
Anxiety Based School Avoidance

Resources & Activities

Kent Educational
Psychology Service



This booklet provides you with activities to complete before and during the online training session as well as copies of and links to helpful resources to use in practice supporting children and young people experiencing ABSA

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West Sussex Educational Psychology Service

Emotionally Based School Avoidance Resources

https://westsussex.local-offer.org/information_pages/460-emotionally-based-school-avoidance

Resources produced by West Sussex EPS include:

- Emotionally Based School Avoidance – Guidance
- Booklet for Parent Carers
- Booklet for Young People
- Booklet for Children
- Profile of Risk of EBSA
- Information Gathering from School ('Round Robin' form)
- Information Gathering and Integration
- Example Support Plan
- Whole School Audit
- Strategies for Young People with ASC

KEPS Evaluation Sheet

Title	Anxiety Based School Avoidance (Online Training) Dr Miquela Walsh – Educational Psychologist Rhea Powell – Trainee Educational Psychologist
Date	14.7.2020

Objectives

- a) I understand the theories underpinning Anxiety Based School Avoidance*
- b) I understand the Push and Pull framework and Four Factors associated with ABSA*
- c) I am aware of how to intervene to help overcome ABSA at an individual, family, and school systems level.*

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), please rate each of the objectives. Please circle the number for before and after the conference.

a) Before:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

After:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

b) Before:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

After:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

c) Before:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

After:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What three things will you remember from this training?

Name at least one thing will you either do or change following this training?

Please rate the training received as follows (1-10):

- ***Content***
- ***Usefulness***
- ***Presentation***
- ***Will training affect practice?***

Please comment on the delivery of this online course:

(e.g. Content, Pace, Relevance, Technology)

What would you like to see covered in future training?

Any other comments

Pre-Session Activities

Pre-Session Activity 1)

Experience of Anxiety

Anxiety is normal. Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time. It can be helpful to consider the ways we ourselves experience anxiety, to help us think more clearly about how best to support others.

Bring to mind a time when you felt really stressed or under pressure
How would you describe your feelings at this time?
<i>e.g. frustrated, worried, fearful, panicked</i>
What thoughts came into your mind at this time?
<i>e.g. 'I can't do this', 'Everything is going to go wrong'</i>
How did your body feel?
<i>e.g. racing heartbeat, feeling sick</i>
What did you do to help yourself cope at this time?
<i>e.g. had a cup of tea, talked to friend</i>

Pre-Session Activity 2)

Bring to mind a pupil you have or are currently working with and complete the Profile of Risk as best you can

West Sussex – Profile of Risk

**West Sussex Educational Psychology
Service**

**Emotionally Based School Avoidance
Guidance**



Profile of Risk of EBSA

The PRE Schedule consists of five key areas, each of which contain a number of items you are asked to consider in terms of their possible importance in influencing an emotionally based attendance problem. The rationale for the schedule content is based on risk factors identified in the guidance.

When completing the schedule, it is important to be as objective as possible, and to base assessments on evidence. Thus it is recommended that completion of the schedule is a joint venture, wherein checking and questioning can lead to the best judgements in terms of item importance.

During the process of completing the schedule, it may be useful to note factors associated with particular items, such as:

- This has been an issue in the past, but doesn't appear to be now.
- This has been an issue in the past and has persisted as an important item.

Items are not quantified by a typical rating scale. This is because it may be that one single item (e.g. death of a parent) is so important it cannot be rated numerically in the same way other items might be rated. Its influence could be proportionately much greater than a rating scale could accommodate. As such the schedule asks you to make notes on the key items of importance you identify. These can then be visually represented in the five overlapping circles that follow the schedule.

