction of a number of factors and trying to find simple causation often encourages blaming and individuals can then become anxious and defensive. Parents may feel blamed for the absences, feel that their parenting skills are being criticised and they may be fearful that they will get into that they will be forced to attend school. Schools may feel powerless to support change in the face of significant challenges that may feel outside of their system/remit.

Cycle of blame
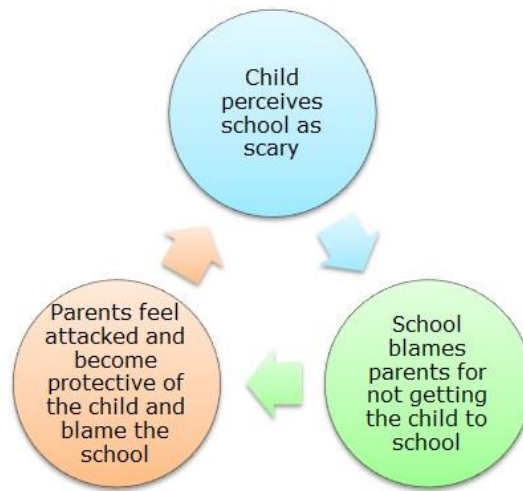
Each person may have a different perspective on EBSA and have a different story to tell. It is essential that different people's views are respected and differences in views are acknowledged. When there is a difference of views it is often more helpful to focus on how the behaviour is occurring rather than why.
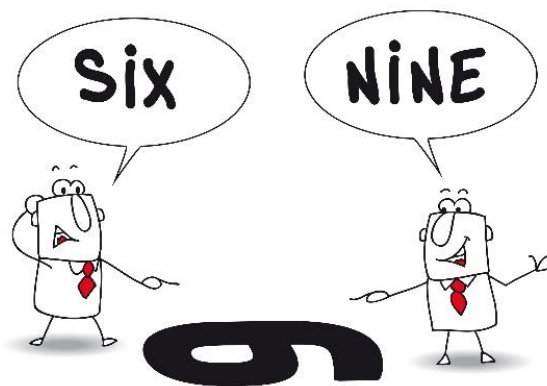
Due to the complex nature of EBSA no fixed 'assessment process' can be followed. However, in all cases it is essential that the views of the young person, the family and key school personnel are gathered and listened to.

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. It is important to acknowledge that this work may need to take place at the child's home if they are already avoiding school or are experiencing significant anxiety around it. Support should begin from a place of greatest comfort/security for the child.

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 a scale or an anxiety thermometer 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 P.E.
  - particular lessons or activities within lessons e.g. writing, working as part of a group, reading aloud, verbally answering a question.

Information booklets for parents/carers, children and young people are also available alongside this guidance and these may be helpful to support conversations.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Educational Psychology (HIEP) have a range of tools to help schools and professionals access pupil's views regarding school; please discuss with your link EP or call the HIEP contact line (details later) to discuss. Some examples include:

EBSA Risk and Resilience cards

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.

Mapping Landscape of School (also known as Landscape of Fear) ~ Kate Ripley

Mapping the Landscape of School is a useful tool that can be used by school staff and others to explore sources of anxiety around school attendance. It examines a young person's beliefs about the physical environment, the social environment and the learning environment in school.

Ideal Classroom ~ Williams and Hanke; Lego classroom ~ Faye Morgan Rose
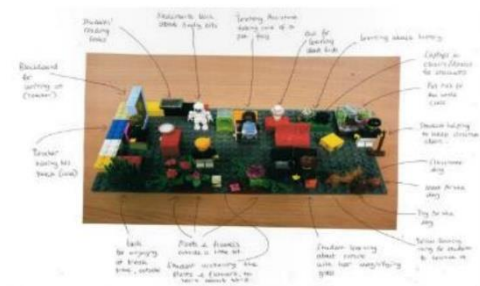
This tool uses Personal Construct Psychology. Using either Lego or drawing, it elicits the child's views about school.

Person Centred Planning

This range of approaches and tools is 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 organisation think about what is important in their lives and also think about what would make a good future. The process taken by this tool can be a significant support for motivation.

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 the next page.

Active 'whole body' listening means being able to give all of your attention to someone else. It is the ability to keep your attention external to yourself rather than thinking through your own thoughts – the diagram below highlights key elements of this. Listening is not a passive process. We need to work hard at really listening to what a person is saying. How well we listen will have a considerable impact on the quality of what others share.

