



Secondary SEND Education & EBSA in Milton Keynes

Listening Event

Tuesday 12th March 2024 7pm-8.30pm

17 parent carers attended.

INTRODUCTION

We held this listening event for parents and carers of Secondary aged children with SEND needs who were struggling to attend settings in Milton Keynes. Parents/carers were able to feedback and share their suggestions about what is working well and what's not working well.

The listening event was focused on the [EBSA pathway](#) from Milton Keynes City Council which some parents/carers had not seen.

Copies of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) A guide for parents and Carers March 2023 was given out.

The parents/carers split into smaller groups and shared their experiences and then put forward positive actions they would like schools to do, and changes they feel need to happen.

Parents told us:

WHAT IS NOT GOING WELL

- Children's needs are not being met.
- Until a diagnosis, school policies are not being followed and the child's right to Education is not happening by the Law and Guidance.
- Parents/carers are not being listened to or believed.

- Parents feel the current system watches the child fail before action is taken. This fails trust with the child and is detrimental to their health and anxiety and success. Trust is the foundation of the relationship with the child and the school and their right to Education.
- Our children have high potential and are above the national average, but the fear is watching their grades drop when could have achieved even higher. To support the child's potential, recognise each are an individual and to build trust, this would help resolve some issues.
- If a child didn't want to go home after the school day and showed anxiety etc. the school would be concerned for their safeguarding. It should be taken more seriously when a child is displaying such anxiety about going to school and the long-term effects.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- All teachers to be SEND trained, children not to be generalised but to remember that all children are individual and have diverse needs.
- Be flexible to needs, that are sensory i.e. uniform, toilet breaks, access to water, time out, safe space, fire drill and other events to be considered on the impact of the child that day on top of all other experiences when it is out of routine. Are all rules critical or can there be exceptions to sensory needs.
- The full school day and daily lives of an SEN child and the extra stresses they experience and with hormones, sensory needs, feeling different, not supported needs to be thought of when one teacher may not be aware of the rest of the day.
- Children need more praise and to celebrate their individual successes this will help with self-esteem.
- To recognise any positive success for each child, and in different ways, a child may not want to achieve a certificate in assembly and to be aware of the child more in their own preferences.
- Can there be more creative learning, not always academic learning, more lunchtime options not only standing around, football or canteen.
- Can there be any flexibility with the school timetable.
- Safe quiet calm spaces need to be always available, and not used for overflow issues.
- Parents/carers need to be listened to too and to be believed. Parents know their child the best and teachers could use their knowledge to guide and support further.

- Children and parents/carers to feel supported until diagnosis. Recognise parents need counselling through the emotional stress of applying for support, completing all forms, pushing to be heard. This affects the whole family, and it is felt by the child further.
- All schools to follow their own policies.
- School is the barrier even with a clear EHCP, reports and assessments, they are in control of the process, a neutral person to help oversee things would be beneficial.
- Schools say they can meet needs even if they know the child needs more, the months of trauma that follow are not acceptable. If it is a budget thing, extra resources, staff, paperwork to not complete plan, assess, review for children and to be honest quicker.

LIVED EXPERIENCES/CASE STUDIES

It has been reported by parents that GPs are now not writing any kind of sign-off letter for school avoidance, it must be the Education Psychologist or CAMHS but there is a long waiting list. This leads to unauthorised absences being recorded.

The threshold for SALT CAMHS is too high.

Parents are being told there are no appointments for community paediatricians.

Need to know what happens after the EBSA Guidance has been followed, and the situation for when the child is not improving.

Schools say they can meet needs even if they know the child needs more, the months of trauma that follow are not fair. Is it a budget thing, extra resources, staff, paperwork to not complete plan, assess, reviews for children and to be honest quicker.

The word 'avoidance' is a strong word.

One Academy has 21 online classes but there is no direct communication.

No Senco team at one School.

Lack of awareness of SEND Autism at another Academy; SEND team to individual teachers isn't working, no extra support being offered (resource implications), sensory needs are not being met when 5 minutes late.

It was reported that another school and Senco said they can't help with education as no diagnosis, and support for learning (SFL) cannot be accessed without a diagnosis.

Waited a year and a half before a FACT+ was filled out by the school.

7% attendance was not as bad as others were told by the school.

The 'safe' space is in the library, but her daughter doesn't feel safe in there as that's where older children eat their lunch!

Currently a 2 year wait for ASD diagnoses.

Parents feel there is nothing in place to prevent children getting into a 'dark' place but instead that want to try to cure it after. Parents feel the school is too crowded and big and there is not enough staff to support all children effectively.

Another parent described that their child was on the waiting list for an Autism assessment but has no idea how long the community pediatrics waiting list is first. Parent stated, there are no 'safe' places at her daughter's school which is too big, noisy and over-whelming. Ideally parents would like more online lessons and practical lessons at school.

Another parent described their child's school whose SEN teacher was missing for many months and had only just visited. Guidance not being met. No EHCP and no support or education. Needs a safe place or a wellbeing hub. No flexibility and they are not following their own policies. Are marking as absence as unauthorised.

Lunch options are only football, standing around or canteen, no play/creativity, or other clubs/options.

SUMMARY

A previous coffee morning was held by PACA on 28th April 2023 highlighting EBSA as a theme when the same concerns had been raised by parents. They asked:

"What is being done?"

"What were the next steps?"

“When are things going to improve?”

Young adults are suffering from this cycle with an increase in serious Mental Health worries, crime etc.

The bigger picture is about funding, schools are too big, lack of choice, MK is constantly growing.

Require more HUBs next to schools.

Transition to secondary schools – smaller groups with gradual intake over one term at least and even at primary school year 6 and previous years to support and prepare more for secondary school.

Be more proactive instead of reactive.

More training for Teachers and support for parents/children.

External, independent person checking school policies are being followed and correct/honest assess plan reviews are carried out and in the correct time scales.

ACTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This report will be sent to the professionals that were unable to attend and a meeting will be arranged with them. PACA will then feedback to our Members.

Arrange an online meeting for PACA members to build up requests from families and to think of possible creative solutions.

The SEND Code of Practice update to include early intervention, as there are not enough school places in MK.

CAMHS has a high threshold to gain help, earlier support is essential, an update of how this is going in primary schools.

Gain staff feedback, what do teachers feel is needed, would they like further training? Could they work with parents more, as parents are knowledgeable and working together may be beneficial.

Are all staff aware of the EBSA policy from LA

Other training that could be considered – ‘Mental Health’, ‘Autistic Masking’, ‘Autistic Burnout’ impact of bullying and ACE’s etc.

Realise maybe cannot change current school children, but find ways to change and shape the future of primary aged children now, ahead of later years.

USEFUL LINKS AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT

<https://pacamk.org/help-and-advice-about-send/>

<https://www.mksendlocaloffer.co.uk/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa>