

# Chorlton CofE Primary School

## Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA) Guidance



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*This document has been written in accordance with latest EBSA guidance from Manchester City Council.*

## **Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA) Guidance**

### **What is EBSA?**

'Emotional Barriers to School Attendance (EBSA) is an umbrella term used to describe a range of factors that can cause a child or young person to have a strong emotional reaction to school. It often results in prolonged absences from school. This term now includes children who may have good attendance but struggle to fully engage, and who may mask underlying difficulties in order to 'fit in.'" (Manchester City Council, 2024).

MCC's updated guidance is due to be published on their website to replace existing guidance on Anxiety Based School Avoidance (ABSA).

It is important to note that EBSA behaviours are not a conscious choice but a strong emotional response to an aversive situation. As a school, we recognise this fact and we understand the importance of ensuring children are regulated before coming to school.

### **Possible Indicators include:**

- A reluctance to leave home or parents, get out of the car at school
- Regular patterns in 'minor' illnesses
- Regular patterns of avoidance e.g. particular days, subjects, after the weekend / a school holiday
- Physical symptoms e.g. stomach aches, feeling sick, difficulty sleeping, headaches, unexplained pains, panic attacks etc..
- Unexpected behaviours or periods of dysregulation (meltdowns, refusal, aggression)
- Evidence of underachievement which could be as a result of managing challenging emotions, masking to fit in with peers
- Low self-esteem, poor confidence, low mood / possible depression

### **Resilience Building**

During cases where there is evidence of EBSA, it is really important to focus on resilience building of the individual.

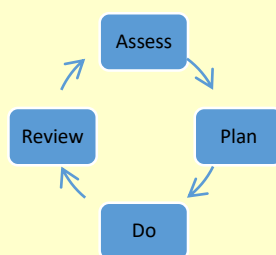
This may include:

- Developing aspiration and motivation
- Increasing confidence, self-esteem and belief in themselves
- Celebrating their achievements so far and the journey to get there
  - Being provided with activities in which they can experience success
- Developing feelings of safety, security and belonging
  - Developing positive relationships with staff
  - Feeling listened to and understood
- Understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviours (actions)

### **Developing Home-School relationships:**

- Willingness to work in partnership from all stakeholders
- Flexibility of approaches to best support the needs of the CYP
- Willingness to collect pupil voice
- Developing parenting skills
- A commitment to understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviours (actions)

## Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR)



### Assess (Information gathering – understanding the child)

#### Factors Associated with the Vulnerability of EBSA

There are often many factors which contribute to a child’s vulnerability and therefore result in emotional barriers to attending school. It can be helpful to consider all of the possible barriers in order to best plan support.

Please highlight any which are relevant to your child and feel free to add any of your own. These are simply a guide.

<b>School Factors</b>	<b>Home Factors</b>	<b>Child Factors</b>
Difficulties in particular subject.	High levels of family stress	Physical illness
Academic demands	History of EBSA	Neurodiversity
Bullying	Overprotective parenting style	Separation anxiety
Friendship challenges	Bereavement	Traumatic events
Physical journey to school	Parent physical / mental illness	Fear of failure / poor self-confidence
Structure of the school day including transitions	Young Carer status	Learning difficulties
	Being the youngest sibling	Age (5-6, 11-12, 13-14)

**Support Plan – Information Gathering: Risk Factors**

**Issues identified within learning / lessons**


**Issues identified within environment**


**Issues identified with child's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)**


**Issues identified by parents / carers**


**Strengths (Factors encouraging them to attend school)**

**E.g. Child x has a positive friendship with child Y, child x is good at art.**

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## Identifying the function of the avoidant behaviour

All behaviour is communication and therefore must have a function. It is important to question the reasons for this behaviour. Often in cases of EBSA, there may be more than one reason and you may see overlap.

Questions to consider: Is this behaviour avoidance of the setting? Could it be separation anxiety from primary caregivers? Is it possibly aversion to social situations? (Break and lunch times can be hugely triggering for some children). Rewarding experiences at home pulling a child to stay (e.g. Time at home away from school means cuddles on the sofa watching a film with a parent).

**Collecting the child's view on the situation. What are their hopes for school? How likely do they think this is to happen? Where do they feel this anxiety is coming from?**

Some examples may be:

Pupil x wants to be liked by their peers.

Pupil x wants to feel safe in school.

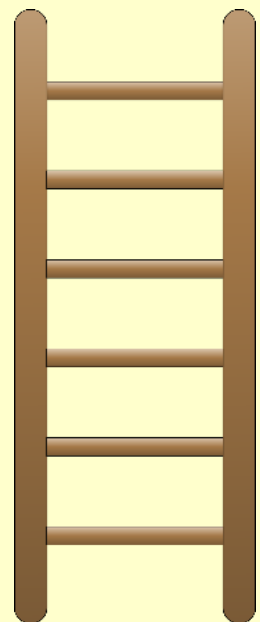
Pupil x wants to feel understood by the adults in school.