Hearing content

Summarising

Listening for feelings

Clarifying

Active listening

Observing body language

Questioning

Non-judgemental

Reflection

Paraphrasing

Self-awareness

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. 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.

Areas to cover	Example questions
Developmental and educational history	What were they like as a young child? Can you tell me about their early experiences at school? The primary school, at the start of secondary school?
Strengths, interests and aspirations	What are they 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 are they closest to? Have there been any changes within the family recently? (You could ask them to draw a family tree/genogram)
Relationships	Do they talk about any other children? What do they say? Do they talk about any adults within school? What do they say? Who do they get on with … who don't they 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	Have they spoken to you about what they find difficult about school? What do they say?
The child's view – what is going well in school	Have they mentioned anything that is going well in school? (e.g. teachers, lessons, friends)
Behaviour and symptoms of anxiety	When they are 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 they go to school from the moment they get up until they go to bed … and when they don't go to school? What do they do when they do not go to school? What do other family members do?
Impact on various members of the family	How does their 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 they have 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 they 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 school 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. 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 it 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 once this information is gathered 'sense' is made of it. An overview of the whole picture and various factors involved needs to be obtained and potential hypothesis/understanding formed. These should then inform the return to school support plan.

Appendix 3 is designed to help schools 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 form a variety of sources. A blank copy can be found in **Appendix 3 Information gathering and integration.**

If helpful at this stage of formulation and integration, schools can access consultation via their link EP to assist in the identification of function of the EBSA behaviour and inform the subsequent action planning and intervention. For more succinct/brief enquiries, schools can seek advice via the HIEP contact telephone line.

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/young person say about any specific fears or 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 a family member) • Any other needs within the family?

Strengths and protective factors
• What strengths do they have? • Do they have any aspirations or ambitions you know of? • What positive relationships do they have at home and at school (peers and adults)? • What positive experiences have they had at school? • What was different about the times they were able to get into school? • What has been helpful in the past?

Formulation and integration of various factors

- What is everyone'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 elicit high levels of stress or negative feelings? (e.g. fear of the toilets, noise on the playground, lots of people moving all together in the corridors between lessons, 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, concern about the wellbeing of a parent)
- To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating? (e.g. 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 plan 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 with recognition that a 'quick fix' is not always possible.** A reduced hours 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. Hampshire guidance around reduced hours timetables can be found at forms.hants.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-d54c8557-83ac-45f9-8434-ce762a737759/AF-Stage-fb9effc0-1d95-40de-a4e4-d364315df21b/definition.json&redirectlink=/en&cancelRedirectLink=/en

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. For more 'engrained' situations, school staff should also be prepared to begin the gradual and graded support in the home environment, working closely with the pupil and family.

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.** This can be difficult for some and schools should proactively manage expectations.

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 be counterproductive.

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 to be successful.

Key elements of any plan

Direct telephone contact between parents/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 a family assessment such as an Early Help Hub referral 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 elicit 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 the school setting using an avoidance hierarchy created with the young person from 'least feared' school situation 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

Most feared
Going into lunch hall without best friend (support)
Going into lunch hall with best friend (support)
Going to P.E. lessons
Going into next two favourite lessons
Going into favourite lessons
Joining in a small group activity
Staying in the resource base
Entering the school, going into the reception area
Entering the school when the school is closed
Standing outside the school when the school is closed
Least feared

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 several times, then they can begin to work their 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 and 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 practise 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 wellbeing of a parent)

Intervention would usually include work with caregivers 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 (e.g. watch television, 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 parent
- identifying that further consultation with other agencies needs to occur which may, if necessary, lead to a referral to other services

Assess
Gain a full understanding of the various aspects at play (child, school and family)

