

EMOTIONALLY BASED SCHOOL NON-ATTENDANCE (EBSNA)

If your child is struggling to attend school because of anxiety, stress or other emotional reasons, this is known as Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA). This term describes children and young people who experience persistent challenges in attending school due to an overwhelm of negative feelings, such as anxiety or fear.

EBSNA is not uncommon and can happen for many reasons, including anxiety about learning and being in the classroom, friendship upsets, feeling overwhelmed by the school environment, or feeling unable to fit in and cope with the demands of the school day.

PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

EBSNA involves many complex factors. Often, these are not known about initially, and have to be discovered through sensitive conversations between a parent and child, between a parent and the child's school, and between the child and any supporting adults and professionals.

Push factors can be described as those that encourage a child to attend school.

Pull factors can be described as those that reduce the likelihood of the child attending school.



EXAMPLES OF PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

ENVIRONMENTAL PUSH FACTORS

- Encouragement to attend school
- Work commitments that make it difficult for the child to stay at home
- Siblings and friends attending school
- Good social networks
- Good routines, including bedtimes and mornings
- Access to toys, hobbies and interests that may be individual to the child
- Having the right uniform, sports clothes and equipment for the school week.

ENVIRONMENTAL PULL FACTORS

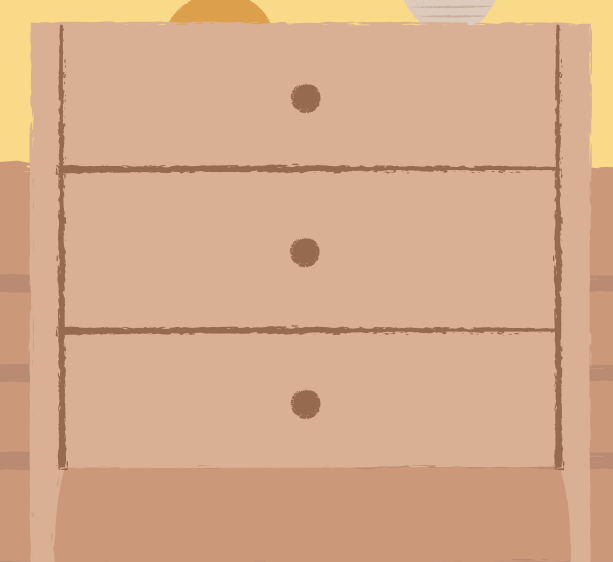
- Parental ill health
- Loss of employment, or working from home
- Friends or siblings at home due to age, health or other reasons
- Less sensory overwhelm at home
- Mealtime routines and availability of food and drink that the child prefers
- Close proximity to parents, grandparents or other adults.

INTERNAL PUSH FACTORS

- Good emotional literacy and ability to recognise and talk about feelings and emotions
- High ambitions and aspirations for the future
- Good sporting aptitude and/or abilities outside of the classroom
- Motivated to attend school to take part in specific clubs or activities.

INTERNAL PULL FACTORS

- Underdeveloped or limited emotional awareness
- Negative thoughts, fears and anxieties
- Lack of motivation to achieve in school, or unable to see the significance of education
- Poor previous experiences of school, or of leaving school for health or other reasons
- Low self-esteem and self-confidence, impacting on day to day experiences.



Parent and carer information leaflet

EXAMPLES OF PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

SCHOOL PUSH FACTORS

Positive transition experience, from early years to reception, from primary to secondary

Warm greeting from familiar adults at the start of the school day

Learning needs or other needs, including health needs, that are met by the school

Strong sense of community and belonging

Feeling of safety in the school environment, its classrooms, social spaces & playgrounds

Clear structures, rules and routines throughout the school.

SCHOOL PULL FACTORS

Unmet learning needs, language needs, emotional & social needs, or other unmet need

Friendship difficulties, an absence of friends, or incidents of bullying

Fractured relationships with significant adults, including teachers, support & other staff

Dislike of certain lessons or times of the day, or routines and rules

Sensory overwhelm at the noise or sounds of the canteen, playground or other social spaces

Fear of being made fun of for weight issues, skin conditions, hygiene or other health conditions.

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

1. Early help and understanding are key. The sooner you spot signs, like regular worries about going to school, feeling unwell in the mornings, at the end of the weekend, on Monday mornings, or other times, the better.
2. Work closely with your child's school and keep in close contact. School staff, including teaching and support staff, can develop strategies to make school feel safer and less stressful for your child. Good communication is crucial to managing and overcoming EBSNA.
3. Try not to let absences build up. Missing school can make anxieties harder to overcome and establish patterns of attendance and non-attendance that are unhelpful. Make time with your child to understand and talk about their fears and get to the root cause of what specifically they are concerned about to the extent that they do not wish to go to school.
4. Create routines at home. Calm, predictable evenings with established evening and morning routines can lower your child's stress levels and help them face the school day with a positive outlook. You might use charts to create a visual image of the highlights of the school day, particular clubs, activities and lessons your child enjoys. Aim to have something in the chart to look forward to on every school day, wherever possible.
5. If your child has high levels of anxiety and distress, talk to your GP or the school nurse. NHS advice suggests that mental health support may help children who struggle with school attendance.