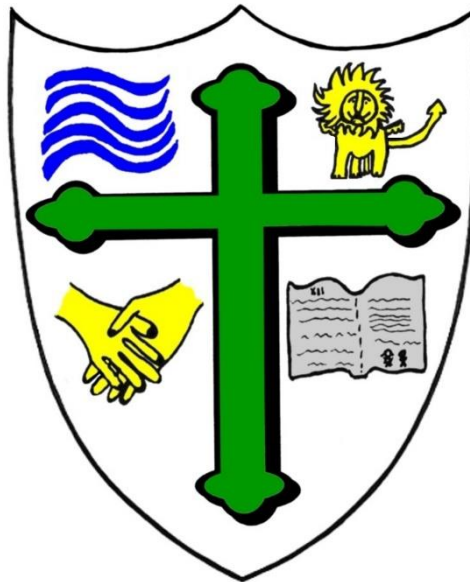


Highcliffe St Mark Primary School



Emotional Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) Policy

Reviewed (date)	May 2026
Reviewed by (name)	Gemma Stiles
Approved by Governors (if applicable)	20 th May 2026
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Emotional Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) Policy

Contents

Statement of Intent	3
Legal Framework.....	3
What is Emotional Based School Avoidance/ Non-Attendance (EBSA /EBSNA)?.....	3
Roles and Responsibilities.....	4
Pupil Voice.....	4
Getting Help	5
Working with the Child	6
Working with Families	6
Working with school staff.....	6
Formulating an Understanding of the Behaviour	7
Intervention Planning and Delivery	7
Early Intervention	7
Action Plans.....	8
Getting More Help	8
Monitoring and Review.....	9
More Information and Support	9

Statement of Intent

Highcliffe St Mark Primary School 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 who present with EBSNA, 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 EBSNA.
- To ensure that staff are educated on emotional and mental health to encourage early identification and support.

Legal Framework

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

- Equality Act 2010
- Mental Health Act 1983, revised 2007
- SEND Code of Practice 2014, revised April 2015

This policy also has due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'

This policy is implemented in conjunction with the following policies:

- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy

What is Emotional Based School Avoidance/ Non-Attendance (EBSA /EBSNA)?

For the purpose of this policy, EBSNA 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 EBSNA. The school recognises this link and supports pupils experiencing emotional trauma to attend school regularly.

Though some instances of EBSNA 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body is responsible for:

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

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Establishing and communicating procedures for attendance monitoring.
- Agreeing and sharing the EBSNA pathway so that staff can react efficiently and effectively.

The SENDCo is responsible for:

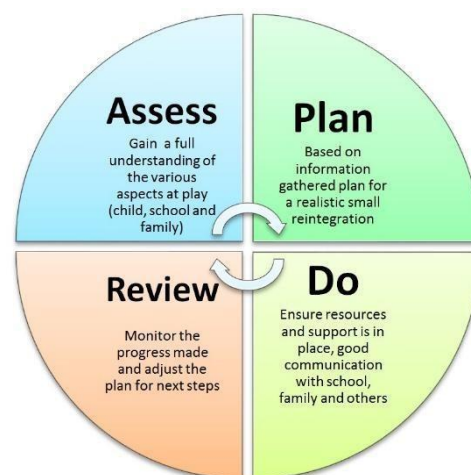
- Overseeing the pastoral team.
- Liasing with external support, such as children and young people's mental health services (CAMHS).

The Class Teacher is responsible for:

- Determining and documenting pupil's emotional triggers
- Carrying out EBSNA profile with the child
- Liasing with parents of pupils with EBSNA on a regular basis
- Supporting the pupil during the school day
- Working together with wider staff, parent and child
- Creating an EBSNA support plan (relationship and behaviour plan) for the child.

Parents are responsible for:

- Working with the school to ensure the best educational outcomes for their child.
- Attending parent workshops to support their child with EBSNA behaviours



Pupil 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. Pupil voice is collected through a range of activities to understand their barriers to attending school.

Getting Help

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

Early indicators of EBSNA	Indicators of EBSNA
<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 non-attendance 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 non-attendance from becoming entrenched and result in much better outcomes. At Highcliffe St Mark Primary School we follow the assess,

plan, do and review cycles with the young person at the center of the planning and interventions.

Working with the Child

Once it has been identified that a child is displaying indicators of EBSNA, 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 know it will be difficult, but you would like to know how they think and feel. It is important that adults working with them do not dismiss anxieties or worries.

This information gathering and then proposed action will be carried out by the class teacher, where necessary alongside a member of SLT. 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 member 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 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 EBSNA, 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 member of SLT. 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
- Referral to ELSA programme
- Referral to CAMHs where appropriate

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: Outreach, Outreach OT, CDC, GP, Educational Welfare Officer
- Primary Mental Health Worker Consultation Line
- 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 Directory
- Keeping links with home open

Monitoring and Review

The headteacher, in conjunction with the SENDCo, will review this policy on an annual basis and make any necessary changes.

More 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.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/support-with-](https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/support-with-education/school-attendance)

[education/school-attendance](https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/support-with-education/school-attendance) BCP school attendance

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://live-educationhub-bournemouth.cloud.contensis.com/Inclusion-](https://live-educationhub-bournemouth.cloud.contensis.com/Inclusion-Services/Attendance-Support-Team/Attendance-Support-Team.aspx)

[Services/Attendance-Support-Team/Attendance-Support-Team.aspx](https://live-educationhub-bournemouth.cloud.contensis.com/Inclusion-Services/Attendance-Support-Team/Attendance-Support-Team.aspx) Educational Support

Team