Plan
Based on information gathered plan for a realistic small reintegration

Review
Monitor the progress made and adjust the plan for next steps

Do
Ensure resources and support is in place, good communication with school, family and others
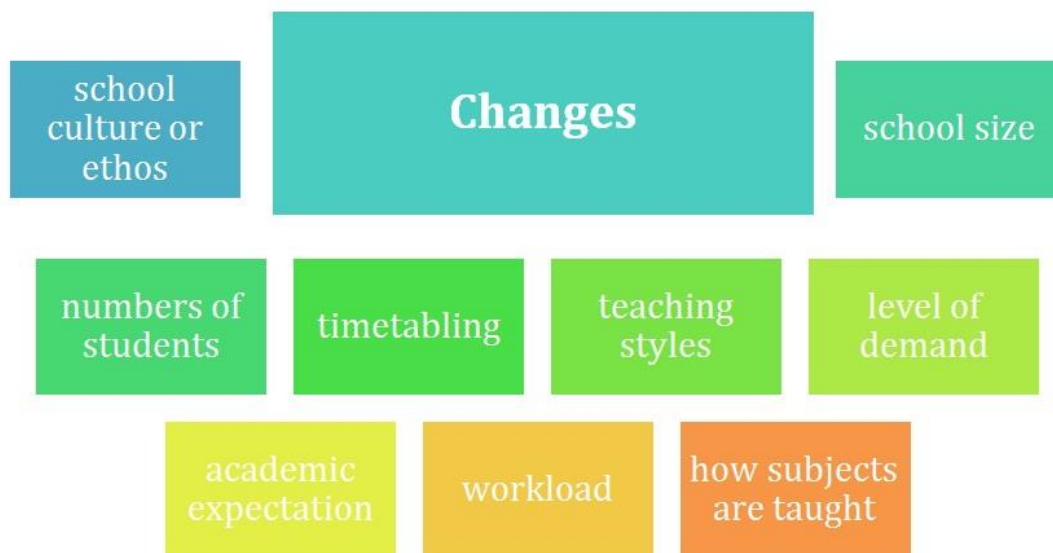
Whole school good practice

Any successful work with an individual needs to be embedded in whole school systems. General good practice for promoting emotional wellbeing 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.

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

Committed and inclusive senior management team - values all pupils 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

Provision of interventions within a graduated response - assess, plan, do & review. Working with external agencies when necessary. Use of Early Help Plans using an holistic approach

Continuous professional development for all staff which makes clear the promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing is everybody's responsibility (including EBSA)

Clear systems in place for the early identification of school avoidance. Nominated member of who has a responsibility to investigate and act on concerns

The importance of pupil voice and viewing the child holistically are approaches which are embedded within the culture of the school.

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

Recognition of the importance of partnership working with parents and external agencies

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 policies on attendance, behaviour, bullying and transition which sets out the responsibilities for all and the support in place

Promotion of supportive literature for young people and parents

Curriculum includes the teaching of resilience, coping and social skills. Curriculum appropriately differentiated according to individual need
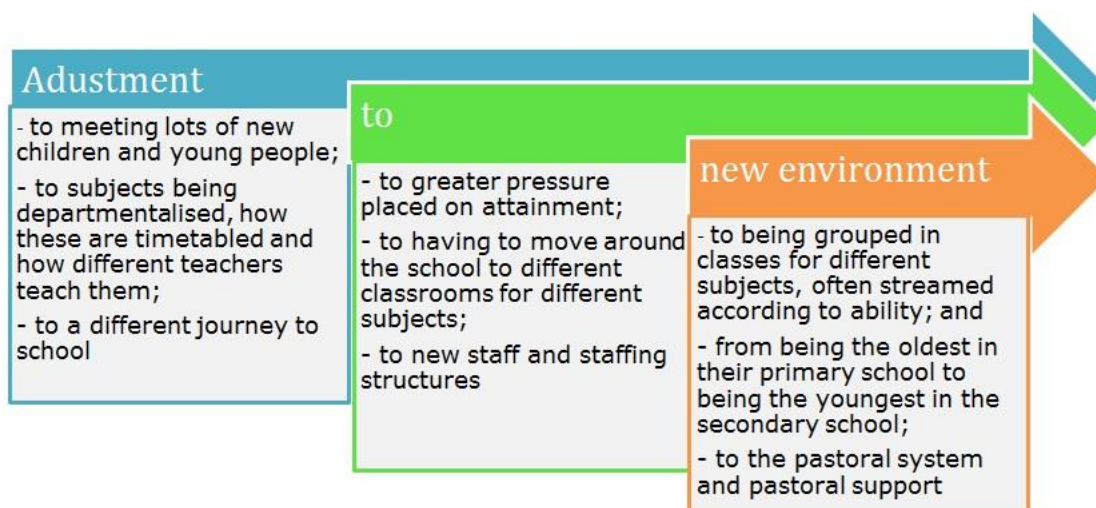
Transition

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 at such times.

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 for 'feeder' schools to 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 parents 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 the school – 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, lay out 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 they are looking forward to and what they are worried about and this should be individually addressed. An example of support for this is 'What if …' cards.

