

OAC Emotionally Based School Avoidance (ESBA)

This is written to support our students and families who may find it difficult coming to school each day. For children for whom the transitions are particularly difficult or whose attendance is being adversely impacted we will follow the school SEND graduated response.

What makes children anxious about coming to school ?

- Friends, fitting in, lessons, relationships with adults
- Difficulties outside school – bereavement, illness in family and being a young carer
- Mental health, neurodiverse conditions, SEND making school anxiety inducing and exhausting.

What we may see ?

- Not wanting to get up
- Worrying about small issues
- Feeling ill eg: stomach aches and headaches
- Angry – acting out
- Withdrawing low mood and quiet

Actions:

At school:

- Anxiety iceberg [School Anxiety and Refusal | Parent Guide to Support | YoungMinds](#)
- Younger children might find it helpful to arrive ten minutes early and have a job to do like tidying the classroom or setting the first lesson up. This gives them a calm start to the day with a clear purpose.
- Children might like to have a safe space where they can sit at the beginning of the day with a staff mentor, such as someone from the pastoral team. They can then return to this space if they need to at particularly difficult moments through the day.
- Having a flexible start time can help to take the pressure off.
- Having a friend meet them at the gate can reduce anxiety around walking into school and getting to the classroom.
- Being given a visual timetable, with pictures to represent registration, different subjects and breaktimes can help give them a clear structure.
- Having a 'now, next, then' card, which the child can edit through the day to keep track of what's coming next, can break the day down into smaller steps.
- Being given written/pictorial instructions when they're asked to complete a task can help if they're finding it difficult to hold spoken instructions in their head.
- Being given a warning before the next transition, can reduce how overwhelming it might feel
- Linking the child with a peer buddy or mentor, or a staff mentor, can give them a safe person to talk to and make sure someone is regularly checking in with them at school.
- Being given a safe space, such as Mr Men room, which they can drop into when needed, can help them to manage difficult moments.
- Having an 'exit card' that lets them leave a lesson if they're too anxious, and a safe space or person to go to, can help them know they have an 'out' when things get too much.
- Having a flexible or reduced timetable can take the pressure off
- Having activities and clubs they can do at break and lunchtimes can provide some structure and reduce feelings of anxiety about what they'll do.

- Being part of a club, or being given a responsibility such as Mr Men Manager, can make them feel more involved.
- Linking the child with a buddy or mentor can help them to feel there's someone at school who cares about them.
- Making sure the child has emotionally available adult named

At home:

- Having a set routine broken down into small steps focus on one thing at a time
- Make a worry box or self soothe box
- Encourage them to do things to relax after school
- Recognise the small achievements