

FROM COMPLIANCE TO PARTICIPATION

Engage Provision at The Grange Therapeutic School
A leadership model for EBSA re-engagement
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THE BIG QUESTION

What were we trying to understand?

“What is the pedagogy and learning pathway for students with Emotionally Based School Avoidance?”

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Challenge

The leadership challenge is clear: EBSA is not resolved through pressure, incentives or compliance-led attendance drives. Leaders create the conditions for attendance by protecting relational safety, strengthening belonging and ensuring every pupil has a credible pathway back into meaningful participation.

Leadership shift: stop chasing attendance; build the conditions for participation.

WHAT WE TRIED

The Innovation

- A trauma-informed and neuro-affirming Engage pathway for pupils with EBSA.
- Bespoke timetables built around interests, wellbeing, life skills and gradual academic learning.
- Integrated education and clinical thinking: formulation, relational safety, co-regulation and meaningful learning.
- A whole-child, whole-network approach that worked alongside families and social care, recognising progress in community participation, social development and health as well as academic attainment.

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Setting: **Specialist therapeutic school Engage provision**

Participants: **3 pupils with EBSA profiles**

Timeframe: one-year minimum pre/post review

Measures: **attendance, incidents, engagement, wellbeing and voice**

Frameworks: trauma-informed pedagogy and Ways to Wellbeing

LEADERSHIP PATHWAY: ATTENDANCE IS THE RESULT, NOT THE STARTING DEMAND

Safety & regulation →

Trust & belonging →

Interest-led engagement →

Meaningful participation →

Attendance & achievement

IMPACT AT A GLANCE — WHAT CHANGED?

Attendance ↑

Attendance increased for all three pupils across the review period.

Incidents ↓

Incidents reduced substantially for all three pupils across the review period.

Engagement ↑

Became visible, sustained and meaningful

VOICES FROM THE PROJECT — WHAT WE HEARD

PUPIL VOICE

“I’ve passed Maths and English. I join in with some lessons and I’d never thought that would happen.”

STAFF VOICE

“Not how we can get you to comply, but how can we help you to feel safe enough to participate.”

PARENT / CARER VOICE

“He’s turning into a very well rounded, confident young man.”

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

What should leaders do differently?

1. Make attendance the outcome — not the intervention.
2. Lead first with safety, regulation and belonging.
3. Build small, trusted teams around pupils.
4. Design flexible pathways that rebuild confidence.

FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

What changed because of this work — and what should now be scaled?

- Define the Engage EBSA pathway clearly.
- Use wellbeing data to shape provision.
- Evidence impact beyond attendance alone.
- Create one shared language across teams and families.
- Build post-school transition into the Engage pathway from day one, using small steps in engagement and attendance to support longer-term participation in adulthood and the community.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Future development: move from promising local practice to a defined, transferable EBSA pathway.

- Formalise the pathway and curriculum model.
- Test transferability across OFG settings.
- Use Ways to Wellbeing to evidence progress.
- Build staff confidence in EBSA practice.
- Co-produce early transition plans with pupils, families and wider support networks, linking engagement, attendance and wellbeing to realistic post-school destinations.

KEY TAKEAWAY — ONE MESSAGE TO REMEMBER

Belonging is the intervention. Attendance is the outcome.

