

Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Guidance and toolkit for Walsall
schools, settings and support agencies

Version 1.1



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR **PAST** OUR **PRESENT** AND FOR OUR **FUTURE**

About

Purpose and aim

This guidance and toolkit have been produced to support and guide school staff and other professionals working with children, young people and their families experiencing emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA).

The guidance and toolkit aim to:

- Support staff and professionals understand EBSA;
- Help schools develop their whole-school approach to supporting EBSA;
- Assist school staff and professionals to develop and implement support for children and young people and their families experiencing EBSA;
- Provide an overview of support agencies and services available who may provide further support.

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- West Sussex Educational Psychology Service
- Solihull Educational Psychology Service
- Birmingham #You've Been Missed Campaign
- Buckinghamshire Educational Psychology Service
- Camden EBSA Pathway
- Lancashire County Council Educational Psychology Service
- Sheffield Educational Psychology Service
- Somerset Educational Psychology Service
- Staffordshire Educational Psychology Service
- Wakefield Educational Psychology Service

Overview

This document is in two parts. We encourage readers to read part one first to support effective use of the resources in part two.

Part One: GuidancePages 6 - 27

Provides an overview of what EBSA is, the factors that can lead to EBSA, how to support pupils experiencing EBSA, and an overview of services available to support with needs identified.

Part Two: Resource ToolkitPages 28 - 70

Contains a range of resources to help you understand the needs of and support children and young people experiencing EBSA.

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Section 1: About Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Definition

Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) is the chosen term for this guidance and was first used by West Sussex Educational Psychology Service in 2018.

It is a broad umbrella term used to describe the situation for children/young people who, due to emotional factors, experience severe difficulty attending school, often leading to prolonged absences. Other terms often used include emotionally based school nonattendance (EBSNA), anxiety related non-attendance (ARNA) and extended school nonattendance (ESNA).

Prevalence

It is difficult to provide an accurate measure of the frequency of emotionally based school avoidance, with challenges including the variety of reasons for which children/young people experiencing EBSA and how individual cases are coded in attendance measures.

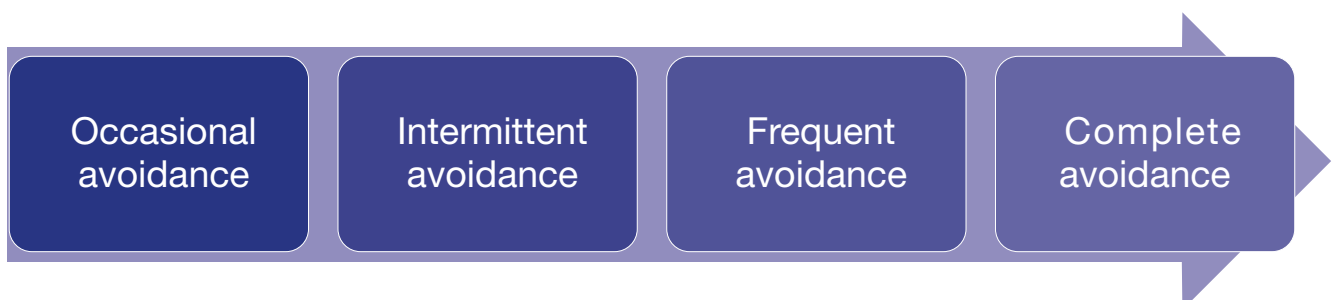
Previous research literature estimated that 1-5% of the school pupil population experience difficulties attending school (Pellegrini, 2007; Elliott and Place, 2019). More recently, in the UK it is recognised that there has been a national increase in school attendance difficulties since the Covid-19 pandemic (House of Commons Library, 2023). Local data indicates that in Walsall, the percentage of persistent absentees is greater than the national average.

What is EBSA?

Emotionally based school avoidance is a term used to describe the situation for children/young people who are experiencing severe difficulty attending school due to emotional factors. Children/young people experiencing EBSA often want to attend school, but feel that they cannot and show significant anxiety and distress about attending school.

EBSA can have a gradual or sudden onset. EBSA can be considered across a continuum of need, to include those who are showing early signs of and are at risk of becoming nonattenders. Some children/young people may also be in school, but not attending lessons and therefore not engaging fully in school life.

Figure 1: EBSA Continuum of need (Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes, 2008)



It is therefore important to notice early signs to EBSA, in order that support can be put into place. Early signs can include not wanting to get ready for school, feeling unwell on school days, missing occasional lessons, or avoiding particular activities. For some children, they may have support in place that supports them to attend, though they may be experiencing daily emotional difficulty managing at school. For further information and to help you notice and consider early signs, please see Section 2: Supporting EBSA.

What causes EBSA?

EBSA is not a 'diagnosis' and there is no single underlying reason or cause as to why children/young people experience EBSA difficulties. Children/young people experience EBSA for varying reasons and there are likely to be different contributing factors individual to each context. It is therefore important to consider the individual experience for each child/young person. We can do this by considering the:

- Risk and protective factors
- Function of EBSA
- Push and pull factors

Risk and Protective Factors

The likelihood of EBSA occurring is affected by the balance between risk and protective (also referred to as resilience) factors. Risk factors are those that can increase the possibility of difficulty, and protective factors are those that can lower the possibility of difficulty.

Risk and protective factors can be grouped into different categories relating to school, family and the individual child/young person. This is important as difficulties in school attendance are not only about the children/young person, but also the school and the family. The table below provides an overview of prevalent factors in each of these categories that can increase the risk of EBSA occurring.



School Factors	Family Factors	Individual Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying (the most common school factor) • Difficulties in specific subject(s) • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation and divorce or change in family dynamic • Parent physical or mental health challenges • Overprotective parenting style • Complex interactions/ dynamics between family members • Being the youngest or only child in the family • Loss and bereavement • High levels of family stress • Family history of EBSA • Young carer • Intergenerational and/or community experiences such as racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperamental style – reluctance to interact and withdrawal from unfamiliar settings, people or objects • Fear of failure and low self confidence • Physical illness • School transition ages (5-6, 11-12 & 13-14 years) • Learning difficulties, developmental needs, or neurodevelopmental differences including autism, particularly if unidentified or unsupported • Separation anxiety from parent/carer • Traumatic events

Table 1: Risk factors associated with EBSA (based on West Sussex EPS Guidance, 2018).

Risk factors can also be considered according to whether they are:

- Pre-existing factors that increased the likelihood of difficulty (pre-disposing factors). For example, separation anxiety from parent/carer.
- Recent specific events that prompt an escalation in difficulty (precipitating factors). For example, transitioning from primary to secondary school.
- Factors that maintain the difficulty (perpetuating factors). For example, reduction in confidence in learning skills following being away from lessons.

Protective factors are those which provide a support and are positive resource to ‘protect’ against difficulties. These can also be grouped into school, family and the individual child/young person as in the table below:

School Factors	Family Factors	Individual Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships with member(s) of staff • Willingness to work in partnership with family and support agencies • Flexible approach • Developing understanding of child/young person’s needs and feelings • Responding to child/young person’s needs and feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationships in the family and/or community • Willingness to work in partnership with school and support agencies • Positive parenting skills • Developing understanding of child/young person’s needs and feelings • Responding to child/young person’s needs and feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths and interests • Aspirations and ambitions • Motivation for change • Increasing confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy • Developing understanding of own needs and feelings • Positive relationships with peers in school • Experiencing success in school

Table 2: Protective factors associated with EBSA (adapted from Staffordshire EPS Guidance (2020) and Somerset EPS Guidance (no date) .

Risk and protective factors cannot be viewed in isolation from each other as they will interact together in a way unique to each individual context. Therefore, when considering how to support individual children/young people, it is important to recognise that:

- There will be multiple risk factors influencing a child/young person having difficulty attending school
- Different factors can influence the situation at different times
- The factors will interact with each other.

As a result, it is important to explore, understand and consider the situation specific to each child/young person.

Functions of EBSA

When a child/young person experiences EBSA, it is also important to consider what the function of the behaviour is and what the behaviour is communicating. Doing so acknowledges that all behaviour has a purposeful function or meaning. Research has grouped the functions of EBSA into four categories (Kearney and Silverman, 1996; Kearney 2008), which are presented below alongside some examples.

1. To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school, such as feelings of anxiety or low mood. For example uncomfortable feelings when entering the school building or on the journey to school.

2. To avoid situations that might be stressful, such as academic demands, social pressures and / or aspects of the school environment. For example exams, speaking or reading aloud in class, class sports, or eating around others at lunch time.