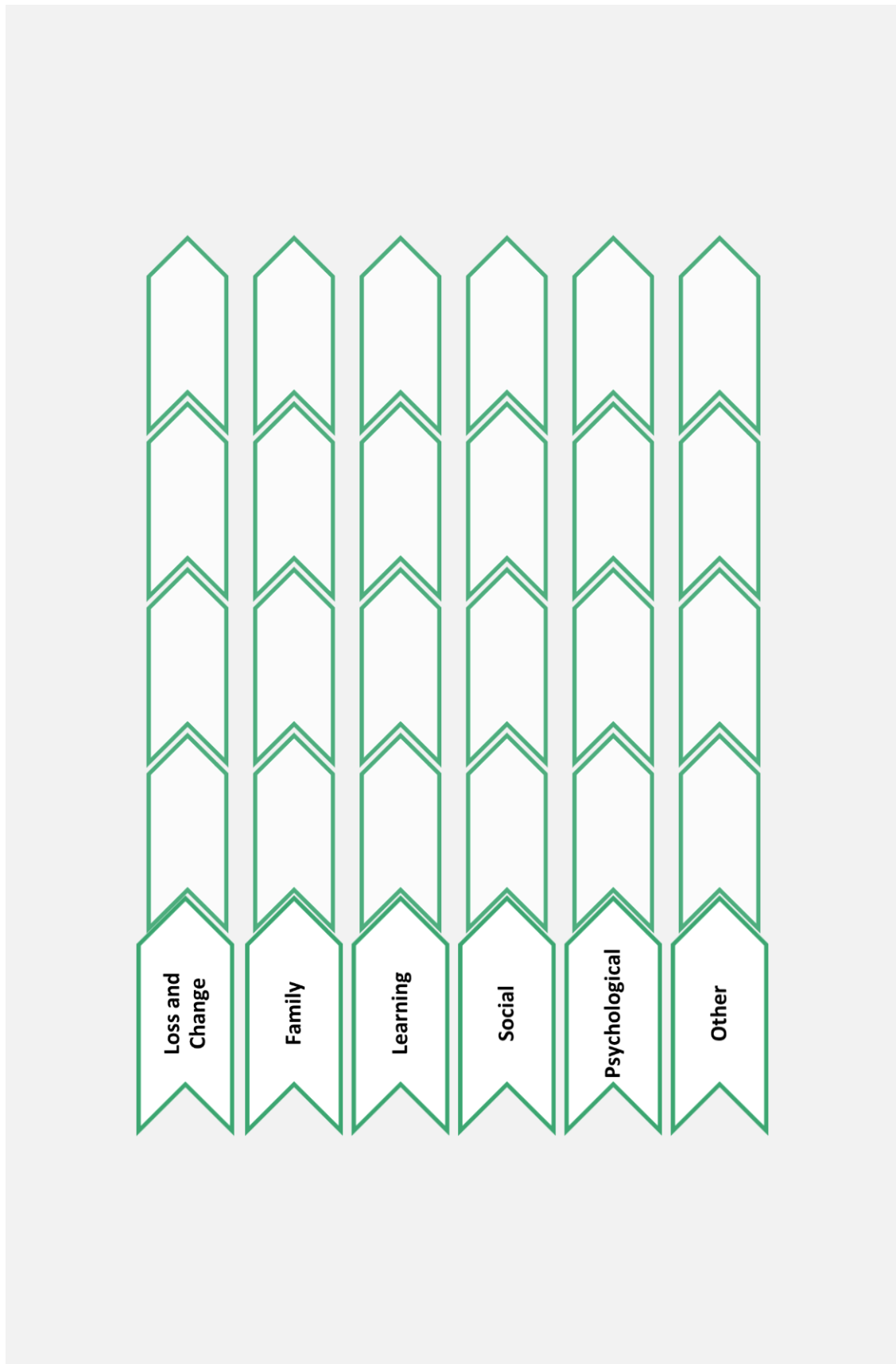
If the resultant profile suggests to you that the pupil is at risk of emotionally based school refusal, the next step is to obtain the views of the pupil, parents and other staff.

