



EMOTIONAL WELL BEING

HIGHLY ANXIOUS PUPILS – COVID19

This resource for was created by a working party from the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service, Kent Educational Psychology Service and partner agencies within Kent.

INTRODUCTION

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is not a new phenomenon associated with the coronavirus pandemic. Children and young people miss school for a variety of reasons; a voluntary or involuntary response to personal, family, school or wider environmental factors.

EBSA is a pattern of absence whereby reluctance, or refusal, to attend or stay in an educational setting has its base in anxiety or fear. Risk factors vary and it is important to understand the reasons for poor/non-attendance.

This resource does not provide detailed information about EBSA. However, some of the information and advice obviously draws on that area of study. It is predicted that EBSA, due to anxiety, is highly likely to be an area of concern once schools start re-opening.

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This google drive [resource](#) and its subfolders aims to provide some initial guidance to meet the challenge identified in the introduction to this document.

The contents of the package is outlined below. The [links to resources](#) are highlighted in the title row of documents set out in the table. An overview is provided here:

- ✚ Introduction: a brief guide to anxiety.
- ✚ Tools to 'measure' anxiety and create a back to school plan.
- ✚ Resources for interventions.
- ✚ Whole school good practice.
- ✚ Tools for managing anxiety during (and after) the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ✚ Recommended reading and other resources.

Kent Educational Psychology Service will be offering free virtual training on the following topics (full details will be sent out when confirmed):

- ✚ Support for Highly Anxious Children

[INTRODUCTION – A BRIEF GUIDE TO ANXIETY \(Google drive\)](#)

Anxiety and the return to school: Who's worried now?

Working with anxiety – Graded Exposure

[TOOLS TO 'MEASURE' ANXIETY AND CREATE A 'BACK TO SCHOOL' PLAN \(Google drive\)](#)

Reintegration Guidance

PSP template

PSP template Early Years

PSP example Primary

Back to School plan - initial

Back to School plan - review

Reintegration Primary

Reintegration Secondary

Graded hierarchy for returning to school

Return to school grading statements

School stress survey

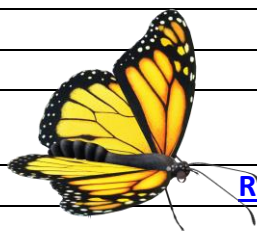
Working not working

4 + 1 questions

Worry Planner template

Worry Planner examples

Worry Triggers



[RESOURCES FOR INTERVENTIONS \(Google drive\)](#)

Anxiety Body Map

Anxiety Support Questions

CBT paper fortune tellers for anxiety

Emotions for zones of regulation

Mindfulness – quick intro

Mindfulness – journal

Positive Language alternative

Sizes of emotions with 'Inside Out' characters

Take 5 – Breathing Exercises

Traffic Light self-assessment fan

What not to say and what to say instead

[WHOLE SCHOOL GOOD PRACTICE \(Google drive\)](#)

Brief guidance from Dr Tina Rae

Reducing anxiety in the school environment based on the SWAN approach

Return to school plan for highly anxious students

Suggested resources school environment

Supporting anxious pupils in a primary setting

Supporting anxious pupils in a secondary setting

Think Piece by Barry Carpenter (A recovery curriculum)

Tips to support anxiety in autistic students

Whole Class Happy Pack

[TOOLS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY DURING \(and after\) THE PANDEMIC](#)

Social Story – What is the coronavirus?

Social Story – keyworkers and COVID

Social Story – other people are coming back to school

Social Story – social distancing school

Social Story examples – Back to School

Social Story – return to school

Social Story – going back to school 1

Social Story – going back to school 2

Social Story – going back to school 3

My Lockdown Experience

Suggested Home Activities to support transition back to school

Supporting anxious children as a parent

Ideas for families preparing for the return to school



[RECOMMENDED READING and OTHER RESOURCES](#)

[7 ways to support a worried child](#)

[Combatting Anxiety - Books](#)

For children who were already highly anxious or were refusing to attend school before the Pandemic, it is likely to be a huge challenge for both you as parents, and the staff in their school, to settle them back successfully after recent events.

