

includEd Learning

Independent Specialist Education Provider



EMOTIONALLY BASED SCHOOL AVOIDANCE (EBSA) POLICY

Essential Safeguarding Contacts

The Head of Centre who has the ultimate responsibility for safeguarding is Noreen Khan. In their absence, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) Paul Dearden has ultimate responsibility.

KEY SCHOOL STAFF & ROLES

Name	Role	Location/Contact Number
Noreen Khan	Head of Centre DSL	IncludEd Learning Centre 07380 292211
Paul Dearden	Deputy Head of Centre DDSL	IncludEd Learning Centre 07380 484818
Adeel Kean	Pastoral Lead DDSL	IncludEd Learning Centre 07380 484818
Ann Hardy	SEND CO	IncludEd Learning Centre 07380 484818

ADVISORY PANEL

	Contact Phone Number/Email
Chair & Prevent Dr J. Karim	jehangir.included@gmail.com
Safeguarding: Katrina Garg	kattyg39@hotmail.co.uk
Staff: Mental Health & Well-Being: Noreen Khan	noreen@includedlearning.co.uk
Staff: Prevent	noreen@includedlearning.co.uk
SEND: Ann Hardy	a.hardy@includedlearning.co.uk

Our procedure if there is a concern about a child's welfare or safeguarding is:-

- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Helpline: **0161 219 2895**
- Early Help Hubs: North **0161 234 1973**, Central **0161 234 1975**, South **0161 234 1977**
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC): **0800 800 5000**
- Local Authority (LA) Safeguarding in Education Team: **0161 245 7171**
- **Child Line:** 0800 1111

Our procedure if there is an allegation that an adult has harmed a child, or that a child is at risk from a named adult is:

- To follow safeguarding procedures;
- Refer to Part 1 KSCIE
- Manchester LADO (sometimes known as DOLA or LA Designated Officer): 0161 234 1214

Our Whistleblowing procedure if staff and volunteers wish to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in our safeguarding regime internally or externally.

- To follow safeguarding procedures
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline: 0800 028 0285
- The Whistleblowing Helpline on 08000 724725 or email to enquiries@wbhelpline.org.uk

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Statement of Intent

IncludEd Learning recognises that regular attendance is essential for raising educational standards and for ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential.

The school understands that there are instances when pupils who have emotional and mental health needs may find it difficult to attend their classes or the school altogether. We are committed to valuing, respecting and understanding pupils with emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), and will provide continuous, professional support to these pupils.

The main aims of this policy are:

- To provide all necessary and required support, details and information for pupils with EBSA.
- To ensure that staff are educated on emotional and mental health to encourage early identification and support.
- To create and foster a learning environment which is free from bullying and harassment.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to the following legislation including, but not limited to:

- Equality Act 2010
- Mental Health Act 1983, as amended in 2007

This policy also has due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'

This policy is implemented in conjunction with the following policies:

- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Positive Mental health and Wellbeing Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equality and disability Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

The Advisory Panel is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the school community recognises EBSA as a significant emotional health issue.
- Ensuring appropriate support measures are in place for pupils with EBSA
- In liaison with the headteacher, determine the need for commissioned support.

The head of centre is responsible for:

- Establishing and communicating procedures for attendance monitoring.
- Ensuring that bullying incidents relating to pupils with EBSA are dealt with in the same manner as other bullying incidents.
- In liaison with the governing board, determine the need for commissioned support.

The SENDco and Mental Health Lead is responsible for:

- Overseeing the pastoral team.
- Liaising with external support, such as children and young people's mental health services (CAMHS).

Our whole school staff are responsible for:

- Determining and documenting pupils' emotional triggers.
- Liaising with parents of pupils with EBSA on a regular basis.
- Supporting pupils during the school day
- Working together with staff, parent and child.

Parents are responsible for:

- Working with the school to ensure the best educational outcomes for their child.

Definitions

The discourse and terminology surrounding school non-attendance has continually been evolving in response to emerging literature and research findings. Previous terms include 'school phobia', 'school refusal', 'school withdrawal' and 'truancy' (Kearney, 2008, Pellegrini, 2007). More recent definitions used within practice include 'emotionally based school avoidance' as coined by West Sussex Educational Psychology (2018). See definitions below:

Truancy: 'generally refers to unexcused, illegal, surreptitious absences, non-anxiety based absenteeism, absenteeism linked to lack of parental knowledge about the behaviour, absenteeism linked to delinquency or academic problems, or absenteeism linked to social conditions such as homelessness or poverty' (Kearney, 2008, p.452)

School phobia: 'generally refers to fear based absenteeism, but youths are rarely phobic of school and so this term has been deemphasized in recent research literature (Hanna, Fischer, & Fluent, 2006; Suveg, Aschenbrand, and Kendall, 2005)' (Kearney, 2008, p.453).

School withdrawal: where parents deliberately keep a child home from school for economic purposes, to conceal maltreatment, to prevent abduction from an estranged spouse, to protect a child from perceived school-based threat, to assist a parent with psychopathology, or for other reasons (Kearney, Lemos and Silverman, 2004)' (Kearney, 2008, p.452)

School refusal: 'generally refers to anxiety-based absenteeism, often from separation, generalized, or social anxiety' (Kearney, 2008, p.452). School refusal is a psychosocial phenomenon defined by a prolonged absence from school, with parents'/carers' knowledge, and the prospect of going to school causing severe distress (Maynard et al, 2015, Berg, 1997). Kearney and Silverman (1993) proposed school refusal occurs when children experience lowered anxiety through avoidance of the school setting, which results in negative reinforcement.

Emotionally based school avoidance: a 'broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school' (West Sussex Guidance, 2018, p.3).

What is emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)?

For the purpose of this policy, EBSA is the manifestation of internal problems, such as fear, anxiety, misery, and feeling ill without obvious cause, which affects a pupil's willingness to leave their home and/or attend an educational environment.

Pupils who have experienced emotional trauma may display some signs of EBSA. The school recognises this link and supports pupils experiencing emotional trauma to attend school regularly.

EBSA differs from truancy such that there are underlying emotional and anxiety issues which cause the individual to be absent from school. Contrastively, truant behaviour displays anti-social behaviour and an unwillingness to learn

It is important that schools are able to identify instances of EBSA and can differentiate this from truancy; however, three potential overlaps between EBSA and truancy have been identified for reasons of non-attendance. These include:

- Problems with specific teachers or lessons.
- Complexity of primary and secondary education.
- Being bullied and in isolation.

