

Emotionally Based School Avoidance



**Camden Educational Psychology Service
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What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance?

Camden Educational Psychology Service has produced this guidance, based upon the 2018 'West Sussex EPS Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA): Good Practice guidance for schools and support agencies' with their kind permission. In this revision we have continued to use the terminology 'avoidance' to emphasise the need to notice early warning signs and intervene early before full non-attendance. We are aware that other authorities use Emotionally Based School Non Attendance (EBSNA).

The current evidence base of the factors associated with positive outcomes include:

- Intervening early
- Working with parents/carers, school staff and the child/young person (CYP)
- Working in a flexible manner paying attention to the individual case and function served by non-attendance
- Emphasising the need for rapid return to school alongside good support and adaptations within the school environment (Baker & Bishop 2015)

Definition

EBSA is a broad umbrella term used to describe CYP who have difficulty in attending school due to emotional needs. This can include decreases in attendance, patterns of non-attendance (e.g Mondays), and prolonged absences from school. The onset of EBSA may be sudden or gradual. The literature suggests that there tend to be peaks in EBSA corresponding to transition between school phases (King & Bernstein, 2001). We recognise that all behaviours are a communication of an emotional need that is either unmet or being met elsewhere. It might not always look like an emotional need but our knowledge about trauma helps us see beyond what CYP say and the externalising behaviours they may present with. It is important to remember survival mode and how differently the fight, flight, freeze response can present.

Although the literature in this area often cites the phrase 'School Refuser', this terminology could be considered misleading as the term 'refuser' implies that the CYP has control over the school non-attendance. Language is very powerful. The first intervention is to change the language used by professionals and parents/carers. By changing the language used, the way we choose to intervene will change.

Terminology such as 'School Refuser', 'Truant', 'Choosing to stay at home' and 'delinquent' locates the 'problem' within the CYP and detracts from how their lived experiences can tell us how to support them.

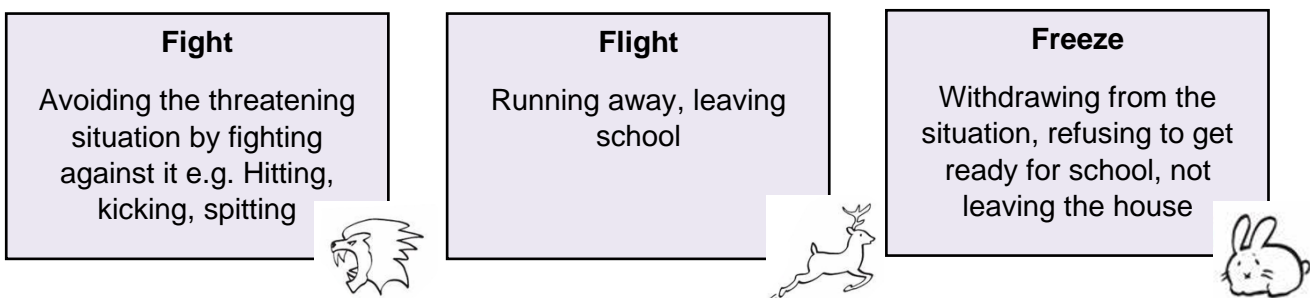
Prevalence

- It is difficult to estimate the prevalence of EBSA but UK literature reports that between approximately 1 and 2% of the school population (Elliot, 1999)
- There is a slightly higher prevalence amongst secondary school students absent from school due to emotional reasons (Guilliford & Miller, 2015)
- EBSA is reported to be equally common in males and females with little evidence of a link to socioeconomic status (King & Bernstein, 2001).
- Following the COVID-19 pandemic, persistent absence has increased, particularly in certain populations such as pupils with SEND and those accessing Pupil Premium (DfE, 2022). Many CYP who found it easier not being in school have found it harder to return to school.
- In Camden, there are concerns for attendance levels in relation to pre COVID-19 and national average data (94.9% vs. 95.2% primary; 92.1% vs. 92% secondary).

What can lead to Emotionally Based School Avoidance?

Anxiety has been identified as a key feature of EBSA. Although a certain level of anxiety is considered a normal and natural part of growing up and we can teach coping mechanisms to function with anxiety in everyday life, sometimes this escalates and can impact on day-to-day functioning.

When the anxiety is linked to school including social expectations and/or learning, the CYP may experience anxious and fearful thoughts around attending and coping with school demands. These feelings may also be accompanied by physiological symptoms of anxiety such as nausea, vomiting, shaking, sweating, etc. and may start the morning, night, or even a few days before school. In order to avoid these overwhelming emotions and the fear associated with school attendance, students might use the fight, flight, freeze survival response. These behaviours, and the avoidance of school, may then contribute to the maintenance of EBSA over time.



Possible indicators of EBSA

The longer the problem is not addressed, the bigger the problem becomes and the greater the intervention needed. It is crucial to identify this early and put support in place to ensure a rapid return to school.

Possible indicators include:

- Difficulty attending school with periods of prolonged absence.
- CYP reluctant to leave home and stays away from school with the knowledge of the parent/carer.
- For younger CYP, reluctance to leave parents or get out of the car.
- Missing a day or two sporadically, slowly increasing to more prolonged absence.
- Gradual or sudden school non-attendance coinciding with stressful events at home or school.
- Regular absence, especially unauthorised absence.
- Frequent absences for minor illnesses.
- Patterns in absences e.g. Particular days and/or subjects, after weekends/holidays etc.
- Reluctance to attend school trips.
- The young person expresses a desire to attend classes but is unable to do so.
- Anxiety on separation and dependence on family members e.g. Worry expressed about the safety of those at home.
- Evidence of under-achievement in learning, making less progress, and/or fear of failure.
- Social isolation and avoidance of classmates or peer group.
- Severe emotional upset on school days e.g. Excessive fearfulness, outbursts of temper, and/or complaints of feeling ill. Difficulty communicating what is causing discomfort or upset.
- Depression, low self-esteem, and low confidence.
- Confusion or extreme absent mindedness due to lack of concentration.
- Physical changes e.g. Sweating, sickness, aching limbs, headaches, panic attacks, rapid weight loss or gain.
- Withdrawal in class e.g. Head on desk, hood up, avoiding work or interactions.
- Other family members have experienced EBSA.