[Helping Parents to Support Anxious Children to Return to School](#)

The following guidance offers suggestions on how to support an anxious pupil with successfully transitioning back into school, particularly after the Coronavirus Pandemic.

[Supporting anxious pupils in a primary setting](#)

The following guidance offers suggestions on how to support an anxious pupil with successfully transitioning back into school, particularly after the Coronavirus Pandemic.

[Supporting anxious pupils in Secondary setting](#)



This resource has been developed by professionals working in Kent in May 2020 (namely, Andy Young, Liz Ross and Alison Goodsell- Specialist Teachers and Kelly Underdown, Educational Psychologist). Thanks go to Northamptonshire Educational Psychology Service who shared their resources which helped to inform this section.

INTRODUCTION

Research has identified five key principles for supporting all children and young people manage the transition back to education after covid-19. These will be particularly relevant when considering supporting pupils with SEMH needs.

Strategies/support should be implemented in a graduated approach depending on the developmental needs of the child/young person and the response to intervention. For further details around supporting vulnerable pupils (e.g. children in care) and pupils experiencing high levels of anxiety please see the resources developed by the relevant working parties.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS (SEMH) TO REINTEGRATE BACK TO EDUCATION SETTINGS FOLLOWING COVID-19

CREATE A SENSE OF SAFETY

- ✚ Ensure staff wellbeing first (this is key!)
- ✚ Communicate with parents to help reduce their anxieties
- ✚ Create a climate of nurture and structure
- ✚ Support the transition to the education setting

SUPPORT EMOTIONAL LITERACY

- ✚ Staff to understand the link between emotion and behaviour
- ✚ Provide graduated approaches to supporting emotional literacy at the child's developmental level
- ✚ Consider creative learning opportunities

PROMOTE A SENSE OF SELF-EFFICACY

(belief that we have control over what is happening and that our actions generally lead to positive outcomes)

- ✚ Consider ways to gain children and young people's views
- ✚ Celebrate strengths and progress

SUPPORT SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

- ✚ Reinforce a sense of community (in the education setting)
- ✚ Consider peer support systems
- ✚ Provide opportunities to re-connect with key staff members

PROMOTING HOPE

- ✚ Staff to model optimism and a 'can do' attitude
- ✚ Provide opportunities to recognise and celebrate courage and kindness



CREATE A SENSE OF SAFETY: It is important that all adults, children and young people feel safe upon their return to their education setting, especially those with SEMH needs. This can be supported by:

- ✚ **Ensuring staff feel emotionally** contained themselves before working with vulnerable children and young people so that they can provide containment and reciprocity solihullapproachparenting.com/working-with-covid. For helpful, practical strategies on supporting staff wellbeing see the documents 'Transition, recovery and learning in the aftermath of a pandemic' by Biborough Educational Psychology consultation service. This can be accessed via: services2schools.org.uk.
- ✚ **Acknowledge that parents** will be feeling (understandably anxious) about reintegration. Hence, it is important to communicate regularly with all parents (providing clear information e.g. around risk assessments). Consider vulnerable parents who may need more personalised/intensive support.
- ✚ **Supporting the transition** to existing or new education settings is fundamental, particularly for children and young people with SEMH needs (who may require more intensive support). Ideally this should begin prior to the transition, for example, through meeting virtually with parents/carers to explore the child/young person's experience of lockdown and helpful resources/strategies (e.g. considering transition objects). It may be helpful to offer children/young people resources to familiarise them with the setting (e.g. virtual tours, pictures of key staff etc). For some, opportunities to re-connect with trusted staff members will be helpful.
- ✚ **In order to support children and young people's emotional wellbeing**, the environment should provide nurture and structure. Where possible, continue with routine activities or use visual support (e.g. Social Stories and visual timetables to communicate changes/new routines/expectations).
- ✚ **Staff should provide clear information** to children and young people about the strategies that they will implement. This should include explicit information about physical safety and how they can access pastoral support in their education setting.
- ✚ **It may be helpful to support children and young people's understanding of covid 19** (e.g. to challenge any misinterpretations). There should be consideration of how to explain social distancing to vulnerable children/young people (e.g. those experiencing attachment difficulties) as this may be interpreted as a hurtful rejection by key adults. Resources such as Social Stories are likely to be helpful). Provide opportunities for asking questions about these (e.g. through check-ins with a trusted adult or opportunities to write down/draw any thoughts or questions they have). In Early Years settings, these opportunities are likely to come about when you are engaging with the children in play or at story time. Be honest with them but keep your language simple and matter of fact (reinforced through visuals).

