

Emotionally Based School Non- Attendance (EBSNA)

Information for parents and carers



What is EBSNA?

Emotional Based School Non-Attendance or EBSNA, which might also be referred to as *Emotional Based School Avoidance* (EBSA) or *Emotional Based School Refusal* (EBSR), is a term used to describe children and young people who experience high levels of distress, anxiety and worries that prevents them from going to school.

Worrying and feeling anxious is a normal feeling that we all experience on occasions. These feelings can even keep us safe from harm or increase our performance in difficult situations. However, sometimes high levels of anxiety or excessive worrying can become problematic, especially when it stops people from doing what they want or need to do.

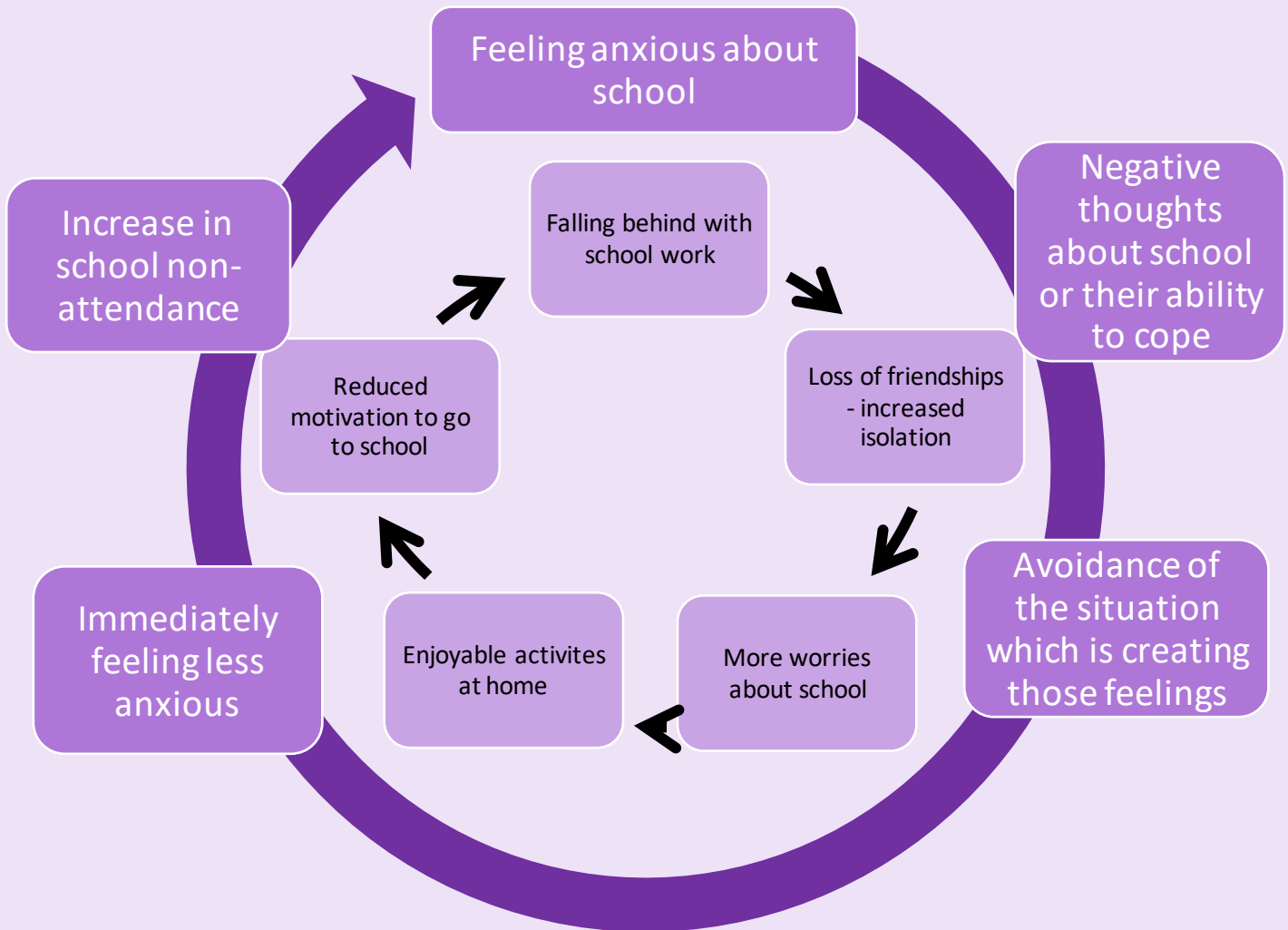
Worrying or feeling worried about school is not uncommon. Most children and young people will, at some point, feel anxious, worried or nervous about going to school. Feeling anxious or worried is part of life and learning to manage those feelings is part of growing up. However, sometimes the child or young person's worries might lead to difficulties going to school. If your child has high levels of anxiety or worries a lot and does not want to go to school, they may be experiencing **Emotional Based School Non-Attendance** (EBSNA).



