

# **EBSA and School Duties**

## **- Part of the EBSA Factsheet series**



**Please note:** 'child' = 'child or young person'

### **Duties on Schools to support pupils with EBSA**

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance at school. This can include pupils who have long term physical or mental health (MH) conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as it is for any other pupil, but additional support may need to be provided.

In cases of both long term physical or mental ill health, school staff are not expected to diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they are expected to work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every pupil.

Broadly speaking, the role of school staff is to ensure that the school is a calm, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn, which is the foundation of securing good attendance.

The Department for Education (DfE) encourages schools to identify a senior mental health lead who will have strategic oversight of their setting's whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing.

### **Involving parents/carers in conversations at an early stage**

Parents/carers generally know their children best and are well-placed to support them to recognise and manage their normal emotions. Where a child is anxious about attending school, school should develop a plan involving their parents/carers from an early stage to implement reasonable adjustments. The plan should make it clear that part of its aim is to maximise face-to-face attendance as much as possible. The plan should have regular review points built into it and have been agreed in advance of implementation.

This is important for children of all ages, but in particular, if the child is transitioning from one school to another, or to another class, which may make them more anxious about school.

In developing a plan to support attendance through reasonable adjustments, school staff will need to consider the individual circumstances of the child, being mindful of safeguarding responsibilities as set out in the 'Keeping children safe in education 2024' guidance. - [DfE Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#)

### **When schools inform the Local Authority about an absence**

Schools should inform the Local Authority (LA) where pupils are likely to miss more than 15 days. They should work with the family to provide educational provision whilst determining with the LA whether alternative provision should be provided (under section 19 of the Education Act 1996, as outlined in statutory guidance).

LAs must **not** follow an inflexible policy of requiring medical evidence before making their decision about alternative education and must look at the available evidence for each individual case, even when there is no medical evidence.

No pupil should be left without educational provision. - *DfE Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (February 2023)*

## Facilitating support where a MH issue is affecting attendance.

As part of any plan to support the child to attend well, schools should facilitate relevant support e.g. pastoral / SEND. This should:

- Be done with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible while supporting the underlying issue (MH/SEND).
- Involve having sensitive conversations with pupils and with parents/carers as quickly as possible after having been made aware of the issue.
- Involve making reasonable adjustments to overcome specific barriers to attendance.
- Also involve making referrals to in-school or external professional support where appropriate, and schools should be supportive where parents/carers feel the child needs to visit a health professional in relation to a mental health concern.
- Consider additional pastoral care inputs for pupils, including any support that can be offered by the pupil's most trusted adults in school. This might include community groups, counselling services, psychological practitioners or, where available, Mental Health Support Teams.
- Where appropriate, seek support from the school nursing service who can provide health advice or information.
- Should join up professionals and provide cross-agency support through a team around the school or family where they feel other services may help to alleviate a pupil's concerns about barriers to attending school and ensure that the pupil knows which school staff they can talk to if required.

## Remote Working

Although limited, there may be circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend school but is able and well enough to continue their education remotely such as special educational need or disability (SEND) or a mental health issue. In these circumstances, and after the pupil's absence from school has been established, schools should consider providing pupils with remote education on a case-by-case basis. This should be part of a plan to reintegrate back to school, and only when it is judged that providing remote education would not adversely affect the pupil's return to school. – [Providing Remote Education Aug 24](#)

## Further information:

Support is available at Children's mental health - [Every Mind Matters](#).

Guidance for West Sussex schools by the Educational Psychology Service – [EBSA Toolkit](#)

West Sussex SEND Information, Advice and Support Service ([SENDIAS](#)) have a website with several resources, including guides and factsheets.

The [Local Offer](#) includes information on the local arrangements for EBSA



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## Service Statement

The role of the SENDIAS service is to ensure all parents, children and young people have access to impartial information, advice and support so they can make informed decisions related to their situation. Any information that is shared with the service is in confidence unless permission has been obtained to share this with any individuals, services and agencies that may be able to help in the circumstances. For more detail, view our [policies and privacy notice](#) on our website.

**How to contact us:** Tel: 0330 222 8555 / Email: [send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk) or [cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk) (up to age 25) / Website: [www.westsussexsendias.org](http://www.westsussexsendias.org)

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