

## ISSUE 9:

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## SENDIASS West Northants Information Bulletin

### Topic 1: Emotional Based School Avoidance

**Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) can be used to describe children and young people who do not attend school due to emotional factors. This absence can often lead to long periods of time away from school. EBSA is different from absence for physical illness and truancy. Most young people experiencing EBSA can be highly anxious and show significant distress about attending school. In many instances, they remain engaged with education and want to return to school even though they feel unable to do so. Often, the young person's anxiety will reduce during weekends or school holidays.**

#### Cause

EBSA is a complex issue, and it is likely that several factors, rather than one single cause, contribute to a young person finding attending school difficult. Each child and situation are unique. Some factors are complex and interlinked. For example, they might include the young person, the family, and the school environment (Thambirajah et al 2008).

We also understand that the onset of school avoidance appears to be at or around the time of transition between key stages. Research, for example, continues to show an increase in emotionally based non-school attendance around the time that young people move from primary to secondary school (Nutall & Woods, 2013; Pellegrini, 2007; Thambirajah et al, 2008).

This information is taken from Emotionally Based School Avoidance Guidance for professionals working with families and young people which was created by Sheffield Educational Psychology Service in 2020.

#### Possible indicators of EBSA:

There can be a variety of signs or indications that a child or young person is having difficulty attending school. Below is a list of some of the early warning signs that a child might display, but there can be many others:

- pleading to go home,
- difficulty separating from parents e.g. reluctance to leave parents to get out of the car/at the school gate,
- refusing to go into certain lessons or not going to their classroom,
- lateness,
- a change in attendance and/or punctuality,
- frequent absence for minor illnesses,
- patterns in absences e.g. particular days,
- reluctant to leave home and stays away from school with or without the knowledge of parent/carer,
- expresses a desire to attend classes but is unable to do so,
- speaking negatively about school,
- changes in behaviour,
- presenting as more anxious or with low mood,
- physical signs linked to stress (e.g. stomach ache, sickness, headache).

### What to do if you're worried about your child's attendance:

At the first sign that your child is experiencing uncomfortable emotions around attending school, contact the school and identify a key person there (often the SENCo or Head of Year). Maintain open, regular communication with them. Whilst this is happening, reassure your child that you and this person are working together to find a good way forward.

Talk to family and friends or seek out people in a similar situation to talk to.

Encourage your child to share their thoughts and concerns with you. Find time to listen to them without judgement or trying to 'fix' things.

Work with your child, and any other adults supporting them, to find techniques that support them to feel calm and regulated.

Contact the [SENDIASS Team](#) for support in having those conversations with school.

### Useful links:

[Not Fine in School](#) - A parent-led organisation supporting families experiencing school refusal and attendance difficulties along with raising awareness of related issues. Lots of videos and support as well as guides for schools and families.

[Young Minds](#) - Information, advice and publications on mental health with detailed sections on anxiety for young people, parents/carers and professionals. Includes a parent survival guide and monthly live parents lounge sessions with mental health professionals.

[Mind Ed](#) - Some free online courses on how to support young people with mental health difficulties.

[Define Fine](#) – A national parent carer led peer support organisation.

## **Topic 2: Refusal to Assess Appeal**

**It's important to fully understand why the local authority reached this decision. It's always a good idea to continue talking to the local authority about your concerns or any questions you have. Before appealing you must firstly consider mediation, this can be useful for example, where you have some additional information or a new report you would like to share with the local authority. It is possible that with new information the local authority will agree to reconsider their decision – and may avoid an appeal.**

### Is this my only opportunity to appeal?

You should not feel pressured to appeal as you may re-request an Education, Health and Care needs assessment at a later date, allowing time for further strategies or support to be tried.

### The Children & Families Act 2014 says:

"The local authority must secure an EHC needs assessment for the child or young person if, after having regard to any views expressed and evidence submitted under subsection (7), the authority is of the opinion that:

- a) the child or young person has or may have special educational needs, and
- b) it may be necessary for special educational provision to be made for the child or young person in accordance with an EHC plan." (36.8)

### So, what does this mean?

Your case needs to satisfy these two conditions (known as the legal tests) in order for a successful outcome. The important thing to note here is the use of the word 'may' in both these tests – the child 'may' have SEN and 'may' need an EHC plan. Usually the first of these (a) is not in dispute and the local authority will likely be relying on the second (b) of these legal tests. You do not need to evidence that your child/young person

definitely needs an EHC plan. The purpose of this type of appeal is to establish whether the local authority should carry out an EHC needs assessment.

You have the right to mediation and to appeal this decision. You will need to consider mediation first. Our factsheet about [Mediation](#) explores this further.

