



Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out the principles and procedures for supporting pupils who experience emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA) at our school. EBSNA is a term used to identify a group of pupils who face challenges in attending school due to emotional factors and who frequently experience significant levels of physical and emotional distress. EBSNA is not a diagnosis and there is not one underlying cause or need common to all pupils who experience EBSNA. The emotional difficulties that pupils experience may be the result of many different underlying special educational needs (SEN), adverse life experiences, and developmental needs.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Promote a shared understanding of EBSNA among staff, pupils, parents, and other stakeholders.
- Provide guidance on how to identify, assess, and support pupils who are at risk of or experiencing EBSNA.
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of staff, parents, and external agencies in relation to EBSNA.
- Ensure that pupils who experience EBSNA are safeguarded and receive appropriate education and wellbeing support.
- Prevent and reduce the incidence and impact of EBSNA on pupils' attainment, inclusion, and wellbeing.

This policy is based on the guidance and resources provided by the Buckinghamshire Council EBSNA Toolkit for Schools, which can be accessed [here](#).

This policy also takes into account the relevant DfE publications, such as:

- School attendance: guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (2020).
- Keeping children safe in education: statutory guidance for schools and colleges (2020).
- Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2015).
- Mental health and behaviour in schools: departmental advice for school staff (2018).

Definition of EBSNA

EBSNA is apparent where difficulties with attending school are the result of emotional factors and frequently pupils presenting with EBSNA experience significant levels of both physical and emotional distress. The emotional element of EBSNA is what makes it distinct from other forms of non-attendance (truancy). It is not 'refusal' to attend (though this term has been used in the past). Frequently pupils want to attend school and it is the overwhelming experience of stress, anxiety, and other emotions that lead a pupil to feel that they must stay away or 'avoid' school.

Identification of EBSNA

There are four likely functions that underpin school avoidance and considering how they apply to each pupil experiencing EBSNA should be the starting point to developing intervention. These are:

- To avoid situations specific to being in school which elicit high levels of stress (push from school)
- To escape social situations which cause feelings of discomfort (push from school)
- To spend more time with significant people (pull to home)
- To spend time doing something that is more fun or stimulating (pull to home)

It is only through understanding the individual experience of each pupil that we are likely to help them improve or manage their EBSNA. By understanding the individual functions/push and pull factors for a pupil we can begin to think about how to re-dress the balance and create factors that pull them towards attending school. This might be through providing more support, making reasonable adjustments, or putting specific interventions in place.

We use the EBSNA risk screening tool (Appendix 1) to identify and maintain a register of pupils who are vulnerable or at risk of EBSNA. This is shared with SENDCOs and pastoral leads, who make assessments of underpinning needs and put appropriate adjustments or intervention in place at the point that they first arise.

Support for pupils experiencing EBSNA

Planning to meet the needs of pupils experiencing EBSNA will be informed by assessment and collaboration with parents and pupils. Consideration will be given to how needs are met in line with the SEN code of practice. A pupil who is not able to attend due to emotional reasons and/or because their underlying needs are not being met is likely to require an increase in adjustment, support, or provision. For some pupils this may be a short-term requirement and for others a sustained change in provision or setting may be required.

In line with the SEN code of practice we identify needs early and there is likely to be a case to place pupils experiencing EBSNA on the SEN register on this basis.

When needed one of the school ELSA trained staff will use the Buckinghamshire Council EBSNA Toolkit for Schools to support pupils who experience EBSNA at our school. The toolkit covers the following:

- Preventative measures
- Early identification tools
- Working in collaboration with parents
- Working with pupils to understand their EBSNA
- Developing reintegration plans

The process of developing an understanding and planning can take months and even years in some cases. As such, it is important to consider how to meet needs in the shorter term whilst making longer terms plans.

Roles and responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities apply to all staff, parents, and external agencies involved in supporting pupils who experience EBSNA at our school.

Staff

- All staff are expected to have a shared understanding of EBSNA and the principles that underpin intervention. Staff are required to attend training sessions and access the resources provided by the EBSNA toolkit.
- All staff are expected to monitor and report any concerns about pupils' attendance or emotional wellbeing to the designated EBSNA lead in the school. The EBSNA lead is responsible for coordinating the identification, assessment, and support for pupils who experience EBSNA.
- EBSNA/ELSA leads and SENDCOs are expected to follow guidance within the LA toolkit pertaining to: identification of needs; making reasonable adjustments; implementing appropriate intervention; reintegration planning.
- EBSNA/ELSA leads and senior school staff are expected to follow guidance within the LA toolkit pertaining to absence coding.
- All staff are expected to communicate and collaborate with parents, pupils, and external agencies in a respectful, empathetic, and solution-focused manner.
- All staff are expected to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils who experience EBSNA and follow the school's safeguarding policy [INSERT LINK].

Parents

- Parents are expected to ensure that their child receives an education and attends school regularly, in accordance with the Education Act, 1996.
- Parents are expected to communicate and collaborate with the school in a respectful, empathetic, and solution-focused manner.
- Parents are expected to inform the school of any concerns or difficulties that may affect their child's attendance or emotional wellbeing.
- Parents are expected to provide medical evidence to support their child's absence due to illness, if requested by the school.
- Parents are expected to co-produce and follow any reintegration plans and/or home-school agreements for their child, and attend meetings and reviews as required.
- Parents are expected to access medical or mental health advice for their child, if recommended by the school or external agencies.
- Parents are expected to accept the duty of care and safeguarding responsibilities of the school and follow the school's safeguarding policy.

