



Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) Policy

Policy Written:	February 2025
Agreed by Governors:	March 2025
Review Date:	

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Statement of Intent

Victoria Park Junior School recognises that regular attendance is essential for educational achievement, wellbeing, wider development and for ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential.

Victoria Park Junior School understands that there are some instances when pupils may find it difficult to attend school due to a range of factors. We are committed to valuing, respecting and understanding pupils with Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA), and will provide continuous, professional support to these pupils.

The main aims of this policy are:

- To provide all necessary and required support, details and information for pupils with EBSNA.
- To ensure that staff are educated on emotional and mental health to encourage early identification and support.
- To provide a fair, stimulating, caring learning environment where all children are helped to realise their full potential.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to the following legislation including, but not limited to:

- Equality Act 2010
- Mental Health Act 1983, as amended in 2007

This policy also has due regard to the following guidance:

- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'

This policy is implemented in conjunction with the following policies:

- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Regulation Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Child on Child Abuse Policy
- Equality Information Policy and Plan
- Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing body is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the school community recognises EBSNA as a significant emotional health issue.
- Ensuring appropriate support measures are in place for pupils with EBSNA.
- In liaison with the headteacher, determine the level and implementation of support.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Establishing and communicating procedures for attendance monitoring.
- Ensuring that bullying incidents relating to pupils with EBSNA are dealt with in the same manner as other bullying incidents.
- In liaison with the governing board, determine the level and implementation of support.

The SENDco (who is the deputy head) and Mental Health Lead is responsible for:

- Overseeing the pastoral support.
- Liaising with external support, such as children and young people's mental health services

Our Attendance Lead/SENDco and SLT are responsible for:

- Determining and documenting pupils' emotional triggers.
- Liaising with parents/carers of pupils with EBSNA on a regular basis.
- Supporting pupils during the school day
- Working together with staff, parents/carers and child

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Working with the school to ensure the best educational outcomes for their child.

What is emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA)?

Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) is a term adopted by Trafford Council and a number of authorities to describe children and young people who have significant difficulties in attending school due to a range of factors.

Pupils who have experienced emotional trauma may display some signs of EBSNA. The school recognises this link and supports pupils experiencing emotional trauma to attend school regularly.

What can EBSNA look like?

- Crying or pleading
- Avoidance of getting up, get ready for school or leave the house
- Sleep difficulties
- Frequent complaints of minor illness e.g. feeling sick, headache
- Distressed and aggressive behaviours (usually at home)
- Some children mask their anxiety and appear fine at school
- A pattern of absence from school which may lead to prolonged absence.
- Social isolation.
- Expressing a desire to attend school but not doing so.
- Under-achievement of learning potential.
- Physical indicators, e.g. sweating, sickness, rapid weight loss or gain.

EBSNA differs from truancy such that there are underlying emotional and anxiety issues which cause the individual to be absent from school. Truant behaviour displays anti-social behaviour and an unwillingness to learn.

It is important that to identify instances of EBSNA and can differentiate this from truancy; however, three potential overlaps between EBSNA and truancy have been identified for reasons of non-attendance. These include:

- Problems with specific teachers or lessons.
- Complexity of primary and secondary education.
- Being bullied and in isolation.

Causes of EBSNA

There is no single cause of EBSNA, it is thought to be multiple factors unique to the child that can include:

- Special Educational Needs
- Social and communication difficulties
- Stressors from school
- Bullying or perceived threats of bullying
- Family and friendship difficulties
- Negative thoughts

This can lead to pushing children away from school and pulling them towards home.

Where risks of emotionally based school non-attendance are identified, it is important to gather further information from the child, families and school staff and put in place strategies to support them as soon as possible. Fast action can prevent emotionally based school avoidance from becoming entrenched and result in much better outcomes. At Victoria Park Junior School we follow the assess, plan, do and review cycles with the child at the centre of the planning and interventions.

