

How can parents and school work together to help an EBSA child?

Keeping the school informed & Maintain positive contact

It is important to keep closely in touch with the school about your child's health. You should inform them in advance of any medical appointments or planned treatment. If your child is unable to go to school because of a mental health condition, such as severe anxiety, let the school know in writing, rather than just keeping them at home. A GP's note may help in such cases. Keep in regular contact with key staff as the situation progresses. Try to maintain a positive relationship, including by recognising the things that are being done to help your child. Ultimately, this will help you get more of the support you need.

Bullying, Assault or other Safeguarding Concerns

If you are concerned about bullying, read through the school's anti-bullying policy. This should set out how the school needs to respond and support your child. If you are unhappy with the way a member of staff is responding to your concerns, escalate them to a more senior person.

Sharing information

Some school staff may not have relevant training and/or experience with EBSA children. This topic has become more prevalent in recent years. [Not Fine in School \(NFIS\) has created a school's guide to anxiety related non-attendance](#) which you could share with the school to aid their understanding on the subject.

Potential Strategies to discuss

- A flexible, reduced and bespoke timetable – with the aim of building back up when it feels manageable for your child
- Changing forms, sets or tutors if your child thinks this would help
- A home visit from the school, where a staff member can check-in to show your child the school cares about them
- Small, achievable targets your child can work towards
- Linking them with a member of staff as a named trusted adult, for example from the pastoral team, who they can chat to
- Finding a way for them to feel more part of the school community, for example by joining a club, or linking with a peer buddy or mentor
- Thinking of ways they can structure break-times if they are finding them difficult
- Offering them a new role or responsibility, such as library or book-corner monitor, or learning mentor
- Exit pass, visual supports, designated safe space, reduced demands, and more.
- **Referring the child for additional support.** This support could include ELSA, Pastoral, counselling, specialist referrals
- **Home-School Communication Book.** This could help maintain regular communication – giving you a better sense of what things are like at school, and the school a better sense of what it's like for your child at home.
- **This is not an exhaustive list.** Remember that support should be tailor made to your child, you can think outside the box and use their interests and aspirations to help find strategies that work.

Ask for a meeting

Ask the class teacher, SENCO and or senior management team for a meeting to discuss what might be behind the school refusal, and to work together moving forward. It might help to write down a list of concerns beforehand, and to bring along a family member or friend to support you. The key aim is to agree with the school which strategies will be tried, and arrange a time to check-in on how it's going e.g. after one week or two and work from there.

Meeting advice

See our [Top Tips for Meetings](#)

It would be worth confirming the actions agreed with school/ professionals in writing including what, when, how often, by whom, and date for review of the support plan. This affirms your expectations and gives something you can refer to and hold those involved accountable.

Still no improvement after a meeting with school? You could consider these options:

- EHC assessment application
- Self-referral to specialists
- Contact Education Welfare service
- Making a complaint
- Seek parent support groups

What if my child has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

It is likely that the plan needs to be re-examined. Your child may need extra or different support, and/or a different school. You should consider asking for an early review of the EHC plan or a re-assessment of needs, especially if your child's mental health needs have arisen relatively recently and are not covered in the plan. The LA must continue to secure the special educational provision in the EHC plan while your child is out of school. [Section 42, Children and Families Act 2014](#)