Risk/Resilience Factors

Just as with general mental health, there have been factors identified that place CYP at greater risk of EBSA. It is usually a combination of factors interacting with a change in circumstances that leads to what we see as EBSA. The predisposing factors may be present in the nature of the school, the CYP's family or the CYP themselves. Risk and resilience factors can affect the **strength of relationships** that a CYP has with other pupils and staff in school. They can also impact their **sense of belonging** in the school environment. The School Environment and Sense of Belonging Audit (Appendix 2) is a helpful tool to use to consider pupils' experiences of belonging.

School Factors	Family Factors	CYP Factors	Community factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Difficulties in specific subject • Transition to secondary school • Key stage or change of school • Structure of the school day • Academic demands/high levels of pressure and performance orientated classrooms • Exams • Difficult relationships with peers or staff • Sense of belonging facilitated by the overall school environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation, divorce, change in family dynamic • Parent physical or mental health challenges • Attachment relationship style with parent • High levels of family stress • Domestic violence or abuse • Loss or bereavement • Family history of EBSA • Young carer • Financial situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social anxiety • Fixed mindset • Low self confidence • Physical illness/injury • Period pain/period poverty • Transition ages (5-6, 11-12, & 13-14 years) • SEND and difficulties accessing the learning/making progress at the same rate as peers • Trauma/Adverse childhood experiences • Separation anxiety • Gaming addiction • Health anxiety • Neurodiversity (including autism and ADHD) • Experiences of belonging for LGBTQ+ pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism • Social media • Gang membership • Transport or journey to school • Community safety

Neurodiversity and EBSA

It is now well documented that rates of EBSA are higher among neurodiverse pupils, particularly those with an autism diagnosis¹. Some possible reasons for this include differences in:

- Social interaction – Leading to difficulties with friendships, bullying or social isolation, and a lack of belonging.
- Sensory processing and regulation – Leading to sensory overwhelm in schools.
- Information processing – Leading to difficulties accessing the school curriculum.
- Flexibility – Leading to heightened anxiety in response to transitions and unexpected changes.

¹ Totsika, V., Hastings, R. P., Dutton, Y., Worsley, A., Melvin, G., Gray, K., Tonge, B., & Heyne, D. (2020). Types and correlates of school non-attendance in students with autism spectrum disorders. *Autism*, 24(7), 1639-1649.

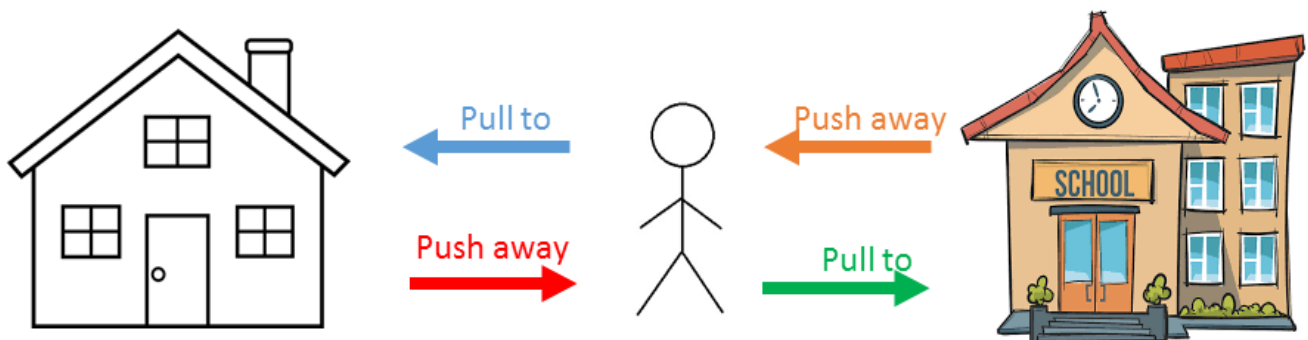
The 'Anxiety Overlap'

As outlined in the graphic below, anxiety often co-occurs with other conditions, including mental health conditions, and diagnoses. This is not an exhaustive list but provides some examples of co-occurring conditions that may be present for a CYP. For some CYP, these conditions and needs may contribute to their experiences of school and learning, which may lead to EBSA.