Though some instances of EBSA are not always clearly identifiable, it can be commonly recognised by:

- A pattern of absence from school which may lead to prolonged absence.
- Anxiety or fear which is presented as a reluctance to attend school.
- Common complaints of feeling unwell and requesting to leave the classroom.
- Challenging behaviour, for example physical aggression
- Social isolation.
- Expressing a desire to attend classes but not doing so.
- Under-achievement of learning potential.
- Physical indicators, e.g. sweating, sickness, rapid weight loss or gain.

Whole School Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing

At IncludEd Learning we aim to create an environment and policies that adopt whole school, evidence-based approaches to promote wellness enhancing, resilient environments and reduce the likelihood of EBSA concerns emerging.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) advises that school settings should be supported to adopt a comprehensive 'whole school' approach to promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Such an approach moves beyond teaching and learning to be incorporated in all aspects of school life. Mental wellbeing is not simply the absence of mental illness but is a broader indicator of social, emotional and physical wellness. The Anna Freud Centre defines mental wellbeing as 'children and young people's happiness, life satisfaction and positive functioning'.

Public Health England (2015) highlighted eight principles to promoting whole school approaches to emotional health and well-being, and builds on the mental health Wheel of Resilience.



Leadership and Management

Support from the senior leadership team is essential to ensuring the efforts to promote emotional health and well-being are accepted and embedded. NICE recommends that head teachers, governors and teachers should demonstrate a commitment to the social and emotional wellbeing of young people. They should provide leadership in this area by ensuring social and emotional wellbeing features within improvement plans, policies, systems and activities. These should all be monitored and evaluated.

School leaders have an important role in advocating for the needs of children and learners within the context of wider local strategic planning.

School Ethos and Environment

The physical, social and emotional environment in which staff and CYP spend a high proportion of each weekday has been shown to affect their physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing as well as impacting on attainment.

Relationships between staff and CYP, and between CYP are critical in promoting CYP wellbeing and in helping to engender a sense of belonging.

At IncludEd Learning we:

- create an ethos and conditions that foster supportive and trusting relationships which are essential for successful learning.
- provide an emotionally secure and safe environment that prevents any form of bullying or violence
- Collaboration with parent/carers

Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

School-based programmes of social and emotional learning have the potential to help children acquire the skills they need to make good academic progress as well as benefit children's health and wellbeing. Children are more likely to engage in lessons that focus on emotional wellbeing if they are of practical application and relevant to them.

Teaching of EBSA and mental health issues will be incorporated into PSHE lessons to promote an accepting, understanding attitude from other pupils, and to prevent any bullying incidents.

The school will educate pupils about EBSA, in order to give them the confidence to approach a member of staff and request support.

NICE guidance recommends that education providers:

- include a curriculum that integrates the development of social and emotional skills within all subject areas (these skills include problem-solving, coping, conflict management/ resolution and understanding and managing feelings).

Pupil's Voice

We believe that involving children in decisions that impact on them can benefit their emotional health and wellbeing by helping them to feel part of the school and wider community and to have some control over their lives (sense of belonging and sense of mastery). At an individual level, benefits include helping children to gain belief in their own capabilities, including building their knowledge and skills to make healthy choices and developing their independence.

Staff Development, Health and Wellbeing

It is important for staff to access training to increase their knowledge of emotional wellbeing and to equip them to be able to identify mental health difficulties in their pupils. This includes being able to refer them to relevant support either within the school or from external services. Promoting staff health and wellbeing is also an integral principle of the whole school approach to emotional health and wellbeing.

As a school we welcome staff training and support in how to develop children's social, emotional and psychological wellbeing. We also train and develop staff so that they have the knowledge, understanding and skills to deliver a curriculum that integrates the development of social and emotional skills within all subject areas effectively. The training includes how to manage behaviours and how to build successful relationships.

Staff are also trained to identify and assess the early signs of anxiety, emotional distress and behavioural problems among our students. They should also be able to assess whether a specialist should be involved and make an appropriate request.

Getting Help

Awareness, curiosity and recognition

As a staff team, it is important that there is a shared understanding and awareness of EBSA indicators, so that pupils at risk of EBSA can be identified as early as possible so that effective support can be put in place. It may be that the pupil may present with few or many different indicators of EBSA. Please see table below which outlines some possible early indicators of EBSA (those you may notice before the child's patterns of behaviour become entrenched) and indicators of EBSA (those you may notice once the child's patterns of behaviour are more established).

Early indicators of EBSA Indicators of EBSA	Indicators of EBSA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporadic attendance and/or lateness • Parent reporting that the child 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 unable to support child to attend school • Identifiable patterns within non-school attendance e.g. specific days, subjects, staff members • Providing minor reasons for school absences • Child experiences anxiety in relation to home factors e.g. parental separation, divorce, conflict, loss, bereavement • Child displays greater reliance upon family members e.g. separation anxiety, increased proximity • Concerns around academic progress due to non-school attendance / missed education • Child 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 • Displays of emotional dysregulation and/or distress

Where risks of emotionally based school avoidance are identified, it is important to gather further information from the child, families and school staff and put in place strategies to support them as soon as possible. Fast action can prevent emotionally based school avoidance from becoming entrenched and result in much better outcomes. At IncludEd Learning we follow the assess, plan, do and review cycles with the young person at the centre of the planning and interventions.



Assess: Information Gathering

Once there has been a difficulty identified there should be a prompt information gathering process to explore reasons for the difficulties. The main aims of this are to gather information regarding the various child, family and school factors that may be contributing to the emotionally based school avoidance experienced by the child.

Working with the Child

Once it has been identified that a child is displaying indicators of EBSA, it is important that staff begin to gather further information regarding the child's thoughts, feelings and wishes so that any support or intervention can be tailored and personalised accordingly. Remember that any child currently avoiding school will become anxious when asked to discuss returning; they are managing their feelings of anxiety by employing avoidant behaviour, so any talk about going back will raise their anxiety as you are proposing taking away their coping mechanism.

Always a good place to start is to acknowledge it will be difficult, but you would like to know how they think and feel. It is important that the adult working with them does not dismiss anxieties or worries.

This information gathering and then a proposed action will be carried out by the school's Mental Health Lead (Learning Mentor). The action plan will be shared and agreed with the child, school and parents.

Working with Families

It is important that time is taken to build collaborative partnerships working together with families in the best interests of the young person. Families may find it difficult to talk about the concerns they have and the difficulties they experience in getting their child to school. During the initial meeting it is important to gather background information, establish the current situation and the family's views. There should be regular contact with families throughout the assess, plan, do and review cycles and schools should identify a key person to communicate with parents.