SUPPORT EMOTIONAL LITERACY: upon the return to education following covid-19, children and young people are likely to experience a range of emotions. It is important that these are normalised, and they are given support to help them manage their emotions and return to a state of calm. This can be supported using the following strategies:

- ✚ **It is important that staff** (particularly those working with pupils with SEMH needs) **recognise the link between emotion and behaviour**. Staff should provide opportunities to reflect on this with others (e.g. using functional behavioural approaches such as ABC charts or the STAR approach) and ensure there are support systems in place for staff.
- ✚ **Staff should model emotional regulation** and staying calm through providing opportunities for co-regulation (e.g. whole class/group mindfulness or yoga exercises).
- ✚ **Make use of emotion regulation strategies** in the classroom or nursery setting for all children/young people (e.g. feelings boards, calm corners, relaxation resources, ‘happiness boxes’). Some children may require more intensive support (e.g. using resources such as the zones of regulation or the Incredible 5-point scale (by Buron and Curtis) and through access to individual or small group emotional literacy intervention. Such intervention should be implemented using an assess-plan-do-review approach, overseen by a qualified teacher/SENCo. If there are wider professionals involved it may be helpful to liaise with them (if deemed appropriate by the SENCo).
- ✚ **Research has clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of creative learning opportunities to help create calm during the coronavirus pandemic**. For example, see research by [Karen Mak](#) from UCL and research from the March Network on [Creative Isolation](#).



PROMOTE A SENSE OF SELF- EFFICACY: Children need to feel they have some control over what is happening to them, and a belief that their actions are likely to lead to generally positive outcomes (Bandura, 1997). This will be particularly important now (following the covid-19 pandemic). This can be supported in the following ways:

- ✚ **Consider ways to seek children/young people’s views about strategies** that they would find helpful to support their reintegration (e.g. through circle time activities, suggestion boxes, sessions with a key adult for more vulnerable pupils). In nursery settings liaise with parents regarding how the child has responded to the coronavirus at home and any helpful strategies/resources. Ensure a consistent approach is used in the nursery setting.
- ✚ **Build strengths and capacity** - explore children/young people’s strengths and aspirations. Provide opportunities to experience success and to use their strengths.
- ✚ **Teach children and young people problem solving skills** (at a developmentally appropriate level) and help them to recall times when they have coped with change in the past.
- ✚ **Support children/young people to develop self-regulation strategies** (at a developmentally appropriate level) so that they feel in control of their emotions (see above).

PROMOTING HOPE: Whilst things may feel difficult at the moment, it is important that adults, children and young people feel things will get better and work out in future. They need to be provided with reassurance and understand that in the long term they will feel positive again.

- ✚ **Creating a sense of support for staff in the education setting is key.** Work together as a team and agree on how you will answer key questions and concerns.
- ✚ **Adults to model optimism and kindness.** ‘If kindness is shown; then kindness will be received’. It is important to remember to be kind to yourself too.
- ✚ **Support children and young people to notice acts of courage and kindness** (e.g. using developmentally appropriate activities such as gratitude diaries or gratitude jars or just a simple ‘you were kind’ sticker for younger pupils).