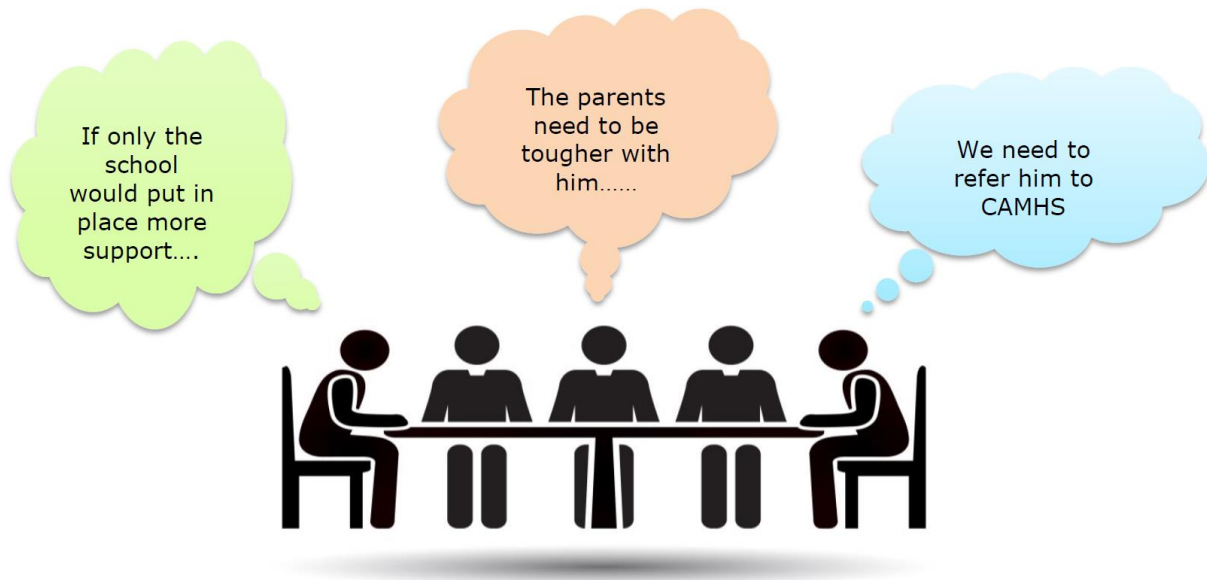
'Push and Pull' factors

The literature indicates that Emotionally Based School Avoidance is most likely to occur when the risks are greater than resilience, when stress and anxiety exceeds support, and when the factors that promote school avoidance overwhelm the factors that encourage school attendance. By mapping out what is going on for a CYP, you can identify where there are imbalances which would tell you how to intervene to support a CYP. For an example template, see Appendix 1.

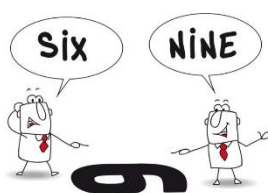


A helpful framework for this is the 'Push/Pull' factors approach. This is intended to be used by professionals to support their own thinking in the first instance. A number of tools that can be used with the CYP to gather information for this grid can be found in the **Seeking Information** section (page 10). If a professional chooses to use this with a CYP, it is advised that they remove the terms 'push' and 'pull' which can be interpreted literally. An example of where certain factors may lie is included below.

Perspectives and blame



It is often tempting to try to locate a simple reason and simple solution for behaviour. However as identified earlier it is often an interaction of a number of factors and trying to find simple causation often encourages blaming. Individuals can then become anxious and defensive. Parents/Carers may feel blamed for the absences, feel that their parenting skills are being criticised and they may be fearful that they will get into trouble or even prosecuted for non-attendance. CYP may feel guilty or scared that they will be forced to attend school.



Each person may have a different perspective on EBSA and have a different story to tell. It is essential that different people's views are respected and differences in views are acknowledged. When there is a difference of views it is often more helpful to focus on *how* the behaviour is occurring rather than *why*.

Seeking Information

Seeking information from CYP

School Wellbeing: Risk and Resilience Card Set

The School Wellbeing cards are designed to be used by education, health and social care colleagues and are suitable for CYP aged 7+. Through a card sort activity, the CYP is empowered to share their experience of school and the factors that they feel are significant in terms of any risk factors that may need to be addressed, as well as any resilience factors that could be further harnessed to improve their experience of school and their school attendance.



Link to page: <https://www.schoolwellbeingcards.co.uk/>

School Stress Survey

☹️ I very often or always feel stress at this. I can't cope with it. ☹️ I sometimes feel stress. I don't like it but I can cope. 😊 I feel OK about this. I can cope with it easily.

1. Getting Up & Ready	2. Journey To & from	3. Assembly	4. Corridors
5. Written Work	6. Break Times	7. Teacher Q&A	8. Team / Group Work
9. Lunch Times	10. 1 to 1 with Adults	11. Tests	12. Homework

School Stress Survey

This is a short reflective exercise designed to encourage students presenting with anxiety (often manifesting in things like non-attendance) to identify the 'stress points' in their day.

Link to tool: [School Stress Survey](#)

Other approaches to capture pupil views

Drawing thoughts and feelings about school

- What name would you give the feeling that you experience when you think about going to school?
- If it was a thing, what would it look like? What would it say?
- How does the get in the way of you attending school? When is in charge and when are you in charge?
- Ask them to draw how their body feels when they are worried
- This helps to externalise the anxiety

Scaling anxiety about school on a thermometer

- The physical environment e.g. toilets, corridors, assembly hall.
- Times of the day or social interactions e.g. arriving at school, play and breaktimes, lining up to go into school or classroom, lunchtimes, going home, changing for PE
- Particular lessons or activities within lessons e.g. writing, working as part of a group, reading aloud, verbally answering a question

Life graphs

A life graph or path can help them tell you their 'story so far' and what they would want in the future.

Developing an Understanding

Below are some questions you can use to structure an explorative conversation about a CYP who is struggling to attend school.

Description of behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current rate of attendance? • Are there any patterns to non-attendance? Particular days or lessons? • History of behaviour – When did it first occur? Have there been similar difficulties? • Behaviour and symptoms of anxiety – What does it look like? What does the CYP say about any specific fears and difficulties?
Risk factors (school, CYP, family and community)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental and educational history (health, medical, sensory or social factors). What are CYP's previous experiences of school? If secondary age, what was their experience of the primary to secondary transition? • Any changes in family dynamic? (Separation, loss, birth of a sibling, health issues of other family members) • Who is the CYP closest to in the family? • Are there any other needs within the family? • How do members of the family respond to the situation? • Does the CYP have any learning needs or difficulties? • For neurodiverse CYP, are there particular challenges that have not been understood or addressed that are triggering emotional distress? • What do we know about their local community? • What do we know about their 'social graces' (gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation and spirituality)? How do these interact with their experiences of school? <p><i>Consider: Some groups such as CYP Looked After (CYPLA), those known to social care or refugee families may be more vulnerable.</i></p>
Strengths/Protective factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the CYP think is going well? • What strengths do they have? • What are their interests, or aspirations and ambitions for the future? Can we help them to articulate or explore this? For neurodiverse students, what are their special interests? • What positive relationships do they have at home and at school (peers and staff)? • What positive experiences have they had at school? • When and where do you feel most safe and secure in school? • What helps you to feel a sense of belonging to your school? • What was different about the times when the CYP was able to get into school? • What has been helpful in the past?
Integrating the various factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What understanding do people have about the CYP's strengths, needs and presenting behaviours? What different views are held? What risk factors have been identified (CYP, school and family)? What strengths have been identified that can be built upon? • What is the function of the behaviour? Is it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To avoid something or situations that elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress (e.g. fear of the toilets; the noise in the playground; lots of people moving all together in the corridors between classes, tests/ exams) – To escape difficult social situations (e.g. feeling left out at playtime; reading out loud in class or other public speaking/group task; working as part of a group) – To get attention from or spend more time with significant others (e.g. change in family dynamic, concerned about the wellbeing of parent). – To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or motivating (go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends). • Are there maintaining factors? i.e. When a pattern of behaviours is reinforced, sometimes without the awareness of each part played by CYP, family, school.

