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

You bought *The Empty Chair*, or you're thinking about it. Either way, here are the eleven core templates it points to (K1–K11), plus the eight extra sheets and cards the chapters mention along the way (K12–K19), ready to print. They're built for a real timetable and a real frightened teenager, not for a display board. Take the two or three that fit the student in front of you — you don't need all of it for any one case.

Everything here is for Years 7 to 11. 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)

Log the *shape* of the absence across the timetable, not just the total — fill it in as you go, and start watching from the 94% mark, not from persistent absence.

Student: …… **Year:** …… **Form tutor / 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 / timetable fragmentation** — reliably absent for the same subject or period even with decent overall attendance. Which: ……
- ☐ **Somatic complaints — schooldays vs weekends** — stomach aches, headaches, nausea on school mornings that fade by Saturday. The on/off pattern is the tell: ……
- ☐ **Withdrawal** — the dimming: quieter, edge of things, more worry about small things. Notes: ……
- ☐ **The masker flag** — looks fine in lessons 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 and the student, in pencil — it maps what's driving the student away from school against what's pulling them home, so the real drivers surface; this term's map isn't gospel next term.

Student: …… **Year:** …… **Date:** …… **Review date:** ……

PUSH — what about school feels too big	PULL — what draws the student home
Sensory (corridors between lessons, the canteen, noise, crowds):	*Comfort / safety* of being at home:
Social (friendships, being put on the spot, toilets, unstructured time):	*Worry about a parent* / someone at home:
Academic (a feared subject, reading aloud, exam pressure, demand):	*Change at home* (illness, loss, separation):
Transitions & change (new building, fragmented timetable, a return after illness, exam season):	*Other pulls:*

School-based factors: …… **Family-based:** …… **Child-based:** ……
What the avoidance seems to be *for* (escape something / get to something): ……

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 a hard morning runs a shared plan, not a fresh negotiation; a number is something a student can give when words won't come.

Built with: …… **Date:** ……

Level	Traffic light	What it feels like (student'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 version is yours to copy freely.

4 Pupil Passport / One-Page Profile (K4)

This is the student's own page — written *with* them, in their words — and it rides ahead of them into every classroom, so the maths, geography and supply teacher all open the lesson already knowing what matters.

My name: …… **My form:** …… **Written by me on:** ……

What helps me	What tips me over / my triggers

My key adult is: …… **My back-up adult is:** ……
My safe space / base is: ……
My exit card: ☐ I have one — I put it on the desk and walk to my base, no questions asked.
What to do if I'm struggling in your lesson: ……
What I'd like all my teachers to know about me:
……

5 Worry Ladder (K5)

Fill this in *with* the student and their key adult — the smallest first 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*.

Student: …… **Key adult:** …… **Started:** ……

Rung	The step (in the student's words)	Done it?	Felt boring yet?
TOP **Top — a full ordinary day**		☐	☐
5	*(e.g. a fuller day / a feared subject)*	☐	☐
4	*(e.g. one whole lesson with the class)*	☐	☐
3	*(e.g. into reception, then the library base)*	☐	☐
2	*(e.g. to the car park, meet the key adult)*	☐	☐
1 — the smallest 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 arrangement into a shared, written agreement — complete it *with* the student so it survives a busy timetable and means the same thing to you, the student, the parent and the SENCo.

My key adult is: …… **My back-up adult is:** ……
When we meet: start-of-day check-in at …… · end-of-day check-in at …… · and any time I show my card.
Where we meet: ……
My safe space / base is: …… *(chosen for dignity — the library, a pastoral zone — not labelled 'Learning Support', somewhere others use for ordinary reasons)*
My exit / time-out card: ☐ I have one. When I put it on the desk I can walk to my base — no questions, no explaining, never a sanction, and I'm expected back.
My quieter route / timing between lessons: ……
Reviewed on: ……

7 In-class Reasonable-Adjustments Card (K7)

A tick-box menu — the SENCo or tutor ticks what applies and drops it straight into the one-page profile, then it reaches every adult on the timetable, not just the ones you happened to brief.