Working with school staff

It is essential that representatives from schools 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 child 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.

Key information to gather includes:

- The young person's strengths?
- What is going well?
- Any difficulties they have noticed
- Peer relationships

- Relationships with adults
- Response to academic tasks
- If they have witnessed emotional distress what did this look like and what caused it.
- What support or differentiation is put in place and how the young person responds to this?
- Any ideas for further support.

Formulating an Understanding of the Behaviour

Following the gathering of information from the child, family, school and other professionals involved it is important that 'sense' is made of it. In other words, an overview of the whole picture and various factors are obtained and potential formulations or hypotheses regarding the behaviour are formed. These should then inform the intervention and return to school support plan. In order to understand the cause of EBSA, we must consider the child's underlying needs and how these may be contributing towards their presenting behaviour. It can be helpful to consider what the function of the behaviour is and what it may be communicating. Try to separate behaviours from feelings and underlying needs.

Intervention Planning and Delivery

Early Action

- Listen to the pupil
- Listen to the parent
- Listen to all staff who interact with the pupil
 - Look for patterns – Relationship awareness
 - *With peers*
 - *With staff*
 - *With parents(s)*

- Look for triggers – sensory awareness
 - Sights
 - Sounds
 - Textures
 - Space
 - Smells

- Look at the classroom environment
 - Is work too hard
 - Is progress being made
 - Are resources being provided to support learning such as visuals
 - Does pupil have a good understanding of tasks expected of them

It will be the expectation that all these communications will be recorded in a meeting with the class teacher, parent, pupil and the SENDCO or Head. From this meeting an action plan will be devised and early intervention strategies will be discussed.

Early Intervention

- Safe person to talk to
- Safe place to go
- Signalling worries
- Break System
- Allowing calming activities
- Address issues arising from monitoring
- Specific interventions
- Meet and greet
- Preparing for change (social story support)
- Basic stress management techniques
- Refer to wellbeing principles

These interventions will be recorded in the action plan and time allocations will be identified.

Action Plans

After the information gathering and analysis process has occurred an Action plan should be co-produced with parents, the child and any other professionals involved with outcomes that focus on the child remaining in school or returning to school. The outcomes on the action plan should be individual to that child and therefore each plan will be different. The outcomes should be realistic and achievable with the aim of reintegrating the young person. The return should be gradual and graded.

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. An optimistic approach should be taken, if the child fails to attend or carry out the actions as described in the action plan one day, start again the next day. It should be anticipated that there is likely to be more difficulties following a weekend, illness or school holiday.

At the start of the plan the child is likely to show more distress and everyone involved should be aware of this and work together to agree firm, consistent approaches. A unified approach is recommended between all involved and any concerns should be communicated away from the child.

Getting More Help

When there has been limited or no progress in response to targeted intervention over time, following the plan, do, review process, it is advised to seek psychological support. The appropriate service to refer to depends upon the individual needs of the child.

Next Steps

- Review with all parties
- Make any further adjustments
- Review Again
- Consider referrals: GP, Remedi, School Attendance
- Mental Health in Schools Team (NHS)
- Early Help Services

Increasing Support

- Part time timetable (agreed with parents)
- Bespoke package of support
- Activities in line with pupil's interest
- Sensory activities
- Use of outside space
- Alternative Provision
- Keeping links with home open
- Alternative Tuition Service

Bullying Incidents

The school has zero tolerance for any bullying incidents towards pupils with EBSA. The school will follow the Communication and Behaviour Policy,

Any occurrence of bullying will be reported to a member of school staff. These incidents will be dealt with following the process in our Anti-Bullying Policy.

Monitoring and Review

The head of centre, in conjunction with the SLT and SENDco, will review this policy on an annual basis and make any necessary changes.

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.

REVIEWED: Senior Leadership Team

DATE: AUTUMN 2024

NEXT REVIEW DATE: AUTUMN 2026

APPENDIX A - FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EBSA

School Factors (Stressors)	Family Factors	Child Factors
Structure, routines of the school day	Separation, divorce or change in family dynamic	Learning difficulties, developmental difficulties
Peer or staff relationship difficulties	Parent physical or mental health difficulties	Neurodivergence – Autism, ADHD, including intolerance to certain sensory input and managing uncertainty.
Transition to secondary, key stage or new school	Overly caring/protective parenting style	Health conditions, physical illness
Transport or journey to school	Chaotic or unpredictable family interactions, including domestic abuse	Fear of failure and poor self confidence
Bullying/Racism/ LGBTQIA+ discrimination	Being the youngest in the family	Separation anxiety from parent
Academic demands/high levels of pressure and performance-oriented classrooms	Loss and Bereavement	Traumatic event, Adverse Childhood Events
Exams	High levels of stress, including financial worries, housing and poverty	
Difficulties in specific subject/s	Family history of EBSA	
Curriculum content	Young carer	
Sensory environment	Practical difficulties getting to school	
Issues with a whole school sense of belonging		

APPENDIX B - PLANNING FOR CHANGE - EBSA

Planning for Change

An Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) Toolkit for Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA)



Assess (Information Gathering)

Assess (Information Gathering)

Possible indicators of EBSA include:

- Child/young person reluctant to leave home and stays away from school.
- Reluctance to leave parents, get out of the car or a high level of worry about what is happening at home: consider safeguarding concerns if child is worrying about home, this may not be attachment.
- Regular absences, including for 'minor' illnesses.
- Patterns in absences, for example, particular days and/or subjects, after weekends/holidays etc.
- The child or young person feels unable to attend a class or school.
- Evidence of under-achievement compared to their learning potential which could be caused by heightened emotions, difficulty in concentration, masking their needs to appear to be coping or similar.
- Social isolation, bullying, ongoing friendship difficulties leading to avoidance of peers and low mood/depression as well as low self-esteem and confidence.
- Behaviours that challenge, which could look like significant emotional upset, particularly in relation to specific situations at school or demands (e.g., meltdowns, refusal, threats, insults, aggression).
- Physical changes or symptoms (stomach aches, extreme tiredness/difficulty sleeping, feeling sick, headaches, panic attacks, aching, unexplained pains, sudden weight gain or weight loss etc.).



2

Section 1: Understanding the child



The following pages provide different resources to gather the child's voice. Select the ones you feel appropriate depending on the age and individual circumstances of the child.