Strategies and Interventions

Strategies to use at home

- Support development of a secure attachment at home so that the CYP feels like they are able to separate. This may involve creating **special time** to be spent together which will vary depending on age, or more specialist intervention, such as Video Interaction Guidance (VIG)
- Consider using **transitional objects** such as teddies, hair ties, photos, keyring that the CYP can take from home into school
- Acknowledge that anxiety is ok but **don't over re-assure or dismiss the feeling**. Accept the CYP's emotional experience of school, **allow them to feel heard** and normalise their experience
- Encourage and **positively affirm** the CYP when they go to school (e.g. 'I'm really happy for you')
- Give the CYP some **protected quality time** with you at home ('special time')
- Try to **present a balanced view** when talking about school and try to **avoid negative narratives** about school ('I was never good at Maths either')
- Encourage the CYP to engage in mindfulness or other activities that may make them feel relaxed (e.g. mindful colouring)
- Make the school day as **predictable** as possible by creating a visual planner for the week and checklists for school equipment. Encourage the CYP to tick days spent at school off on a calendar as they achieve them.
- Ensure a **clear routine** is in place. This may include use of visuals/weekly planner/organisation, across home and school activities etc. Having a clear routine across school days, weekends and school holidays can help to maintain a sense of momentum.
- Consider how to support good routines and boundaries around eating, sleeping, screen time and exercise.

It may be necessary to seek further support and consultation from specialist services where school avoidance has become entrenched. This could be discussed with the family.

Strategies to use at school

- Create a **sense of belonging** in school by offering a positive greeting when seeing the CYP entering school/class (e.g. 'It is so lovely to see you!') and giving them a role and responsibility (e.g. 'Could you help me hand out these books?')
- When the CYP is not at school, continue to communicate with them via email, notes, phone or video calls etc. This helps the CYP to feel like they are being **'kept in mind'**.
- Start and end the school day with **protected quality time** with a safe, consistent adult for 15 minutes
- Ensure there is a **clear transition** between parent/carer(s) and a trusted staff member at the start of each day
- Ensure the CYP sees **positive interactions** between home and school
- Consider the **safe spaces** that pupils can go to, such as a pastoral zone or library, as these may be less stigmatising for some pupils than the learning support area
- Identify and address any **specific triggers** that cause anxiety or distress
- Support the CYP with **peer interactions** (e.g. circle of friends, social skills groups)
- Ensure that the school day is predictable by **creating a consistent routine** that is outlined on a visual schedule. Try to keep elements of the school day the same (e.g. entering school via the same route each day, having the same regulating activity on arrival).
- Encourage and **positively affirm** the CYP when they go to school (e.g. 'I'm really happy that you've come into school today')
- When possible, **flexible schedules and alternative learning environments** can facilitate engagement for students starting to attend school.

Strategies to use at school

- Consider using **transitional objects** such as teddies, hair ties, photos, keyring that the CYP can take from home into school. Allow them to text or phone home during the school day if needed.
- Encourage the CYP to engage in mindfulness or other activities that soothe the CYP's nervous system. Identify activities that make them feel relaxed (e.g. mindful colouring). These activities could take place upon arrival at school and at regular intervals throughout the day. Carrying out these activities with an attuned adult is a helpful way to strengthen relationships and offer opportunities for a 'check in'.
- Additional strategies may include: Anti-bullying programmes, buddying pupils, mentoring and teaching coping strategies.

A whole school audit is included in the Appendices, to support you with developing your school environment and sense of belonging for pupils' needs.

Making the challenge manageable

Re-exposure to school should happen gradually, using an **avoidance hierarchy** created with the CYP from least feared school situation to most feared. To create an avoidance hierarchy, the CYP can be asked to name situations (or shown cards representing possible fears) and rank them in terms of how they feel about that situation or object from 'least worried about' to 'most worried about'. When thinking about next steps it is important to start with the item that causes the least amount of anxiety, helping them think about how they will cope with this situation and what support they will need. When they have overcome this fear and consolidated this a number of times, they can begin to work his or her way up the hierarchy.

Most feared
Going into lunch hall without best friend
Going into lunch hall with best friend
Going to PE lesson
Going into next 2 favourite lessons
Going into favourite lesson
Joining in a small group activity
Staying in the resource base
Entering the school going into the reception area
Entering the school when the school is closed
Standing outside the school when the school is closed
Least feared

For each situation the young person will need to be supported to think about:

- What coping technique they will use (e.g. relaxation, thinking, distraction)
- What support will be in place (e.g. key worker available, time out card, access to secure/ quiet base)
- Some situations may need to be broken down into even smaller steps.

When supporting young people to manage negative feelings or high levels of stress in certain experiences (e.g., fear of the toilets; the noise in the playground; lots of people moving all together in the corridors between classes, tests/ exams), interventions should include learning about anxiety and how it affects our thinking, feelings, and behaviours. The CYP should be taught anxiety management techniques such as relaxation training and deep breathing. Links to resources can be found in the Resource section.

Schools are responsible for providing home learning when CYP do not attend. This enables the CYP to be 'held in mind' by the school and maintains a connection between home and school. This also minimises the amount of learning that a CYP misses when not in school and offers a routine and structure to their day. Consider the format of learning that would be appropriate for the family (i.e. Online or paper, based on access to the internet).