Student: …… **Year:** …… **Agreed with SENCo on:** ……

Demand ☐ no cold-calling / no forced reading aloud ☐ pre-warned before their turn ☐ reduced / no homework ☐ differentiated task ☐ trigger subject adjusted short-term
Senses ☐ low-stimulation seat (back to wall, near the door, out of the gangway) ☐ ear defenders / low-stim, freely available ☐ sensory / movement break *before* the hard part ☐ light & acoustic check done ☐ quieter place at break / lunch (canteen and toilets are common triggers)
Exit & base ☐ time-out / exit card to an agreed base: …… ☐ leaves 2 minutes early to beat the corridors ☐ *return* expected and welcomed
Exams (AARA) ☐ flag to SENCo *now* to build a **'normal way of working'** and a 'picture of need' across Years 7–9 ☐ note: low-level exam nerves alone are **not** grounds for separate invigilation — a real need is evidenced the normal way, through the SENCo
Other: ……

8 Home–School Agreement (K8)

One page, filled in *together* — you, the parent, and the student's voice — 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 student 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 student.

Student: …… **Year:** …… **Date:** ……
What we both want for the student (shared goals): ……
The morning routine we'll keep *(prepared the evening before; steady sleep, food, leaving time)*: ……
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 & Exam-Season Booklet (K9)

For the two pinch points that make secondary EBSA worse — the move up into Year 7 and the run-up to exams — started *before* the pressure lands, not after it goes wrong.

Student: …… **Year:** ……

Part A — Transition (Year 6→7 or a school move):

- ☐ Feeder school has flagged any early separation difficulty or earlier EBSA — *even if mild*
- ☐ Extra visits to the new setting at quiet times; see the rooms, the canteen, the toilets, the route between lessons
- ☐ Photo / map booklet of the building, with who to find and where
- ☐ Named key adult introduced before day one: ……
- ☐ Safe base and exit arrangement agreed *before* the start
- ☐ Pupil Passport (K4) travels ahead to all subject staff

Part B — Exam season:

- ☐ Flagged to SENCo *early* — access arrangements must reflect the student's **normal way of working**, built on a documented 'picture of need' across Years 7–9, not switched on in the spring
- ☐ Walk the exam hall when empty: their desk, where the invigilator stands, the toilet, how they signal a rest break
- ☐ If granted, extra time / supervised rest breaks are known in advance *(rest breaks are not 'thinking time')*
- ☐ Arrive early, settle in a familiar quiet space, walk in with the key adult — not swept in with the crowd
- ☐ **Remember:** attendance and staying connected beat a perfect set of results a student made themselves ill for

What worries the student most: ……

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

One side, laminated, agreed as a whole team — for the colleague who has this student twice a week and no time for the back-story, so everyone is reading from the same page.

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

We don't call a student 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 defiance 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 (an exit card, a room) without checking. *We do* only commit to what we'll actually deliver, then deliver it.
We don't break an agreement we've made with the student — 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 stomach 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 student 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 gap (illness, holidays, a crisis) — co-produced with family and student, and reviewed on a fixed day so the first day back isn't left to chance.

Student: …… **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 student is entitled to full-time education; a managed return is never a managed exit, and off-rolling is prohibited)*

12 EBSA vs Truancy Sheet (K12)

Worth pinning above your desk: almost every wrong turn in an EBSA case starts with mistaking one for the other.

	Truancy	EBSA
What it is	A choice to be elsewhere	Anxiety that physically stops a student attending
Can't or won't?	Could come, and decides not to — heading *towards* somewhere better	Often fights to come, and can't — fleeing *from* somewhere worse
The pattern	Spreads across whole days, often the easy or unsupervised ones	Clusters on the threatening lessons or parts of the day
The body	No consistent physical pattern	Real stomach aches, headaches, nausea on school mornings that ease at weekends
How the student reads	Unbothered rather than distressed	Fear rather than defiance — sometimes a masked, too-smooth 'fine'
On the register	Unauthorised absence; lives inside the penalty-notice system	Recorded as illness, it's authorised (**Code I**), and sits outside the penalty system entirely

The test, when you're unsure: *can't or won't?* Watch the body and the pattern, not the percentage. Discipline and avoidance need opposite responses.