If I don't know where my classroom is...	If someone calls me an unkind name...	If I have nothing to do at breaktime...
I will get my plan from my student planner and see if I can work it out	I will try and walk away and not swear or shout	I could go to the library
I will try and ask someone in my class	I will tell a teacher why I feel upset	I could buy a snack and eat it in the dining hall
I will ask my teacher	My teacher will deal with it and talk to that person	I could find my buddy

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; the Education Act 1996 goes further as the offence is one of strict liability. This means there are only certain permitted defences a 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 Headteacher 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 Headteacher 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 the Attendance Legal Panel (ALP) for advice and intervention. The ALP discharges the Local Authority's statutory duties associated with school attendance. On receiving the referral, the ALP will gather evidence from all involved before deciding 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 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.

For schools with young people experiencing EBSA and struggling with attendance, it is the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise absence or not. If a school decides to refer a student to the ALP 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 request for Education Health and Care needs assessments

Education Health and 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 EHCP 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 and Care (EHC) 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 such as PBS, ISS and HIEP
- health professionals including GP and CAMHS
- 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 EHC needs assessment, schools should refer to:
The Hampshire Guidance and Criteria for EHC Needs Assessments
www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/sen-pathway/draft-ehc-plan

The Hampshire Graduated Approach Guidance Document
documents.hants.gov.uk/education/sen-support.pdf

The SEND Code of Practice (2014) can be found here
www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Children and young people with medical needs – school must have regards to the new DfE (2015) guidance 'Supporting children at school with medical conditions: statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England'
www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3

The Hampshire medical policy should be consulted
documents.hants.gov.uk/education/HCC-Medical-Policy-2019.pdf

Further local support and resources

Information regarding local services and organisations can be found on the Hampshire Local Offer

www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds

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

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Educational Psychology

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Educational Psychology (HIEP) promotes the development and learning of all children through the application of psychology. Educational Psychologists (EPs) 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. EPs apply a wide range of skills, including consultation, assessment, case formulation and intervention related to children's learning, developmental, behavioural, emotional and mental health needs.

How we support EBSA

HIEP can offer consultation to support in assessment, understanding and planning for intervention for individual children, young people and families. HIEP 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. HIEP offers training bespoke to individual settings; however, a range of central trainings are also available, e.g. using cognitive behavioural approaches to support children and young people. Please contact your link EP or local HIEP office (numbers below) for further information about the range of training available.

Telephone contact line

Brief advice can also be obtained from an EP (for EYs settings, schools, colleges, parents/carers and other professionals) via a Telephone Contact Line which runs twice weekly. Please see the HIEP website for current timings (link on the home page): www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/educationalpsychology

How to access support

School staff can access ongoing and regular EP advice and support via purchasing a service level agreement which provides the school with a named link EP. Anyone can phone the Telephone Contact Line for further information or brief advice.

Further details on how to access the service can be found on HIEP's website.

If you have any enquiries, please phone the number below for your local area and ask to speak with the Area Senior EP:

- North (Basingstoke & Test Valley North): 01252 814 835
- South (Havant, Fareham & Gosport): 02392 441 497
- East (Hart, Rushmoor & East Hants): 01252 814 729
- West (Winchester, Eastleigh, New Forest & Test Valley South): 01962 876 239
- Isle of Wight: 02392 441 497

Early Help Hub

The family support service delivers vital early help support and targeted early help support to children and families across Hampshire. The Early Help model is coordinated through ten multi-agency hubs: Eastleigh, Gosport, Test Valley, Basingstoke, Hart and Rushmoor, New Forest, Havant, Winchester, Fareham and East Hants.

The hubs are coordinated by the Family Support Service (FSS) and involve a range of practitioners who contribute to the local Early Help offer.

FSS is part of the 'early help' provision for Hampshire run by the County Council for families with children aged 0 to 19 years (or up to 25 for young adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) to provide a joined-up, whole-family service to those who have high levels of need.

How we support EBSA

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

How to access support

Information regarding referral routes and contact details

www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/familysupportservice/earlyhelp

CAMHS

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are made up of specialist teams offering assessment and treatment to children and young people up to age 18 who have emotional, behavioural or mental health problems. CAMHS are part of the National Health Service (NHS) and provide services across the South East. They help children and young people and their families and carers when someone is experiencing emotional wellbeing or mental health difficulties.

www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/service-hampshire-community-teams

How we support EBSA

CAMHS 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 form a small group anxiety-based intervention.

