

EBSA – Emotionally Based School Absence / Avoidance

What is EBSA?

EBSA is a very broad term and usually used to describe children and young people who experience challenges attending school, or who are struggling to engage with school. This is usually due to negative feelings such as anxiety.

The Functions of EBSA

- To avoid school related stressors
- To avoid social situations or activities
- To engage in preferred activities
- To seek needed attention

Questions to think about when trying to unpick why your child is experiencing EBSA.

What problem is your child trying to solve by not attending school?
What outcome is your child achieving by not attending school?
What are your child's non-attendance behaviours telling us about how they are feeling?
What are your child's non-attendance behaviours telling us about what they need?

Why might my child/young person be experiencing EBSA ?

Pupils often present with high anxiety over the unknown. There is a greater pull to stay at home with all its boundaries. COVID has meant more of the unknown, procedures that don't have an end. We live in a world now where staff tell students "we're back to normal...until we hear the rules are changing again". Or, "this is our new normal". It has made it more difficult for lots of students to get back into school because of greater anxiety Post COVID. Pupils may have had great success with their remote learning during COVID so in their eyes, have no need to change.

Further information can be found at:
<https://www.reminds.org.uk/advice-1>

Solutions for all to think about and talk through with school.

Make sure we are trying to solve the right problem.

Use non-judgmental questioning, be curious.

What is stopping them from feeling safe at school?

Physical – Do they feel safe coming to school?

Are the school and parents doing all they can to help the student feel safe? Do the parents feel the student is safe?

Social – Is the student feeling able to engage appropriately? Do they know what is expected of them in a social situation?

Emotional – Do they know and have confidence that their needs will be met? Do they know it is safe for them to have these feelings at school?

Cognitive – Are they able to be bold and brave with learning? Do they know if they get it wrong it is ok?

Suggestions to try.

- Try agreeing a timetable with a Red, Amber, Green rating -

Unpick what it is, in a particular lesson, that is making the student want to avoid that lesson. Go through the timetable lesson by lesson, is it school in general, a particular subject, a particular member of staff or an environment? Once agreed work on one area at a time with the aim of moving more towards a green rating.

- Help the student to create a narrative -

To tell their own story that can be shared with staff to explain how they are experiencing time in class from the student's point of view.

- If they are not able to go into lesson -

Consider a blended learning approach.

Could online lesson(s) be part of this approach?

This can help the student to feel safer whilst a reintegration plan is worked on. Online lessons can be at home, in the classroom or in another learning environment and can help provide a layer of protection whilst engaging in learning. Students can learn to be brave in a supported environment.

- Work with the student on goals that are achievable by them -

Small steps, the "I can's". Break down into tiny steps so they get a sense of achievement and we are not setting them up to fail.

ABOVE ALL be led by the child not by what you think they should be doing