Student: …… **Year:** …… **Date:** ……
What I'm seeing points to: ☐ can't (EBSA) ☐ won't (truancy) ☐ not sure yet — keep logging (K1, K14) · **Shared with:** ☐ SENCo ☐ a welfare worry → DSL, straight away

13 Masking Signs Sheet (K13)

The masking signs next to what to do about each — the face is managed; the body and the timing aren't.

Student: ..... **Year:** ..... **Started:** .....

What you might notice	What to do about it	Seen (dates)
A scatter of single days off, nothing flagged	Back the figures, not the face. Keep quiet, dated notes.	
Work slipping late — up most of the night	Privately: 'We can sort the deadlines out.'	
A too-smooth 'fine' — half a second too fast	A question, not an answer. Never challenge the mask in public; tell your head of year or SENCo.	
Stomach aches on school mornings that lift on Saturday	Believe the body over the smile.	
Fraying at the edges — scratchy handwriting, the hand that no longer goes up	Check in sideways, in passing: 'How are you doing, honestly?'	
Certain moments avoided — reading aloud, presenting, the canteen	Take the exposure out: 'I'll never pick you cold.' Keep that promise.	
Fine all day, falls apart at home (a parent tells you)	Take it seriously — maskers hold it together until they're safe.	

Where the line is: worry about mental health or self-harm → **DSL** and your pastoral lead or **SENCo**, straight away, in writing. No diagnostic questions, no promise of secrecy, never CAMHS yourself. **999** only for immediate danger.

14 Week-Mapping Grid (K14)

Lay the week side by side and mark which lessons the student is actually missing — one miss is an incident; the same one three weeks running is a pattern.

Student: …… **Year:** …… **Week beginning:** ……
Key: ✓ in · **L** late · **T** toilet pass / left the room · **S** skipped this lesson · **A** absent all day

Period	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Period 1					
Period 2					
Break					
Period 3					
Period 4					
Lunch					
Period 5					

Read the shape — tick what the grid is telling you:

- ☐ The **same subject** missed far more than chance would explain: ……
- ☐ The **same teacher** or the **same slot**, e.g. after an unstructured break or lunch: ……
- ☐ Lessons with **reading aloud, paired work or presenting**: ……
- ☐ **Lateness on Mondays**, never on a Friday · one-day illnesses that melt away at weekends

Then: take the pattern to your **SENCo** or head of year before anyone reaches for report or a detention. A welfare worry goes to the **DSL**, straight away.

15 Colleague-Briefing Card (K15)

The ninety-second version — a small, repeatable script and a two-line summary to hand or read to a subject teacher, so every adult on the timetable gets the same message, the same way. Print a stack and give one to every name on the student's timetable.

Student: …… **Year / form:** …… **From (key adult / tutor):** ……
Two-line summary: ……
……

The script — say it out loud, at the printer or the classroom door:

'…… in your period ……. He/she gets very anxious about …… , so please …… **(ask 1)**. He/she also …… **(ask 2)**. If he/she shows the card, just nod them through — don't query it. That's it, that's the whole thing.'

Keep it to: ☐ the two or three behaviours they'll actually meet ☐ what to do when they do ☐ no jargon

Leave out: the history, the diagnosis, the safeguarding file — none of it belongs on this card.

Subject	Teacher	Briefed on	Card given
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐

Use it with K7: K7 decides what the adjustments are; this card makes sure the same adjustments actually reach every room.

16 Revision & Exam-Anxiety Plan (K16)

A one-page scaffold that turns the infinite spec into bounded stepping stones — one topic, twenty-five minutes, one past-paper question, then stop — with a column for the access arrangements being put in place, so the student can see in writing what's actually been sorted.