Pupil x wants to catch up on their learning.

## Ranking anxiety-provoking situations (Appendix 1)

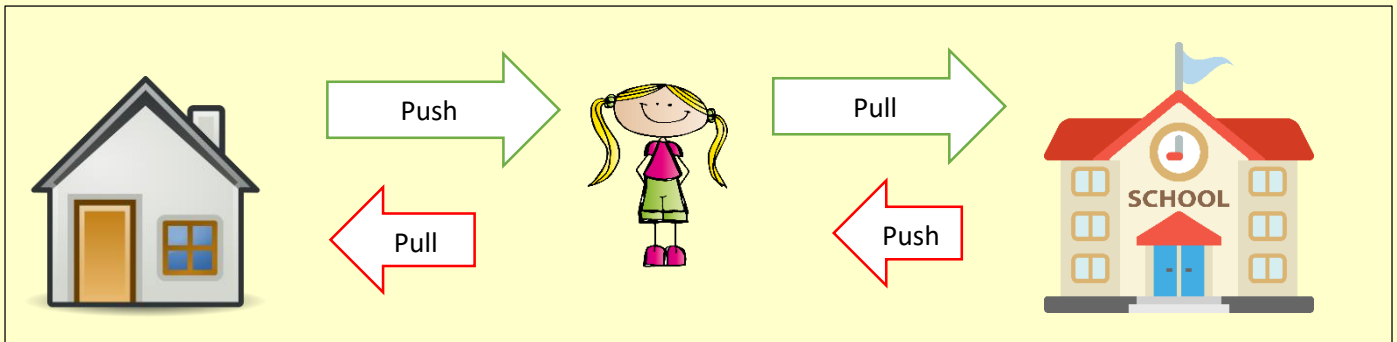
Imagine a ladder, rank the following from the most difficult to the easiest.

- Asking to go to the toilet during a lesson
- PE lessons
- Getting changed for PE
- English lessons
- Maths lessons
- Going to the toilet when the bathroom is busy
- Wearing my school uniform
- Wake up Shake up
- Waiting on a busy playground in the morning
- Going into a busy dining hall
- Travelling to school
- Leaving the house
- Making a mistake in learning
- Being asked a question by my teacher
- Moving around school



## The balance of 'push' and 'pull' factors

It is important to understand the balance between the 'push' and 'pull' factors to best understand how to support the CYP. The aim of adults around the child should be to foster the push/pull factors towards school and to strive towards moving away from the factors pushing /pulling the child towards staying at home.



As part of the initial Assess stage in the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR), it's helpful for parents and professionals to consider what these factors may be. Consider the factors which may encourage a child to stay at home.

Peer relationships	School Environment / Learning	Home	Neighbourhood / culture

Only when we have an idea of these can we begin to best support the child. Which ones can we work with? What do we need to address first?

## Transitions

It is well documented that children who display EBSA behaviours show an increase in difficulties around managing transitions of any kind. This can range from the micro-transitions within the school day (moving from their Maths to English seat) or the larger transitions such as moving to a new Key Stage.



***A successful transition occurs when a child is wholly supported to manage in their new environment.***

### Identifying the issues in the school environment

It can be helpful when identifying triggers within the school environment to RAG rate the school building together to find out which areas may prove more challenging than others. Appendix 2 is a map of our school building which you can share with your child. Encourage them to think about the rooms / locations and explain that you are going to colour them like traffic lights using the below as a guide.

- Green – where do they feel most settled / safe / happiest.
- Amber – where do they start to feel a bit wobbly.
- Red – which areas do they need to avoid altogether because they become overwhelmed by ‘big feelings’

### Identifying how this feels

Ask your child to imagine the place they have labelled as green (starting with a comfortable feeling can be helpful). Using the body map (Appendix 3), encourage your child to represent how this feeling is for them and where they feel it. Children can surprise us with where they experience different emotions!

Now try the same activity together with an amber or red location. Discuss how the emotions differ and explain that there is a reason for this. We call this a trigger.

## Plan

It is crucial for school staff and parents to work cooperatively to support a child to have a successful return to school. As part of the planning stage, a meeting should be held between all parties.

- Include the child, parents and school pastoral team
- Consider the pull factors to encourage return to school
- Focus on the support which may need to be implemented in school

## Supporting the return to school

A successful reintegration into school life may require reasonable adjustments to be made in various areas. It will be helpful at this point to refer to the issues identified in your information gathering. Please note that the below is an example, and this will need to be completed in detail during the planning stage.

