The Calm Classroom — Free Primary Resource Pack (School Anxiety / EBSA)

You bought *When School Feels Too Big*, or you're thinking about it. Either way, here are the fourteen tools it points to, ready to print. They're built for a real classroom and a real frightened child at the gate, not for a display board. Print them, fill them in *with* the child or the parent where it says so, and keep them in the drawer you actually open.

Everything here is for Reception to Year 6. Every tool is built from what the evidence and the England guidance actually support, so you can defend using it. Nothing here is legal advice or a diagnosis. The golden rule runs through all of it: you notice and stay steady — a real SEN pattern goes to your **SENCo**, a welfare worry to your **DSL**, straight away. You never refer to CAMHS or an educational psychologist yourself. Where something depends on your own school's policy or current statutory guidance, it's flagged so you check before you act.

> *The Calm Classroom series · Emma Whitcombe · emma-whitcombe.co.uk · Legal position: November 2026*

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1 EBSA Early-Warning Checklist (K1)

Keep one running for any pupil who's started to niggle at you, fill it in as you go rather than from memory at term's end, and start watching from the 94% mark — not from persistent absence.

Pupil: …… **Year:** …… **Key adult:** ……
Date opened: …… **Current attendance:** …… % *(watch from 94%)*

Tick what you're seeing and add the detail — it's the *pattern*, not any single line, that tells the story:

- ☐ **Absence pattern** — the shape, not just the amount: Mondays / day back after holidays / clustering around the joins. Notes: ……
- ☐ **Lateness** — creeping, recurring. Dates / frequency: ……
- ☐ **Missing single lessons** — reliably 'unwell' for the same lesson (PE, assembly, …), even with good overall attendance. Which: ……
- ☐ **Somatic complaints — schooldays vs weekends** — tummy aches, headaches, nausea on school mornings that fade by Saturday. The on/off pattern is the tell: ……
- ☐ **Withdrawal** — the dimming: less hand up, edge of the playground, more worry about small things. Notes: ……
- ☐ **The masker flag** — looks completely fine all day, falls apart at home (too often a girl, too often missed). Notes: ……

The 94% line crossed? ☐ Yes → open the first conversation *curious, not concerned*, bring parents in early and no-blame, and share with the SENCo. ☐ Not yet → keep logging.

2 Push and Pull Factors Sheet (K2)

Fill this in *with* the parent, in pencil — it maps what's pushing the child away from school against what's pulling them home, so the real drivers surface; this term's map isn't gospel next term.

> **Child:** …… **Year:** …… **Date:** …… **Review date:** ……

PUSH — what about school feels too big	PULL — what draws the child home
Sensory (noise, light, crowds, the dining hall):	*Comfort / safety* of being at home:
Social (friendships, being put on the spot, unstructured times):	*Worry about a parent* / someone at home:
Academic (a feared subject, reading aloud, demand):	*Change at home* (new baby, illness, loss, separation):
Transitions & change (new teacher, new room, a return after illness, a loss):	*A parent's own anxiety* / other pulls:

- **School-based factors:** …… **Family-based:** ……
- **Child-based — what this child brings** *(temperament, a known or suspected SEND, a history of separation difficulty, somatic symptoms)*: ……
- **In their own words** *(verbatim)* — **child:** …… **parent:** ……
- **What we think the avoidance is for** *(a hypothesis to tick and date, not a verdict)*: ☐ to escape a bad feeling ☐ to get away from a particular situation ☐ to stay close to someone ☐ to get something better at home · **Date:** ……

3 Wellbeing Check-in / 5-Point Scale (K3)

Agree the five levels *and* the one thing you both do at each one *together, in the calm* — so the bad Monday runs a shared plan, not a fresh fight; sit with the child, draw the faces, let them name them.