3. To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others, such as parents or other family members. In this situation school is not viewed as a negative, and the function of not attending school is to stay with a significant person.

4. To pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time.

Figure 2: Functions of school non-attendance (Kearney and Silverman, 1996; Kearney, 2008) . Also adapted from West Sussex EPS Guidance (2018) and Solihull EPS Guidance (2020).

Awareness and consideration of these functions will help in understanding what is happening for the child/young person, and also help with intervention planning. Children/young people experiencing EBSA may present with a combination of the four functions. Therefore, it is again important to consider the situation individual to each child/young person.

Push and Pull Factors

A helpful way of considering the risk factors, protective factors and functions of EBSA is to identify what factors ‘push’ and ‘pull’ a child/young person to school or home. There will be school-based and home-based factors that ‘pull’ away from attending school, and home-based factors that ‘push’ towards staying at home. School-based protective factors that support attendance can be described as those that ‘push’ towards school. Thambirajah, Grandison and De-Hayes (2008) refer to this when they describe EBSA as occurring 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” (p.33).

The table below provides an example of different push and pull factors.

School factors	Home Factors
Push (towards attending school) Factors at school that help a child or young person to attend school. For example, positive relationships with peers, positive relationships with staff, learning skills, or self-esteem.	Pull (away from school towards home) Factors at home that pull the child or young person home and therefore away from attending school. For example, anxiety separating from parent/carer, change in family dynamics, or bereavement/loss.
Pull (away from school) Factors at school that pull a child or young person away from attending school. For example, anxiety in situations at school, social difficulties, bullying, academic demands, or difficult transition.	Push (towards staying at home) Factors at home that keep a child or young person at home. For example, a reduction in anxiety by staying with parent/carer, reduction in anxiety by not being in situations at school, not experiencing difficulties at school such as bullying or academic demands.

Anxiety and EBSA

Anxiety can be a key and significant feature of EBSA. A certain level of anxiety is a normal and natural part of growing up, however, some children/young people may experience heightened levels that impact on their functioning and experience of school.

Anxiety can be described as a feeling of nervousness, worry, or unease. One difference between worry and anxiety is that worry is considered to be more manageable than anxiety, whereas anxiety is considered to be out of one's control.

Anxiety is a normal response to events and changes and can also be useful. It can help protect us from danger and alerts us to things that do not feel right. In moderation, it can encourage us to practice and prepare, for example studying for exams.

For children/young people experiencing anxiety in excess about school, it can be accompanied by fearful thoughts about attending school and their ability to cope in school, and physical symptoms of anxiety for example nausea, vomiting, shaking, sweating etc. These feelings may also start the night before school or even a few days before.

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

Over time, these behaviours and the avoidance of school, may contribute to maintaining EBSA. By avoiding school, the child/young person may experience a sense of relief, which then becomes a powerful reinforcer of avoiding school and the feelings of anxiety (see figure below for the anxiety-avoidance cycle).

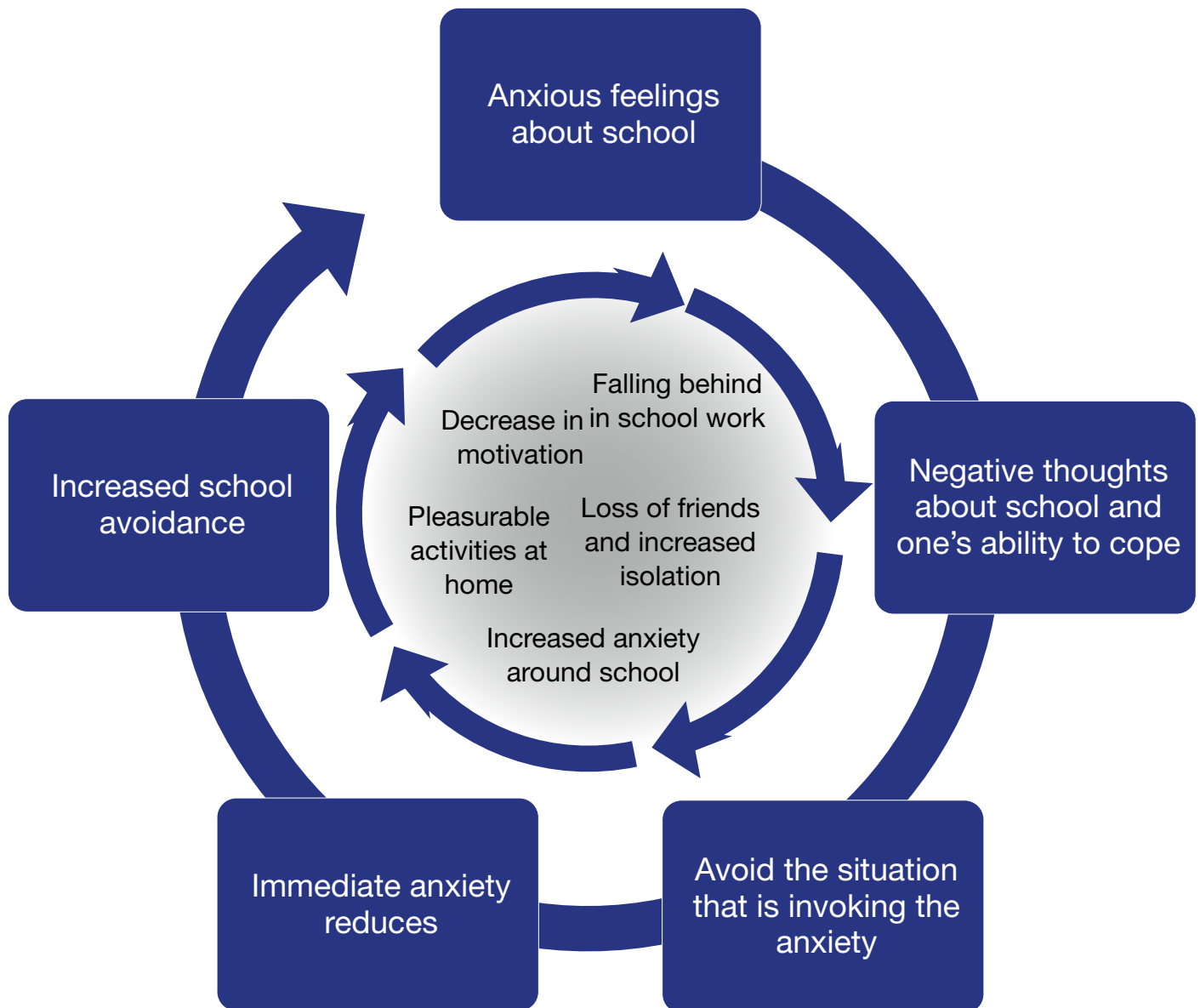
It is important to consider the child/young person's perception of their ability to cope, including their perceived social and academic competence, as negative thoughts about their ability to cope can lead to further feelings of worry, which if not addressed is considered to undermine attempts to support attendance.

Successfully 'surviving' the anxiety and experiencing the relief also undermines the child/young person's belief in their ability to manage the situation. This in turn, can lead to a vicious cycle with anxiety increasing over time. It is for this reason, that it is essential to consider individual factors and the function of the behaviour.

Unfortunately, a child/young person's feeling of anxiety can be increased by things often offered to support. For example:

- Parents/carers' own anxiety about their young person's situation
- Other people around them minimising or dismissing the feelings relating to the anxiety
- Reassurance that inadvertently demonstrates that there really is something to be afraid of.

Figure 3: Anxiety-avoidance cycle (West Sussex EPS, 2018)



Autism and EBSA

Children/young people who may have needs such as autism may find the school experience very challenging and appear to experience EBSA. Research has identified key factors that impact on levels of anxiety experienced by children or young people with autism. For instance, frequent sensory processing differences make the world unpredictable, and since schools are full of sensory experiences it often becomes hard for children/young people to cope with. Other difficulties associated with understanding emotions makes it harder for children/young people with autism to feel safe and regulate their emotions, causing anxiety.

As schools can be quite complex, the unpredictability may mean that children/young people with autism find the experience challenging. They will use a lot of energy navigating these experiences, which can sometimes be overwhelming. This may be seen more in secondary schools, where frequent change is a regular occurrence.