LINKS TO STAFF TRAINING/FURTHER SUPPORT:

Reintegration Resource: (LINK) we have developed a resource for reintegration based on the 5 key principles in this document. This is in the form of two power points, one for Early Years/KS1 and another for Year 6/KS3/KS4. These resources can be used for SEMH first aid training for staff. Each power point consists of three sections – key messages for the Children and Young People and supporting staff

- ✚ [Training for staff around attachment theory by Andy Young](#) (Specialist teacher for SEMH):
- ✚ [Training for staff around emotional intelligence by Andy Young](#) (Specialist teacher for SEMH):
- ✚ [For further information](#) around implementing a Recovery Curriculum in Early Years settings.



HELPFUL WEBSITES/ONLINE RESOURCES:

- ✚ [Young minds website:](#)
- ✚ Schools in Mind resources via the [Anna Freud Centre:](#)
- ✚ [Beacon House website](#) particularly useful for supporting children and young people who have experienced trauma:
- ✚ [Kooth](#) offer web-based confidential support for young people aged 11-18 years around supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing
- ✚ ‘Transition, recovery and learning in the aftermath of a pandemic’ by [Biborough Educational Psychology consultation service.](#)
- ✚ [Social Story about the coronavirus](#) by Carol Gray:
- ✚ [ELSA network coronavirus story:](#)
- ✚ Free resources to support emotional wellbeing from [MINDUP:](#)
- ✚ [Free app for 10-18 year olds](#) specifically to support emotional wellbeing related to Covid 19:
- ✚ [Mindheart.co](#) - Online book about the coronavirus for younger children (under 7 years old):
- ✚ Relaxation and Calming Ideas for young children:
- ✚ [Childline.org.uk](#) – calm zone
- ✚ [Books Beyond Words](#) - Wordless stories-

USEFUL APPS



SAM self help – anxiety management for people who are serious about learning to manage their anxiety.



PACIFICA – calm down in moments of stress or anxiety using deep breathing, muscle relaxation, positive visualisation, mindfulness meditations and more.



WHAT'S UP – when you feel negative thoughts taking over, use the app to help you overcome them.



WELLMIND is designed to help with stress, anxiety and depression.

[NHS – EVERY MIND MATTERS](#) - having good mental health helps us relax more, achieve more and enjoy our lives more. We have expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.



[BIG WHITE WALL](#) - a community of members who support, help each other and share what's troubling them in a safe and anonymous environment. (Aged 16-25)

[MIND.ORG.UK](#) – provides advice, support and information on an extensive set of topics from [sleep problems](#) to [suicidal thoughts](#).

[SAFE HANDS THINKING MINDS](#) – Dr Karen Treisman is a Highly Specialised Clinical Psychologist focusing on [dealing with trauma and stress through new and useful information](#), including videos.

[What you should know about returning to school](#) (google Doc) for young people

*Kent and Medway services are **[#Hereforyou](#)**. If concerned about mental health and are not sure what is needed, in Kent call the Single Point of Access (SPA) for Kent on **[0300 123 4496](#)**.*

Other Resources supporting Emotional Wellbeing

[Staff Wellbeing](#)

[Emotional Wellbeing Vulnerable Pupils](#)

[CYP Kent Emotional Wellbeing flow chart](#)

[Emotional Wellbeing in Schools including universal and Transitions](#)

[Emotional Wellbeing Support for Primary School Aged Children -](#)

[Practical and Emotional Wellbeing Support Following Bereavement](#)

[Emotional Wellbeing - YOUTH](#)

[Emotional Wellbeing - SEND](#)

[Practical Resources for parents and carers](#)

All the resources above are updated regularly and are also hosted on [Kent Resilience hub Covid 19](#) pages and young people can access content at [Moodspark](#)