1. Start with an informal discussion with the child about how school is going. After this, you may feel in a position to make positive changes. You may then select from the following:
 - a. An About Me profile may further your understanding of the young person's needs and challenges.
<https://www.manchesterlco.org/about-me-templates/>
 - b. Laddering exercise
 - c. Questionnaire
 - d. What helps? Card sort
 - e. Questionnaire for children making a fresh start

<p>My Likes</p>	<p>ABOUT ME</p>	<p>Things I need help with</p>
<p>My Strengths</p>		<p>Name:</p> <p>Add picture here</p>
<p>Everyday information</p>	<p>Keeping me safe and well</p>	
	<p>How I Communicate</p>	
	<p>Other</p>	
	<p>Date written: _____</p> <p>Updated by: _____</p>	

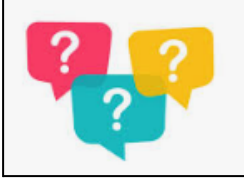







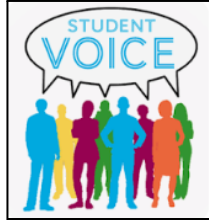

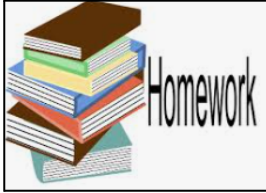


B. Laddering Exercise

A laddering exercise can be used to rank a range of anxiety-provoking situations. Follow-up questions might be useful to further explore.

An example laddering exercise is below. Cut out each of the statements, and rank them from most difficult to easiest. Blank ones have been included for you or the child/young person to add your own.



<p>Going into a busy room</p> 	<p>Going into school with everyone else</p> 	<p>Wearing the right clothes</p> 
<p>Asking for help</p> 	<p>Talking with friends at break time</p> 	<p>Playing a game supervised by an adult (e.g., football)</p> 
<p>English lessons.</p> 	<p>Vocational lessons (e.g., H&B/Food Tech)</p> 	<p>Maths lessons.</p> 
<p>Getting changed for PE.</p> 	<p>PE lessons.</p> 	<p>Going to the toilet when it is busy.</p> 

<p>Being asked a question in class</p> 	<p>Travelling to school</p> 	<p>Leaving the house</p> 
<p>Saying goodbye to my parent(s)</p> 	<p>Packing my bag</p> 	<p>The corridors between lessons</p> 
<p>Getting something wrong in lesson</p> 	<p>Reading out loud in a lesson</p> 	<p>Student Voice</p> 
<p>Following school rules</p> 	<p>Homework</p> 	<p>Doing exams or tests</p> 
<p>Walking into school office</p> 		

C. Questionnaire (young person version)

Your strengths



What are you good at? What do you enjoy? What do you like learning about?


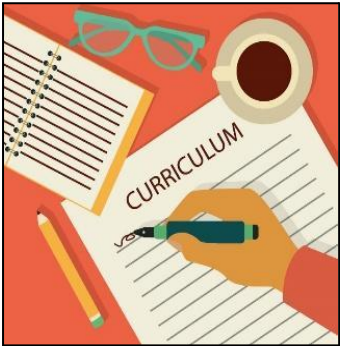
When did you start finding school difficult?



What helps you? What do you think might help?

Which adults help you in school?

How's it going with your friends?

Area	Contributing Factors	Comments (e.g., yes this is an issue or not an issue)
Peer relationships 	Do you have any close friends? Do you have a friendship group? Any fallouts? Problems with social media and/or cyberbullying? What do you do at breaks and lunchtimes? Do you feel lonely? Have you been bullied? Do you feel different to your friends?	
Staff relationships and staff approaches 	Do you feel certain teachers are too strict or not strict enough? Are you upset by shouting or raised voices? Are you worried about teachers being angry with you? Can you ask adults for help? Is there anything else you would like to say about adults in your school?	

Area	Contributing Factors	Comments (e.g., yes this is an issue or not an issue)
<p>School environment</p> 	<p>Are you overwhelmed or upset by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busy, noisy corridors • Moving rooms for different lessons • The dining hall • Aspects of the school uniform • Background noise • Bright lights • Anything else in the school environment? 	
<p>Learning curriculum</p> 	Do you worry about getting things wrong or getting into trouble?	
	How is your reading?	
	Is writing uncomfortable or difficult?	
	How is your maths?	
	Do you understand the teaching?	
	Do you find it difficult to concentrate?	
	Do you manage to keep up in lessons?	
	Is the work too easy or too hard?	
	Are there certain lessons you don't like?	

Area	Contributing Factors	Comments (e.g., yes this is an issue or not an issue)
<div data-bbox="197 406 421 683">  </div>	Do you often feel unwell?	
	How is your sleep?	
	Anything else you want to say about your health?	
<div data-bbox="152 850 544 1109">  </div>	Are you worried about anything or anyone at home?	
	Has anything changed recently at home?	
	Are there any problems getting to and from school?	

D. Card sort – What helps?




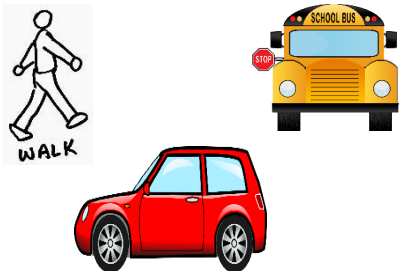

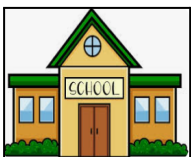

Here is an example script you might like to use to introduce the activity:


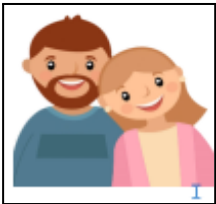
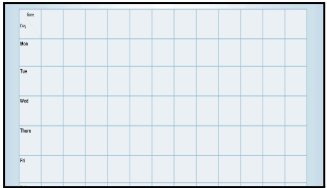



These cards will help us to think about how you can be supported to feel happy and safe in school. You can tell me which “would help me” or “would not help me”. If there is a card which makes no difference, you could put it to one side. There might also be other things that might help you go to school. We can write these on the blank cards. Then we might talk about/draw things that help you to be happy and safe to go to school.







Considerations:


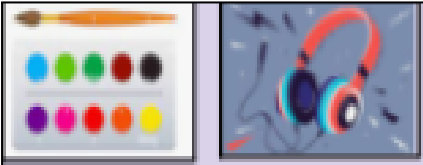


- The cards should be used to open up discussions about what might help.
- This should be used by a trusted adult in a safe space.
- Look through the cards in advance in case any sensitive topics arise.
- The prompts may support further exploration.
- There are blank cards to record additional ideas. They could be based on the suggested reasonable adjustments table below.