Assess, Plan, Do and Review

When a child is identified as experiencing difficulties attending school (or are at risk of becoming persistently absent), the following process will be followed:



Assess

Prompt information gathering process to explore reasons for the difficulties which will include:

- **Trafford Council Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) Early Identification of Needs Tool (EINT)** (Appendix 2) will be completed with parents/carers with the Attendance Lead.
- **Card sort activity** (Appendix 3) will be completed with the child to gain an understanding about why a child might not want to go to school. The cards cover a range of factors from school environment, journey to and from school, social relationships, lessons, family dynamics and the home environment but the factors listed are not exclusive. There are also blank cards for the child to record additional reasons which might affect whether they want to go to school. The cards will be used creatively and flexibly and as an exploratory tool to open up discussions about why a child does not want to go to school. This could then lead to conversations about what factors might support them. The card sort activity will be completed with an adult they know and trust, and in an environment where they feel relaxed and able to speak freely.

- Using the **Trafford Council Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) Early Identification of Needs Tool (EINT)** (Appendix 2) and **Card sort activity** (Appendix 3), push and pull factors contributing to the child's non-attendance/attendance will be identified

Plan

- The Attendance Lead and SENDCo will create an individual attendance plan for the child which will include support/strategies based upon the identified push/pull factors.

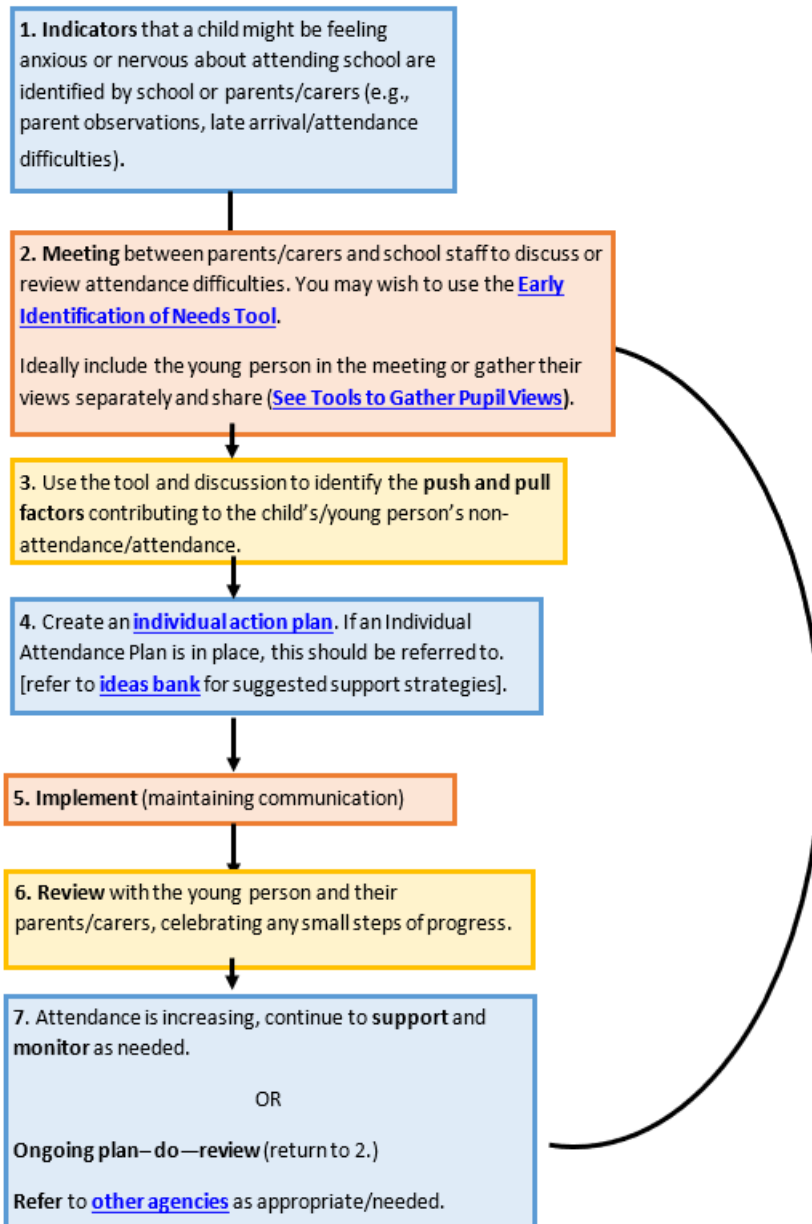
Do

- Plan will be implemented maintaining communication with home

Review

- The attendance plan will be reviewed (half termly) with parents and child, celebrating any small steps of progress. If attendance is increasing, support will continue and the child will be monitored as needed.

Flow Chart Of Support



Getting More Help

When there has been limited or no progress in response to targeted intervention over time, following the plan, do, review process, it is advised to seek psychological support. The appropriate service to refer to depends upon the individual needs of the child.

Next Steps

- Review with all parties
- Make any further adjustments
- Review Again
- Consider referrals to Educational Psychologist, Special Educational Needs Advisory Service (SENAS)
- Mental Health in Schools Team
- Family Support/ Trafford Team Together (TTT)

Monitoring and Review

The headteacher, in conjunction with the Attendance Lead and SENDco, will review this policy on an annual basis and make any necessary changes.

The next scheduled review date is January 2026

All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.

Appendix

Definition of terms (Appendix 1)

