



Understanding and Responding to EBSA Derbyshire Focus

Thank you for attending our webinar today. This information sheet summarises key content from the 'Understanding and Responding to EBSA' webinar. Many of the screenshots in the presentation were taken from the EBSA Toolkit (info below).

What is EBSA?

Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA) describes difficulties attending school due to emotional distress, often linked to high anxiety. It exists on a spectrum - from reluctance to attend certain lessons to complete non-attendance. Language matters; avoid terms like 'school refusal'. You can [watch a short video about what EBSA feels like](#).

Early Signs of EBSA

Common indicators include psychosomatic symptoms, sleep difficulties, separation anxiety, emotional distress, behavioural changes, avoidance, and reduced motivation. Early identification is crucial.

Contributing Factors

EBSA often involves a mix of sensory needs, environmental stress, social isolation, communication differences, fear of uncertainty, and performance anxiety. Neurodivergent pupils are significantly more likely to experience EBSA.

Risk and Protective Factors

Risk factors relate to school, home, and personal challenges. Protective factors include positive relationships, flexibility, supportive environments, and strong home-school communication.

Pupil Voice

Understanding the child's perspective is essential. Tools such as the Sunday Night/Monday Morning Plan, Laddering Activity, and The Ideal School support this process.

Working with Parents/Carers

Strong relationships, non-judgmental communication, flexibility, and reduced pressure all support engagement and attendance. Parents' own experiences may also influence EBSA.

Strategies to Support EBSA

Effective approaches include building trusted relationships, offering flexibility (e.g., timetables, uniform), collaboration with families and professionals, and adapting the school environment to reduce sensory overload.

Skill-Building for Child/ Young Person

Support should include developing emotional and sensory regulation, resilience, social communication, self-advocacy, executive functioning, and confidence.

EBSA Toolkit and Pathway

Schools should use a structured Assess–Plan–Do–Review approach, supported by Derbyshire’s EBSA Toolkit, to identify, assess, and address needs collaboratively. The Toolkit can be accessed here: [EBSA Toolkit - Removing Barriers to Education.pdf](#)

Key Messages

- Notice early signs and stay curious.
- Build relationships and work closely with parents/carers.
- Offer flexible, individualised support.
- Remember: behaviour is communication.
- Reintegration takes time - don’t give up.

More Resources

Progression Framework training and resources: [ISAS Webinars - Derbyshire Local Offer](#)

DCC Part-Time Timetable Reintegration Plan: [Part-time timetables](#)

Barriers to Education website: [Welcome to Barriers to Education](#)