Built with: …… **Date:** ……

Level	Traffic light	Our face (colour it in together)	What it feels like (child's words)	Our agreed strategy at this level
1 — Calm	🟢 Green	◯		
2 — A bit wobbly	🟡 Yellow	◯		
3 — Worried	🟠 Amber	◯		
4 — Scared, near tipping	🟠 Orange	◯		
5 — Overwhelmed	🔴 Red	◯		

The agreed action is the part most people forget and the part that makes it work. A *Incredible 5-Point Scale* exists commercially — you don't need it; this home-grown version is yours to copy freely.

4 Pupil Passport / One-Page Profile (K4)

This is the child's own page — they design it, in their words, and it rides ahead of them into every classroom and every supply teacher's day.

My name: …… My class: …… Drawn by me on: ……

What helps me	What stresses me / my triggers

My key adult is: …… My back-up adult is: ……
My safe space is: ……
What I do when it gets too big: ……
What I'd like my teachers to know about me:
……
(Room for the child to draw or stick a photo.)

5 Worry Ladder (K5)

Fill this in *with* the child and their key adult — the easiest, tiniest step at the bottom, an ordinary full day at the top — and only climb a rung when the one below has gone from scary to *boring*.

Child: …… **Key adult:** …… **Started:** ……

Rung	The step (in the child's words)	Done it?	Felt boring yet?
TOP **Top — a full ordinary day**		☐	☐
5		☐	☐
4		☐	☐
3		☐	☐
2		☐	☐
1 — the tiniest first step		☐	☐

Move at the speed of boredom, not the calendar. Add a rung back in when one's too big. Bank and name every small win out loud.

6 Key-Adult & Safe-Base Plan (K6)

One page that turns the soft start into a shared, written agreement — complete it *with* the child so it survives a supply teacher and means the same thing to you, the child, the parent and the SENCo.

- **My key adult is:** …… **My back-up adult is:** ……
- **When we talk:** morning check-in at …… · home-time check-in at …… · and any time I show my card.
- **Where I find them:** ……
- **My soft start looks like:** *(a job, a quiet activity, the same way every day)* ……
- **My safe space / base is:** …… *(chosen for dignity — the library corner, the pastoral area — not a 'time-out for being naughty')* **A calm adult who's there:** ……
- **My exit card:** ☐ I have one. When I show it, I can go to my safe base — no questions, no explaining, and I'm expected back.
- **My link to home (transitional object)** *(toy, photo, something of a parent's)*: …… *(I keep ……; Mum/carer keeps ……)*
- **What we do if my key adult is busy:** ……
- **Reviewed on:** ……

7 In-class Reasonable-Adjustments Card (K7)

A tick-box menu — fill it in (or take it to your SENCo to agree), then give a copy to every adult who teaches the child, so the plan doesn't live only in your head.

> **Child:** …… **Year:** …… **Agreed with SENCo on:** ……

- **Demand** ☐ no reading aloud cold ☐ pre-warned before their turn ☐ reduced / no homework ☐ differentiated task ☐ named role instead of full participation (PE, assembly) ☐ trigger subject adjusted short-term
- **Senses** ☐ low-stimulation seat (back to wall, out of the gangway, away from the door) ☐ ear defenders / low-stim, freely available ☐ sensory / movement break *before* the hard part ☐ light & acoustic check done ☐ quieter place to be at playtime
- **Exit** ☐ time-out / exit card ☐ agreed safe base named: …… ☐ leaves 2 minutes early to beat the corridors ☐ goes ahead of the line at transitions (hall, playground, lunch) ☐ *return* expected and welcomed
- **Safe base** ☐ least-stigmatising option chosen ☐ not labelled 'Learning Support' / the naughty chair ☐ quiet route to it
- **Review** ☐ what we've dropped: …… ☐ review date: …… ☐ shared with: all teaching & lunchtime staff, supply
- **Other:** ……

8 Home–School Agreement (K8)

One page, filled in *together* — you, the parent, and the child's voice where they can give it — and copied so both ends hold the same plan.

> **A note before we start (read it together):** This is not about whose fault anything is. The child isn't being difficult, and no one's a bad parent or a bad teacher. School feels frightening right now, and this is the plan we're building together to help — home, school, and child.