How to access support

A CAMHS referral can be made by a GP, social worker or school staff, if they feel specialist support is required.

Parents/carers can also contact CAMHS directly on 0300 304 0050, Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm. Trained mental health staff are available to discuss any concerns and how CAMHS, or one of their partner organisations, may be able to help.

Alternatively, a referral form can be accessed via the Hampshire CAMHS website. The form asks some questions to help find out a bit about the difficulties being experienced. Once this information has been received, CAMHS will make contact to discuss whether they may be able to help. Because there are lots of people who need support from CAMHS, there may be a short wait time before an appointment can be offered.

General information for young people, parents/carers and professionals, with specific links to and resources for anxiety support, can be accessed via hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/

Requests for consultation are only accepted from people working with children and young people, not children or young people themselves or their families/carers. Consultation can be accessed in the following ways:

Hampshire Single Point of Access Team: 0300 304 0050

Aldershot: 01252 335600

Andover: 0300 304 0070

Basingstoke: 01252 824800

Eastleigh: 0300 304 0625

Fareham: 0300 304 0447

Havant: 0300 304 0099

New Forest: 023 80 743000

Winchester: 0300 304 0070

Hampshire Youth Access

Hampshire Youth Access (HYA) is a partnership of 11 leading agencies providing counselling, information, advice, and support to children and young people aged 5 to 17 across Hampshire. They also give advice and information to anyone concerned about a child or young person's emotional wellbeing.

Information and access available on 02382 147 755, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday or via enquiries@hampshireyouthaccess.org.uk

Primary Behaviour Service

The Primary Behaviour Service (PBS) primarily works with mainstream primary schools. The service supports children who do not currently have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and who go to school in Hampshire. This includes children who live in a bordering local authority but attend a Hampshire primary school.

By providing early, targeted support through a child-centred approach, the service aims to:

- remove barriers to learning
- help children get the most from their education
- reduce exclusion.

How we support EBSA

Impartial advice, information and support to schools and parents/carers of pupils. Strategies to engage children into education.

How to access support

www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/educationinclusionservice/primarybehaviourservice

The website has links to the PBS six teams across Hampshire.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

The Hampshire SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) 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, Local Authority, health and other agencies.

How we support EBSA

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

How to access support

Helpline: 0808 164 5504 Mon – Thurs 9am– 5pm; Fri 9am-4pm

Email: www.hampshiresendiass.co.uk/contact-us

Legal Intervention Team

The Legal Intervention Team (LIT) provides a prompt and structured response to poor school attendance where it has been agreed through the county's Attendance Legal Panels (ALP) to pursue legal action. The LIT is an integral part of the Family Support Service in Hampshire. It has six Legal Intervention Court Officers (LICO), across eight districts within the county of Hampshire. It is the role of the LICOs to process legal decisions authorised at each District Attendance Legal Panels (ALP).

The LIT can provide advice and guidance for schools and practitioners.

Attendance Legal Panel

Hampshire County Council, through its Attendance Legal Panel (ALP), carries out its responsibility to act on behalf of its schools. (Education Act 1996. Section 443: failure to comply with school attendance order and Section 444: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil).

The County Council's Legal Intervention Team (LIT) will also process Education Supervision Orders. (Section 447 Education Act 1996; and School attendance orders – Section 437 Education Act 1996.)

Each county district has developed an Attendance Legal Panel (ALP). This is chaired by the District Manager of the Children and Families branch. The panel considers if it is appropriate to pursue legal action on cases presented by schools and to ensure that the evidence provided is robust and unambiguous enough to be presented in court.

How we support EBSA

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

How to access support

www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/legalintervention/panel

Reporting concerns and general guidance

- reporting concerns for child welfare
- general education enquiries
- finding childcare
- sources of help and support
- adoption and fostering
- children with special needs

Phone 0300 555 1384

Email childrens.services@hants.gov.uk

We also give advice and information to anyone concerned about a child or young person's emotional wellbeing.

Communication and Interaction Team

Support for young people in school with speech, language, and communication needs.

We are a team of Specialist Speech and Language Therapists (SaLT) and Specialist Teacher Advisors (STA) who support young people in special schools and mainstream schools and colleges across Hampshire. We are a separate service from the NHS and aim to liaise closely with our colleagues from other services.

In special schools we support children from Year R and up. Any child in a special school is automatically eligible for our support.