*This card sort activity has kindly been shared by Trafford Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Adapted from Nuttall's (2011), which incorporated information from Birmingham EPS Path to School (2008) and from West Sussex EPS (2004) about factors associated with school attendance difficulties

<p>Would Help Me</p> 	<p>Would Not Help Me</p> 
<p>Help to leave the house in the morning</p> 	<p>Talk me through/draw/write about your morning routine. What does that feel like for you? Is this better/worse after weekends and holidays? What would your ideal morning routine look like? What would you change if you could?</p>
<p>Changing the way I travel to or from school</p> 	<p>Talk me through/draw/write about your journey to/from school. What transport do you use? Who do you travel with? Does anything happen along the way? What does that feel like for you? What emotions would you identify? When are these emotions strongest? What would your ideal journey look like? What would you change if you could?</p>
<p>Help to return to school after a long time off.</p> 	<p>How would you score your desire to go back to school (e.g., 1 – 10)? What might make you more or less likely to want to return to school?</p>
<p>A chance to visit my school and/or teachers before going for the whole day</p> 	<p>When might you like to visit? Who would you like to see? Would you like to ask them questions or do an activity?</p>
<p>Help to get to know my teachers and/or make new friends in school;</p> 	<p>Is there anybody who you would like to get to know?</p>

<p>A way to speak to my parent/carer during the day</p> 	<p>Who would you like to speak to during the day? When would be best? How would you like to do this?</p>
<p>Someone to stay with my parent/carer in the day time</p> 	<p>Why do they need someone to stay with them? (E.g., illness, caring responsibilities, helping with a family business) Who/what might help them if you came to school? What might they say if I asked them?</p>
<p>A change to my lessons and/or subjects</p> 	<p>Which lessons are good/not so good? Why is this? (e.g., trouble keeping up, work is difficult or boring, teacher actions, behaviour management, peer difficulties) Are there any lessons you have enjoyed previously? What made them good? What would you change if you could?</p>
<p>Help with the work in my lessons or to catch up on learning that I have missed</p> 	<p>Which lessons are harder than others? Why is this? (e.g., teaching style, curriculum content, lack of equipment, unmet learning needs, peer difficulties) Are there any lessons you have found easier? What made them easier? What would you change if you could?</p>
<p>Support for when people are unkind or bully me in school</p> 	<p>What happens? Have you ever experienced this? (You may want to sensitively ask who is involved, what this looks like) Where does bullying happen in school? Are teachers aware of this? What do they do? Is there anything else you'd like teachers to do to help?</p>
<p>More people to talk to or spend time with at school</p> 	<p>What do you normally do at break and lunch times? Do you have friends at school? Who would you count as a friend? Is there anything you'd like teachers to do to help?</p>

<p>Help to feel like I fit in at school.</p> 	<p>What makes you feel this way? Is there anything you would like to change? Is there anything you would like others to know or understand better about you?</p>
<p>Other people to understand me/my needs</p> 	<p>What makes you feel this way? Is there anybody who does understand you? What do they do differently? Is there anything you would like others to know or understand better about you? What would happen differently if they did?</p>
<p>Help me to feel less tired at school.</p> 	<p>Tell me about your typical sleep/bedtime routine. How do you feel when you wake up in the morning? Does anything help you to feel more awake or wake up faster?</p>
<p>Help to feel less poorly or unwell at school.</p> 	<p>*Be aware of any existing medical conditions which may contribute to this* How do you usually feel poorly or unwell? How would you describe this? How severe would you rate it from 1-10. What might make you feel a little bit better?</p>
<p>More support with my mental health needs which make it difficult to attend school.</p> 	<p>*Be aware of any existing medical conditions which may contribute to this* Can you tell me more about that? What might make you feel a little better in school? What makes you feel worse in school? Do you have any diagnoses which would be helpful for us to know about?</p>
<p>More support with my physical health needs which make it difficult to attend school.</p> 	<p>*Be aware of any existing medical conditions which may contribute to this* How would you describe your physical health needs? How severe would you rate it from 1-10. What might make you feel a little bit better or a little bit worse in school? Do you have any diagnoses which would be helpful for us to know about?</p>

<p>Make changes to the school environment (e.g., make it less noisy, busy or smelly).</p>	<p>It may be helpful to draw a map of the school for this activity, to identify safe or difficult areas or hotspots.</p> <p>Which bits of school are better?</p> <p>What would you say is overwhelming? (e.g., noise, crowding, strong smells, lighting, size, navigation)</p> <p>Is there anywhere in school that you like to spend time?</p> <p>Is there anywhere in school that you try to avoid?</p>
<p>Help me to have the right equipment for school.</p> 	<p>What are you missing? (e.g., stationery, uniform, lunch money)</p> <p>What might help you with this?</p>
<p>Do more activities or lessons that I enjoy in school</p> 	<p>Talk me through/draw/write about a typical day at home for you.</p> <p>What activities do you like to do?</p> <p>Who do you like to spend time with?</p>
<p>Help to feel safer in school</p> 	<p>What makes you feel safe at home or school?</p> <p>What makes you feel unsafe at home or school?</p> <p>How safe would you say you feel at home from 1-10? How does this compare to how safe you feel at school?</p>
<p>There is something else.</p> 	<p>Is there anything else that we haven't talked about?</p> <p>What is important for the adults around you to know to help you?</p>

E. Questionnaire for children making a fresh start

This is for young people who have had negative experiences of school and may be starting 'afresh' or at a new placement. The following questionnaire may help to take a retrospective look at what wasn't working based on reasons for EBSA mentioned in research.

These are reasons other children have said made school difficult. Please be as honest as possible, if you don't want to talk about something you have ticked as true/sometimes then tick the "I don't want to discuss this yet" box.

I don't want to discuss this yet	Reason	True for me	Might be true/ Sometimes	Not true for me
	It was hard to have no control in school (lessons, timetable, uniform, rules etc.).			
	School staff were mean/unfair and didn't treat me with respect.			
	I didn't fit in with other students.			
	I didn't feel a part of the school community.			
	School was too noisy and busy.			
	The uniform was uncomfortable and distracted me.			
	The transition to high school was too quick, I wasn't prepared for the difference from primary school.			
	Adults in school didn't listen to me.			
	There was too much pressure (to attend, high workload, good grades, behave etc.).			