- **Truancy:** 'generally refers to unexcused, illegal, surreptitious absences, non-anxiety based absenteeism, absenteeism linked to lack of parental knowledge about the behaviour, absenteeism linked to delinquency or academic problems, or absenteeism linked to social conditions such as homeless or poverty' (Kearney, 2008, p.452)
- **School phobia:** 'generally refers to fear based absenteeism, but youths are rarely phobic of school and so this term has been deemphasized in recent research literature (Hanna, Fischler, & Fluent 2006; Suveg, Aschenbrand, and Kendall, 2005)' (Kearney, 2008.p.453).
- **School withdrawal:** where parents deliberately keep a child home from school for economic purposes, to conceal maltreatment, to prevent abduction from an estranged spouse, to protect a child from perceived school-based threat, to assist a parent with psychopathology, or for other reasons (Kearney, Lemos and Silverman, 2004)' (Kearney, 2008, p.452).
- **School refusal:**' generally refers to anxiety-based absenteeism, often from separation, generalized, or social anxiety' (Kearney, 2008, p.452). School refusal is a psychosocial phenomenon defined by a prolonged absence from school, with parents'/carers' knowledge, and the prospect of going to school causing severe distress (Maynard et al, 2015, Berg, 1997). Kearney and Silverman (1993) proposed school refusal occurs when children experience lowered anxiety through avoidance of the school setting, which results in negative reinforcement.
- **Emotional based school non-attendance:** a 'broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school' (West Sussex Guidance, 2018, p.3).

Appendix 2

Trafford Council Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) Early Identification of Needs Tool (EINT)

Name (pupil): _____ DoB: _____

Completed by (names and relationship to pupil): _____

Date: _____ Name of school: _____

In consultation with the parent/caregiver please go through this questionnaire and rate your levels of concern by ticking the corresponding 'level of concern' box and adding additional notes where appropriate in the notes sections.

Level of concern					
Attendance	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Reduced or erratic attendance (please comment on patterns in notes section below)					
Expresses upset/distress to leave home in the morning					
Late for school					
Expresses distress/reluctance to attend certain lesson (any specific triggers and patterns that lead to avoiding partial or full days of absences please note below)					
Missing lessons/truancy					
Expresses upset/distress on return to home					
Reluctance to return to school after a school holiday or weekend					
Notes on key items					
Loss and Change	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Death of carer, parent, relative, friend					
Death of a pet					
Sudden or traumatic event: could include family member(s) experiencing job redundancy or change and financial pressures.					