	Level of concern				
Loss and Change	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Death of parent, relative, friend					
Death of pet					
Sudden traumatic event					
Sudden separation form a parent					
Moving house, school, area					
Loss of a classmate					
Parent, relative, friend illness					
Note on key items					
Family Dynamic	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Inappropriate parenting					
Birth of new child					
Parents separated					
Parents arguing/fighting					
Practical problems bringing the child to school					
Problems with parental control					
Jealous of sibling at home					
Note on key items					

Curriculum /Learning issues	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Low levels of literacy					
PE and/ or games issues					
General learning difficulties					
Specific subject difficulties					
Exam or test anxiety					
Difficulties with a particular teacher/adult					
Problems keeping up in lessons					
Note on key items					
Social Personal	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Being bullied					
Seems to have few friend/ friendship issues					
English as a second language					
Dislikes play/ break times					
Few leisure interests					
Note on key items					

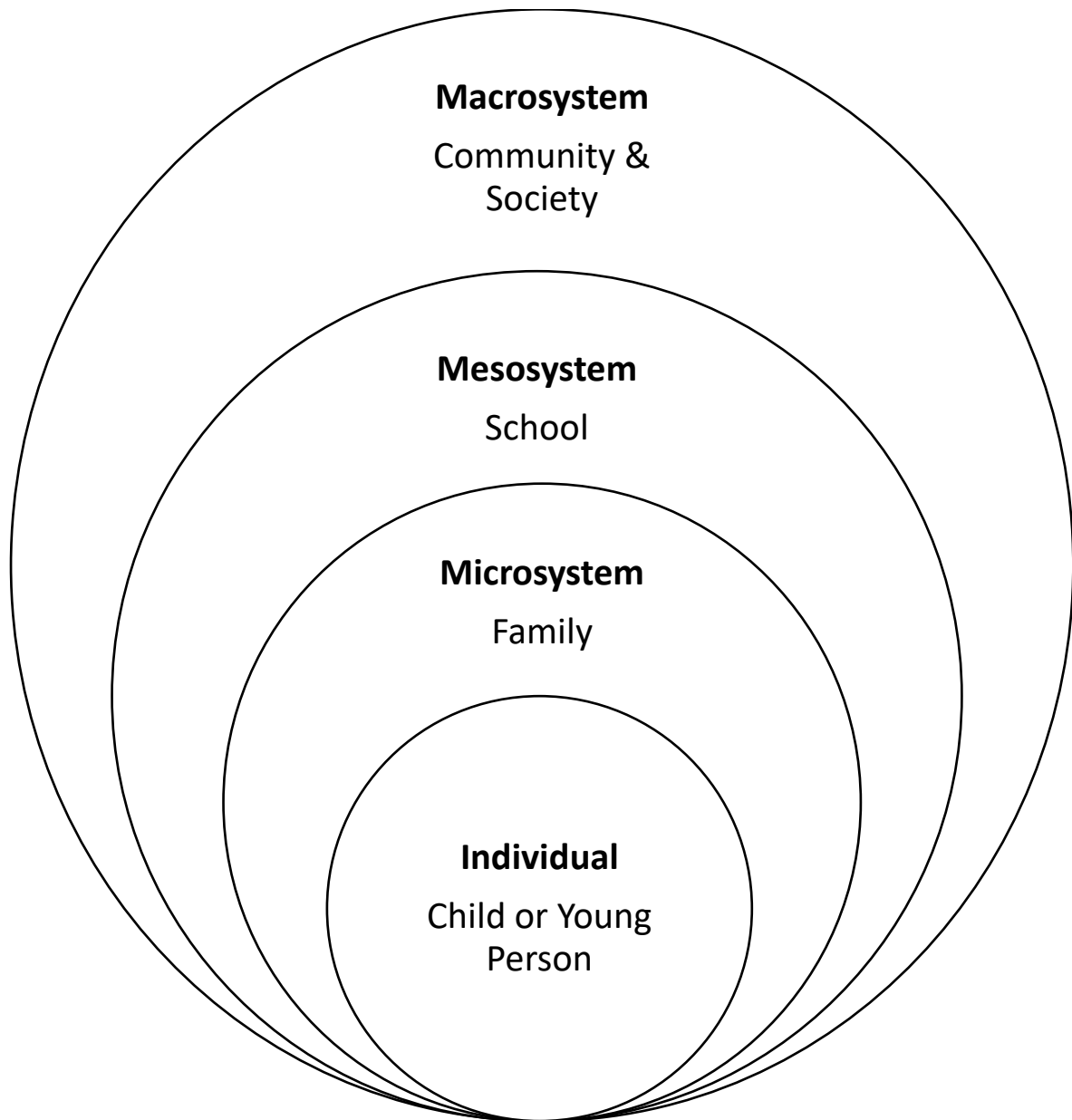
Psychological Wellbeing	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Often seems tired					
Low self esteem					
Appears depressed					
Appears anxious					
Keeps feelings to themselves					
Has a pessimistic nature					
Note on key items					
Other issues	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Note on key items					