Case Studies

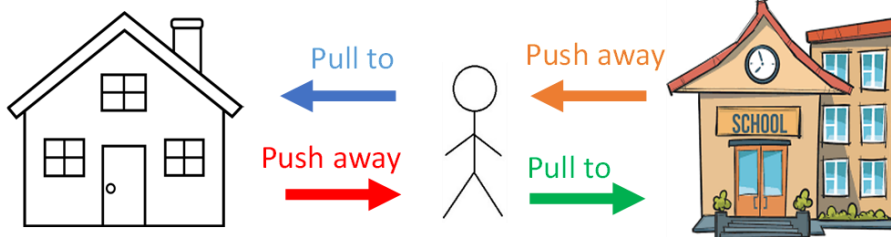
Two example case studies are included below.

Case Study 1 – Esther:

Esther is in Year 9 and attends a mainstream secondary school. Her attendance started to slowly decline and was 81% for the Autumn term. After considering 'push and pull factors', school were then able to intervene to enable the CYP to check-in with mum throughout the day, mentoring with a key teacher to build a supportive relationship, and information sharing with all teachers to better understand what her behaviour in class was communicating. School also did some work to develop a friendship group by setting up activities she would enjoy with peers.

- Young carer - Worry about Mum's health wellbeing
- Mum spending time with young sibling without her
- When at home, spends time dreading going back to school resulting in her feeling unwell
- Fear of journey to school

- Lessons are hard and teachers 'reject' her
- Feeling anxious about learning and is 'punished' when anxious (e.g. hood up, withdrawing, using phone to text Mum)
- No close friends and experiences of bullying
- Low self-confidence



- Mum wants her to return to school and is keen to work with school to support this

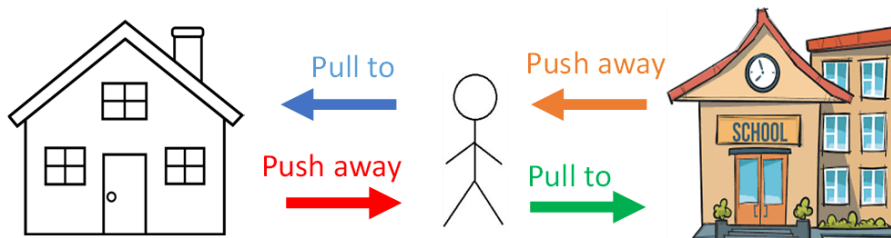
- Good relationship with Head of Year
- Likes Spanish

Case Study 2 – Hussain:

Hussain has just started Year 7 and his final years at primary school were disrupted by COVID-19. He has a diagnosis of autism. After considering 'push and pull factors', school were then able to intervene by providing more adult support to Hussain in lessons. They also arranged for him to leave lessons earlier to avoid busy transitions and set up Minecraft club at lunchtime so he could socialise with peers and spend lunchtime in a quieter space. They jointly decided with parents to apply for an EHCP to help meet his needs in school.

- Quieter and calmer- No loud, unpredictable hallways
- Can play Minecraft on his computer
- Parents are worried about Hussain and like him to be at home 'where they can see him'

- Struggles to find his way around the school and often gets in trouble for being late to lessons
- Finds it difficult to make friends due to his 'specific' interests
- Feels anxious about eating in front of peers
- Has difficulty understanding all of the lesson content

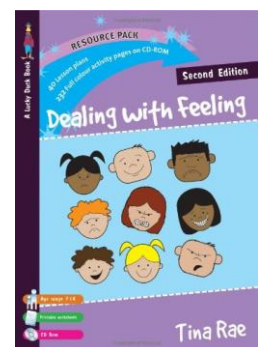
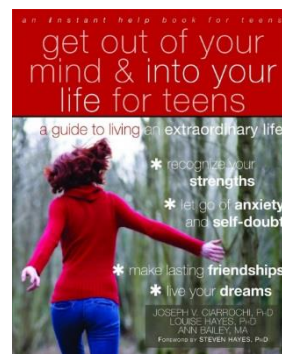
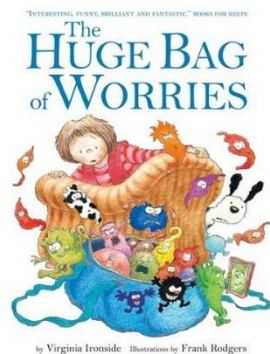
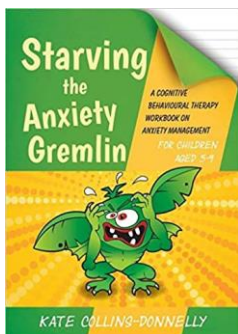