Sudden separation from a family member (including family member working away from home/area).					
Moving to a new house, school, Key Stage, area (including international new arrivals), a late start or in-year transfer into a new school					
Came from a smaller primary school and/or outside the catchment area					
Loss of a classmate or sibling e.g., left for college/university					
Changes in after-school care					
Other					
Notes on key items					
Family Dynamic	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Carer/parent requiring advice and support/finding things hard					
Birth of a new child impacting relations and/or routine					
Family separation					
Family conflict including low level difficulties e.g. working through disagreements and/or different cultural considerations					
Practical problems bringing the child to school and/or problems travelling to school for young person					
Child acting as a carer to family member(s) with medical, mental health and/or substance dependency needs.					
Family member(s) who have had difficult experiences of school or who have avoided school					
Anxious to leave carer/parent (separation anxiety)					
Notes on key items					
Curriculum/Learning Needs	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Low levels of progress					
PE and/or games issues					
General learning needs					
Specific subject difficulties and low confidence					
Exam or test anxiety					
Difficulties with relationships with school staff and/or particular teacher/adult.					


Negative view of school					
Problems keeping up in lessons					
Fear of failure, making mistakes and not meeting expectations					
Homework challenges					
Passive learning approach					
Notes on key items					
Social and Personal	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Has been or is being bullied and/or expresses worries about the threat of being bullied					
Appears to have few friends/friendships					
Difficulties with communication and language					
Difficulties and issues with play/break times (conflict, socially isolated and/ or on own)					
Fewer leisure interests in school and/or home					
Notes on key items					
Wellbeing	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Often appears tired or expresses feeling tired and difficulties with sleep routine					
Has a medical condition and or previously serious illness/operation(s)					
Low self-esteem and confidence					
Appears and expresses low mood					
Appears anxious and/or expresses feeling worried e.g., tearful, tense face and body posture, sweating, vocal/tics, complains of feeling unwell, stomach-ache etc., needs to visit the toilet frequently, continence needs, self-soothing behaviours e.g., rocking, fiddling with objects, rigid need for order and routine					
Keeps feelings to themselves					
Expresses negative thoughts about self, others and/or life generally					
Has emotional episodes at home and/or school					
Notes on key items					


Other	High	Medium	Low	Not an issue	Not known
<p>Has sensory sensitivities e.g., in response to noisier/crowded times in school such as smells and tastes in the lunch hall etc.</p> <p>Please see here for a broader understanding of a child/young person's sensory needs: sensory-processing-pre-referral-advice-oct18.pdf (mft.nhs.uk)</p>					
<p>Has a diagnosis or awaiting a diagnosis/EHCP or undiagnosed needs</p>					
<p>Appears unsettled in school and/or not their first choice of school</p>					
<p>Complex needs e.g., special educational needs effecting capacity to attend school and anxiety when in school (can be hidden anxiety) including those relating to physical and medical needs e.g. displays reluctance or some discomfort with aspects of moving and handling etc.</p>					
<p>Notes on key items</p>					
<p>Planning next steps:</p> <p>Make comments regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any strategies that you have used to support pupil previously • What has/could work well • Concerns you have around school's ability to support the pupil at present • Anything else • Your initial next steps to support the pupil based on discussions 					

Appendix 3

Like Me	Not Like Me
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Attendance Factors

<p>I find it difficult to leave the house in the morning.</p> 	<p>Talk me through your morning routine.</p> <p>What does that feel like for you? Is this better/worse after weekends and holidays? What would your ideal morning routine look like? What would you change if you could?</p>
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<p>The journey to/from school is difficult.</p> 	<p>Talk me through your journey to/from school.</p> <p>What modes of transport do you use? Who do you travel with? Does anything happen along the way? What does that feel like for you? What emotions would you identify? When are these strongest? What would your ideal journey look like? What would you change if you could?</p>
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I have been out of school too long to go back.