It is advantageous for staff to explore what children/young people are finding hard to tolerate when they are showing signs of EBSA, so that reasonable adjustments can be made and the behaviour is reduced. This means that interventions that support to develop children/young people's social skills, resilience and emotional literacy are highly important. Knowing this, it is crucial to remember that there is no "one size fits all" approach to help supporting children/young people who have autism. The strategies and resources in this toolkit can be used to support pupils with autism. However, in addition to these, all interventions should include:

- An emphasis on building of relationships
- Visual supports
- Structure
- Managing change, and
- Increasing the certainty of the school day.



Section 2: Supporting EBSA

Responding to EBSA and supporting individual children/young people at risk of EBSA involves different stages of support:

1. Universal: Adopting a whole-school approach to promoting mental health and wellbeing of the whole-school community.
2. Early identification and support: Early identification of pupils who are at increased risk of or are beginning to experience difficulty.
3. Targeted intervention: Co-ordinated and targeted support for pupils who are experiencing difficulty attending school. This can include the involvement of external support agencies.

The following section outlines these stages in further detail.

Universal: Whole-school approach

Adopting a whole-school approach involves taking a strategic and co-ordinated approach to supporting the whole-school community, and considering the factors within the environment and organisation that contribute to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

Public Health England (PHE) working with the Department for Education (DfE) published eight principles that contribute to and should be considered as part of the whole-school approach (see figure below). Further information on these principles can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoplesemoional-health-and-wellbeing>



Adopting a whole-school approach is also recommended by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) as a way to support overall social, emotional and mental wellbeing in schools. See table below for an introduction to the whole-school approach recommendations. The full guidance can be found here: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng223/chapter/Recommendations#whole-school-approach>

1.1.1 Adopt a whole-school approach to support positive social, emotional and mental wellbeing of staff, children and young people (including people with a neurodiverse condition) in primary and secondary education.

1.1.2 Ensure that the school has a culture, ethos and practice that strengthens relational approaches and inclusion, and that recognises the importance of psychological safety.

1.1.3 Review the school's policies and procedures regularly to make sure that they promote social, emotional and mental wellbeing positively and consistently. This should include making them consistent with relational approaches to social, emotional and mental wellbeing.

1.1.4 Review regularly the school's accessibility plan, medical conditions policy and approach to understanding behaviour, taking into account neurodiversity and communication needs. Also take into account the value of trauma-informed approaches and parental co-production.

1.1.5 Consider monitoring and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the wholeschool approach as part of a school improvement strategy.

Research has found that the features of a whole-school approach are key to supporting pupils at risk of and who are experiencing EBSA. For example, school ethos and how safe, accepted, valued and respected pupils feel has been found to be connected to school attendance (e.g. Kearney, 2008), and communication between staff and support from school leadership team has been found as key to supporting pupils re-integrate into school after a period of non-school attendance (Nuttall and Woods, 2013).

To support schools/settings to develop their whole-school approach, a whole-school audit specific to EBSA is available in the Resource Toolkit. The audit tool will help you consider what is currently in place and areas for development. In Walsall, external agencies can also support the development of your whole-school approach (see section 3 for information).

Early identification and support

It is important to take a proactive and responsive approach to EBSA by seeking to identify issues early. This includes careful monitoring of attendance (including subtle patterns such as late arrivals or missing lessons) and being aware of early signs of EBSA.

In schools, it is important that all staff have a shared understanding and awareness of indicators, and that there is a whole-school policy and approach to support staff to respond. This should include staff remaining curious about behaviour, trying to refrain from making assumptions, sharing information with colleagues to establish a holistic picture, and having open and supportive communication with parents/carers.

The table below provide a list of possible early indicators of EBSA.

Possible Early indicators of EBSA	Possible Indicators of EBSA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sporadic attendance and/or lateness. Parent/carer reporting that child/ young person does not want to come to school. Physical signs of stress believed to be linked to stress (e.g. stomach ache, sickness, headache) or complaining of feeling ill. Behavioural changes or fluctuations e.g interactions with others, reduced motivation and engagement in learning tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periods of prolonged absence. Persistent lateness. Parent/carer is unable to support child/ young person to attend school. Identifiable patterns within non-school attendance e.g. specific days, subjects, staff members. Providing minor reasons for school absences. Child/young person experiences anxiety in relation to home factors e.g. parental separation, divorce, conflict, loss, bereavement. Child/young person displays greater reliance upon family members e.g. separation anxiety, increased proximity. Concerns around academic progress due to non-school attendance / missed education. Child/young person displays increased anxiety in relation to their learning and/ or poor self-concept as a learner. Low self-esteem and/or lack of confidence. Struggling in relation to peer relationships and/ or social situations. Physical signs of stress believed to be linked to stress (e.g. stomach ache, sickness, headache) or complaining of feeling ill.

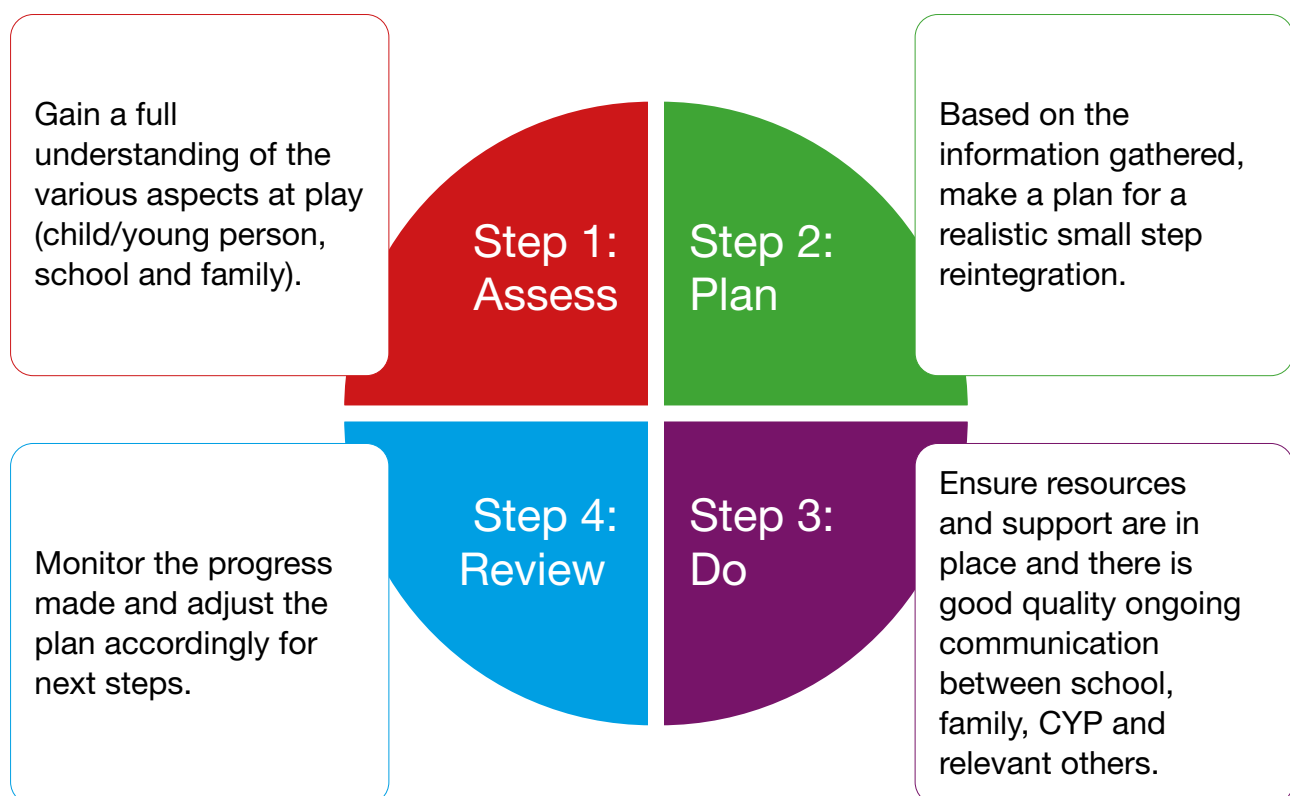
Transition

To support early identification of and support for pupils at risk of or who are experiencing EBSA, specific consideration should also be given to transitions within education. Children and young people experience many transitions throughout their education, and there can be many daily transitions that children/young people may find challenging. In particular it is recognised that the transition from primary to secondary school is a time when EBSA can increase. See in the Resource Toolkit, for examples of other transitions and strategies to help.

Targeted intervention

When it has been identified that a child or young person is at risk of or experiencing difficulties attending school, it is important to take swift action and identify strategies to support. This should begin with an information gathering stage, and it is important that parent/carers, child or young person and school staff are all involved.