	I was happier during Covid lockdowns and found it too hard to go back to school.			
	I was exhausted.			
	I've been off for so long now that it's too hard to go back.			
	I've missed too much learning to go back.			
	The work was too hard and staff didn't help me.			
	I wasn't interested in the topics; I want to learn about things I'm interested in.			
	I was bullied or treated unfairly (by students and/or staff).			
	I felt like I was playing a part and it wasn't natural to me.			
	I couldn't concentrate for the whole school day.			
	I'm scared that I can't do it or will fail if I try. So, it's easier to not try (then I can't fail).			
	I didn't understand the lessons and couldn't keep up.			
	I constantly felt unsettled or uncomfortable.			
	Plans kept changing (cover teachers, lesson changes, friends being off school).			
	School took my phone off me but I feel safer when I have it with me.			
	I needed time to ease into the school day, but they expected me to start learning straight away.			
	I didn't trust/believe the adults in school. They wouldn't help me.			
	I felt trapped in school.			

	Things that would help made me look different and I didn't like that.			
	It's like a wall, I want to go in, but I physically can't.			
	Writing is hard and uncomfortable, and there's a lot of writing in school.			
	When I was asked to start the work, I didn't know what to do.			
	School made me work in a pair or a group, but I wanted to work alone.			
	There was no one in school I could trust.			
	School focused too much on my anxiety, but I just wanted to learn/work.			
	People kept asking me what was wrong, but I just didn't know. Then they seemed to get annoyed with me for not knowing.			
	Leaving the house on time was too stressful.			
	I don't see the point in school.			
	No one understood me.			
	People at school don't want me.			

Summary

Looking at the reasons selected, use the table below to help to identify next steps.

Reasons	What do you think could help with this?

Section 2: Working with parents/Carers



1. Start with an informal discussion with about how school is going. After this, you may feel in a position to make positive changes.
2. The questionnaire below should support a more detailed conversation including what might help.

Questionnaire (parent version)

Your strengths

What are they good at? What do they enjoy? What motivates them to learn?




When was attendance last good at school? When did the difficulties seem to start?

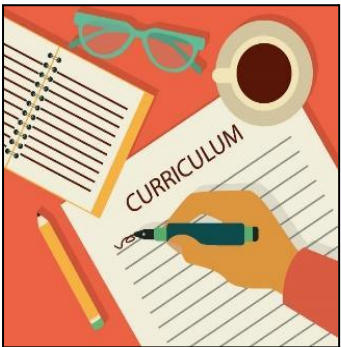

What impact are the attendance difficulties having on the family?

What helps them? What do you think would help them?

Adults they trust? How do they help?

Any comments about friendships?

Area	Contributing Factors	Comments (e.g., yes this is an issue or not an issue)
Peer relationships 	Do they have any close friends?	
	Any significant relationship breakdowns?	
	Problems with social media and/or cyberbullying?	
	How do they spend breaks and lunchtimes?	
	Do they feel lonely? Are they socially isolated?	
	Any reports of bullying?	
	Do they feel different to their peers?	
Staff relationships and staff approaches 	Do they have more difficulties with certain staff members/feel picked on?	
	Do they feel certain teachers are too strict or not strict enough?	
	Are they distressed by shouting or raised voices? Are they afraid of teachers being angry with them?	
	Do they feel able to ask for help?	
School environment 	Are they overwhelmed or distressed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busy, noisy corridors • Moving rooms for different lessons • The dining hall • Aspects of the school uniform • Background noise • Bright lights • Anything else in the school environment? 	

<p>Learning curriculum</p> 	Fear of failure or getting into trouble	
	Literacy difficulties	
	Writing difficulties	
	Maths difficulties	
	Difficulties with understanding	
	Difficulties with attention and concentration	
	Problems keeping up in lessons	
	Low levels of progress	
	Low confidence with learning	
	The work is too easy or too hard	
	Certain lessons they don't want to do?	
<p>Health and wellbeing</p> 	<p>Does your child have any medical conditions? Or regular physical complaints (such as headaches or stomach aches)?</p> <p>Does your child have any of the following diagnoses or areas of need?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism • ADHD • Dyspraxia • Dyslexia • Speech and language difficulties • Sleep difficulties/poor sleep routines • Anything not listed above 	

Home factors



Does your child say that they feel like they don't belong?

Separation, divorce or change in family dynamic

Parent or family member has physical or mental health difficulties

Difficulties with some family interactions

Being the youngest in the family

Recent loss or bereavement

Other stress, including financial worries, housing and poverty

Family history of EBSA

Young carer

Practical difficulties getting to school

Separation anxiety

Birth of a new sibling impacting on routine

House moves

Has experienced domestic abuse or other trauma

Section 3: Information gathering from staff



At all stages of the APDR, consult key adults in school who know the child best.

If unanswered questions remain, then it may be helpful to do a personalised round robin to all staff.

Plan

The Planning meeting

- Now hold a meeting to co-produce a plan (see template below) and use the information from the assess stage.
- Include the child, parent(s)/carers and key pastoral staff who know the child well and can advocate for them.
- Focus on what needs to change. Start with where the child is at.
- Strengths and protective factors are key considerations.
- A key aim is that everyone agrees and commits to the adjustments.

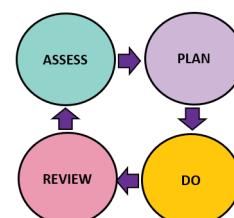
By the end of the meeting there should be clear agreement about:

- o What the school will do.
- o What parents will do.
- o What the young person will do.



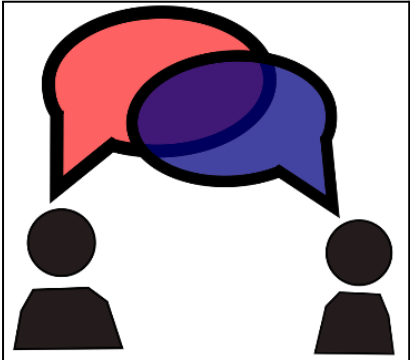

Important considerations

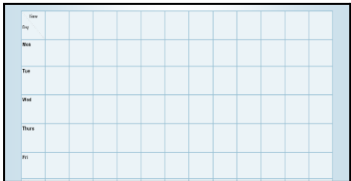


- **The return should be gradual** with recognition that a 'quick fix' is not always possible. However, the plan should address the key factors that underlie the overwhelm and highlight the changes that will be made. This will be through **additional support and/or adaptations**. Suggestions can be found below.
- The plans should always be **realistic and achievable**. An overly ambitious plan is likely to fail.
- The timeline should be appropriate to the individual.
- **Most young people want to learn**, and parent(s)/carers want them in education, but the environment and curriculum have to be right.
- **Try to minimise anxiety, but it is important to maintain a sense of challenge**. Aim for the young person to be in their 'stretch' zone (this lies between comfort and danger, see MCC EBSA guidance booklet for more details).
- **Everyone should stick to the plan**, even if you believe the child could be doing more/staying for longer. Steps may need to be very small, and there will be setbacks.
- **Pupils and parents should have a copy of their plan.**



Suggested reasonable adjustments

Use this table to highlight agreed adjustments that can be included in the support plan.