How would you score your desire to go back to school (e.g. 1 – 10)?
What might make you more or less likely to want to return to school?

Loss and Change

Be sensitive to experiences of bereavement and loss within this section

Someone I am/was close to is not in my life anymore.



Be sensitive to experiences of bereavement and loss within this section

Can you tell me a bit more about that?
What do you miss about that person?
What might help you to feel closer to them again?

My life at home has changed or is different to how it used to be.



What is different at home?
What would you change if you could?

My life at school has changed or is different to how it used to be.



What is different at school?
What would you change if you could?

I have recently changed school or year groups.



What emotions do you feel about the change? What do you miss about your previous school/class?

I have recently moved house/flat.



What emotions do you feel about the change? What do you miss about your previous house/flat/home?

Family Factors

I worry about my parent/carer during the day.



Can you tell me a bit more about that?

I need to stay with my parent/carer in the day time.



Why do you need to stay with them? (e.g. illness, caring responsibilities, helping with a family business)
What might help them if you came to school?
What might they say if I asked them?

My family/carers do not want me to go to school.



How do you know?
Do you know why they think this?
What do you think about going to school?

My sibling doesn't/didn't go to school.



What is the same/different for you?
What do you think they want you to do?

Curriculum and Learning Factors

I don't like my lessons.



Which lessons are good/not so good? Why is this? (e.g. trouble keeping up, work is difficult or boring, teacher actions, behaviour management, peer difficulties). Are there any lessons you have enjoyed previously? What made them good? What would you change if you could?

I find some lessons difficult.



Which lessons are easier than others? Why is this? (e.g. teaching style, curriculum content, lack of equipment, unmet learning needs, peer difficulties) Are there any lessons you have found easier previously? What made them easier? What would you change if you could?

I worry about 'getting it wrong' in lessons or not meeting my targets.



Which lessons are good/not so good? Why is this?
Have you experienced 'getting it wrong' before? What happened?
Are there any lessons where you worry less about this? What helps?

My teachers do not always help me in the right way.



Which lessons/teachers are better/worse? Why is this?
Are there any lessons/teachers you have found helpful previously? What made them helpful?
What would you change if you could?

I don't see the point in going to school.



Can you tell me a bit more about that?
What would you like to do when you are older?
How might school help you to do that?

Social Factors

Other people are unkind or bully people in school.



What happens? Have you ever experienced this? (You may sensitively want to ask who is involved, what this looks like).

Where does bullying happen in school?

Are teachers aware of this? What do they do?

Is there anything else you'd like teachers to do to help?

I don't have people to talk to or spend time with at school.



What do you normally do at break and lunch times?

Do you have friends at school? Who would you count as a friend?

Are teachers aware of this? What do they do?

Is there anything else you'd like teachers to do to help?

I sometimes feel like I don't fit in at school.



What makes you feel this way?

Is there anything you would like to change to fit in more?

Is there anything you would like others to know or understand better about you?

Other people do not understand me/my needs.



What makes you feel this way?
Is there anybody who does understand you? What do they do differently?
Is there anything you would like others to know or understand better about you?
What would happen differently if they did?

Wellbeing

I feel tired at school.



Tell me about your typical sleep routine.
How do you feel when you wake up in the morning?
Does anything help you to feel more awake or wake up faster?

I feel worried at school or worry about coming into school.



What does your worry typically feel like?
Are there times when this is better or worse through the day/week/year?
How severe would you score it from 1 – 10?
What might make you feel a little better or a little worse in school?

I feel poorly or unwell at school.



Be aware of any existing medical conditions which may contribute to this

What usually feels poorly or unwell? How would you describe this?

How severe would you score it from 1 – 10?

What might make you feel a little in school?

I do not feel confident enough to go to school.



Can you describe what makes you feel this way?

Do you think your parents/carers/teachers/friends would agree?

What would need to change for you to feel confident enough?

How might you know when you were ready?

Going to school makes me feel bad/worried about myself.