The graduated response of stages of assess, plan, do and review (see figure below) should be implemented and the child or young person placed at the centre of planning and interventions.



Remember, that there is no single or simple reason for EBSA and there are likely to be multiple contributing and interacting factors (see section titled: What causes EBSA?). Similarly, there is no one-size-fits all support strategy. Supporting EBSA will require a robust assessment of factors, collaboration between school, families and any other professionals, and careful individualised planning. The following sections guide you through this approach using the graduated response cycle and signposts to relevant resources within the Resource Toolkit.

Step 1: Assess – Information gathering

When possible EBSA difficulties are identified, there should be a prompt process of information gathering to explore contributing factors. This will include gathering information on the variety of school factors, family factors and individual child or young person factors that may be contributing to the difficulties. There will be different views on the situation, therefore it is essential that all views are respected and differences in views acknowledged.

Working with the child / young person

The thoughts, feelings and views of the child or young person are important to understanding potential risk and support factors, and planning personalised support and intervention. It is important to remember that the child/young person is currently managing uncomfortable feelings by not attending school, therefore talk about school is likely to raise feelings of anxiety. Therefore, consider who is best placed to gather information from the child or young person. Then start by acknowledging their emotions and that you know it may be difficult to talk about, though you would like to know what they think and feel.

The approach then used will need to be tailored to the individual child or young person's skills, strengths and needs. The Resource Toolkit contains a range of resources.



Working with the family

It is essential to work in partnership with parents/carers throughout the assess, plan, do and review process, in order to support successful outcomes for children and young people experiencing EBSA. Therefore, gathering the views of the family is not only integral to understanding and supporting difficulties, but also an initial step in building collaboration and partnership.

It is important to recognise that families may have experienced a range of challenges prior to the current difficulty, for example daily difficulties getting the child to go to school, worrying about their child due to them not wanting to attend school, or difficulties encountered when engaging with support systems. It will therefore be important that professionals working with parents seek to build a genuine and supportive working relationship and that schools should identify a member of staff who will be the key link to communicate with parents/carers.

In the initial meeting it will be key to gather background information, establish the current situation, and the views of parents/carers.

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. 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.

Analysing and interpreting the information gathered

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. This means pulling all the information together to identify the various factors and form potential hypotheses regarding the behaviours.

To do this the information will need to be reviewed to identify risk and protective factors, explore potential functions of school non-attendance, and using this information to consider the push and pull factors. Through this, hypotheses will be generated specific to the situation which can then be used to inform intervention planning. The Resource Toolkit provides a template to support you through this process.

Step 2: Plan – Action planning

After the information gathering and analysis process, an action plan should be coproduced with parent/carers, the child or young person, and any other professionals involved.

The action plan will need to be individualised to the situation and address key areas identified in the assessment stage. Therefore, the goals and strategies will also be specific to the child/young person – what works for one person may not work for another. However, from the literature, there are principles that an effective action plan should include:

- A personalised programme for each child/young person.
- A focus on reintegration as early as possible, taking account of the need for gradual steps (see below).
- Gradual and graded steps (i.e. taking small steps beginning with the least-anxiety provoking situation). In addition to realistic and achievable outcomes and steps.
- Early home visits if appropriate to discuss the child/young person reluctance to attend school.
- All parties to agree actions and keep them until the next review date.
- Ensuring the child/young person's needs are clearly communicated with all staff in the setting. This includes supply staff and particularly during changes in classes.
- Identification of a key member of staff who can be approached by the child/young person if anxiety becomes temporarily overwhelming in school.
- Identifying a member of staff for the child/young person to 'check in' with throughout the day.
- A safe space in school that the child/young person can go if needed.
- Direct and regular phone contact between school and parents/carers. Agree expectations regarding frequency of contact and set realistic response times.
- Consideration of what support the family requires.



The Resource Toolkit provides an example template for an action plan.

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. Please seek guidance from and inform Walsall School Attendance Support Service of the use of a part-time timetable.

There will be times when a child or young person may find the plan more challenging, such as at the start of its implementation, following a weekend, a school holiday or a period of illness. If the child or young person does not attend or carry out the agreed actions one day, start again the next day with an optimistic outlook. It might be necessary to move back a step in the plan, so as to build greater confidence.

At the start of the plan the child or young person may show more distress. All involved should be aware of this and work together to agree a consistent approach, and any concerns should be communicated away from the child or young person.

In addition to the broader action plan, it may be useful to work with the child or young person on an individual support plan. This builds on elements of the action plan and helps them to see what action can be taken by themselves, by school and by their family to support their reintegration. The support plan could include:

- Agreed information about timetable changes;
- Key adults;
- Strategies to help reduce anxieties;
- How friends and family can help, and;
- Information about a safe place.

The Resource Toolkit provides example support plan templates.

External advice and guidance should be sought if professionals are unsure or under confident in planning or implementing interventions, and in instances where:

- The child or young person has significant, on-going mental health needs or a history of needs.
- The child or young person is on a waiting list for therapeutic support with an external agency.
- The child or young person is unable to come into school.
- The child or young person does not have a trusting relationship with an adult in school.

See section 3 for details of support services.

Interventions and strategies

The interventions and strategies chosen for the action plan will be based on the assessment stage. To help, possible school-based strategies and resources are provided in the Resource Toolkit and grouped into:

- General school-based strategies
- Support to manage uncomfortable feelings, such as anxiety
- Support for managing school situations that might be stressful
- Support to reduce separation anxiety or attention sought from significant others
- Support to manage the pursuit of activities outside of school

The ideas are provided to help with planning. There will be many other helpful strategies and resources that are not included, and through collaboration and discussion, other helpful and personalised strategies can be identified. Therefore, it is recommended that ideas are discussed and agreed together by all involved.

Step 3: Do – Implementing the plan

Ensure that all key personnel are involved and aware of the plan, and that support agreed is in place. It will be essential to review the plan, therefore, set a review date in advance. It is recommended that the review date is set for 4 – 6 weeks.

Then put the action plan into place and monitor it closely, maintaining good communication between those involved.



Step 4: Review – Reviewing the plan

There is no expectation that the problem will be fixed overnight or by a single person. Celebrate success no matter how small and look to making those gradual changes if the issue seems stuck.

The review, as with the action plan, will need to include parents/carers, child/young person, key school staff and other professionals involved. The review will enable all involved to:

- Discuss how the support plan is progressing and review the impact;
- Identify and celebrate any progress made;
- Make any adjustments to the support plan, and;
- Consider if further information has been learned that can help inform next steps.

These next steps can include:

- Consolidating and maintaining the current plan;
- Setting new outcomes and or actions for the young person, school and parents;
- Identifying that consultation with other agencies needs to occur and if necessary, a referral for support from other services.

It is recommended that a second review date is set for 4 – 6 weeks.

The assess, plan, do and review process can be repeated multiple times to support an increase in support. Where there has been limited or no progress in response to targeted interventions and support plans over time, discuss with the family seeking involvement from external agencies. Consider the areas of need identified through the assess-plan-do-review process to help identify the appropriate service(s) to refer to. Section 3: Local and National Support Services provides an overview of available services.

Involvement of external agencies will help to provide further targeted and individualised support. Furthermore, where appropriate in the context of complex and long-term needs, external agency involvement can support with ensuring a long-term plan for ongoing areas of difficulty.



Section 3: Local & National Support Services

Local Services

The following is a list of local services able to provide support to school staff and/ or individual families, children and young people where there are difficulties attending school.

Information on local services can also be found on the Walsall Local Offer page for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND): <https://send.walsall.gov.uk/>

BRICS Inclusion Support Service:

BRICS is a service available to all schools in order to support children to be in school, be happy, safe and learning. The service offers a wide range of training plus a bespoke outreach offer for when a child may be at risk of permanent exclusion. The outreach service uses a graduated approach, with specialist inclusion advisors offering strategic advice and signposting to other professionals as appropriate.

All of the training on offer is based around the six principles of nurture, putting relationships front and centre of successful learning.

For more information contact Annette Guest at brics@shortheathfederation.org.uk and Lorraine Thompson at Lorraine.Thompson@walsall.gov.uk

Early Help

This is the term used to describe the support we give to children, young people and their families when they need extra help. Early Help take a partnership approach as it is difficult at times for one single agency to deliver effective support alone. It means they work alongside a number of services to help families.

