PINEWOOD

Est. 1875

EMOTIONALLY BASED SCHOOL AVOIDANCE (EBSA) Policy

Purpose/Aim

Pinewood School recognises there may be many reasons for poor school attendance. Attendance at school and attainment in academic/personal development are directly linked, i.e. better attainment with better attendance. This policy aims to explore the concepts of EBSA and provide guidance on how school staff can support pupils improve their attendance, reduce school avoidance and remove other associated barriers to attendance. It is recognised at Pinewood that attendance, especially since the Covid 19 outbreak and the complexities this has generated, is usually a matter of mental health rather than behaviour.

What is EBSA?

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is the term which will be used throughout this policy. This is a term used to describe pupils who find attending school difficult due to emotional factors, including anxiety, which leads them to being absent from school for extended periods of time. Other terms such as extended school non-attendance, school refusal and school phobia are factors in EBSA. This can have a significant impact on pupils, affecting their social and emotional development and can have a negative impact on educational progress.

There may be one key trigger or several triggers for anxiety related to attending school, some examples include:

- Changes to class structure / teachers / routine
- Poor class behaviour / inconsistent classroom management
- Not understanding work
- Fear of getting something wrong
- Fear of exams/poor performance
- Group activities
- Sport and extra-curricular activities.
- Break and lunchtimes (social anxieties)
- Bullying/peer pressure
- Being away from loved ones for some reason (separation anxiety)

How to Identify EBSA

It will be important to identify which pupils may be 'at risk' of and susceptible to EBSA as soon as possible, so that links can be made with the family to collaborate on a support plan. Signs that can be recognised are:

- Talking negatively about school
- Becoming anxious on separation from caregiver
- Physical symptoms of anxiety (e.g. headaches, stomach aches), often on a Sunday night or a Monday morning, which may improve when the pupil stays home from school
- Sharing worries about particular aspects of school
- Refusing to get ready for school
- Difficulties sleeping
- Becoming distressed when school is talked about
- Engaging in self-harming behaviours

Contributing Factors

There are many contributing factors to EBSA that can be related to the individuals lived experience (e.g., trauma) these can be familial (e.g., siblings refusing school, parental relationship difficulties) or related to school directly (e.g., previous issues around bullying).

What can we do to ensure EBSA is taken seriously at Pinewood?

A consistent and supportive approach will be taken by all staff when dealing with EBSA. It is the aim of the school to take rapid intervention through pupil/parent meetings to reduce EBSA. Communication with parents/guardians when a pupil develops attendance problems is vitally important. Key staff (including Heads of School, DSL and Head of Wellbeing) will seek to ascertain the correct reasons for a pupil not attending school. Attendance data will be analysed. A range of solutions will be sought to support a pupil attending school.

These will include:

- Shadow/Buddy/Circle of friends intervention
- Praise/Celebration and Reward when in school.
- 1:1 support sessions with the Head of Wellbeing
- 1:1 support at drop off in the morning with Head of School/Head of Wellbeing
- Emails from Form Tutor/Heads of School to encourage the pupil back into school
- Home Visits to encourage the pupil back into school.
- Adapted/reduced timetable until the pupil is fully re-integrated
- Notifying the Local Authorities if attendance remains low and consistently falls below the required threshold of 90%

Reviewed by: Sarah Martyn-Fisher, DSL
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