Overview of key risk factors factors identified



Session Activities & Resources

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Development



Vulnerability Factors

Child

Temperament

Fear of failure

Poor self-confidence

Physical illness

Age - 5-6, 11-12, & 13-14 years

Traumatic life experiences

Separation anxiety from parent

Other learning or developmental needs – especially Autism

Family

Separation and divorce or change in family dynamic

Parent physical or mental health problems

High levels of family stress

Loss and bereavement

Parenting style and family interactions

School

Academic demands or high levels of academic pressure

Transition to secondary school, key stage or new school

Difficulties in a specific subject

Structure of the school day

Exams

Transport or journey to school

Peer or staff relationship difficulties

Bullying (*the most common school factor*)

Community

- Coronavirus Pandemic

Life has slowed down, those with sensory difficulties may find school environment more overwhelming

Missed friendships, lost social skills, new social rules

Health anxieties increased, wanting to keep family members safe

Child (and parent) has had a positive experience of not attending school

Increased separation anxiety

Uncertainty of new expectations on returning to school

Academic demands, unequal access to learning during lockdown

Resilience Factors

Child or Young Person

- Developing ambition, aspiration and motivation
- Increasing confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, value in themselves
- Developing feelings of safety, security and a sense of belonging
- Understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Feeling listened to and understood

Family

- Willingness to work in partnership between school, family and professionals
- Developing parenting skills and understanding

School

- Having positive experiences where they can succeed
- Holding positive relationships with peers or staff
- Flexibility of approaches within school, listening to the voice of the child

ABSA - Push and Pull Factors

Pupil Name:

School	Home
Push	Pull
Pull	Push

Information Gathering

West Sussex Educational Psychology Service
Emotionally Based School Avoidance Guidance
Information gathering and integration



Name		School	
Year group		Key School staff	
Other agencies involved			
Description of behaviour			
Risk factors school, child and family			
Strengths and protective factors			
Formulation & integration of various factors			

Gathering Information with the Child

- ***Talking About Anxiety***

It is important to:

Let them know **you want to know** how they think and feel
Avoid dismissing anxieties or worries the child might have
Find sensitive, **child-centred** ways of gaining their views

- ✓ Ask the child to think about their thoughts and feelings about going to school...

'If these feelings had a name what would you call them?'

'If it was a thing, what would it look like?'

'Can you draw it?'

- ✓ Ask them to draw how their bodies feel when they are worried or anxious.
- ✓ Ask them to draw their 'Ideal Classroom'

