

Emotionally-based school avoidance: School questionnaire responses (Feb/march 2022)

1. schools and school representatives

2. numbers and distributions of ebsa

School Representatives

Individuals completing the questionnaire were one or more of the following:

* + SENCO (**59%**)
  + Senior attendance officer
  + Safeguarding and/or attendance lead
  + Head of inclusion/ inclusive learning
  + Headteacher
  + Assistant/deputy head teacher
  + Teacher
  + Children and families officer
  + Child and family support worker

Schools

**39** responses to a questionnaire related to EBSA were obtained by representatives from 37 schools around Milton Keynes:

* + **10** infant/junior schools
  + **19** primary schools
  + **8** secondary schools

Estimated prevalence of EBSA

School representatives estimated how many young people at their setting were finding it difficult to attend school for emotional reasons:

* + For primary schools: the mean number of ESBA cases was **6.42** students, and the range was **0-20** (approximately **2%** of primary school populations)
  + For secondary schools: the mean number of EBSA cases was **36.92** students, and the range was **12.5-88** (approximately **1.99%** of secondary school populations)

Prevalence of EBSA across year groups

School representatives described which year group(s) they believed EBSA was most prevalent in within their school setting:

* + Highly prevalent in **years 1, 5** and **6**
  + Some respondents explained that EBSA was spread out evenly, or that no single school year group stood out

Representatives explained how they identified children and young people as experiencing EBSA. Responses showed identifications were typically based upon:

* Low attendance or reluctance to attend school/lessons/activities
* Low attainment and/or a disengagement with learning
* Conversations with pupils and parents/families, teachers, pastoral staff and external agencies
* Lateness to school
* Children complaining of feeling poorly
* Children requiring additional support coming into school or during school
* Difficulty transitioning into school
* Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties

Respondents shared what they considered to be the factors underpinning the development of EBSA. These included:

* Home circumstances
* Anxiety, low self-esteem or other mental health difficulties (including parental mental health)
* Bullying or friendship issues
* Issues related to the curriculum or school environment
* Attachment difficulties
* COVID-19 factors
* A history of poor attendance (within the child or their siblings)
* Communication and interaction difficulties

4. factors underpinning ebsa

3. identifying ebsa

5. approach to supporting ebsa

6. support from other agencies

Respondents outlined their school’s approach to supporting young people who present with EBSA:

* + 1 to 1 support and daily check-ins
  + Mental health, therapeutic and calming resources, counselling/therapy services and pastoral support
  + Part-time and clear (visual) timetables and routines
  + Providing sensory breaks and a safe space
  + Regular communication between school and parents
  + Praising and rewarding school or lesson attendance
  + Using different school entry and exit doors and staggered arrival/departure times
  + Identifying causes/triggers
  + Home visits and setting of work at home
  + Creative methods to encourage school attendance

Importance was also placed upon providing individualised strategies and adopting a case-by-case approach.

Schools worked with other agencies when supporting children and young people presenting with EBSA

* Ride High
* MASH
* CAMHS
* School nurse
* Tutoring services
* GP and community paediatricians
* Youth Information Service
* SASH MK
* Arthur Ellis
* Charities, mental health services or online support
* Family centres
* Intervention and Inclusion Team
* Inclusion and Assessment Team
* Speech and Language Therapy
* Children and Family Practices
* Children’s Social Care
* Educational Psychology Team
* EHC Specialist Teaching Team
* The SEND Team
* Hypnotherapist
* Play therapist
* FAST Team
* Local Offer Specialist Intervention

9. support that would be useful

8. useful resources and support

Certain resources were found particularly useful:

* Online support and research
* SEMH interventions
* Attachment theory training
* Anxiety workshops and workbooks
* Coaching from professional or specialist teachers
* Resources which allow children to express their feelings and encourage self-advocacy
* A list of alternative provision providers
* Working closely with parents/carers, connected schools
* SEND Support line
* Social stories support from the child’s family, previous teachers and teaching assistants
* Support from: school nurses, other county documents, IIT, CFP, therapeutic leads, learning mentors

Several representatives felt their school had received little support. Of the training and support detailed, it comprised:

* Briefings from the Inclusion and Intervention team
* Mental health/SEMH training, first aid and webinars
* Training in anxiety, trauma, attachment and ASD
* SEND support, including support from the SEND support line
* Support from the school counsellor
* Information through the EBSA working group
* Support from Children’s Social Care
* Educational Psychologist and Specialist Teaching support in relation to individual cases
* CAMHS advice

7. training/support received

* Someone who can support the family in the early stages of EBSA
* Support and training for parents, helping them in their role e.g., to encourage school attendance
* Training courses related to EBSA, to increase understanding and provide resources to encourage school attendance
* Clearer guidance on the rules/regulations around EBSA
* Having external intervention with trained professionals
* Having a clear pathway of escalation and good practice guidance
* Easier and quicker access to specialist support
* Support regarding transition from primary to secondary school
* Ideas from other members of staff with experience working with students experiencing EBSA
* What to do when strategies implemented don’t seem to be working