- The school routine is more structured than at home

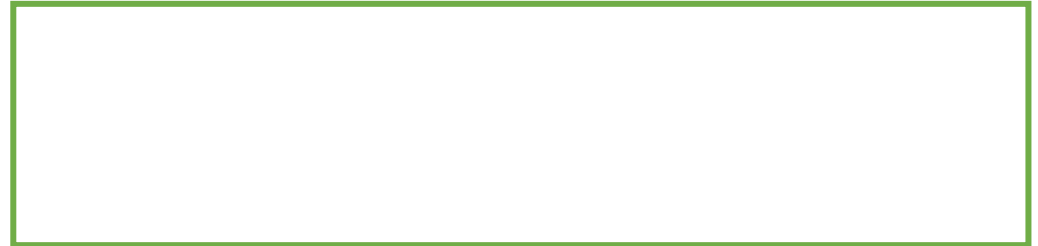
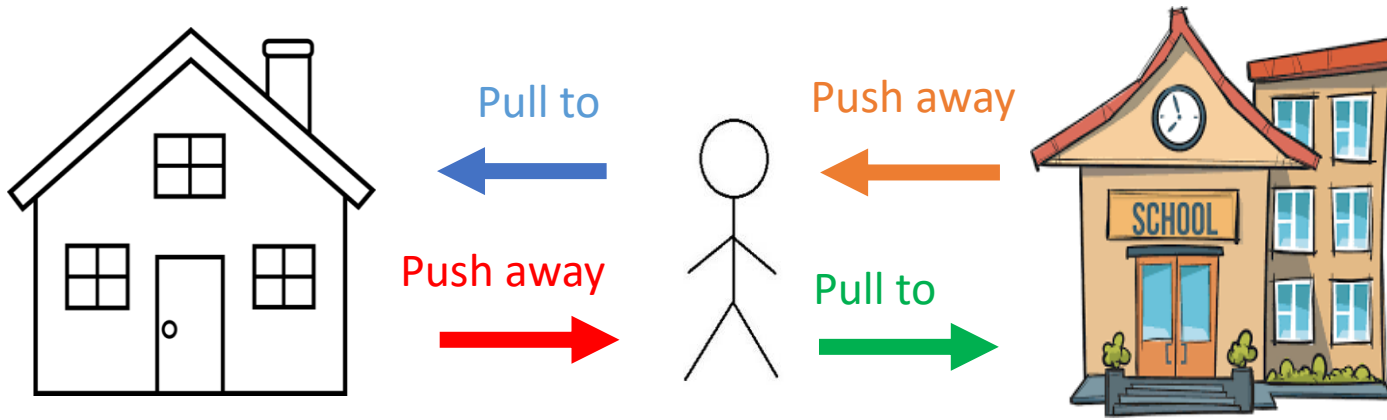
- Is good at creative writing and Computer Science
- Has a best friend at school who has similar interests

Resources

- *Huge Bag of Worries* by Virginia Ironside
- *Worry Box: managing anxiety in young children* by Hannah Mortimer
- *When my worries get too big! A relaxation book for children who live with anxiety*, 2nd Edition by Kari Dunn-Buron
- *A Volcano in My Tummy* by Elaine Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney.
- *Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People* by Kate Collins-Donnelly
- *Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents)* by Eline Snel
- *Dealing with Feelings* by Tina Rae
- *My Book of Feelings* by Tracey Ross
- *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life for Teens* by Joseph V. Ciarrochi, Louise Hayes and Ann Bailey.
- *Anxiety* by Paul Stallard – Examples of activities:
<http://tandfbis.s3.amazonaws.com/rt-media/pp/resources/CBTCHILD/worksheets.pdf>
- *Supporting Children and Young People with Anxiety: A Practical Guide* by Elizabeth Herrick and Barbara Redman-White
- *Promoting Emotional Resilience – Toolkit*:
<http://hbtg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/KAN-Emotional-resilience-toolkit.pdf>
- Brainstem calming activities:
<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Brainstem-Calmer-Activities.pdf>



Appendix 1 – Blank ‘Push and Pull Factors’ Template



Appendix 2 – Creating a School Environment which Promotes School Sense of Belonging and Attendance

5

Promoting School Enjoyment
(e.g. Increased leisure opportunities, food options, subject choice etc)

4

Meeting Individual Needs
(e.g. Personalised approach to individual needs, manageable workloads, opportunities for group working)

3

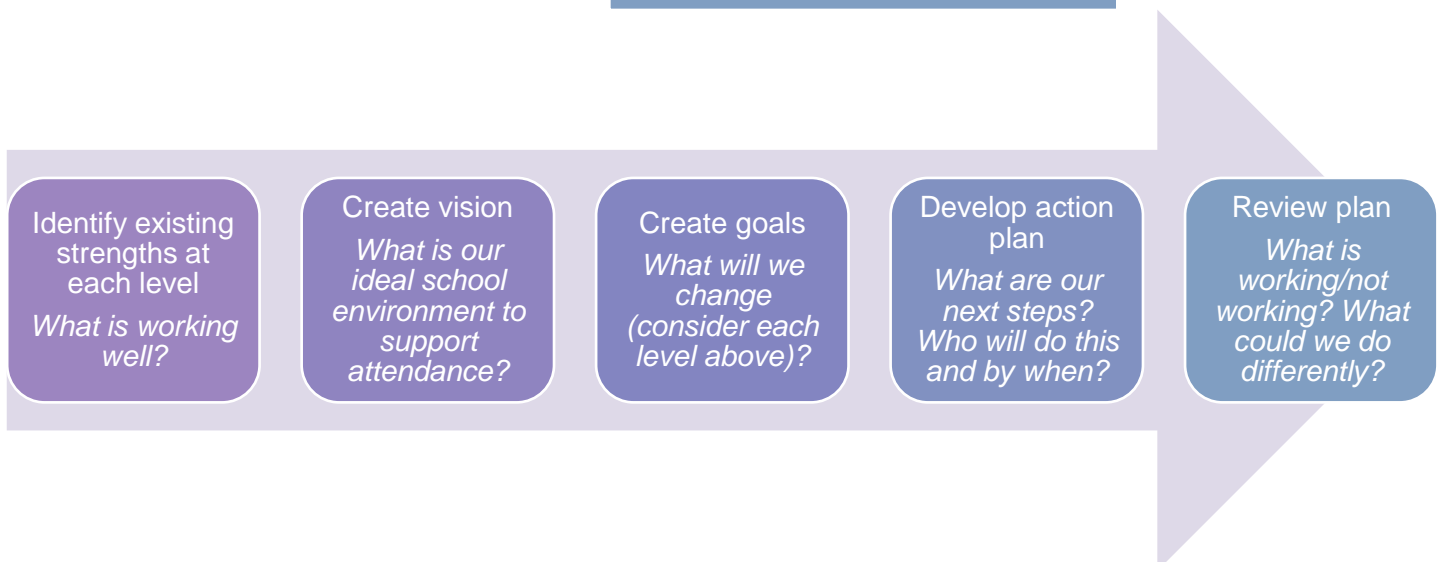
Encouraging Belonging and Relationships
(e.g. Inclusive school ethos, approachable/available adults, opportunities to connect with peers)

