Emotionally Based School Refusal (EBSR) Policy

Agreed: September 2016

Signed: ______________ (HT)

Signed: ______________ (CofG)

Review date: September 2018
Goldthorpe Primary School EBSR Policy

Statement of intent

Goldthorpe Primary School recognises that regular attendance is essential for raising educational standards and for ensuring that all pupils fulfil their potential.

The school understands that there are instances when pupils who have mental health issues may find it difficult to attend their classes or the school altogether. We are committed to valuing, respecting and understanding pupils with emotionally based school refusal (EBSR), and will provide continuous, professional support to these pupils.

The main aims of this policy are:
- To provide all necessary and required support, details, information, etc., for pupils with EBSR.
- To ensure that staff are educated on mental health issues to encourage early identification and support.
- To create and foster a learning environment which is free from bullying and harassment.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to the following legislation, including, but not limited to:
- Equality Act 2010
- Mental Health Act 1983, as amended in 2007
1.2. This policy also has due regard to the following guidance:
- DfE (2016) ‘Mental health and behaviour in schools’

2. What is emotionally based school refusal (EBSR)?

2.1. For the purpose of this policy, EBSR is the manifestation of internal problems, such as fear, anxiety, misery, and feeling ill without obvious cause, which affects a pupil’s willingness to leave their home and/or attend an educational environment.
2.2. EBSR differs from truancy such that there are underlying emotional and anxiety issues which cause the individual to be absent from school. Contrastively, truant behaviour displays anti-social behaviour and an unwillingness to learn.
2.3. It is important that schools are able to identify instances of EBSR and can differentiate this from truancy; however, three potential overlaps between EBSR and truancy have been identified for reasons of non-attendance. These include:
- Problems with specific teachers or lessons
- Complexity of primary and secondary education
- Being bullied and in isolation

2.4. Though some instances of EBSR are not always clearly identifiable, it can be commonly recognised by:
- A pattern of absence from school which may lead to prolonged absence.
- Anxiety or fear which is presented as a reluctance to attend school.
- Common complaints of feeling unwell and requesting to leave the classroom.
- Challenging behaviours and social isolation.
- Expressing a desire to attend classes but not doing so.
- Under-achievement of learning potential.
- Physical indicators, e.g. sweating, sickness, rapid weight loss or gain.

2.5. All schools should understand that EBSR is a serious mental health issue, and should ensure all staff and pupils are also understanding of this.

2.6. Bullying incidents relating to EBSR can be emotionally harmful and must be dealt with as seriously as other bullying incidents within the school.

2.7. All schools should ensure they have appropriate measures of support in place which are readily available to EBSR pupils.

3. Support

3.1. Curriculum and staff training:
- Teaching of EBSR and mental health issues will be incorporated into personal, social and health education lessons to promote an accepting, understanding attitude from other pupils, and to prevent any bullying incidents.
- Members of staff are also regularly trained on the assessment and intervention of EBSR, as well as external support mechanisms to promote early identification and ensure all necessary support is provided to a pupil.
- A clear procedure for response will be established by the headteacher for when staff or pupils identify another pupil with EBSR.

3.2. Monitoring and communication
- The school will use this policy in conjunction with our Attendance Policy and Behavioural Policy.
- Rigorous procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour outlined in these policies will be in place and communicated to all staff to promote early identification of EBSR.
- In the instance where a pupil is identified, or identifies themselves, as having EBSR, they will be encouraged to attend a meeting with a member of the pastoral care team to establish necessary methods of support.
- Prior to starting at the school, pupils who are already identified as having EBSR will be given an information pack containing details of the support available to them in the school and the community.
- The school will regularly communicate with parents/carers to ensure they are aware of EBSR and the signs to look out for.
- Parents/carers of pupils with EBSR will be contacted on a regular basis by a member of the pastoral care team to discuss progress of support, and to ask for their input.
- The school understands there are instances when pupils may not wish to have their parents contacted. This will be discussed with a pupil in their assessment meeting, though in all cases it will be encouraged that the parents/carers are contacted.
- The school will regularly communicate with third-parties who provide external support, such as children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), and will offer to refer pupils should they require this.
- In every instance, the school will set out a clear written plan of action to support a pupil, and review the effectiveness of this on a termly basis.
- The school respects rights to privacy, and will not disclose a pupil’s mental health state to any other members of staff or pupils, without prior permission from a pupil.

3.3. Pastoral care in the school:
- The school will have trained counsellors available within the pastoral care team who are able to provide professional support for pupils with EBSR.
- The names of the trained counsellors, and where they can be located, will be communicated clearly with all pupils to ensure they are confident in locating the necessary support.
- Should a pupil require a child psychologist, the school will refer the pupil to the specialist CAMHS team.
- The school may consider commissioning a CAMHS service directly to encourage flexibility and early intervention response. This will be discussed between the headteacher and governing body, if this is considered to be an option.

3.4. Day-to-day school environment:
- During a pupil’s assessment meeting, the pastoral care team will aim to discover what contextual situations give a pupil anxiety and fear in the school.
- The pastoral care team will discuss this information with the headteacher, who will then aim to manage these situations, e.g. fear of entering a busy lunch hall. The headteacher may consider encouraging a pupil to take their lunch break at a different time, or assist them in entering the hall.
- The school will provide ‘break cards’ to a pupil, which will allow them to request to leave a classroom should they feel anxiety or fear. In these instances, a pupil will be encouraged to go and see a member of the pastoral care team to discuss their emotional wellbeing.

4. Bullying incidents

4.1. The school has zero tolerance for any bullying incidents towards pupils with EBSR.
4.2. Teachers have the power to discipline pupils who engage in misbehaviour inside or outside the school premises.
4.3. Any occurrence of bullying will be reported to a member of school staff, who will then issue disciplinary action against the pupil once he/she is on school premises.
4.4. These incidents will be dealt with following the process in our Anti-Bullying Policy. The headteacher will decide whether it is appropriate to notify the police or the anti-social behaviour coordinator in their LA of the action taken against a pupil.

5. Monitoring and review

5.1. The headteacher, in conjunction with the pastoral care team, will review this policy on an annual basis and make any necessary changes.
5.2. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with this policy as part of their induction programme.
Indicators of EBSR
Though EBSR may be difficult to recognise in some instances, the following are common signs that you may notice and should look out for:
- Difficulty attending school, and evident periods of prolonged absence
- Child refusing to leave home, and stays at home with knowledge from the parent/carer
- A history of anxiety and/or EBSR, in the family
- Reluctance to attend school trips
- Frequent absences for minor illnesses
- Continued absence from certain classes
- Evidence of under-achievement
- Regular absence without indicators of anti-social behaviour
- Social isolation and avoiding peers
- Challenging behaviours
- Severe emotional upset
- Physical changes, e.g. sickness, sweating
- Confusion or extreme absent-mindedness
- Expressing a desire to attend class but being unable to do so
- Outbursts of temper and complaints of feeling unwell