

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONALLY BASED SCHOOL AVOIDANCE (EBSA)

EBSA Concerns Raised

For example:

- CYP is not going to their classroom, not staying in class, not attending some lessons, or avoiding some physical spaces or people.
- CYP is finding it difficult to enter school and separate from parents when they have previously been able to do this well.
- CYP's school attendance has reduced or is intermittent or there is school non-attendance.

Behaviours above are noted along with a clear link to emotional factors.

4 main reasons/ functions for school non-attendance:

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.

- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Explore additional areas of need if necessary

- Are there concerns about **academic attainment** or an unidentified special educational need (SEN)? School to complete assessments if these have not already been done. This must include literacy skills - [SEND Online calendar booking \(bookingbug.com\)](https://www.bookingbug.com) for Literacy Difficulties training or speak to your link practitioner for additional support with this if needed.
- Are there significant **mental health** concerns? Refer to [YOUUnited](https://www.younited.org.uk) for additional support if needed. See also [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service \(cambspborochildrenshealth.nhs.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshireandpeterborough.nhs.uk/emotional-health)

Gathering CYP's Views

- Share **Children Leaflet/Young People Leaflet** as appropriate and review with the CYP.
- Explore trigger events (obvious/ subtle/ gradual)
- Explore potential factors around parent health & family dynamic (if separation anxiety)
- Explore peer relationships and any changes (bullying/ isolation present?)
- What they find difficult in school (risks/ pull factors)
- What are their strengths and things they enjoy about school (resilience/ push factors)
- What is their level of emotional literacy?

Example Tools:

- ✓ **Drawing the Ideal School**
- ✓ [School wellbeing cards](#) (packs available for school, college, and special school)
- ✓ **Strength Spotting Card Sort**
- ✓ **Drawing the Ideal Self** (including prompt sheet)
- ✓ **Creating a Life Graph**
- ✓ **Your Feelings About School (Primary and Secondary)**
- ✓ **Exploring Situations and Problems Cards**
- ✓ [Sociogram/Social Audit](#)
- ✓ Anxiety mapping from Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking
- ✓ **Observational Schedule for Stress**
- ✓ **Pupil views cards and form** as part of a Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA)

Meet with parents and CYP to explore factors behind EBSA and discuss reasonable adaptations to be made at home and at school.

Complete whole school audit
[EBSA resources for schools - Suffolk County Council](#)

Whole School Training
[EdPsychEd | EBSA Horizons School Training Home - NESSie](#) – more info to follow

Working with Parents/Carers

- Share **Parent/Carer Guide** (there is also an easy read version if needed) as appropriate.
- Gather parent/carer views and narrative.
- Plan a graduated return to school – including discussion around home to school transition, routines at home and at school etc.
- Discuss how the CYP's emotional literacy can also be supported at home.

Example Tools:

- ✓ **Risk & Resiliency Questionnaires & Scoring Template** (completed by parents/carers and staff members who know the CYP well) – including a scoring example.
- ✓ **Questions to ask parents**
- ✓ **Ideal Safe School** (a tool parents can use with their children)
- ✓ [Resources for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants - ELSA Support \(elsa-support.co.uk\)](https://www.elsa-support.co.uk) – resources can be used by parents at home as well as in school.
- ✓ [School Anxiety | Parent Guide to Support | YoungMinds](#)

Review Plan every 1-2 weeks. Gradual return/re-integration plan working well?

Yes

No

Great!
Time to set new targets/ expectations with CYP & Parents using the same skills as before of setting small and manageable next steps.

Problem Solve
Was the plan gradual enough? Small enough steps?
Did the CYP say they were ready to move on when they weren't? Were they prepared for the next steps?
Has something changed at home? In school? Are there exams?
Do they have time to build relationships in school with staff?
Did something go wrong and the CYP did not have opportunity to explore their day and have issues resolved before a return?

Gradual Return/Re-integration Plan

- Along with CYP & Parents, as well as through information gathered, plan the graduated return or reintegration into school/class to begin at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensure steps are small manageable, planned in advanced and never changed at the last minute e.g., if the CYP says they feel confident to stay longer that same day do not change the plan.
- Ensure adaptations/ supports are in place before the CYP starts.
- Ensure there are opportunities to experience success at each stage and engage in positive and enjoyable tasks.
- Be proactive - Prepare the child for difficulty.
- Explain how the CYP can access safe spaces/ regulation activities & how to ask for help (e.g. key adult/s)
- Ensure time is scheduled to check in with CYP at the end of any time in school to address issues and discuss what went well. Praise successes, no matter how small and in a way the CYP would find meaningful and helpful.
- Think ahead where possible.

Example Tools:

- ✓ **Graduated Return Pathway**
- ✓ [Return to School Planning Tools](#)
- ✓ **Ladder of Strengths and Courage** (including a worked example)
- ✓ **List of Anxiety Management and Wellbeing Resources**
- ✓ **Child, School & Home-Based Factors Overview**

For further advice and support at any stage of this process, please speak to your Link Practitioners.