

# Supporting Transition to Reduce Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Initiative

## 2024 - 2025



### Overview

From September 2024 to July 2025, Fleet Primary School led a cross-phase initiative in partnership with Acland Burghley School to explore how transition support could reduce cases of Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA). The project responded to rising concerns about attendance and disengagement in Camden secondary schools, particularly among vulnerable pupils post-lockdown. Using trauma-informed and attachment-based principles, the initiative aimed to strengthen continuity of care between primary and secondary settings, improve data systems, and co-create support structures with students and families. The work focused on building belonging, visibility, and trust, key protective factors in mitigating EBSA.

### Goals and Intentions

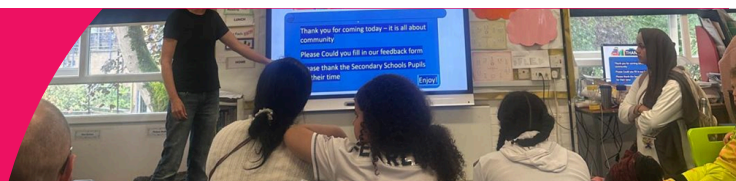
The initiative set out to:

- Analyse EBSA-related data across Camden secondaries.
- Identify patterns linked to attendance, SEND, trauma, and social challenges.
- Conduct case studies and interviews to understand breakdowns in engagement.
- Track Y7 pupils who participated in previous transition workshops.
- Develop peer mentoring models with Y9 pupils.
- Deliver student- and parent-led transition workshops.
- Pilot targeted support for vulnerable pupils transitioning from Y7 to Y8.

### Why This, Why Now?

Camden Secondary Schools report persistent absence above National and London averages, with EBSA emerging as a growing concern. The transition from KS2 to KS3 is a critical point for intervention. Yet, the cross borough nature of movement from primary to secondary schools in Camden and varied transition processes make universal provision challenging. This initiative sought to bridge that gap by identifying risk factors, strengthening relational support, and embedding protective practices across phases.

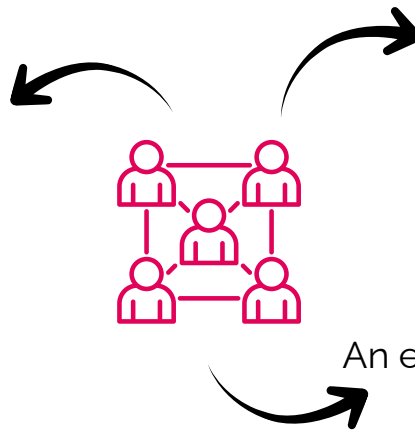
Lead: Becca Wall  
School: Fleet Primary School



## What we did - information gathering

### Data and insight gathering:

Secondary schools shared EBSA-related data, enabling analysis of attendance trends and risk factors. Questionnaires were refined to improve monitoring of emotional wellbeing and engagement.



### Cross-sector collaboration:

Discussions with borough leaders and practitioners highlighted systemic gaps in family support, recording practices, and continuity of care.

### Case study learning:

An exploration into the transition model at Robson House Primary PRU provision where Y6 pupils receive early visits and continued support into Y7.

## What we did - test and learn

### Student-led workshops:

In partnership with Acland Burghley and a child psychotherapist, workshops were delivered to Y6 pupils across two primary schools. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and informed future resources.

### Parent workshops:

Led by an educational psychologist, sessions at Fleet supported families in navigating the emotional and logistical complexities of transition. Parents expressed a desire for peer mentoring and continued contact with primary schools.

### Reunion events:

Drop-in sessions for former Y6 pupils were well attended and helped maintain a sense of belonging. A transition event for Y5 and Y6 pupils featured reflections from former students across five secondaries.



## Key Learning

Identified pupils with adaptations in primary (e.g. flexible timetables, movement breaks) lost these in secondary, leading to sensory overload and disengagement.

Families who had built trust with primary school staff said they lacked a key contact in secondary, contributing to feelings of family isolation from support.

Secondary teachers said that with increased pastoral demands, often without the relational context or time to respond effectively, adaptations were not as effective as they could be.

*"It feels great being listened to about my experiences of coming to secondary school, everyone should get this opportunity"*

*Fleet Primary School worked in partnership with:  
Acland Burghley Secondary School, London Borough of Camden.*

## Key Takeaways

- Bridging relationships across phases through mentoring has high value. Research from UCL and the BERA Journal highlights that a sense of belonging and continuity of care are critical protective factors during transition for pupils at risk of EBSA. Assigning a key adult before and after transition, someone known to both the child and family, can help sustain trust and reduce anxiety.
- Use of a vulnerability matrix to identify at-risk pupils in year 6 was identified as supportive by secondary school staff.
- Where family support roles in secondary schools are present, this actively supports families navigate new systems and maintain visibility.
- Trauma-informed approaches emphasise psychological safety, relational connection, and predictable routines. Training attendance and pastoral teams in EBSA-specific strategies improves early intervention and reduces stigma.
- Maintaining links to primary schools through reunion events, peer mentoring, or parent buddy systems can reinforce belonging and reduce the emotional disruption of transition. This is especially important in boroughs like Camden where Y6 cohorts disperse widely.
- Peer mentoring and student-led workshops have shown positive impacts on wellbeing, resilience, and engagement. Involving pupils and parents in designing transition support ensures relevance and builds agency, particularly for those with lived experience of EBSA.