- ***Anxiety Measures***

Spence Children's Anxiety Scale

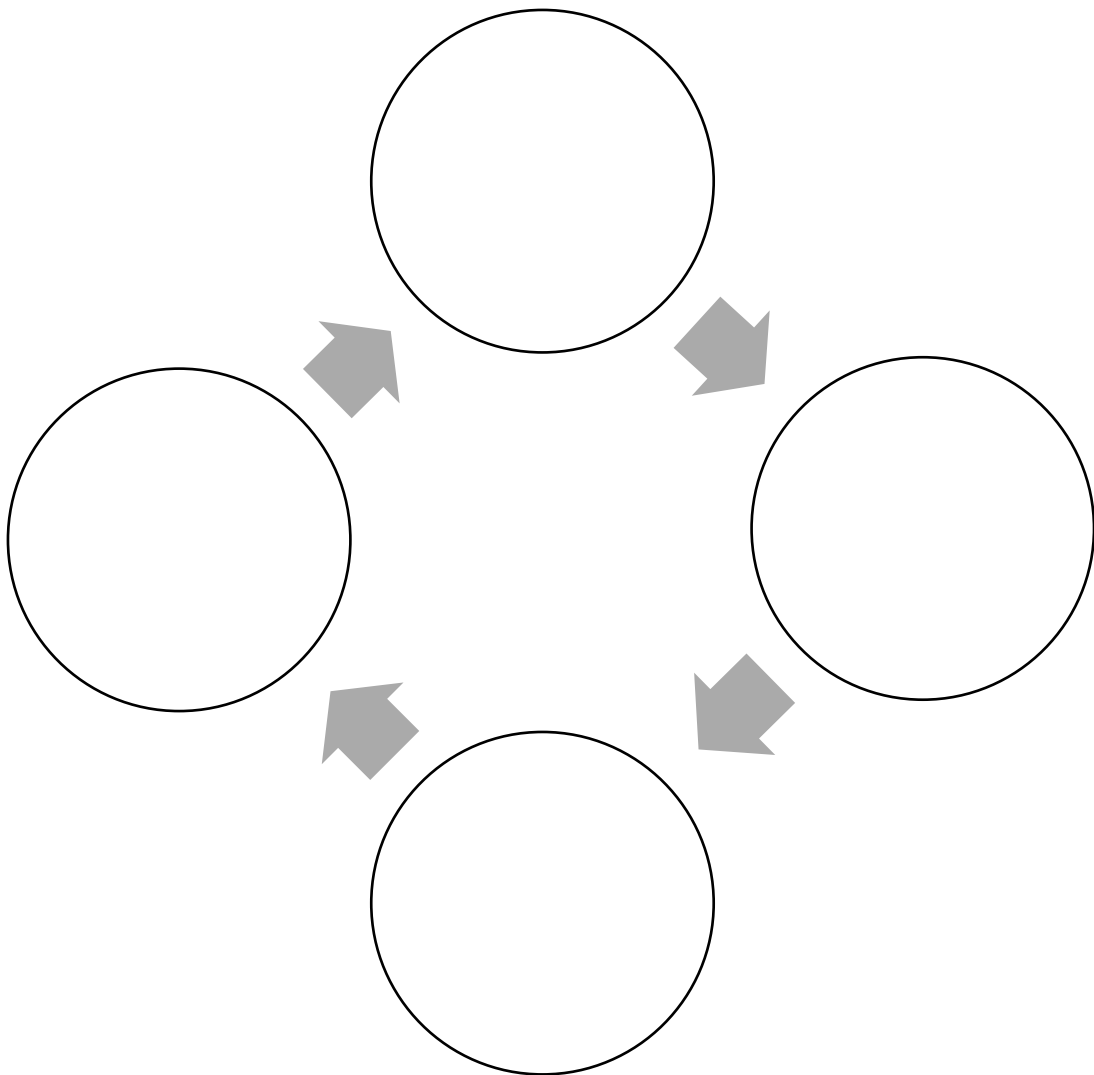
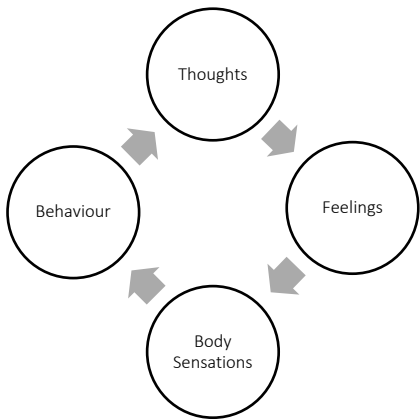
<https://www.scaswebsite.com/>

