

SEMH SPOTLIGHT – Emotionally Based School Avoidance

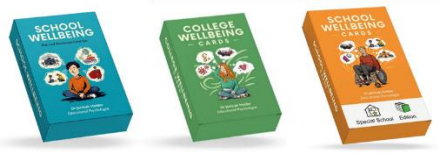


This spotlight accompanies the Warwickshire Educational Psychology Service short webinar on understanding, identifying, and supporting Low Mood and Depression in schools. The webinar can be accessed through the website: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/educationalpsychology>

Focusing on wellbeing and resilience, as the foundation to feeling ready for school:



Difficulties can arise when a young person experiences stresses and challenges presented by attending school (risk factors), and these begin to far outweigh the support provided and their ability to cope with these challenges (protective factors).

1) Resources that may help to explore a young person's barriers to school attendance / school wellbeing:

Resource	Details
<p>The School Wellbeing Cards</p> 	<p>Available to purchase via: https://www.schoolwellbeingcards.co.uk/</p> <p>Cards are to be used within direct work with CYP, for exploring barriers to attendance. Card decks are available for school-age CYP, college age CYP and CYP attending specialist settings.</p>
<p>The EBSA Horizons Risk and Resilience profiles</p> 	<p>Two profiles, one focused on a young person's barriers to attendance (risk factors) and the other focused on supportive ideas for the young person (protective factors). These can be completed between CYP, parents/carers and school staff.</p> <p>An automated scorer is also provided.</p> <p>Please see included in resources circulated.</p>
<p>The Checklist for School Attendance Tracking and Support (CATS)</p> 	<p>Provides a framework to support schools with having supportive, curious conversations with families.</p> <p>Promotes the importance of parent/family voice.</p> <p>Seeks family ideas on the support that may be needed.</p> <p>Provides with a covering letter to families, to invite safe, supportive collaboration with school.</p>

	Please see included in resources circulated.
Mapping the Landscape of your School	A dynamic tool for discussing aspects of the school day / environment that may need adapting, from a young person's perspective. Both primary-age and secondary-age versions are available, via: https://tinyurl.com/35javy65
Drawing the Ideal School.	This activity can be used by Educational Psychologists, school staff, parents or other trusted adults to help understand why a CYP might be struggling to attend school. Please see included in resources circulated.

2) Key support ideas to be aware of:

Please see the Spotlight session and the idea of the 'four types of safety', these are those protective factors intended to 'balance out' the resilience scales for any child or young person, and to ensure that school feels a happier and safer experience.

1. **Physical safety** – 'No harm will come to me or others'. Ideas include: clear policies around student safety; good communication between home and school; believing and validating the child's concerns.
2. **Emotional safety** – 'I can regulate or seek support. I'm less likely to feel triggered.' Ideas include: safe places, calming tools and resources, key adults to check-in with, teaching calming skills, remaining curious, exploring triggers and adapting.
3. **Social safety** – 'I know what is expected of me and what I can expect of others.' Ideas include: Agreeing plans per visit, reassuring about small steps of progress, agreeing arrival routines, explaining any changes in good time, restorative work.
4. **Cognitive safety** – 'I feel safe enough for learning, to try new things, I'm not fearful about making mistakes.' Ideas include: Adaptive teaching, praising small steps of progress, smallest steps of reconnecting with learning

For more information on 'types of safety' please see the following wonderful webinars from Dr Pooky Knightsmith focused on [EBSA prevention](#), [EBSA early intervention](#), and [EBSA reintegration planning](#).

3) Key guidance and legislation to be aware of:

- **Working together to improve school attendance** (DfE) – applies to 18th August 2024. Link [here](#). This outlines statutory roles and responsibilities on schools.
- **Working together to improve school attendance** (DfE) – this version applies from 19th August 2024. Link [here](#).
- **Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance** (DfE, February 2023) – available [here](#).
- Case study examples of **support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance** (DfE, February 2023), found [here](#).

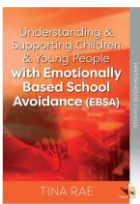
Key messages included in these guidance documents include:

- The [guidance](#) applies to any pupils displaying any social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance. It is not only for pupils who have a diagnosed mental disorder, or a disability or special educational need. **It is for any child or young person facing barriers to school attendance (and wellbeing).**
- 'In developing a plan to support attendance through reasonable adjustments, school staff will need to take into account the individual circumstances of the child' **That is, there is a no one size, fits all approach**

to support – and the support needs of any individual young person should be carefully explored through assessment.

- It is important to keep a focus on reasonable adjustments to support attendance throughout – placing a focus on flexibility within school systems, bespoke strategies tailored to the individual CYP's circumstances '...to ensure that the school is a calm, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn'. **The guidance will support your school to work in this way.**
- 'Any associated anxiety about attending should be mitigated as much as possible by creating a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to alleviate specific barriers to attendance. These adjustments should be agreed by and regularly reviewed with all parties, including parents/carers I.e. Reasonable adjustments pupils with a disability under section 20 of the 2010 Equality Act.' – **Therefore, there is a need to regularly capture pupil/student voice about their perceived priority areas for support. This is so that young people have a sense of being heard; and that their support ideas are being acted upon over time.**

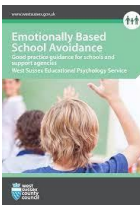
4) Wider reading and information:



'Understanding and Supporting Children with Emotionally Based School Avoidance' (Dr Tina Rae)



'Addressing emotionally based school avoidance For school leaders, senior mental health leads and classroom teachers' (Anna Freud Centre)



West Sussex EPS EBSA guidance. Wider reading and useful practical guides.



'Square Pegs: Inclusivity, compassion and fitting in – a guide for schools' (Square Peg)



'Can't Not Won't: A Story About A Child Who Couldn't Go To School' (Eliza Fricker)

5) Videos:

'Wrong Size Fits All' - a short film production that chronicles the personal journeys, based on the experiences shared by members of IMPACT, Warwickshire's youth forum for individuals with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Available via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VwhZyrX2bM>

6) Local Organisations:

RISE <https://cwrise.com/>

- Navigation Hub: Tel: 0300 200 2021 (Mon-Fri 8am – 6pm)
- Primary Mental Health Service: <https://cwrise.com/primary-mental-health/>
- Mental Health in Schools Team: <https://cwrise.com/mhst/>
- <https://cwrise.com/coping-with-low-mood>
- How to make a referral: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrcZKiDTRik>

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

Mind Coventry and Warwickshire Wellbeing Advisors: <https://cwmind.org.uk/wellbeing-advisers/>

CW Mind: <https://cwmind.org.uk/>

Warwickshire School Health and Wellbeing Service: <https://www.compass-uk.org/introduction-to-wshwbs/>

7) National Organisations:

Young Minds: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/school-anxiety-and-refusal/>

Anna Freud Centre: <https://www.annafreud.org/resources/schools-and-colleges/school-attendance-and-mental-wellbeing/>

8) Supporting Parents:

Define Fine - a national parent carer led peer support organisation - <https://www.definefine.org.uk/>

Not Fine in School - a national parent carer led peer support organisation - <https://notfineinschool.co.uk/>

Square Peg - a national parent carer led peer support organisation - <https://www.teamsquarepeg.org/>

Lancashire County Council – parent-facing EBSA resources. Warwickshire County Council equivalent guidance is due soon - <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/primary-and-secondary-education/school-anxiety-and-school-avoidance/>

Please note that information is subject to change and the authors cannot take responsibility for any advice obtained from third parties. Information collated May 2024.