



Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

What is Emotional Based School Avoidance?

EBSA is a term used to describe severe difficulty for children and young people attending school due to negative emotional factors and extreme distress around the idea of going to school. This can result in either reduced attendance or non-attendance.

This can become a cycle, as attending school can perpetuate emotional distress which then may result in more reduced attendance.

Pupils do not intentionally choose to avoid school, or “refuse” to attend. Their feelings of worry, dread, sadness and other emotions beyond their control are key factors of EBSA.

What causes EBSA?

EBSA is not a diagnosis, and there is not one specific issue that leads to it. The overwhelming emotions, thoughts and feelings that one may experience could be due to many different needs. This includes having an additional need or disability, difficult life experiences, bullying, academic pressure or friendship difficulties.

It is important to remember that every child or young person’s experience of EBSA is unique to them.

What are the signs?

Identifying EBSA early can make a difference and can ensure that support is put into place correctly and timely.

Signs to look out for may include:

- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches or headaches, feeling faint or vomiting
- Difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep through the night, or difficulty waking up in the morning
- Changes in appetite
- Increased anxiety, tearfulness, irritability, mood swings
- Withdrawal from friends or activities they used to enjoy
- Reluctance or refusal to get ready for school
- Separation anxiety



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What can I do?

Being supportive and understanding may play a crucial part in helping your child with EBSA. Try not to be forceful or give them consequences—this could exacerbate their anxiety.

Try to be sensitive and reassuring and allow your child time to explore their worries and feelings.

Ask them what you could do to help. Are there small steps that could be taken to encourage reintegration? Trying to reduce anxiety triggers along the way can help to build a child's confidence.

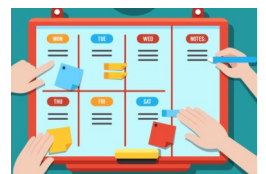
If left for too long, it can be difficult to intervene and reintegrate a child back into education. Early intervention is key to ensure that a child is supported in getting back into school with a level of increased support and a greater understanding of their needs.

Strategies to try at home could include: creating a visual routine or timetable for your child or young person to follow, encouraging them to do things that they enjoy and will help them to relax, recognising small achievements, thinking about ways to manage and reduce their anxiety and trying to take the pressure off when possible.

What can the school do?

It is worth speaking to the SENCO to arrange a meeting on how to move forward.

The child should have an active involvement in the development of a support plan which has small, manageable steps, both flexible and personalised to them.



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Reasonable adjustments, including a flexible timetable, access to a quiet space, a trusted adult to speak to, extra learning support, a predictable and consistent environment can help to support a child back into school. It is important to try and keep consistency because this will increase the child's sense of security. It will also give all parties an opportunity to reflect on its success and whether anything else may need amending.

If the situation is not improving, it may be worth contacting an education organisation for further advice, such as SENDIASS, IPSEA or Families in Focus.

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Will I be fined?

Schools must record absences as authorised where it is not possible for a pupil to attend school due to physical or mental illness. The school is, however, entitled to ask for evidence to support the absence, if they feel they need verification.

If you as a parent/carers are unable to provide evidence, the school should have a conversation with you.

If you are being threatened with a penalty notice due to absences, you should arrange an attendance meeting with the SENCO to discuss the difficulties you are facing with getting your child to attend school. Try to make it clear that you want to work closely with the local authority, health professionals and other agencies, if applicable, to make a plan to move forward.

If your child has an additional need and either has an EHCNA underway or an EHCP in place, it is important that the SEND Operations team are involved with any updates, meetings or conversations.

Online resources

[EBSA: Essential Guide for Parents | School Anxiety Support](#)

[Emotional Based School Avoidance - Essex Special Educational Needs & Disability](#)

[Emotionally based school avoidance \(EBSA\) – supporting a child or young person who can't go to school - Family Action](#)

[Emotionally Based School Avoidance | Kids Charity](#)

[Emotional Based School Avoidance | SENDIASS Southend](#)

[Not Fine in School - School Refusal, School Attendance](#)

[School Anxiety and Refusal | Parent Guide to Support | YoungMinds](#)

[SEN Support in Thurrock](#)

[What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\) and How Can I Support My Child? - Be Happy Resources](#)

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SNAP (Special Needs And Parents) • Helpline: 01277 211300 • The SNAP Centre, Pastoral Way, Warley, Brentwood, Essex CM14 5WF



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[Downloadable Survival Guides, Information and Resources from SNAP](#)



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