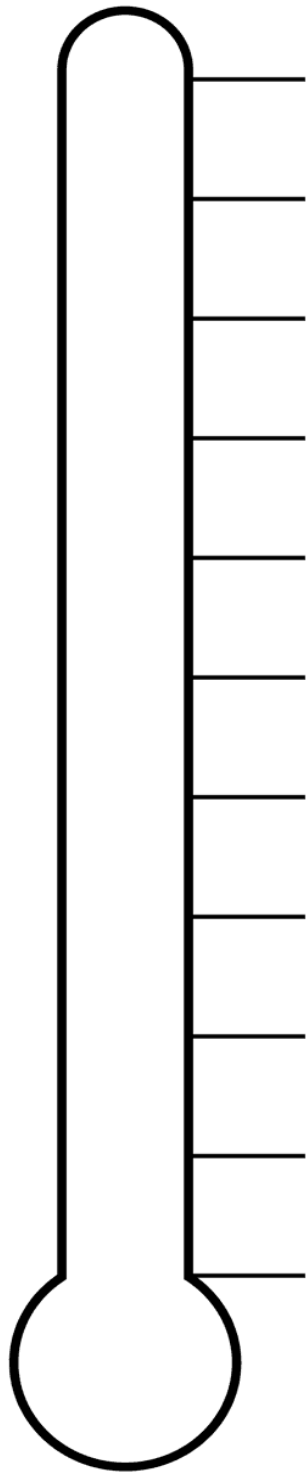
Penn State Worry Questionnaire

<https://thinkcbt.com/penn-state-worry-questionnaire-pswq>

Learning about Anxiety

Use this diagram to explore the thoughts, feelings, body sensations and behaviours that occur in the difficult situation at school





Feelings Thermometer

Drawing the Ideal Classroom – Brief instructions

Equipment

- Coloured pens or pencils
- Plain white paper

Instructions

Throughout the tasks, the child draws, and you write the labels.

Part 1: Drawing the “Ideal Classroom”

Think of the kind of classroom that you would like to have – your dream classroom. This isn't a real classroom but one that you could create using your imagination. This can look like whatever you like and there is no right or wrong way to do this activity.

As the young person draws ask them questions such as: What's that?, What's happening here? and Why is that important? Write down their answers.

When the young person has finished the drawing go through some questions together.

Questions

Ask these questions and record them on paper:

1. What are the most important things in this classroom?
2. What is your favourite thing in this classroom?
3. If you were to walk in to this classroom, how would you feel?
4. Is this classroom has rules, what would they be?
5. What are the students doing?
6. Tell me three things about the students.
7. What are the adults doing?
8. Tell me three things about the adults.
9. What happens at break time for the students of this classroom?

Part 2: Drawing the “Non-ideal Classroom”

Think about the kind of classroom that you would not like to have – the worst classroom you can imagine. It isn't a real classroom but one from your imagination.

As the young person makes their drawing ask them questions such as: What's that?, What's happening here? and Why is that important? Write down their answers

When the young person has finished go through some questions together.

Questions

Ask these questions and record them on paper:

10. What are the most important things in this worst classroom?
11. What is the worst thing in this classroom?
12. If you were to walk in to this classroom, how would you feel?
13. Is this classroom has rules, what would they be?
14. What are the students doing?
15. Tell me three things about the students.
16. What are the adults doing?
17. Tell me three things about the adults.
18. What happens at break time for the students of this classroom?

Part 3: Discussion

The final step is ensuring that you have understood what the young person has expressed through this work. Review and clarify what you think the student has said. Discuss who can view the drawing and explain how they will be used to help the adults around them understand how they think and feel about school.

Adapted from: Morgan-Rose, H. (2014). Pupil voice: Building the “ideal classroom” with PCP and Lego. In H. Moran

Working with Parents

Key Questions to Ask

- ✓ Developmental and educational history
- ✓ Strengths, interests and aspirations
- ✓ Changes or losses in family life
- ✓ Relationships with others
- ✓ Academic progress
- ✓ Child's views: *fears and worries*
- ✓ Child's views: *what is going well at school*
- ✓ Behaviour and signs of anxiety
- ✓ Typical day: when they *do* go to school
- ✓ Typical day: when they *don't* go to school
- ✓ Impact on family life
- ✓ Parent views on reasons for school avoidance
- ✓ Exceptions to the problem
- ✓ Previous attempts to address the problem