2

Supporting Feelings of Safety
(e.g. Person-centred approaches to bullying, safe spaces to access during unstructured times, seating plans that enable pupils to sit with friends)

1

Nurturing Physiological Needs
(e.g. School structures that enable adequate time to eat, rest, regulate and use the toilet, comfortable and appropriate uniforms)



School Environment and School Sense of Belonging Audit

Area	Questions to consider	Suggestions to improve	Comments and review
Nurturing Physiological Needs	<p>To what extent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the structure of the school day allow adequate time to rest, regulate and take toilet breaks? • Do pupils have appropriate and comfortable uniforms? • Do pupils have access to free school meals and breakfast clubs? Do they feel comfortable accessing this provision? 		
Supporting Feelings of Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a person-centred approach to bullying in place? (i.e. are pupil's perceptions, listened too, taken seriously, accepted as their reality?) • What safe spaces are there for pupils to access at lunch (i.e. small rooms supervised by adults/segregated areas for pupils in different year groups?) 		
Encouraging Relationship and a Sense of Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do pupils have trusting interpersonal relationships with key adults in school? • Are these key adults available throughout the school day and do pupils know where to find them? • Are there opportunities for pupils to be able to provide their views/ participate in decision-making? • Does the structure of the school day provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to interact with friends? Are pupils seated next to friends in lessons? • Have positive home-school relationships been established and a range of opportunities offered to help parents maintain their involvement? 		
Meeting Individual Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are pupils' experiences of school non-attendance understood? • What factors are currently supporting pupils' attendance? • Are pupils who have arrive late warmly welcomed and supported by asking if there are any barriers to being on time that the school can help them to address? • Are pupils' individual strengths and needs understood? Are pupils needs understood by all key adults in school? Are their strengths being nurtured and is provision in place to meet their needs? • Have adaptations been made to school rules and expectations in line with the above? • Are there any conditions in the classroom, canteen or other school areas that might impact on their wellbeing or trigger anxiety (e.g. Noise, lighting, busy spaces, transitions). • Are flexible schedules, alternative learning environments, or other accommodations available? 		
Promoting School Enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the curriculum account for and support pupils' individual interests, strengths and needs? • Do pupils have sufficient opportunities to work in pairs and small groups? • Does the canteen provide a range of food choices? • Does the structure of the school day provide a balance of work and leisure time? • Are there any clubs, programs or resources during the school day and after school that might facilitate engagement? • Do pupils have a well-being plan that focuses on their hopes, interests and strengths? 		

Appendix 3 – Camden Services Offering Support

Schools can seek additional support from services in Camden for young people experiencing EBSA. The Camden EBSA Pathway (see p. 20) outlines support that is available and can be put in place across three phases of intervention. The following services can also support where EBSA is a presenting difficulty. While awaiting support from external services, continue with the ‘plan, do’ review’ cycle.

Service	Description	Contact
Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	<p>There are a range of CAMHS teams available for CYP attending Camden schools and Camden residents, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Mental Health Practitioners who help CYP with mental health difficulties • Named CAMHS Clinicians for each secondary school who clinically work within the school context; school professionals can liaise with this CAMHS Clinician and discuss any young people they are concerned about. CAMHS are also aiming for all Camden Primary Schools to have a named CAMHS Clinician who will be able to offer consultation to primary schools on a fortnightly basis. • Community CAMHS teams who work with children, young people and families who present with a range of difficulties including emotionally based school avoidance. Community CAMHS is made up of a multi-disciplinary team who are qualified in various evidence-based talking therapies. CAMHS Clinicians will aim to work alongside the CYP, family and school in completing a CAMHS Assessment and, following this, discuss what support would be most helpful. 	<p>For contact information, click here.</p>
Early Help Service (Camden residents only)	<p>Early Help is a free support service for families with CYP aged 0 to 19 in Camden. It offers practical and emotional support for a range of life issues and works with young people and their families to help them make changes and feel connected in their community. Early Help comprises a range of services offering short and long term support both for families and young people directly.</p> <p><i>For non-Camden residents, please refer to resident borough Early Help Services .</i></p>	<p>Email: LBCMAHadmin@camden.gov.uk</p> <p>Telephone: 020 7974 3317</p>
Youth Early Help (Camden residents only)	<p>Youth Early Help offer direct support to young people to: stay safe; be healthy; succeed in education, training and employment and contribute positively to their community. The service is comprised of multi-disciplinary youth practitioners based in youth hubs across three localities in Camden. Youth Early Help offers both universal open access and targeted, bespoke support for vulnerable young people and their families. Support is offered to young people aged 11-19 (and up to 25 years for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities).</p>	<p>Email: youthearlyhelp@camden.gov.uk</p>

Service	Description	Contact
Educational Psychology Service	Educational psychologists draw on a range of psychological frameworks to help understand the factors that may be contributing to a CYP's escalating anxiety about school and the complexities underpinning their avoidance of school. We work in consultation with school staff, families and other professionals to develop a holistic picture and identify small steps of change that help lessen anxiety and support the CYP to return to school. Sometimes, but not always, educational psychologists will work directly with the CYP to contribute to the assessment or a direct intervention.	Contact your link EP directly. Email: EducationPsychology@Camden.gov.uk Telephone: 020 7974 6500
Pupil Attendance Service	<p>The Attendance Service offers advice and guidance on attendance issues for all pupils in Camden schools. We can discuss processes in schools, individual cases and additional support for CYP and their families. Support is also available for pupils who are electively home educated.</p> <p>Weekly zoom meetings are available for attendance leads at 11.30am each Wednesday for up to 45 minutes to look at the latest guidance, strategies to improve attendance and brief case discussions. There is also a weekly attendance update for attendance leads in schools.</p>	Email: pas@camden.gov.uk or ehe@camden.gov.uk Telephone: 020 7974 1653
Royal Free Hospital School	<p>The Royal Free Hospital Children's School is a community special school and a leading practice school for mental health and wellbeing. As part of its wider work the school runs the School Inclusion Panel in conjunction with Camden's School Inclusion Team. The school can also offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three alternative provision programmes FUTURES, PATHS and The Thomas Group that can support pupils presenting with medical or mental health needs, including emotionally based school avoidance (see www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk). • A team of Outreach teachers who are allocated cases through the School Inclusion Panel. • General support and advice around EBSA and access to successful case studies. 	Email: admin@royalfree.camden.sch.uk Telephone: 020 7472 6298
School Nursing Service	The School Nursing Service works in partnership with children and families across education and health, providing a link between the school, home and community delivering the 5-19 years National Healthy Child Programme. The role of the School Nurse is to improve the health and wellbeing of CYP to maximise their chances of reaching their full potential in school. Written referrals can be sent to the confidential email address stating name of school, CYP details (including date of birth) and summary of concern. Please indicate on the referral that you have	Email: camdenschoolnurses@nhs.net Telephone: 020 3317 2304