In mainstream schools and colleges, we support KS2, 3, 4 and 5 pupils with EHCPs, where communication and interaction is an area of need.

How we support EBSA

During the times when the young person is able to access a school site we offer:

Assessment both direct and through observation and information gathering to identify the role of language and social communication needs in the EBSA.

Direct support to the young person to develop language and social communication skills and their ability to use strategies in the school environment.

Indirect support to school staff to help them understand the young person's language and social communication needs and ensure they are trained and confident in supporting them.

How to access support

In special schools there is a speech and language therapist attached to the school who will be aware of the needs of all the children.

In mainstream the school or college Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) will discuss with us whether the young person would benefit from a referral to our team.

Support for pupils who are not able to access a school site can be accessed via request from the SEN team.

Lynne Ralston lynne.ralston@hants.gov.uk or Louisa Gray louisa.gray@hants.gov.uk

Further Information www.hants.gov.uk/stas

Public Health 0-19 School Nursing Service provided by Southern Health Foundation Trust

www.hampshirehealthyfamilies.org.uk

A request for support can be made through school and child and family assessment completed. If appropriate, a care plan can be offered.

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 from Young Minds
  youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI0NyXycXX1wIV7LDtCh0sBQ5pEAMYAyAAEg KEWfD_BwE
- *Mighty Moe* by Lacey Woloshyn
  www.cw.bc.ca/library/pdf/pamphlets/Mighty%20Moe1.pdf
- Anxiety self-help guide – Mood Juice
  www.mcgill.ca/counselling/files/counselling/anxiety_moodjuice_self_help_guide.p df
- *Anxiety* by Paul Stallard - examples of activities
  tandfbis.s3.amazonaws.com/rt-media/pp/resources/CBTCHILD/worksheets.pdf
- The Anxious Child: a booklet for parents and carers wanting to know more about anxiety in children and young people.
  www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/anxious-child
- *Overcoming Your Child's Fears and Worries: A Self-help Guide using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques* by Cathy Cresswell and Lucy Willetts

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
- 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
- Parent survival guide
  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 age)
- Online course on how to support young people with mental health difficulties www.minded.org.uk
- 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. www.minded.org.uk/families/index.html#/

  MindEd for professionals 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. www.minded.org.uk/Catalogue/TileView

Specific support for families

Square Peg

www.teamsquarepeg.org/

Not fine in school

www.notfineinschool.org.uk/home

Chat Health

Hampshire Chat Health service run by the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service (Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust).

Chat Health 0-5 - anonymous text support service for parents/carers of children under 5 years. 07520 615720

Chat Health 5-19 - anonymous text support service for parents/carers of children aged 5-19 years. 07507 332417

Chat Health 11-19 – anonymous text support service for children and young people aged 11-19 years. 07507 332160

www.hampshirehealthyfamilies.org.uk

Examples of Local Authority guidance

Devon www.babcockldp.co.uk/inclusion-and-ehwb/anxiety-based-school-avoidance

North Somerset thinkleftdotorg.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/ebsr.pdf

West Sussex schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483

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* 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 (PRE)

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 does not 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 avoidance, the next step is to obtain the views of the pupil, parents/carers and other staff.

	Level of concern				
Loss and change	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Death or caregiver, relative, friend					
Death of pet					
Sudden traumatic event					
Sudden separation from a parent/carer					
Moving house, school, area					
Loss of a classmate					
Caregiver/relative/friend illness					
Note on key items					
	High	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Family dynamic					
Parenting concerns					
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					
P.E. 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 friends/friendship 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					

Loss and Change

Family

Learning

Social

Psychological

Other

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 _____ 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 do 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 adults(s): **Where I can speak to my key adults(s):**	
Until _____ my return to school plan includes the following changes to my attendance:	
(Identify any changes to days or times 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, lunchtimes, 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 key adult(s) in school is/are:	
When I can speak to my key adults(s): **Where I can speak to my key adults(s):**	
Until _____ my return to school plan includes the following changes to my attendance:	
(Identify any changes to days or times they come in)	
Any other changes include:	
Identify any other changes to routines, (break, lunchtimes, 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:

Appendix 5 Whole School Audit

Whole school systems for promotion of emotional wellbeing 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 set 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 wellbeing 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 wellbeing and mental health for young people and parents.			
Clear roles and responsibilities for SENCo and 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 staff who has responsibility to investigate and act on concerns.			
Staff are aware as to whom they should convey any concerns regarding 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.			