Active Listening Skills



Parent Support Resources and Organisations

It is essential to build collaborative working partnerships with parents. Signposting to helpful resources and parent support organisations is an important part of this:

Young Minds

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-school-anxiety-and-refusal/>

West Sussex EPS – Guidance for Parents

<http://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483>

Square Peg

<https://www.teamsquarepeg.org/>

Not Fine in School

<https://notfineinschool.org.uk/>

West Sussex Example Support Plan

West Sussex Educational Psychology Service Emotionally Based School Avoidance Guidance



Support Plan	
Name	Date
At school these things can make me feel upset	
My school support person/(s) is/are:	
Details of checking in with my school support person (When, where)	
Until _____ my return to school plan includes the following changes to my attendance (Identify any changes to days or time they come in)	
Changes to my timetable include	
(Identify any changes needed and what should happen/ where they should go instead)	
Any other changes include:	
(Identify any other changes to routines (break, lunch times, changes between lessons etc) to classroom expectations (not expected to read aloud, work in pairs etc) homework	
When I start to get upset, I notice these things about myself	

When I start to get upset, others notice these things about me

Things I can do to make myself feel better when I'm at school

Things that other people (staff and friends) can do to help me feel better when I'm at school

Things that my family can do to support me to attend school

Places in the school where I can go to where I feel safe and supported

This plan will be reviewed regularly so that it remains helpful.

Review date:

My signature

School support persons' signature

Parent signature

Other people who have access to the plan are?

Whole school systems for promotion of emotional well-being and prevention of EBSA

Committed and inclusive senior management team - values all pupils and allows them to feel a sense of belonging

All staff working within school are valued. Clear protocols regarding emotional support and stress management for staff including supervision

Continuous professional development for all staff which makes clear the promotion of positive emotional health and wellbeing is everybody's responsibility (including EBSA)

The importance of pupil voice and viewing the child holistically are approaches which are embedded within the culture of the school.

Recognition of the importance of partnership working with parents and external agencies

Clear policies on attendance, behaviour, bullying and transition which sets out the responsibilities for all and the support in place

Curriculum includes the teaching of resilience, coping and social skills. Curriculum appropriately differentiated according to individual need

Promotion of supportive literature for young people and parents

Clear roles and responsibilities for SENCo and emotional wellbeing leads. A member of senior staff is responsible for over-seeing arrangements for EBSA students

Clear systems in place for the early identification of school avoidance. Nominated member of who has a responsibility to investigate and act on concerns

Provision of interventions within a graduated response - assess, plan, do & review. Working with external agencies when necessary. Use of Early Help Plans using an holistic approach

Access to indicated provision e.g safe places within the school, key person. All staff are aware of specific strategies and programmes in place to support those experiencing EBSA

Supporting a Positive Transition

Key information required

Travel to school – how will they get there

Key people in school

Environment

Structure of the day timetables, break and lunchtime systems

Social time – supporting social interactions and those more vulnerable, bullying policies

Academic demands – how lessons are structured. Homework

Support systems in place – pastoral SEN support

Equipment needed

Practical supports

Go through journey to school, practice this, identify any companions

Give a simplified structure chart, provide photos, identify a key person

Layout of school – map, tour, quiz colour coding Provide maps, give tours, quiz, colour code subjects to building areas

Provide timetables, colour code these, break and lunchtime systems

Identify how pupils will be supported to make new friendships, access to supported social activities

Give information about how lessons are structured, homework expectations

Set out how young people will be supported provide one-page profile

Provide checklist for each day

References

ABSA

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Gulliford, A., & Miller, A. (2015). Coping with life by coping with school? School refusal in young people. In *Educational Psychology* (pp. 299-321). Routledge.

Kearney, C. A., & Silverman, W. K. (1990). A preliminary analysis of a functional model of assessment and treatment for school refusal behavior. *Behavior Modification*, 14(3), 340-366.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence>

Autism

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Greig, A., & MacKay, T. (2013). *The Homunculi approach to social and emotional wellbeing: A flexible CBT programme for young people on the autism spectrum or with emotional and behavioural difficulties*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

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