Service	Description	Contact
Virtual School for Looked After Children	<p>sought consent from the family to refer to the service (unless there is clear evidence that information must be shared in order to safeguard a vulnerable CYP).</p> <p>Camden Virtual School can provide support and advice for CYP who are Looked After and those with a Child in Need Plan. The Virtual School:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides training, advice and support to early years providers, schools, colleges and other education institutions as well as social workers, independent reviewing officers, foster carers and related professionals to promote the attainment of CYP in care, those previously in care and children in need. • Ensures that the providers of fostering services, residential care and alternative educational provision can show that they prioritise the educational success of Looked After Children. • Ensures there is timely communication and effective co-operation with the Virtual School head from other local authorities, particularly in relation to possible education placement changes, school admissions and attendance, educational success and exclusions. • Undertakes multi agency work, collaborating with a range of other professionals and using mentors to improve attendance at school and education outcomes. • Maintains rigorous and robust tracking and monitoring of individual attendance, success and progress. • Provides advice, guidance and resources in the form of mentors for Children in Need to their schools and social workers. 	<p>Email: Natalie.white@camden.gov.uk Telephone: 020 7974 2359</p>
Rebuilding Bridges Project	<p>The Rebuilding Bridges Project provides support to enable children and young people to get the most out of mainstream education and universal out-of-school services, and to support their families. The Project works with children and young people, aged 6 to 25, who are having difficulties engaging with school; are likely to be experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties; need support to manage behaviours of concern; would benefit from opportunities to mix with peers and make friends; need support to access out-of-school activities or youth services; need help to develop independent living skills and prepare for adulthood. Experienced mentors offer one-to-one and small-group support, alongside bespoke therapeutic interventions from the Project psychologists. The Project provides enjoyable activities with positive outcomes for children/young people, as well as respite and holistic, joined-up support to families through the project partners (PACE, CAMHS, London Borough of Camden, EPS and Wac Arts).</p>	<p>Email: hpurkis@paceforall.com (new referrals) gjames@paceforall.com (ongoing referrals)</p>

Additional services include:

Kooth – Online counselling service

<https://www.kooth.com/>

Family Action Islington and Camden Young Carers Service – Support for young carers

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/>

Young Camden Foundation – Unites voluntary and community groups (including faith and sports groups) that work with children, young people and their families who live in the London Borough of Camden.

<https://youngcamdenfoundation.org.uk/>

CARAF Centre – Support service for black and minority ethnic and low income families

[The Caraf Centre \(youngcamdenfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.youngcamdenfoundation.org.uk/the-caraf-centre)

Waiting Room – NHS service providing up-to-date, reliable, and vetted help and support information for emotional wellbeing

[Welcome to the Waiting Room \(nclwaitingroom.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nclwaitingroom.nhs.uk/)

Appendix 4 – EBSA Pathway

Camden EBSA Pathway

Guiding Principles of Intervention:

- Research highlights the importance of intervening early before behaviours become entrenched. We need to be particularly aware of early warning signs in primary school.
- Use a collaborative, cooperative approach which involves families, school staff and professionals.
- Consider the function of the behaviour and the potentially unmet emotional needs.
- For further information, see Camden’s EBSA Guidance document.

Phase 1: Attendance low/intermittent patterns of attendance identified (also initiate Phase 1 when attendance falls below 90%)

- Gain CYP and family/carer views to consider barriers to attending, and factors contributing to non-attendance (push/pull factors). Use this to inform a plan of push and pull interventions.
- School to arrange an initial TAF meeting to establish intervention plan. If additional services are already involved consider the coordination of network.
- Seek evidence of effectiveness of interventions (Plan, Do, Review).
- Seek support from relevant services if additional needs are identified.

Suggested Strategies for Schools:

- Ensure that the CYP has regular contact with a trusted adult
- Create a safe place in school that the CYP can go to
- Daily communication between home and school
- Continue to keep in touch with the CYP when not on site
- Create a predictable and consistent daily routine and schedule
- Allow the child to use transitional objects
- Explicitly teach coping and relaxation strategies
- Consultation with Pupil Attendance Service

Phase 2: Minimal or no improvement in attendance after 6 weeks of intervention implemented by school staff

- Review attendance weekly in light of plan (plan, do, review) and monitor response to intervention, making adaptations where appropriate.
- Review effectiveness of interventions in place.
- Hold a TAF meeting review.
- Seek support from targeted services if appropriate.

Suggested Strategies for Schools:

- Ensure a graduated approach to increasing attendance.
- Create a hierarchy of anxiety with the CYP that they work through gradually.
- Consider delivering evidence-based interventions directed at developing key skills such as social skills, coping strategies.

Phase 3: Not attending despite professional involvement and intervention

- Review impact of interventions with TAF and consider a referral to:
 - Rebuilding Bridges
 - School Inclusion Panel (Camden residents only) – Please email Camden School Inclusion Team (Dylan.Buckle@camden.gov.uk) for a referral form

Appendix 5 – Intervention Hierarchy

EBSA Intervention Hierarchy

