

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

**Early Warning Signs
for School Staff and
other Professionals**

EBSA Early Warning Signs Resources

I've included the following resources for you to use in conjunction with the article on our website.


If you have not yet read the article, you can do so by clicking here or copying and pasting the following URL:


<https://unlockingchildren.co.uk/cat/ebsa/spotting-early-signs-of-ebsa-emotionally-based-school-avoidance>



EBSA Early Warning Signs Checklist

Use this section as a checklist which will help you to identify any potential early EBSA warning signs.

- ☐ Frequent lateness/absence patterns.
 - ☐ Physical complaints (headaches, stomach aches).
 - ☐ Tearfulness, panic, or clinginess at drop-off.
 - ☐ Withdrawal from peers/social avoidance.
 - ☐ Sudden changes in academic performance.
 - ☐ Reports of morning battles from parents.
 - ☐ Relief when allowed to stay at home.
- 



Pupil Conversation Prompts

This section gives you some conversation starters that might help you uncover the deeper issue.

“How do you usually feel on your way to school?”

“Is there a part of the school day that feels hardest for you?”

“Where in school do you feel most comfortable?”

“Who do you feel safe talking to when things are difficult?”

“What could help mornings feel easier?”





Parent Partnership Template

When you contact parents/carers,
you can use this as a rough script to
guide the conversation

“We’ve noticed [describe behaviour, not
judgement].”

“Sometimes these changes can link to EBSA
[anxiety] about coming to school.”

“What does a typical school morning look
like at home right now?”

“Are there things you’ve noticed at home we
should be aware of?”

“We’d like to work together on small steps
that might help your child feel more settled.”





Support Planning Framework

These adjustments can be trialled
with pupils. They can then be
reviewed, reflected on and adjusted
as needed.

Morning check-in with a trusted adult

Flexible start times during transition back

Buddy system for vulnerable times
(break/lunch)

Access to a calm corner or wellbeing space

Reduced homework or workload during
re-engagement

Staggered arrival/departure times to avoid
busy crowds.





Staff Reflection Tool

These reflective questions can help you to adjust and improve your practice as you move forward with the pupil.

Have I noticed subtle changes in attendance or mood?


Have I created safe opportunities for the pupil to share worries?

Do I understand the family perspective?

What small environmental changes could reduce stress for this pupil?

What have I done to make the classroom feel safe and predictable?

Am I mindful of how I frame attendance to avoid blame or pressure?



**Thank you for downloading this file from
Unlocking Children.**

License: This resource is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

You are free to:

- **Share** – copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
- **Adapt** – remix, transform, and build upon the material

Under the following terms:

- **Attribution** – You must give appropriate credit to *Mark Else*, include a link to Unlocking Children, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.
- **NonCommercial** – You may not use the material for commercial purposes.
- **No additional restrictions** – You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

UnlockingChildren.co.uk