Is your child worried about going to school?

Offering help and support as soon as possible for children and young people with these difficulties is very important. School absence means that they miss out on learning and spending time with other children, which will make it even more difficult when they do go back to school.

The following diagram shows how EBSNA can develop.



The longer your child has these difficulties and does not get help, the harder it becomes to change their thinking and patterns of behaviour.

Signs of EBSNA



Fearfulness, anxiety or emotional and angry outbursts when faced with the prospect of going to school



Complains of stomach pain, headache, sore throat, often without signs of actual physical illness



Complains of racing heart, shaking, sweating, difficulty breathing, feeling sick or having pins and needles, which are common signs of anxiety

These signs are likely to be worse on weekday mornings and less noticeable or absent at weekends and school holidays.

What you can do

Listen

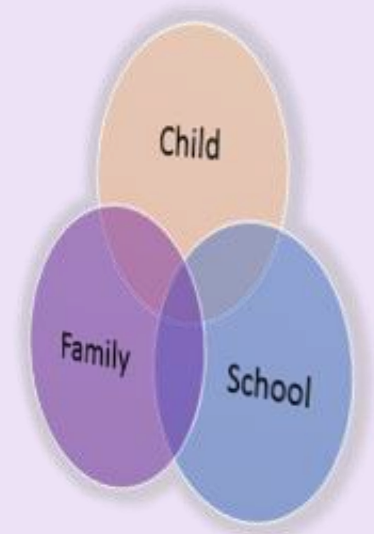
Offer your child space and time to talk. Listen to their worries and acknowledge their feelings. Reassure them that you are there for them and that you and the school will work with them to make school a better place for them.

Work together

Explain the difficulties to the school and work together to find solutions. A plan should be put together to help your child feel happier about coming to school. Your child might like to help to put the plan together.

Give it time

All adults supporting your child should use the same strategies consistently at home and school. Some strategies may work better than others, and the plan might need changing to meet your child's needs more suitably. You might not see a change immediately, give your child time to adjust to the new strategies.



Try to stay positive

There will likely be some difficulties in implementing the plan. You might be able to anticipate some of these in advance and together with the school, think about alternative strategies. Staying positive will be important for you and your child. Your child might find going to school more difficult after a school holiday, after a period of illness or after the weekend. If they do not attend school on one day, start again the next day.

Work on the difficulties

A change of school setting might seem the right solution; however, research tells us that often the child's difficulties will re-emerge in the new school and whenever possible, it is normally better to try to work on the difficulties in the current school.

Look after yourself

It can be difficult to see your child unhappy. Talking to other people about the difficulties you and your family are experiencing can also help you support your child. A familiar member of school staff, a friend or family member or an organisation such as those listed at the end of this leaflet might be people who can help you or listen to your concerns.

Talking to your child about their worries

Any child who has difficulty attending school is likely to become anxious or feel nervous when asked to talk about their difficulties or about returning to school. A good place to start those conversations is by acknowledging their feelings and letting them know that you would like to know how they think and feel. You might want to ask them specific questions to help them think about their feelings, such as:

Can you think of three things that worry you the most?
What three things have worried you the most recently?

Can you think of three good things
about school?

If talking face to face is difficult for your child, they might like to draw it or write it down on paper or even in a text message to you. Your child might also not know what it is that is making it difficult for them to go to school. To help them think about this, you might like to use some specific questions such as those found in the Spence 'Children's Anxiety Scale' (https://www.scaswebsite.com/index.php?p=1_6). You might also like to use the information booklets we have produced for children and young people to help them think about school. Your child's school should be able to give you a copy.



What can you expect from the school?

You child's school should:



Other sources of support

SENDIASS

The Hounslow Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service provide impartial information, advice and support to parents and carers of children who have special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND). To get information and advice about all SEND matters, contact:

Telephone: 020 8583 2607

Email: SENDIASS@hounslow.gov.uk

IPSEA

Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) is a registered charity (number 327691) operating in England. IPSEA offers free and independent legally based information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). IPSEA also provide training on the SEND legal framework to parents and carers, professionals and other organisations.

Telephone: 01799 582030 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm)

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, IPSEA office staff are working from home, if you need to contact them, please **email:** office@ipsea.net

Or find information at <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/>

SOSSEN

SOSSEN offer a free, friendly, independent and confidential telephone helpline for parents and others looking for information and advice on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). They offer workshops, advice centres, 1:1 sessions and a term-time helpline.

Call on: 0208 538 3731 or 0300 302 3731

Monday to Friday - 09:30 to 12:30 and 14:00 to 17:00

and Tuesday Evening Helpline 20:00 to 22:00

<https://sossen.org.uk/#>