Student: …… **Subject(s):** …… **Built with (key adult / teacher):** …… **Date:** ……

Day	Stepping stone (one topic · 25 minutes · one past-paper question)	Done?	Access arrangements being put in place (SENCo)
		☐	
		☐	
		☐	
		☐	
		☐	

The rule: we're not doing all of it tonight. One thing, twenty-five minutes, and then you're done — finished or not.
Access arrangements are the SENCo's to assess and put in place with the exams officer — they must reflect the student's **normal way of working**, built up over time. Supervised rest breaks are not 'thinking time'; low-level exam nerves alone are not grounds for separate invigilation. Don't promise an arrangement you can't deliver.
Check-in this fortnight (K3): today's number …… / 5 · who the student tells: ……
If the plan's fine and she still can't start: the block isn't organisational — stop refining the plan and bring in the SENCo.

17 Escalation Flowchart (K17)

A map to keep for yourself — who opens which door. *(Legal position: November 2026.)*

Start: you, reading the register. Notice, steady, record, hand over. **Ask first: is this about *need*, or about *safety*?**

NEED → the SEN rail	SAFETY → the safeguarding rail
1. SENCo — flag it early and specifically, in writing	**1. DSL** — straight away, in writing: what you saw, factual and dated
2. SEN Support — graduated approach; reasonable adjustments	**2. Not actioned, child still at risk?** Escalate, including above the DSL
3. Senior mental health lead · MHST — early help	**3. Children's social care** (child in need) — the **DSL's** decision
4. EP — where progress stalls, via the SENCo	**Immediate danger → 999**, no waiting. DSL and deputy out of reach: a senior leader or children's social care.
5. CAMHS — clinical need, via GP or SENCo	
EHC needs assessment — when SEN Support isn't enough (SENCo)	

What you bring to a referral: ☐ the register marked up **by lesson**, not just by day (K14) ☐ the triggers you've spotted ☐ what you've already tried, and what happened ☐ what you don't know yet

Never: self-refer to CAMHS · ring the EP service · phone social care direct while a DSL or deputy can be reached. **Go up your own chain — never across it.**

18 The Law at a Glance (K18)

The chapter boiled down to the lines worth keeping in your planner. Not legal advice. *(Legal position: November 2026.)*

> **The law at a glance — England, secondary**

- **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. Persistent absence is 10%+ of sessions; severe is 50%+.
- **Anxiety can be illness.** Absence for mental *or* physical ill health is **Code I — authorised**. No routine doctor's note, though evidence may be asked for when absence is long or repeated, and the school decides the code.
- **Fines only touch unauthorised absence**, and normally only past **ten unauthorised sessions in a rolling ten school weeks**. Authorised illness doesn't count. (£160, or £80 within 21 days; max two per parent, per child, in three years.)
- **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, Education Act 1996: no offence where a young person is absent through illness or unavoidable cause.
- **Part-time is allowed** only in very exceptional cases, temporarily, with an end date and review, **never to manage behaviour** (Code C2).
- **Off-rolling is banned**; a managed move can't be a data fix. **Home education from a mainstream school needs no permission** (a special-school place arranged by the local authority needs its consent). Neither is a teacher's call.
- **Disabling anxiety may be a disability** (Equality Act 2010) — bringing an **anticipatory duty** to make reasonable adjustments. Where SEN Support keeps falling short, the route is an **EHC needs assessment**.

> **Said plainly, in a meeting:** 'The guidance says support first, and her absence is recorded as illness under Code I. A penalty notice only applies to unauthorised absence, so I don't think a fine is the route here.'

19 End-of-Term Reflection Prompts (K19)

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 students actually manage this term that they couldn't in September? Name the small, secured gains — they fade far faster than the bad mornings.

……

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

……

3. For the student nearing the end of the phase: is a good move post-16 the honest goal now, and have I started building it?

……

4. Where am I carrying something alone that ought to be shared across the other adults who teach this student — and who's the one person I could say that to?

……

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:

- ☐ Sunday-night dread about one student's Monday morning
- ☐ Lying awake replaying a hard morning
- ☐ A flatness or a short fuse that isn't like you
- ☐ Resentment leaking towards a young person you know is frightened, not lazy
- ☐ The work following you home and refusing to leave

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

> *Take the two or three that fit the student in front of you — not all nineteen at once. All free at **emma-whitcombe.co.uk**.*