Further information available from: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/children-and-young-people/early-help>

Educational Psychology Service

Walsall Educational Psychology Service provides professional psychological consultation services for children, young people and families in a wide range of educational and community settings. For schools/settings, support is provided through a traded offer and can consist of individual or group casework, training or project work.

Support for individuals includes assessment and bespoke action plans and interventions for individual children/young people, and support with the graduated approach for special educational needs and disability. Strategic support for schools includes:

- Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) training and supervision: ELSAs provide individual and group intervention to support children's emotional literacy skills.
- Sandwell Well-being Charter Mark: This is an action research process that supports schools to identify and develop good practice in their whole school approach to promoting the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school community.

Further information available from: AccessInclusionAdminTeam@walsall.gov.uk and <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools-in-walsall/the-educationalpsychology-service>

Elective Home Education (EHE)

The EHE service is responsible for identifying and recording compulsory school aged children who are home educated. They also work with schools to offer early intervention, prior to parent making a formal decision to EHE and withdrawing their child from school.

EHE should always be undertaken as a positive choice which is expected to lead to better outcomes for the child. The DfE (Department for Education) recommends that whenever possible, the local authority and school should encourage parents to discuss an intention to home educate children with the EHE team and, where appropriate, any relevant professionals supporting the family (e.g. teachers), health and social care (e.g. social workers), before putting it into effect.

Walsall Council therefore recommends that schools inform the EHE service at the earliest opportunity if a parent expresses an interest to EHE their child. We also advise that school coordinate a Pre EHE meeting with parent, the EHE team and any relevant professionals in attendance. This will ensure parents understand the implications of EHE and their responsibility but will also be an opportunity to resolve potential issues in school, which may be the cause for the decision to home educate.

Further information is available from: EHEmailbox@walsall.gov.uk

Inclusion Hub

Walsall's Inclusion Hub sits under the wider Virtual School and has a focus on promoting the education of vulnerable groups.

Staff in the Inclusion Hub work closely with schools, social workers, and other professionals to ensure vulnerable children are in school and are accessing the appropriate support to enable them to reach their academic potential.

Each school in Walsall has a named Inclusion Officer who will:

- Offer advice regarding cohorts of vulnerable children.
- Offer advice and signpost schools and educational settings to additional services and ensure that you receive the support required to support your vulnerable child/children.
- Attend meetings where a child is at risk of exclusion.
- Offer training opportunities to develop schools and educational settings understanding around attachment, trauma as well as training on interventions known to make the biggest impact for vulnerable children.
- Offer 'drop In' sessions, with our Educational Psychologists, Speech & Language Therapists and CAMHS Practitioner to encourage discussions around interventions, provision and strategies to improve outcomes.
- Attend meetings in schools or other educational settings to discuss the education of vulnerable children.
- Signpost local area support systems, external organisations/activities that could support the young person.

For more information contact: vsinclusionteam@walsall.gov.uk

Positive Steps

Positive Steps are part of CAMHS and offer a targeted (tier 2) level support to children and young people. The team is accessed via the School Nursing Service pathway or via GP referral directly to CAMHS. The team provide one to one assessment and interventions for a range of emotional health problems e.g. anxiety, depression.

Reflexions (Mental Health Support Team)

Reflexions is a Mental Health Support Team (MHST). The service aims to help increase access to mental health support for children and young people in schools. They offer individual support to young people and their families, and support the Whole School Approach including through assemblies, staff training and groups/workshops.

For more information contact: bchft.reflexions@nhs.net

School Attendance Support Service

The School Attendance Support Service work with all schools in the area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, they enforce attendance through legal intervention.

Support includes offering a traded service to schools to support them with their attendance responsibilities, and holding termly Targeting Support Meetings with all schools to focus on overall attendance, vulnerable cohorts and ensure schools are working to ensure all pupils are able to access a full-time education.

For more information contact: Attendancemailbox@walsall.gov.uk

School Nursing

School Nursing are a highly trained and skilled team of Qualified School Nurses, Staff Nurses, Nursery Nurses, Clinical Support Workers and administrative support employed by Walsall NHS Healthcare Trust with over 40 years of experience delivering high quality, effective services to children, young people and their families. School Nursing have an excellent track record in working in partnership with schools and wider services to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The School Nursing service is commissioned by Public Health in the Local Authority. The contract is to provide the Healthy Child Programme 5-19 to all children and young people in Walsall. They provide a range of services as part of their free core offer which is accessible to all schools and alternative education providers.

Further information available from: <https://www.walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/school-nursing/>

Virtual School:

The Walsall Virtual School is not a teaching institution. It is “a model by which the local authority provides services and support for the education of children in care and previously in care, and a constructive challenge to those providing the services”. The Virtual School works closely and in partnership with education settings, social care, parents/carers and other professionals to ensure there is a holistic and comprehensive approach to the support of looked after and previously looked after children in all areas of their lives, and to ensure all children and young people receive a quality provision via all partnerships.

For more information contact: walsallvirtualschool@walsall.gov.uk

WPH Counselling:

WPH Counselling and Education Services (WPH) is a charitable, local, and nonjudgemental organisation, providing mental health support for the residents and community of Walsall.

Further information available from: <https://wphcounselling.org>

Regional and National Organisations

Anna Freud Centre

<https://www.annafreud.org>

The Anna Freud Centre is a mental health charity for children and families. They offer a range of support, services and resources to help children and young people's emotional mental health. This includes resources to help schools address EBSA and a range of resources to support schools with their whole-school approach.



Autism Education Trust (AET)

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk>

The AET is a not-for-profit organisation supported by the Department for Education. Their programme offers education professionals training, practical tools and resources to better support children and young people with autism aged 0 to 25. Their offer includes a free resource on school stress and anxiety for autistic pupils and how it can lead to EBSA.

Kooth

<https://www.kooth.com>

Kooth offers therapeutic support to young people between the ages of 11-25. The service is funded by the NHS so it is completely free to all services working with young people in Walsall. As well as chatting to qualified counsellors on the text based service, young people can message the team 24 hours a day, access fully-moderated support forums, online magazine and other self-help tools.

WYSA App

For further information contact bchft@wysa.io

Wysa is a clinically safe mental health support app that helps users build emotional resilience skills and offers immediate support at any time of day or night. Talking to Wysa can help young people navigate difficult emotions and give them the confidence to reach out for help when they are ready. Please note Wysa is NOT a real person (AI).

Wysa gives teenagers someone outside of their circle to talk to, any time, any place. Wysa helps with: anxiety, stress, loneliness, self-confidence, relationship troubles and more. The AI chatbot is available 24/7 and there are over 100 self-help exercises for young people to explore.

Young Minds

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk>

Young Minds is a charity that supports and advocates for children and young people's mental health. They provide tools and resources for young people and parents, in addition to resources and training for professionals working with young people.

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A. Whole School Audit Tool

Adapted from Lancashire County Council Educational Psychology Service EBSA Guidance

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 (When and by who)
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 (incl. EBSA) (Please list).			
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 communication and partnership working with parents and external agencies.			
School Systems, Policies and Practice			
Clear policies on attendance, behaviour, bullying, equality and transition which sets out the responsibilities for all and the support in place.			
Curriculum appropriately differentiated according to individual need.			
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 (What systems are in place? How is information shared with relevant members of staff?).			

Whole school systems for promotion of emotional well-being and prevention of EBSA			
Nominated member of staff who has a responsibility to investigate and act on concerns.			
Access to evidence-based provision to support with EBSA (e.g. safe places within the school, key person).			
Staff are aware as to whom they should convey any concerns regarding EBSA (How is this conveyed?)			
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 Is there a central list of partner agencies who link with school to support EBSA cases, Is this list readily accessible for school staff? Who maintains this list i.e., can it be updated?			
All staff are aware of specific strategies and programmes in place to support those experiencing EBSA.			

B. Profile of Risk Factors of EBSA

Adapted from West Sussex EPS (2018)

The Profile of Risk Factors consists of five key areas, each of which contain items to consider in terms of their possible importance influencing an emotionally based attendance difficulty. The rationale for the schedule content is based on risk factors identified for EBSA.

When completing the schedule, it is important to try and be objective and to consider available evidence for judgements. Therefore, it is recommended that completion of the schedule is a joint venture with staff who know the pupil well, 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, as a single item (e.g. death of a parent) may have great importance and influence that it cannot be rated in a similar way to other items. Therefore, the schedule provides a space to make notes on the key items of importance.

If the resultant profile suggests to you that the pupil is at risk of EBSA, the next step is to obtain the views of the pupil, parents and other staff members.

