



Emotionally Based School Avoidance

Summary Guidance for Schools and FE Colleges

Who to keep an eye on
What to look out for
When to look out
How to help

Who to keep an eye on ...

Students with the following characteristics and circumstances are known to be at higher risk of EBSA and should always be on your radar

CYP experiencing
Bullying/Peer pressure

CYP who are socially
isolated

CYP with Young Carer
responsibilities

CYP with siblings with a
history of attendance issues

A history of mental health
difficulties

ASD and other
neurodevelopmental issues

History of previous episodes
of EBSA

Parental mental
health issues

What to look out for...

The following are well-documented early indicators of EBSA

Persistent lateness

10% unexplained absence
in the past month

Missing more than 2 days
in 1st week of a new term

CYP expressing anxiety about
coming to school

Parent expressing difficulties getting
child into school

Increased or new
separation anxiety

Asking to go home/stay at
home more often than usual

Withdrawal from extra-
curricular activities

Tearfulness/irritability when the topic of
school is brought up

A pattern of absence suggestive of
difficulties with specific lessons/activities

When to look out...

Be vigilant from the start of the school year. Missing more than 2-3 days in the first two weeks of any new academic year is a strong predictor of ongoing attendance issues and/or EBSA. EBSA can present at any time, but the following are known triggers:

Times of transition

Returning to school after a long period of absence

Exams/Assessments and other academic pressures

CYP expressing anxiety about coming to school

Mondays! Look out for patterns of absence on specific days.

Changes to family structure, e.g. separation, new sibling,

Challenging peer behaviour/classroom management issues

Transport/journey issues

Bullying/Peer pressure/Friendship and peer relationship difficulties

A pattern of absence suggestive of difficulties with specific lessons/activities

Performance anxiety/group activities

Changes to class structure/teachers/routine

Strained CYP/Teacher relationships

Death or illness of a loved one/ other traumatic events

Significant changes to family routine, e.g. parent returning to work, etc.

How to help...

Research suggests a **small window of opportunity** between early indicators of EBSA and long-term attendance issues. Monitor the attendance of at-risk CYP closely, particularly at known trigger points, and **offer support at the earliest possible opportunity**.

Reach out to us for training/support with any of the following steps BEFORE attendance becomes an issue. We're more likely to be able to help when attendance is still above 90%.

Speak to CYP and parents. Gain a detailed picture of what's going on. Use an evidence-based checklist to consider CYP, family, school and social/contextual factors.

Minimise family vs school/school vs family dynamics by developing a **collaborative** action plan to actively address CYP, family, school and social/contextual factors.

Build CYP and parent self-efficacy. Negative thoughts about one's ability to cope can impact on engagement with support. Consider support with social skills and peer relationships.

Identify a team around the family to support attendance, including at least one trusted member of staff that CYP can speak to when coming to/being in school feels overwhelming.

Take these steps BEFORE attendance drops below 90%. For CYP with particularly strong risk factors, e.g., history of EBSA, ASD or parent mental health issues, take steps at 95%.