

What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance?

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is when a child or young person feels unable to attend school. They may also have physical symptoms, such as a headache, nausea, tummy pains, generally not feeling well.

Why does it happen?

Emotionally Based School Avoidance can happen for several reasons and it is really important to try and figure out the causes. Some reasons for EBSA include:

- General anxiety about being around lots of people
- Separation anxiety – fear of being separated from parents or other close carers
- Friendship issues or problems within a peer group
- An incident with a teacher or member of school staff
- Finding the work hard and not feeling they can ask for help
- Being bullied
- Struggling with social time during the school day
- Feeling that they have no friends
- Significant life changes

In some cases, where there is a history or diagnosis of anxiety, the issues can seem more significant and be harder for the child or young person to overcome. Where there is no history of anxiety or school refusal, and this comes on suddenly and unexpectedly, there may be an identifiable reason for it, i.e. a specific incident that with support could be resolved.

What can you do?

It is important to address this issue as soon as possible. Talk to your child and their school to see if there has been a specific incident that has caused their difficulties in attending school.

If your child is being supported by CAMHS, a therapist/counsellor or another service then speak to them and ask for their advice and support.

If your child does not come under any services but you are worried about their anxiety, seek advice from your GP.

You could look at the EBSA guide on the right hand side of this link and see if there are any tips you could use: [Welcome to Educational Psychology Service | Can-Do | Bracknell Forest \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](#)

Look at the information on the Young Minds website: [School Anxiety and Refusal | Parent Guide to Support | YoungMinds](#)

You might like to keep a diary of any concerns and difficulties in your child attending. You could check with the school how their absences are being recorded. If they are absent for 15 days or more, please contact IASS for further advice.

Tips when talking to the school:

Some of the things to consider with school include:

- Time out card
- Mentor/buddy
- Social skills groups or individual support
- Slightly later start and/or earlier finish to the school day (avoiding the rush and crowds)
- Check ins throughout the day – these can be very discreet and are sometime called “light touch”
- Safe place
- Named staff member to go to if there is a problem
- Break/lunch time groups
- Restorative work if there has been an incident with a specific person (pupil or staff)
- Reduced timetable for a short, agreed period to help reintegration
- Referral to school counsellor (if they have one), CAMHS or the Educational Psychologist or the LA EBSA practitioner.
- If your child has an Education Health and Care Plan suggest an early Annual Review

If you would like to talk further to IASS about this then please contact us on 01344 354011 or IASS@Bracknell-forest.gov.uk.