	Level of concern				
Loss and Change	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Death of family member or friend					
Death of pet					
Traumatic event (sudden, recent or historical)					
Separation from a parent					
Moving house, school or area					
Loss of a friend or peer					
Illness of a family member					
Note on key items:					

	Level of concern				
Family	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Concerns regarding parenting					
Birth of a sibling					
Parental separation					
Parental discordance (arguing / fighting)					
Practical problems bringing the child/young person to school					
Sibling conflict / jealousy					
Sibling not attending school					
Young carer					
Known parental/family mental health needs					
Known other family stressors					
Note on key items:					

	Level of concern				
Curriculum	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Learning needs					
Difficulties in specific subjects					
Exam or test anxiety					
Difficulty with pace of lessons					
Language needs, including early stages of learning English as an additional language					
Issues in PE / Sports / Games					
Note on key items:					

	Level of concern				
Social	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Bullying (current, recent or historical)					
Friendship issues					
Social isolation					
Issues with or dislike of unstructured times (e.g. play / break / lunch times)					
Few leisure interests					
Involvement in any issues in the local community (e.g. gangs)					
Note on key items:					

	Level of concern				
Wellbeing	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Often seems tired					
Appears to have low self-esteem / self-confidence					
Appears to have low mood					
Appears anxious / tearful					
Keeps feelings / emotions to themselves					
Appears shy / quiet / passive					
Appears to struggle to perceive positives					
Physical illness / injury					
Note on key items:					

	Level of concern				
Environment and Staff	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Issues managing sensory experiences (e.g. noise levels)					
Issues managing transitions within the school day					
Difficulties in relationships with staff					
Note on key items:					

	Level of concern				
Other issues	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Note on key items:					

C. Information Gathering and Formulation: Questions to Consider

Name		School	
Year group		Key school staff	
Other agencies involved			
Description of behaviour			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and 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 and difficulties? 			
Risk factors: School, family and individual			
<p>Use the profile of risk factors tool in the resource toolkit and record relevant factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental and educational history (health, medical, sensory or social factors). • What are the child/young person's previous experiences of school? • Any identified issues in school? (e.g. peer relationships, subject difficulties, difficulties with staff, or school environment). • Any changes in family dynamic? (Separation, loss, birth of a sibling, health issues of other family members) • Who is the child/young person closest to in the family? • Are there any other needs within the family? • How do members of the family respond to the situation? 			
Protective factors and strengths: School, family and individual			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the child/young person think is going well? • What strengths do they have? • Do they have any aspirations or ambitions for the future? • 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 child/young person was able to get into school? • What has been helpful in the past? 			

Formulation and integration of various factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is people's understanding of why the child/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? • Are there any maintaining factors?
Function of behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the function of the behaviour? Is it to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school? • Avoid situations that might be stressful? • Reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others? • To pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school?

Summary: Push and Pull Factors	
Bring together the information gathered to map the push and pull factors.	
School Factors	Home Factors
Push (towards attending school) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What school-based factors 'push' towards the child/young person attending school? • Where can we increase or support school-based 'push' factors? 	Pull (away from attending school) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What home-based factors 'pull' the child/young person away from attending school?
Pull (away from school) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What school-based factors 'pull' the child/young person away from attending school? 	Push (toward staying at home) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What home-based factors 'push' the child/young person towards staying at home?

D. Information Gathering and Formulation Tool

Name		School	
Year group		Key school staff	
Other agencies involved			
Description of behaviour			
Risk factors: School, family and individual			
Protective factors and strengths: School, family and individual			

Formulation and integration of various factors
Function of behaviour

Summary: Push and Pull Factors	
School Factors	Home Factors
Push (towards attending school)	Pull (away from attending school)
Pull (away from school)	Push (toward staying at home)

E. Risk and Protective Factors of EBSA: Information sheets

Risk Factors of EBSA

Factors identified that place children/young people at a greater risk of EBSA

School

- Bullying (most common school factor)
- Difficulties in specific subject(s)
- 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

Individual

- Temperamental style-reluctance to interact and withdrawal from unfamiliar settings, people or objects
- Fear of failure and low self confidence
- Physical illness
- School transition ages (5-6, 11-12, 13-14 years)
- Learning difficulties, developmental needs, or neurodevelopmental differences including autism, particularly if unidentified or unsupported
- Separation anxiety from parent/carer
- Traumatic events

Family

- Separation/divorce or change in family dynamic
- Parent physical or mental health challenges
- Overprotective parenting style
- Complex interactions/dynamics between family members
- Being the youngest child in the family
- Loss and bereavement
- High levels of family stress
- Family history of EBSA
- Young carer
- Intergenerational and/or community experiences, such as racism

Protective Factors of EBSA

Factors identified which provide a support to
children/young people at a greater risk of EBSA

School

- Positive relationships with member(s) of staff
- Willingness to work in partnership with family and support agencies
- Flexible approach
- Developing understanding of CYP needs and feelings
- Responding to CYP needs and feelings

Individual

- Strengths and interests
- Aspirations and ambitions
- Motivation for change
- Increasing confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Developing understanding of own needs and feelings
- Positive relationships with peers in school
- Experiencing success in school

Family

- Positive relationships in the family and/or community
- Willingness to work in partnership with school and support agencies
- Positive parenting skills
- Developing understanding of CYP needs and feelings
- Responding to CYP needs and feelings

F. Push and Pull Factors: Information Sheet

Push and Pull Factors

School Factors

Push

(towards attending school)

- Factors at school that help a child or young person to attend school
- For example, positive relationships with peers, positive relationships with staff, learning skills, or self esteem

Home Factors

Pull

(away from school towards home)

- Factors at home that pull the child or young person home and therefore away from attending school
- For example, anxiety separating from parent/carer, change in family dynamics, or bereavement/loss

Pull

(away from school)

- Factors at school that pull a child or young person away from attending school
- For example, anxiety in situations at school, social difficulties, bullying, academic demands, or difficult transition

Push

(towards staying at home)

- Factors at home that keep a child or young person at home
- For example, a reduction in anxiety by staying with parent/carer, reduction in anxiety by not being in situations at school, not experiencing difficulties at school, such as bullying or academic demands.

G. Functions of School Avoidance: Card Sort

This activity is an adapted version of a card sort developed by Sheffield EPS (2022) based on the School Refusal Assessment Scale (Kearney, 2002).

It is provided as a tool to support staff to develop an understanding of a young person's school avoidance and the function of the behaviour.

The statements are colour-coded by the function of behaviour.

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

Red, function 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)

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

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

How the statements could be used with a child/young person:

- Cut up the statements.
- Ask the child/young person to sort the statements into three groups, shown on the cards: A bit like me, most like me and least like me.
- Using the key below, consider if any patterns are noticeable and whether some functions are more prevalent than others.
- If the child/young person is comfortable, discuss the statements to help build a richer picture.

Consider together how this information can help to plan the next steps.

Most like me

A bit like me

Least like me

I have bad feelings about going to school because I am afraid of something related to school (e.g. tests, school bus, teacher, fire alarm).

I stay away from school because it is hard to speak with the other kids at school.

I would rather be with my family than go to school.

When I am not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), I leave the house and do something fun.

I stay away from school because I will feel sad or depressed if I go.

I stay away from school because I feel embarrassed in front of other people at school.

I think about my parents or family when in school.

When I am not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), I talk to or see other people (other than your family).

I would rather be taught by
my parents at home than
my teacher in school.

I would rather be doing fun
things outside of school
more than most kids of my
age.

I stay away from places
in school (e.g., hallways,
places where certain groups
of people are) where I would
have to talk to someone.

If it were easier for me to
make new friends, it would
be easier for me to go to
school.

I would like to be home with
my parents more than other
kids my age would.

I have bad feelings about
going to school (e.g.,
scared, nervous, sad) when
I think about school on a
Saturday and Sunday.

I feel worse at school (e.g.
scared, nervous, sad)
compared to how I feel at
home with friends.

I stay away from school
because I do not have many
friends there.

It would be easier for me to go to school if I could do more things I like to do after school hours (e.g. being with friends).

When I am not in school during the week (Monday to Friday, I enjoy doing different things (e.g., being with friends, going places)

I have more bad feelings about going to school (e.g., scared, nervous, sad) compared to other kids of my age.

I often stay away from people in school compared to other kids of my age.

It would be easier for me to go to school if my parents went with me.

If I had less bad feelings (e.g., scared, nervous, sad) about school, it would be easier for me to go to school.