External agencies

- External agencies are expected to provide advice, guidance, and support to the school, parents, and pupils in relation to EBSNA, in accordance with their remit and expertise.
- External agencies will be accessed in accordance with the Local Authority pathway.

Escalating concerns

It is expected that the majority of pupils will make progress towards increasing their engagement or attendance using the resources and approaches recommended within the toolkit. Where this is not possible the school or parents may escalate their concerns using the Buckinghamshire Local Authority EBSNA pathway. Escalation will be considered in the following situations:

- Attendance has not increased over a period of two terms despite appropriate intervention and adjustments in line with the toolkit.
- Where a child or young person is not attending at all and attempts to engage them with a key adult have not been successful for a period of one term.
- Either school or parents do not engage with reintegration plans that have been co-produced.
- There are significant concerns for either the welfare or mental health of a child or young person (e.g. they are not leaving the house at all or not engaging with welfare checks).

Part-time timetables

As a school we recognise that some children and young people's levels of emotional distress are such that it may be beneficial to put a part-time timetable in place as a short-term reasonable adjustment. The aim of a part-time timetable is to reintegrate your child into full-time provision as soon as possible. Any longer-term reduced hours would only be considered due to the recognised medical needs which require alternative provision.

A reduced timetable cannot be implemented without written agreement from parents or carers. It will only ever be considered if it is in the best interests of the child and to act as a phased return to the school. A reduced timetable will be considered only where parents and school agree that:

- A period of rest and recovery from significant anxiety (e.g. burnout) may be required before returning to school.
- There are significant unidentified additional needs and removing some demands in the school day might allow your child to spend time engaging with key adults or external professional to understand what is contributing to their situation before developing a good reintegration plan.
- Using reasonable adjustment in the short term might promote attendance and engagement. For example, allowing the child to avoid lessons or elements of the school day they find particularly challenging so that they can attend others.

Alternative provision and flexible schooling

We recognise that for some pupils a short-term reintegration plan may not be appropriate or lead to sufficient engagement to maintain attainment. Where significant burnout or ongoing mental health needs are a barrier to sustained attendance the school will work with parents and pupils to ensure that they have access to an appropriate education. The school require parents to engage with medical professionals when considering alternative provision as a medium to longer term solution.

We recognise LA advice that delivering provision on the school site should be attempted first in order to reduce disengagement with the setting and so that school avoidance does not increase. In the majority of cases the school will:

- First make use of the toolkit and a part-time timetable (if required) to make an assessment of needs and implement an appropriate reintegration plan underpinned by enhanced support/intervention.
- If your child is able to attend but requires some reasonable adjustment in their timetable then in discussion with the SENDCo and Head teacher other arrangements such as flexi schooling and or a reduced timetable can be considered.
- If your child is able to attend for only part of the day then work will be sent home with detail on how to support your child with it. Paper copies of work will be sent home and your child will be able to access Numbots and or Times Table Rockstars online. Your child if in school may be able to access any interventions that are run at those times.

Where these arrangements are insufficient to allow for academic progress or where a child is not able to return to or maintain partial attendance for more than a term the school will work with you and your child to determine whether external providers can support with learning, engagement and/or reintegration. However, this will be dependent on funding available.

If such provision is agreed then the school maintains responsibility for safeguarding and progress whilst pupils receive alternative provision to supplement their education. School is also responsible for ensuring that any external alternative providers are suitable and meet appropriate standards (e.g. qualification, safeguarding, health and safety). Therefore where it is agreed that a third party provider is required the school will seek to work with providers which are pre-approved by the LA. We maintain the right to refuse to work with external providers if: we feel that your child could benefit from in-house flexible schooling arrangements outlined above; we do not deem the provider to meet relevant standards; it is not clear how the provider will work with your child towards their educational or SEND outcomes; the provision undermines potential reintegration.

In all instances, alternative provision is not considered to be an appropriate education in the long term. The school will continue to work with you and your child on longer term plans for reintegration or, if relevant, to identify other settings that might be able to meet your child's SEND needs.

Documentation and record keeping

It is important for schools to maintain records of decision making in reference to children and young people who are not able to attend. The school will regularly update the following:

- The EBSNA formulation tool as a record of:
 - ongoing assessment of needs
 - adjustment and interventions implemented
 - outcomes of meetings with parents and/or professionals.

- Any reduced timetables put in place as a temporary measure prior to reintegration.
- Reintegration plans (these will include agreement on frequency of review and outcomes).
- Records of welfare checks made where children and young people are not attending regularly in accordance with the school safeguarding policy.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the EBSNA lead and the senior leadership team. The review will take into account the feedback from staff, parents, pupils, and external agencies, as well as the data on attendance, attainment, inclusion, and wellbeing of pupils who experience EBSNA. Any changes to the policy will be communicated to all stakeholders and published on the school website.