<p>Start of the day</p> 	<p>A positive start to the school day can be crucial. There are many make or break factors.</p> <p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressors on the journey to school. • A clear plan for who will meet the child/parent and a warm welcome. The handover from parents. Where the child will go. Minimise the time spent waiting in reception and reception staff awareness. • A separate entrance, different start/finish time to avoid busy playgrounds. • A transition object that can be taken into school. • Can any exemptions to usual rules be made if that would help a child to be more comfortable, e.g., keep their coat on, keep a phone with them, a snack. • A regulation activity before going into school/lessons. Allow the time they need. • 'Soft starts' to the day, e.g., breakfast club, playing a game with a friend or trusted adult, watching a TV show, time to talk with friends, a mindful activity etc. • Reassurance about the exact plan for the day including whereabouts of a key supportive adult.
<p>Environmental and sensory sensitivities</p> 	<p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a quiet toilet/disabled toilet, alternatives to busy corridors (e.g., 5-minute pass), alternatives to eating in a busy canteen, private changing rooms. • Access to a safe space. • Access to a sensory room (if available). • Circumnavigating peers or staff that appear to pose an emotional threat (until this can be resolved). • Seating arrangements. • Uniform adjustments. • Sensory adjustments (inc. fidget toys, option to move, headphones/noise cancelling earbuds such as Loop). • Smaller rooms to sit exams in.

<p>Timetable</p> 	<p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable changes including reductions, or completing a lesson in a different room. RAG rating a timetable can help with this. • Temporary exemptions from subjects causing high levels of anxiety. • Break and lunchtime arrangements. • A place to access remote learning while in school (if needed)
<p>Remote education</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote education can help students stay on track • Activity packs and online learning. • If a period of remote learning is indicated, it may be helpful to discuss with Manchester Hospital School about the criteria for AV1 telepresence robots.
<p>Curriculum, classroom support and behaviour expectations</p> 	<p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for self-led learning following young person's interests. • Tutoring to address gaps in learning. • Reduced writing requirements. • More structured writing tasks. • Additional support in class. • Access to concrete materials and references (such as word banks, times table square etc.). • Not being asked to speak in class or read aloud. • Considerations about group/pair work. • Homework allowances, including forgotten homework. • Homework club. • Exemptions from sanctions for being late (we want to focus on the attendance rather than the nonattendance). • Exemptions from sanctions for forgetting equipment (they can work with a peer, or borrow equipment, or manage without). • Exam access arrangements.

Emotional wellbeing



Consider the following:

- Identification of key adults who the young person can check in with throughout the day.
- Interventions to reduce the effects of anxiety, support emotional regulation and building self-esteem, e.g., mindfulness, art, drama, music, or horticulture therapy, emotional learning support assistants (ELSAs), pastoral wellbeing sessions, mentoring etc.
- Nurture groups.
- Access to pupil support centre.
- Designated time for communicating with home if they are anxious, such as a young carer or if there is a family member with health needs.

Increasing a child's sense of belonging and ownership has been found to be effective in changing their feelings about school.

Social



Consider the following:

- Buddy systems.
- Nurture groups.
- Lunchtime and breaktime clubs.
- HAVEN (hearing, accepting and valuing every neurotype) groups through Autism in Schools. See MCC EBSA booklet

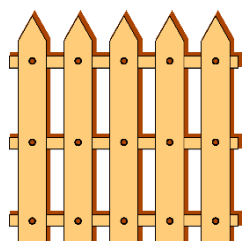
Support Plan

Attended by:

Apologies:

Name:	Year group:	Date of birth:
Date of plan:	Current attendance:	Plan number:
Review date:		

Strengths and what's working well

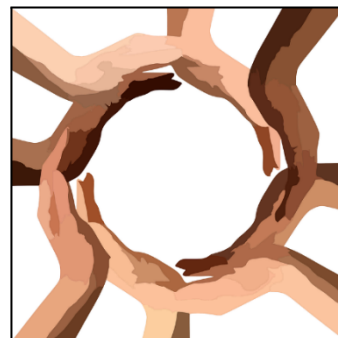


Summary of identified barriers

My key adults in school are:

When I can communicate with my key adults:

Where I can communicate with my key adults:



The following changes/adjustments will be put in place:

(These may be highlighted on the suggested reasonable adjustments outlined above, attach a copy to this plan, or outline below additional changes/adjustments)

Agreed actions

School will:

Parents/carers will:

I (child/young person) will:

Agreed priority target(s):

In 2 weeks...

In 6 weeks...



Name	Signature
<i>Child/Young Person</i>	
<i>Parent/Carer(s)</i>	
<i>Staff member</i>	

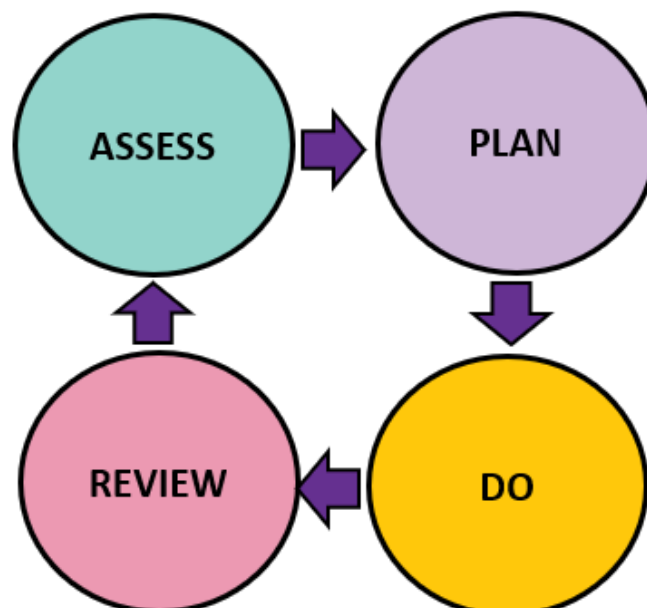
Do

Considerations

- Follow the plan to the letter.
- Ensure it is circulated to all members of staff who come into contact with the child (including non-teaching) and that they understand the importance of sticking to the plan.
- Have an adult monitoring the child each day to provide gentle encouragement and note what is or isn't working.