> **Child:** …… **Year:** …… **Date:** ……

- **What we both want for the child (shared goals):** ……
- **The morning routine we'll keep** *(prepared the evening before; steady sleep, breakfast, leaving time)*: ……
- **Short agreed goodbye, same words daily:** '……'
- **The words we both use:** …… *(one calm line, said at home and at the gate)*
- **The adjustments we've agreed at school** *(see K6 / K7)*: ……
- **What home will do:** ……
- **Our named contact at school:** …… **How often we'll be in touch:** …… *(two-way: consulting, not just informing)*
- **What a wobble looks like, and who calls whom:** ……
- **Review date:** ……

9 Transition Plan / Booklet (K9)

A preventive hand-over for the children most at risk at a move — Year 6 to Year 7, or any mid-year school change — started *before* the change, not after it goes wrong.

Child: …… **Moving from:** …… **Moving to:** …… **Move date:** ……

- ☐ Feeder/sending school has flagged any early separation difficulty or earlier EBSA — *even if mild*
- ☐ Extra visits to the new setting arranged (quiet times, see the room, meet the key adult)
- ☐ Photo booklet of the new place: gate, classroom, toilets, dining hall, who to find
- ☐ Named key adult at the new school, introduced before day one: ……
- ☐ Safe base and exit arrangement agreed *before* the start: ……
- ☐ Pupil Passport (K4) travels ahead of the child to all new staff
- ☐ A familiar face / friend in the new class where possible: ……
- ☐ First-week soft start and a check-in date booked: ……

What worries the child most about the move: ……
What's gone well at this school that the new one should keep: ……

10 'What We Don't Do' Staff Card (K10)

Laminate this for the wall by the kettle and agree it as a whole team — so every adult who meets this child is reading from the same page the moment more people get involved.

K10 — What we don't do (and what we do instead)

We don't call a child out in front of the class about their absence or anxiety. *We do* speak quietly, one-to-one — public shame deepens avoidance.
We don't treat anxious absence as naughtiness or punish it. *We do* record it correctly and treat the fear as real — it's fight-or-flight, not a choice.
We don't make promises we can't keep. *We do* only commit to what we'll actually do, then do it.
We don't break an agreement we've made with the child — not even once. *We do* honour the exit card, the safe base, the check-in, every time — a broken agreement breaks trust and brings regression.
We don't dismiss tummy aches and headaches as 'putting it on'. *We do* take somatic complaints seriously — they're real fight-or-flight signals.
We don't force or 'rescue' a frightened child in the moment. *We do* stay steady, lower the demand, keep to the plan — rescuing rewards the escape and deepens the cycle.

11 Return-after-absence Plan (K11)

A one-page graded re-entry after a long stretch off (illness, holidays, a crisis) — co-produced with family and child, and reviewed on a fixed day so it never quietly goes stale.

Child: …… **Year:** …… **First day back:** ……

This week's rung *(from the Worry Ladder, K5)*: ……
Soft start — arrival time & door: ……
Key adult (by name): …… **Safe base:** ……
Going-home routine: ……
What a wobble looks like, and who calls whom: ……
Temporary reduced timetable? ☐ Yes — hours agreed: …… *(lawful only if temporary, agreed by school + parents, recorded as **Code C2** / authorised; never a behaviour tool, never a drift)*
END DATE: …… **REVIEW DATE:** …… *(the bit no one can miss — the child is entitled to full-time education; part-time is the bridge back)*

12 Class Wellbeing Check-in (K12)

The K3 five-point scale for the whole class — a ninety-second daily routine, not a feelings lesson.

The board — first thing on it, before the date or the learning objective: *How are you arriving this morning?*
Under it, five faces in marker — 🟢 green · 🟡 yellow · 🟠 amber · 🟠 orange · 🔴 red — and a column of named pegs (or cards to flip, or names on a strip) the children move themselves.