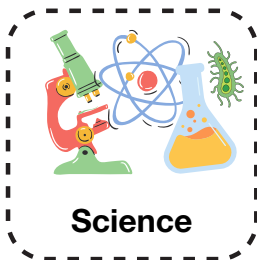
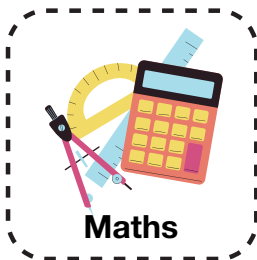
I stay away from school because I want to have fun outside of school.

H. Functions of School Avoidance: Visual Card Sort

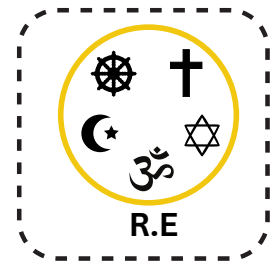
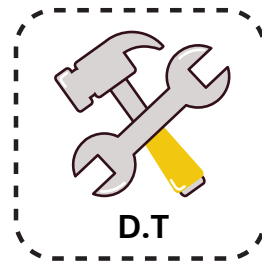
Use this resource with a child/young person that you feel may respond better to a visual card sort.

1. Cut out the pictures and ask the child/young person to place each card onto either the green smiley face, orange ok face, or red sad face. You may feel that not all cards are appropriate to use - it is at your discretion to choose which cards will give you the best understanding of the function of school avoidance for the child/young person.
2. Once the card sort has been completed the adult could explore the functions further through conversations with the child/young person.

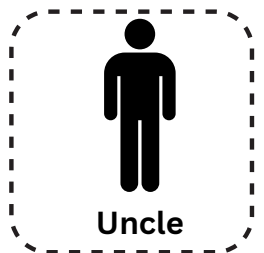
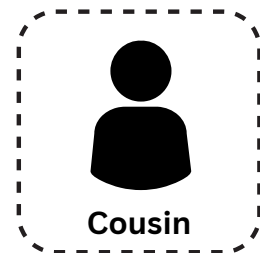
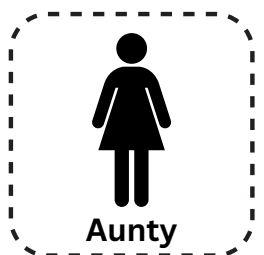
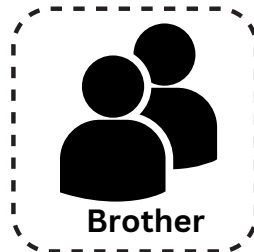
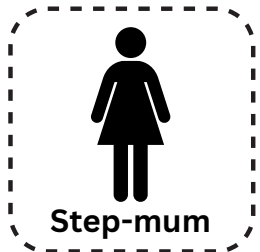
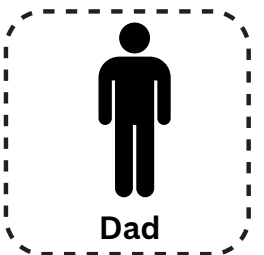
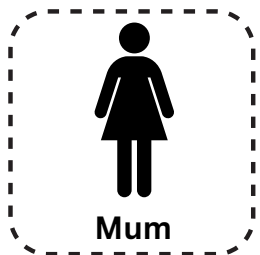
Lesson 1



Lesson 2



People



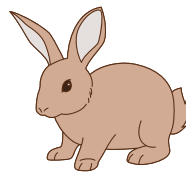
Pets



Dog



Cat



Rabbit



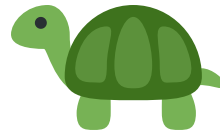
Bird



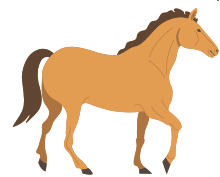
Hamster



Fish



Tortoise



Horse

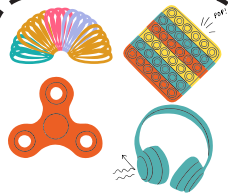
Places/people in school



Classroom



Teachers



Sensory room



Playground



Dining Hall



Corridor



School hall



Toilets



1. Mapping the Landscape of Your School

Acknowledgement to Lancashire County Council

Instructions:

1. The Physical Environment

You will need:

Map of the school: This must show all areas labelled. E.g., SEN base, toilets, outside space, stairs etc.

Coloured pens: Red, Yellow and Green

2. The Social Environment

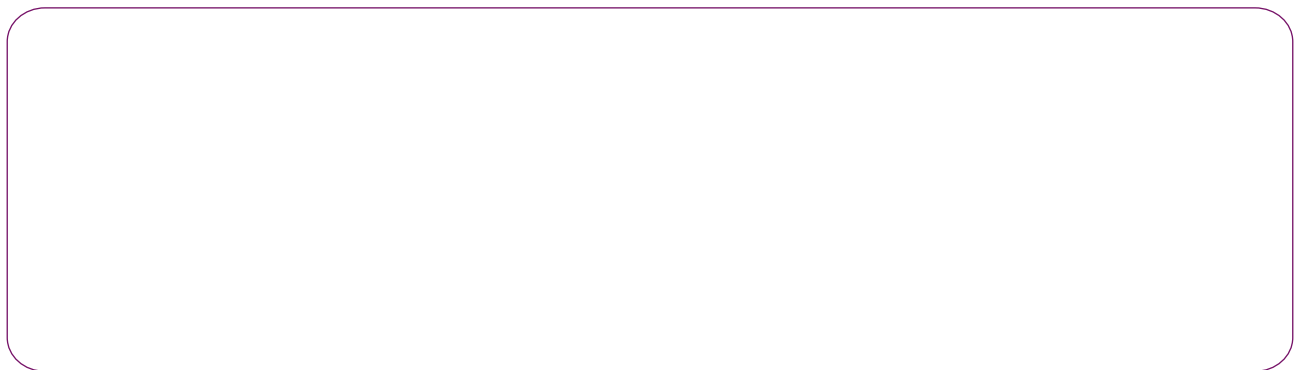
Ensure that the tasks are explained fully to the pupil so that they understand that some encounters can be positive, however, there may be others that can cause anxiety. Check the rating scales are understood and that they know how to complete them.

3 . The Learning Environment

After the pupil has rated their subjects, select one that has been rated as a 5 and another that has been rated as a 1 or 2. The way in which the pupil describes what makes their experience different for these two subjects can be used to explore their personal views and give some insights into triggers for anxiety.

1 . The Physical Environment

- Look at the map of your school.
- Use your coloured pens to indicate how areas on the map make you feel.
 - o Green = I feel relaxed in this space
 - o Yellow = I feel anxious/uncomfortable in this space
 - o Red = I would like to avoid this space as it makes me feel very anxious
- For the specific areas that you have coloured red, what makes you feel unsafe?






- What might the school do to help you feel safer in your ‘red’ areas?

2. The Social Environment

Throughout the school day children work with their class and talk to other children and adults. Whilst this can be fun, it can cause others to become anxious about being with other people.

Can you think of things that you do with others that make you happy or upset you?

				
1	2	3	4	5
I avoid this if I can	I am very anxious about this	I feel anxious / uncomfortable about this	I feel comfortable about this	I enjoy this

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Introducing yourself to others in a group.					
2. Walking through the corridors at lesson changeover time.					
3. Lining up outside of the classroom before lesson begins.					
4. Inside the classroom is there is not teacher in the room.					
5. Waiting outside to go into the dinner hall.					
6. Purchasing food in the canteen.					
7. Siting in the canteen.					
8. Break time when I am required to go outside and be with other students.					
9. Changing for PE lessons.					
10. Taking part in PE lessons.					
11. Talking to subject teachers.					
12. Talking to teaching assistants.					
13. Getting both to and from school via walking, bus or taxi.					
14. Speaking to other students in my class.					
15. Speaking to my classmates.					

For the situations that you find most difficult – please write down what would make them easier for you.

What could make a difference? Please write your ideas....

3. The Learning Environment

There are a range of subjects that are taught in school, and we find some easier and more interesting. Please rate the subjects on a scale of 1-5.