### Evidence:

Begin by looking at the evidence the LA used to make its decision. This is likely to include documentation from the early years' provider, school or post-16 institution, such as school/college reports; the records of any assessments done by the early years' provider, school or post-16 institution, what they then did and what effect that had; any advice from the LA's educational psychologist or other professionals who may have been involved.

If the evidence supports the LA's decision you will have to look elsewhere for evidence to back up your case. Reports from professionals such as educational psychologists can be extremely important to your case, but they can also be very expensive.

Other sources of written evidence may be available from:

- Teachers: ask them to be precise and to quantify exactly what is needed for your child.
- Health service, e.g., speech therapist, paediatrician, clinical psychologist or occupational therapist may write a report. Get your GP to refer you.
- Others involved with you or your child, e.g., social workers, youth workers, careers advisers.
- Home-school diaries.
- Your own evidence: for example, has a younger brother or sister overtaken your child? Are they anxious about going to school?
- Evidence from your child or the young person, written via a third party when necessary.

### Outcomes of a Refusal to Assess appeal:

If your appeal is successful, the Tribunal can order the LA to carry out an EHC needs assessment. It cannot order the LA to draw up an EHC plan or make orders about what a plan should say. It cannot make any orders or recommendations with regard to health and/or social care. Your LA must start the assessment process within two weeks of the Tribunal's order.

If your appeal is not successful, the LA will not have to carry out an EHC needs assessment. The SEND Tribunal cannot order a school to make provision through SEN Support if it decides that an EHC needs assessment is not needed. However, the school should continue to support your child through the SEN Support framework. You can start another request for assessment immediately, but you are unlikely to get a different outcome unless you can show that things have changed, or that new evidence is available. You should keep careful records over the coming months of the support that your child is receiving, the progress they are making, and the difficulties they are experiencing, so that you will have the evidence to support a new request if necessary.

### **SENDIASS News:**

#### SENDIASS Year 5 Seminars:

We are pleased to announce our Year 5 Secondary School Transition Seminars 2025. Supporting the positive transfer from Primary to Secondary school for children with Special Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Please see our event poster below including QR codes for booking your place on Eventbrite.

#### The event dates are:

- Northampton Guildhall (The Jeffery Room) - 22nd January 2025 - 6pm to 8pm
- Towcester, The Forum (Council Chamber) - 5th March 2025 - 10am to 12noon
- Online Seminar - 7th March 2025 - 12noon to 2pm

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## Year 5 Secondary School Transition Seminars 2025

This event is for you if you are a Parent or Carer of a Child in Year 5 who either has an EHC plan or who receives SEN Support in School

Supporting the Positive Transfer from Primary to Secondary School for Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)



**Northampton - Guildhall, The Jefferey Room - 22nd January 25 - 6pm to 8pm**  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sendias-wnc-year-5-secondary-school-transition-seminar-2025-northampton-tickets-1061963233619>

**Towcester - The Forum, Council Chamber - 5th March 25 - 10am to 12noon**  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sendias-wnc-year-5-secondary-school-transition-seminar-2025-towcester-tickets-1070535884649>

**Online - 7th March 25 - 12noon to 2pm**  
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sendias-wnc-year-5-secondary-school-transition-online-seminar-2025-tickets-1070543778259>

**Booking is Essential**  
For Parent / Carers only - Free Event  
Please book your places through the Eventbrite links / QR code provided above.

**We look forward to seeing you there!**

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## Parent Support Group Highlight – Twinkle Time Group



### Who Are We:

Twinkle Time is a sensory music and network session for children aged 0-4 years with vision impairments and/or hearing impairments.

### Sessions:

There are normally ten sessions a year at each children's centre below:

- Tuesdays (12.30-2.30pm): Kingsthorpe Children's Centre, 31 St. David's Road, Northampton, NN2 7QJ
- Wednesdays (12.30-2.30pm): Daventry Children's Centre, Staverton Road, Daventry, NN11 4EY

### Please contact the SIS team for upcoming dates:

- Hayley Thompson: **07595 087863** / [hayley.thompson@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:hayley.thompson@northnorthants.gov.uk)
- Clare Carter: **07595 088346** / [clare.carter@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:clare.carter@northnorthants.gov.uk)

## Northamptonshire Sensory Impairment Service (SIS)

# Twinkle Time Group

*Free Music and Network Sessions for Children  
With Sensory Impairments Aged 0-4*

**Kingsthorpe Children's Centre,  
31 St. David's Road,  
Northampton NN2 7QJ**

- Tue 17 Dec 2024 (12:30pm-2pm)
- Tue 28 Jan 2025 (12:30pm-2pm)
- Tue 25 Feb 2025 (12:30pm-2pm)
- Tue 25 Mar 2025 (12:30pm-2pm)
- Tue 22 Apr 2025 (12:30pm-2pm)
- Tue 10 Jun 2025 (12:30pm-2pm)
- July 2025 - Outdoor Session (TBC)

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