Can you describe what things school makes you feel bad/worried about?

Are there times/lessons/teachers where this is better?

I am not listened to/believed when I talk about my feelings.



Can you tell me more about that?

What would it look like if someone was listening to you? What would happen?

I have mental health needs which make it difficult to attend school.



Be aware of any existing medical conditions which may contribute to this

Can you tell me more about that?
What might make you feel a little better in school?
Do you have any diagnoses which would be helpful for us to know about?

I have physical health needs which make it difficult to attend school.



Be aware of any existing medical conditions which may contribute to this

What usually feels poorly or unwell? How would you describe this?
How severe would you score it from 1 – 10?
What might make you feel a little better or a little worse in school?
Do you have any diagnoses which would be helpful for us to know about?

School Environment Factors

I find the school environment overwhelming.



It may be helpful to draw a map of the school for this activity, to identify difficult areas or hotspots.

Which bits of school are better?

What would you say is overwhelming? (e.g. noise, crowding, strong smells, lighting, size/navigation).

Is there anywhere in school that you like to spend time?

Is there anywhere in school that you try to avoid?

I do not have the right equipment for school.



What are you missing? (e.g. stationary, uniform, lunch money).

What might help with this?

I do not like using the toilet in school.



Can you tell me more about that?

Are there times when this is better/worse?

I do not like using the dining hall in school.



Can you tell me more about that?

Are there times when this is better/worse?

Home Factors

I am happier when I am at home.



Talk me through a typical day at home for you.

What makes you feel happy at home?
How happy would you say you feel at home from 0 – 10? How does this compare to at school?

I do activities that I enjoy at home.



Talk me through a typical day at home for you.

What activities do you like to do?
Who do you like to spend time with?

It is safer at home.



Talk me through a typical day at home for you.

What makes you feel safe at home?
How safe would you say you feel at home from 0 – 10? How does this compare to at school?

Other

There is something else.



Is there anything else that we haven't talked about?
What is important for the adults around you to know to help you?

Would Help Me

Would Not Help Me

Changing the way that I travel to or from school.	A chance to visit my school and/or teachers before going for the whole day.
Help to get to know my teachers and/or make new friends in school.	A way to speak to my parent/carer during the day.
Someone to stay with my parent/carer in the daytime.	A change to my lessons and/or subjects.
A chance to get up and move around after working for a while.	Ear defenders (noise reducing headphones).
Extra time to think before being expected to answer.	Adults quietly checking that I know what to do.
Not being expected to do group work.	Signals to ask for help (e.g., red/green card).
Being introduced to a group of people with similar interests e.g., for social times.	My own workspace with limited distractions.
Somewhere to do homework in school.	Attending online some of the time.
Help with the work in my lessons or to catch up on learning that I have missed.	Support for when people are unkind or bully me in school.

More people to talk to or spend time with at school.	Help to feel like I fit in at school.
Help other people to understand me/my needs.	Help me to feel less tired at school.
Help to feel less poorly or unwell at school.	More support with my mental health needs which make it difficult to attend school.
More support with my physical health needs which make it difficult to attend school.	Make changes to the school environment (e.g., make it less noisy, busy, smelly).
Help me to have the right equipment for school.	Do more activities or lessons that I enjoy in school.
Help to feel safer in school.	There is something else.

Appendix 4

Where to get information and support

For support on specific mental health needs

Anxiety UK www.anxietyuk.org.uk OCD UK www.ocduk.org

Depression Alliance www.depressoinalliance.org

Eating Disorders www.b-eat.co.uk and www.inourhands.com

National Self-Harm Network www.nshn.co.uk www.selfharm.co.uk

Suicidal thoughts Prevention of young suicide UK – POPYRUS: www.papyrus-uk.org

For general information and support

www.youngminds.org.uk champions young people’s mental health and wellbeing

www.mind.org.uk advice and support on mental health problems

Trafford Directory | School Attendance Difficulties and Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)