1

2



3

4



5

I avoid this
subject

I do not like
this subject

This is okay

I like this
subject

I really enjoy
this subject

Subjects	Rating	Subject	Rating
English		Maths	
Science		Geography	
ICT		DT	
Art		Languages	
RE		PE	
Drama		Music	
Dance			

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Speaking up to answer questions in class.					
2. Listening to teacher explanations.					
3. Following instructions.					
4. Knowing what to do to start a task.					
5. Completing work on my own.					
6. Having to work with a peer.					
7. Working in a group.					
8. Asking a teacher for support when I have not understood something.					
9. Working in a class that is quiet.					
10. Working when other students are messing about.					
11. Recording what I have done using pictures, diagrams, or graphs.					
12. Reading aloud in class.					
13. Using the computer to record what I have done.					
14. When the teacher tells off other students.					
15. When the teacher is giving back our homework.					
16. When the teacher is marking my work.					
17. When I go into class and my regular teacher is not there.					
18. Making sure that I have the right books and equipment needed for the class.					
19. Making a note of the homework task so that I can understand what to do when I get home.					
20. When I have a teaching assistant supporting me in the class.					
21. When I have to stop what I am doing before I have finished.					
22. Written work – handwriting.					
23. When the teacher uses images and videos to help explain things.					
24. Homework tasks.					
25. Sharing practical equipment in lessons such as DT and art.					
26. When other students try and distract me.					
27. When the teacher introduces a topic area that I know little or nothing about.					
28. Class tests and assessments.					

J. School Stress Survey

Adapted from Sheffield EPS

Instructions Administration

1. Ask the student to meet with a teacher, mentor or teaching assistant they are familiar with.
2. The member of staff goes through each item in sequence and asks the student to rate themselves, by highlighting or putting a cross through the best fit answer.
3. With each item, the member of staff also asks the student to identify reasons. The student is unlikely to find this easy – questions such as “What happens during this part of the day?”, “What do you see?”, “What do you hear?” are more likely to elicit a response rather than “Why did you put this?” Make a note of any indicative words / phrases such as ‘teacher shouting’, ‘swearing’, ‘queuing up’, ‘too busy’ etc. on the recording sheet. If the student identifies another student as causing stress, write their name as initials to maintain confidentiality.
4. At the end of the items, it may also be useful to ask students to undertake a similar rating activity with their timetable to identify any subjects / peer groups they may find stressful. These can also be noted on the recording sheet.
5. Finally, ask the students if there is anything else that they find particularly easy and enjoyable or particularly ‘annoying’, ‘difficult’ etc. about school. These can also be noted on the recording sheet.

Scoring

The scoring below is not standardised – it is based on averages / a ‘rule of thumb’.

12 - 18	19 - 36	37 - 48
High and regular stress levels. Student will require additional support in managing their day-to-day stress levels.	Specific points of stress that may need further attention. Possibility that the student is ‘masking’ high stress levels.	Based on the answers given, student appears to generally have low day-to-day stress levels in school.

School Stress Survey














I very often or always
feel stress at this. I
can't cope with it.



I sometimes feel
stress. I don't like it
but I can cope.



I feel ok about this. I can
cope with it easily.

 Waking up	 Travelling to and from school	 Assembly	 Corridors
 Written work	 Break times	 Teacher asking questions	 Group work
 Lunch times	 1 - 1 with adults	 Tests	 Homework

School Stress Survey - Recording Sheet for Staff	Score ☹ = 1 ☺ = 2 😊 = 4	Indicative Words / Phrases
Item		
1. Waking up		
2. Travelling to and from		
3. Assembly		
4. Corridors		
5. Written work		
6. Break times		
7. Teacher asking questions		
8. Group work		
9. Lunchtimes		
10. 1 to 1 with adults		
11. Tests		
12. Homework		
Total score:		
Timetable Issues		
Other Issues		

K. Supporting Transitions

Acknowledgements to Staffordshire EPS

Children/young people make multiple transitions throughout their educational life. Below are examples of transitions that should be considered to identify possible areas of difficulty when supporting children/young people.

- Leaving home in the morning (including leaving possessions, pets, family member).
- Accessing transport/making the journey to school.
- Leaving parents/carers at the drive, gate, car etc.
- Entering the school building.
- Entering the school corridors/playground.
- Entering the classroom.
- Moving from the classroom to another classroom/room/playground.
- Transitioning from learning contexts to social contexts e.g. lessons to breaktimes.
- Transitioning from areas of strength to areas of perceived weakness e.g. lessons where the child/young person does well to those where they find challenging.
- Changing between different staff members/peer groups.
- Through the academic years/educational settings (e.g. primary to secondary).

For any transitional needs identified the appropriate support should be provided, discussing with the child/young person 'what could make this better/easier'. A few approaches are detailed below:

- Social Stories.
- Photobooks to prepare child/young person for transitions to new classes/schools/people.
- Transitional objects to support child/young person when they are apart from key and trusted adults. For example, provide the child/young person with an object to look after for you so they know you will return to them at some point.
- Meet and greet – to support child/young person to transition into the setting, classroom, from break to learning.
- Transition planning and visits.
- 'All About Me' sessions, to establish a positive rapport/relationship with new staff members.
- Provide the child/young person with key factual information about areas of concern e.g. new subjects, to minimise how much they are required to anticipate what is going to happen.

L. Ideas to address the functions of EBSA

1 . General school-based strategies

- Programmes to address bullying.
- Programmes to provide peer-based support, e.g. pupil buddying and peer mentoring.
- Provide a predictable school day with a consistent routine. Use visual schedules and timetables.
- Keep routines of the school day predictable and consistent.
- One-page pupil profile shared with subject teachers.
- Identification of and support for potential learning or language needs.
- Identification of and support for potential other special educational needs.
- Provide support to manage organisational aspects of the school day (e.g. checklists).
- Ensure clear communication between all relevant school staff.

2 . Support to manage uncomfortable feelings, such as anxiety

- The use of gradual re-exposure to the school setting, using an anxiety/avoidance hierarchy created with the child/young person.
 - o To create an anxiety/avoidance hierarchy, the child/young person can be asked to name situations (or shown cards representing possible situations based on information gathered during the assessment phase) and asked to rank them in terms of how they feel about that situation or object from least worried about to most worried about.
 - o 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.
 - o When they have overcome this fear and consolidated this, thereby completing it a number of times, then they can begin to work their way up the hierarchy.
- Books and resources to support psychoeducation and teaching of coping strategies, e.g.
 - o Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People by Kate Collins-Donnelly
 - o What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety by Dawn Heubner
 - o When My Worries Get Too Big: A Relaxation Book for Children Who Live with Anxiety – 2nd. Ed. Revised by Kari Dunn Buron.
- Social and emotional interventions such as Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) support.

3 . Support for managing school situations that might be stressful

- Use of strategies above to support managing uncomfortable feelings such as anxiety.
- Provide safe spaces that pupils can go to, for example a pastoral area or library. Consider places that some pupils may find less stigmatising than the learning/SEN support area.
- Provide key adult support whom the pupil can go to when required for support.
- Sensory audit of school and classroom environments.
- Support to develop social skills and positive peer interactions, e.g. circle of friends, social skills groups, Lego Therapy.
- Use of social communication tools to support child/young person's understanding of school situations (e.g. social stories, comic strip conversations).

4 . Support to reduce separation anxiety or attention sought from significant others

- Work with the family to address any home-based issues.
- Create a sense of belonging in school by greeting the child/young person when entering school/class and giving them a role and responsibility.
- When the child/young person is not at school, continue to communicate with them via email, notes, video calls.
- Start and end the school day with protected time with a consistent key adult.
- Ensure there is a clear transition between parent/carers and a trusted staff member at the start of each day.
- Ensure the child/young person sees positive interactions between home and school.
- Consider using transitional objects that the child can take from home into school.
- Allow child/young person to communicate with home during the school day if needed.

5 . Support to manage the pursuit of activities outside of school

- Work with the family to address the activity of concern.
- Support the child/young person's travel to and from school.
- Support engagement with school by providing activities at school that are based on the child/young person's interests.

Work with community organisations if the activity of concern relates to community issues.





M. Action Plan Template

Name:	School:
Year group:	Action plan lead:
Date of plan:	Review date agreed:
Contributors:	
Agencies involved:	
Hoped for outcome: What do we hope to see as a result? What is a realistic expectation given our starting point?	
Agreed method for communication between home and school (When? Who? How?)	
Child / Young Person's Strengths and Interests:	

Identified Need	Agreed Support / Action	Details

N. Return to School Support Plan Template (with visuals)

(With thanks and acknowledgement to West Sussex EPS)

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/carer's signature

Other people who have access to the plan are:

O. Return to School Support Plan Template (no visuals)

(With thanks and acknowledgement to West Sussex EPS)

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/carer's signature

Other people who have access to the plan are:

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