Pitfalls

- ALL staff should be aware of the plan – no staff member must challenge a student over something in the plan, one unfortunate, misguided comment, e.g., “why did you miss my lesson?” can set the plan back.
- Staff should not comment on any absences, even ‘positive’ comments. Young people have said they hate having attention drawn to them.
- If a child seems to be doing well, resist the temptation to add additional challenge, e.g., asking if the child wants to stay for longer.





Review - Support Plan Review

Attended by:

Apologies:

Name:	Year group:	Date of birth:
Date of plan:	Current attendance:	Plan number:
Review date:		

- For support plans to be effective we recommend a review every 2 weeks (virtual if needed).
 - If there is limited or no progress, the initial steps may have been too ambitious and they need to be adjusted.
 - Everyone to think about what's going well, any challenges, further adjustments, and next steps before the meeting.
 - Identify and celebrate any progress made.
- EBSA often includes periods of success, followed by setbacks or regression. This is the nature of it, and it should be expected. Next steps can include:
- Consolidating and maintaining the current support plan,
 - Setting new outcomes and or actions for the young person, school and parents.
 - Identifying that further consultation with other agencies needs to occur which may, if necessary, lead to a referral to other services.

Updates:

Information about any key changes, progress, development etc.



Target	Target achieved?	Adapted target (if needed)	Agreed strategies/actions from support plan/previous meeting	What needs to change?

Agreed next steps (including by who and by when)

School will:

Parents/carers will:

I (child/young person) will:



Agreed priority target(s):

In 2 weeks...

In 6 weeks...

Name and Date	Signature
<i>Child/Young Person</i>	
<i>Parent/Carer(s)</i>	
<i>Staff member</i>	

APPENDIX C - EBSA INTERVENTIONS

Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Interventions

Pupil: _____ Year: ____ Date: _____

Initial actions that may resolve specific issues/barriers	
✓	Personalised support/intervention
	Address and resolve any bullying or friendship issues that may be taking place (a restorative justice approach may be appropriate)
	Ask class/subject teacher(s) to make any specific and simple reasonable adjustments, for example changing the seating plan or modifying homework expectations
	Agree a change or set of changes in the routine around school with parents/carers (for example, an exact plan for 'drop-off' or public transport in the morning might be helpful)

Class-based differentiation and strategies for teachers and support staff to support Quality First Teaching	
✓	Personalised support/intervention
	All of the pupil's class teachers and support staff made aware of pupil's circumstances and relevant aspects of the plan
	Advised differentiation and personalised strategies (some of which may be specific to SEN) listed in a central place which is easily accessible to each class teacher and teaching assistant and/or provided in a one-page profile

Wrap-around support and pupil self-care resources	
✓	Personalised support/intervention
	Safe space(s)
	Buddy/peer support system
	Seating plan for each subject/teacher
	Colour-coded/visual timetable including all parts of the school day (not only lessons); this might include the step-by-step school journey and required equipment, as well as before/after school provision and break time arrangements/options
	'Circle of adults' personal reference (features names and photographs of key staff that the pupil can check in with)
	Special responsibilities/jobs
	'What if' prompts personal reference (what to do in anxiety-provoking situations, e.g. 're-set activities')
	Signal card, to show a teacher/support staff if they are feeling overwhelmed (important for the pupil and staff to know what will happen when they use this – i.e. what response the pupil can expect from adults and what adults can expect the pupil to do)
	Support and protective factors that the family can put in place to strengthen the pupil's resilience and coping skills, at home and within the community; for example this could include specific plans for Sunday evenings and Monday mornings
	Clubs before/after school and/or during break times
	Break time arrangements, including places they can access, activity options and adult support/supervision available
	Assembly arrangements (e.g. allowing the pupil to sit where they feel most comfortable)
	Plan for school trips (e.g. consider having the pupil in the 'teacher's group' or having parents accompany the group)
	Exam access arrangements
	Apps, e.g. Kooth
	Early leave card (e.g. 5 minutes) for lessons or going home
	Reward system/contingency contracting (e.g. a token economy to positively reinforce particular efforts or behaviours; this can be implemented jointly between home and school)
	Time out card
	'Soft landings' on entry to school, e.g. starting a little later, or going to a specific room/adult before starting lessons or allowing the parent/carer to accompany their child into school, gradually phased out with the use of transitional objects (e.g. blanket, toy, photo)
	Time-limited personalised timetable with attendance in some lessons, with a plan for a phased increase in lesson attendance (may include late start / early finish); this may also include a range of other features, for example scheduled check-in times with a key adult

Scheduled interventions, one-to-one/small group, provided to the pupil and/or their parents by school staff or an external agency	
✓	Personalised support/intervention
	Family work; this could include a request for direct family support from the Bromley Children Project
	Therapeutic support provided by a counsellor or play therapist
	Psycho-education CBT-influenced program around anxiety, using a recommended program such as 'Starving the Anxiety Gremlin' or 'The Humonculi Approach' (for pupils with autism)
	Circle of Friends (sharing worries with a selected peer group and providing opportunities to problem-solve together)
	Taught mindfulness, relaxation, deep breathing and visualisation sessions
	Peer mentoring sessions (young people providing this should have some training, with a member of staff overseeing this provision)
	Catch-up or pre-teaching sessions for subjects in the curriculum that may have been missed
	Taught social communication skills sessions, e.g. 'Talkabout'
	Mentoring (semi-structured) sessions with a key adult, which could include solution-focused management of the intervention plan that involves goal-setting, CBT-influenced exercises (e.g. thoughts-feelings-behaviours and phased/graduated exposure activities), practising coping skills in anxiety-provoking situations and planning/reviewing self-help techniques, e.g. journaling and the 'Share It-Shelve It-Shout It' approach (share the worry, shelve the worry for later or a 'shout'/alternative physical release)

Referral to the Local Authority to request additional advice, assessment and/or possible access to alternative provision	
✓	Personalised support/intervention
	Request a Funded Inclusion Plan
	Request an EHC needs assessment
	Request advice and a possible gateway to short-term alternative provision if necessary

APPENDIX D - WHERE TO GET INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

For support on specific mental health needs

Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk OCD UK www.ocduk.org

Depression Alliance www.depressoinalliance.org

Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com

National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk www.selfharm.co.uk

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – PAPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

For general information and support

www.youngminds.org.uk champions young people's mental health and wellbeing www.mind.org.uk advice and support on mental health problems

<https://www.suffolkmind.org.uk/> Suffolk Mind

www.minded.org.uk (e-learning)

www.time-to-change.org.uk tackles the stigma of mental health

www.rethink.org challenges attitudes towards mental health

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/wellbeing-for-education-return/ebsa-emotionally-based-school-avoidance> For local information