The routine — every day, same time, same way:

- ☐ Everyone does it — if only the anxious children check in, it becomes a flag
- ☐ Children move their own peg; you don't hover — nobody is watched while they tell the truth
- ☐ Ninety seconds, then the register · clock the ambers without making a thing of it

What to do with an amber — not a conversation in front of everyone; a quiet word, later.

Say, quietly, in passing, mid-morning: 'I saw you put yourself on amber this morning. You don't have to tell me why. I just wanted you to know I noticed, and I'm here if you want me.'

If you see …	Do this
Amber, orange or red	The quiet word above — noticed, not interrogated. For a child with their own K3 plan, run the action you agreed for that level.
Red 'for the drama'	Don't police it. A quiet *'tough morning?'* costs you nothing.
Green every single day, no matter what	More worrying, not less — perpetual fine is the masker's signature. Don't challenge the board; know the child well enough that it isn't your only window.

Where the line is: the board is one data point; your eyes are the others. A child still slipping — below around 94% attendance, mornings still going wrong — is a named child for the **SENCo**. Anything touching welfare or safety goes to the **DSL**, straight away.

13 The Law at a Glance (K13)

The chapter boiled down to the lines worth keeping in your planner — for the next time a soft-folded letter lands on a parent who thinks they're about to be taken to court. Not legal advice. *(Legal position: November 2026.)*

The law at a glance — England, primary

- **Support comes first.** The statutory guidance leads with help, not legal action (July 2026 edition).
- **Absence is counted in sessions, not days** — two per school day. The numbers look bigger than 'days off'.
- **Anxiety can be illness.** Absence because a child is too unwell to attend, mental *or* physical, is **Code I — authorised** when the school accepts it as illness. Ordinary nerves alone don't excuse absence (paragraph 54). No routine doctor's note needed.
- **Fines only touch unauthorised absence**, and normally only past **ten unauthorised sessions within ten school weeks**. Authorised illness doesn't count towards it.
- **The school never prosecutes** — only the local authority can. Penalty notices come from a headteacher, the local authority or the police, never a class teacher.
- **There's a defence in law** — section 444 of the Education Act 1996: no offence where a child is absent through illness or unavoidable cause.
- **Part-time is allowed** only in very exceptional cases, temporarily, with an end date and review, and **never to manage behaviour**.
- **Disabling anxiety may be a disability** (Equality Act 2010) — bringing an **anticipatory duty** to make reasonable adjustments, not just goodwill.
- **Off-rolling is banned**; **home education needs no permission**. Neither is a class teacher's call.

Said plainly, to a worried parent: 'When he's genuinely too anxious to come in, that can count as being unwell — the same as if he had a temperature. Illness absence is normally authorised, and we don't routinely ask for a doctor's note for it. The coding isn't my call, though, so let me check with our attendance lead how his days have been recorded.'

14 End-of-Term Reflection Prompts (K14)

Not a new tool, just five honest questions for the end of a hard term — for you, not the file. Park the marking for ten minutes and answer them for yourself.

1. What did each of my EBSA children actually manage this term that they couldn't in September? Name the small, secured gains — they fade from memory faster than the bad mornings.

……

2. Which relapse hit me hardest — and was it really a failure, or a predictable dip I took personally?

……

3. Where am I carrying something alone that ought to be shared — and who's the one person I could say that to?

……

4. Am I quietly doing the therapist's job as well as my own?

……

5. What's one thing that would protect *my* capacity next term, however small?

……

Your own line — tick any that have been true for more than a few weeks:

- ☐ Dread on a Sunday night that's about one child's morning
- ☐ Lying awake running the gate scene
- ☐ A flatness or a short fuse that isn't like you
- ☐ Resentment leaking towards a child you know is frightened, not naughty
- ☐ The work following you home and not leaving

Two or three ticked? That's your line — don't tough it out alone: your SENCo or phase lead for the shared load on the case; your line manager or SLT if it's real and ongoing; staff counselling, supervision or an employee assistance line if your school has one; your GP if it's tipping into low mood or anxiety of your own.

> *Pick one tool that fits the child in front of you this week — not all fourteen at once. All free at **emma-whitcombe.co.uk**.*