



Emotionally-Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) Policy

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Headteacher: Mrs Deborah Groom

1. Introduction

At Cadmore End C of E School, we recognise that regular school attendance is essential to children's learning, wellbeing, and future success. However, we also acknowledge that some children experience significant emotional barriers that prevent them from attending school regularly. This is known as Emotionally-Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA).

This policy outlines our approach to identifying, supporting, and reintegrating pupils experiencing EBSNA, using a trauma-informed and relational framework.

2. Definition of EBSNA

EBSNA refers to a pattern of absence or reluctance to attend school due to emotional distress, such as anxiety, fear, or trauma. It differs from truancy in that the child is not choosing to avoid school for leisure, but is struggling emotionally with the school environment.

Children with EBSNA may:

- Exhibit frequent or prolonged absences
- Show high levels of anxiety or distress before or during school
- Be physically present but emotionally disengaged
- Have co-occurring neurodevelopmental conditions (e.g., ASD, ADHD)
- Mask their difficulties while in school

3. Ethos and Principles

Cadmore End School is committed to:

- Early identification of EBSNA through close relationships and careful monitoring
- Using trauma-informed and attachment-aware approaches
- Collaborating with families and external professionals
- Promoting a safe, nurturing and predictable environment for all children
- Ensuring every child feels heard, understood, and supported

4. Identification and Referral

Staff will look for indicators of EBSNA, including:

- Frequent lateness or absence without clear medical cause
- Anxiety symptoms (e.g., tummy aches, headaches, panic attacks)
- Withdrawal or shutdown behaviour
- Expressions of fear or emotional overwhelm about coming to school
- Difficulty transitioning between home and school

If EBSNA is suspected: - The class teacher will complete a Wellbeing and Attendance Review Form - A meeting will be arranged with the parent/carer and child (where appropriate) - The Headteacher and Inclusion Lead will coordinate next steps

5. Response and Support

Our graduated response may include:

Tier 1 – Early Intervention - Strengthening the school-home relationship - Regular check-ins with a trusted adult - Use of emotion coaching, PACE and the 4Rs (Regulate, Relate, Reason, Repair) - Adjustments to the school day (e.g., phased return, alternative provision points) - Visual timetables, worry boxes, Zones of Regulation

Tier 2 – Targeted Support - Involvement of Mrs Hazell (Nurture Lead) or another identified staff member - Creation of a Personalised Support Plan (PSP) - Support from the Bucks Mental Health Support Team (MHST) - Home-school communication book - Peer mentoring or pastoral support groups

Tier 3 – Multi-agency Support - Referral to CAMHS, Educational Psychology, or Early Help - Involvement of the Virtual School (if a CIC/PLAC child) - Access to ELSA or therapeutic intervention (if available)

6. Reintegration Plan

Returning to school following extended absence is carefully planned. We will: - Develop a flexible, pupil-centred reintegration timetable - Use graduated exposure strategies - Celebrate small wins and maintain consistent adult support - Review progress weekly and adapt as needed - Maintain frequent communication with home

7. Working with Families

We understand that EBSNA affects the whole family. We will: - Work in partnership with parents without blame - Offer signposting to parent support services, such as SENDIAS or local family hubs - Ensure transparent communication, shared goal setting, and regular feedback

8. Monitoring and Attendance Procedures

While EBSNA is not “unauthorised absence” in the traditional sense, we are still required to: - Record absences accurately - Follow Bucks Attendance Protocols - In cases of persistent

absence, complete an Individual Attendance Plan (IAP) - Use the graduated approach before any legal action is considered

9. Staff Training

All staff will receive training in: - Recognising signs of EBSNA - PACE, trauma-informed practice, and co-regulation strategies - Working with neurodiverse pupils and those with SEND - Referral routes and support systems

10. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with: - Attendance Policy
- Behaviour and Relational Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if needed, in line with updates to DfE guidance or changes in local authority procedures.