<b>Trigger points</b>	<b>Possible Reasonable Adjustments to support</b>
Getting dressed in the morning	Consider forward planning the morning routine. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow the child to be involved in getting their uniform ready the night before</li><li>• Do they need additional time to wake up in the morning before the routine begins?</li><li>• Celebrate the small wins using a smiley face chart in appendix 4 (Brush teeth, wash face etc...)</li></ul>
Start of the school day	Consider the importance of a positive start to the school day <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are there any avoidable triggers on the journey to school?</li><li>• Can school provide a key person to greet the child on the playground?</li><li>• An earlier/later arrival time to avoid crowds on the playground</li><li>• A regulation activity upon arrival at school e.g. use of the Nurture Nest, a sensory circuit etc...</li><li>• A 'soft start' to the day with key adult to allow for emotional check in</li></ul>
Environmental	Think about the environments the child will be in and whether changes can be made <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to a quiet area of the classroom (if there is space) or quiet area of the building e.g nurture nest, intervention room, library</li><li>• Seating arrangements, what makes them uncomfortable</li><li>• Addressing how busy a room is and the level a child can tolerate</li><li>• Sensory adjustments</li></ul>
Timetabling	Did the child avoid certain subjects / times of the day before? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• RAG rate the class timetable to find out which lessons are the trigger</li><li>• Allow for manageable chunks of learning to gradually expose child to particular subject again.</li></ul>
Wellbeing	Focusing on developing a child's self-esteem and resilience building can be crucial in encouraging school attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure there are named adults who the child can reach out to throughout the day</li><li>• Consider in-class adjustments such as mindful activities, fidgets</li><li>• Nurture groups</li><li>• Possible therapeutic intervention</li><li>• Home-school communication</li></ul>
Social	Are there opportunities to support child to develop friendships? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Playground / learning buddies</li><li>• Nurture groups</li><li>• Lunch clubs</li></ul>

**Support Plan**

\_\_\_\_\_’s Support Plan

**Completed by:**



Name:	Date of birth:	Year group:
Date of plan:	Current attendance:	Review Date:

What’s working well?	What are the barriers?
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My key adults in school are:	
My key adult(s) will:	

The adjustments to support me are:

**Home/school agreed actions:**

My school will:

My parents / carers will:

I will:

**Targets**

In two weeks' time I will...

In six weeks' time I will...

Name	Signature
School representative	
Child / Young person	
Parent / Carer (s)	

**Do**

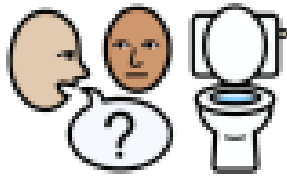
- Ensure that ALL staff working with the child are aware of the plan and its contents
- Ensure importance of this is communicated to all parties
- Ensure that key adult for child regularly checks-in, noting any successes and anything which isn't working
- Ensure NOT to challenge the child e.g. 'and why are you late again?'
- Even if staff are making a 'positive' comment about attendance, do not do this publicly

**Review**

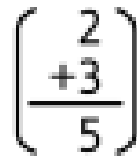
- Endeavour to monitor attendance and progress every two weeks (this does not have to be a meeting!)
- If there is little or no progress, consider whether further adjustments need to be made, or if targets were too ambitious for the initial plan
- You may notice that a child makes progress for a period of time, followed by setbacks. This is ok, focus on revisiting smaller, more manageable targets.
- Does child / young person need a referral to other agencies for further support?

Appendices

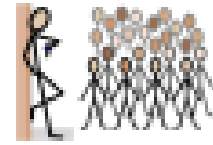
Appendix 1 – Ladder activity



Asking to go to the toilet



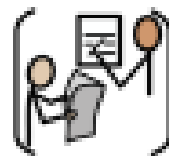
Maths lessons



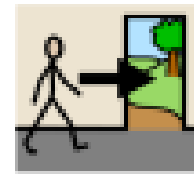
Waiting on a busy playground



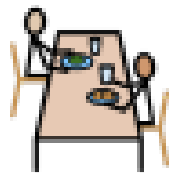
Wearing school uniform



English lessons



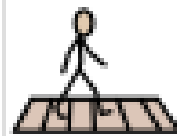
Leaving the house



Busy dining hall



PE lessons



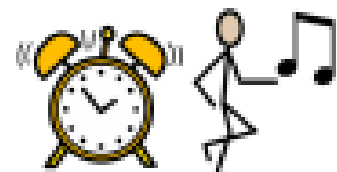
Moving around school



Making a mistake



Music lessons



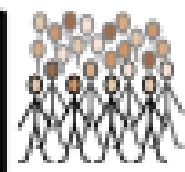
Wake up shake up



Being asked a question

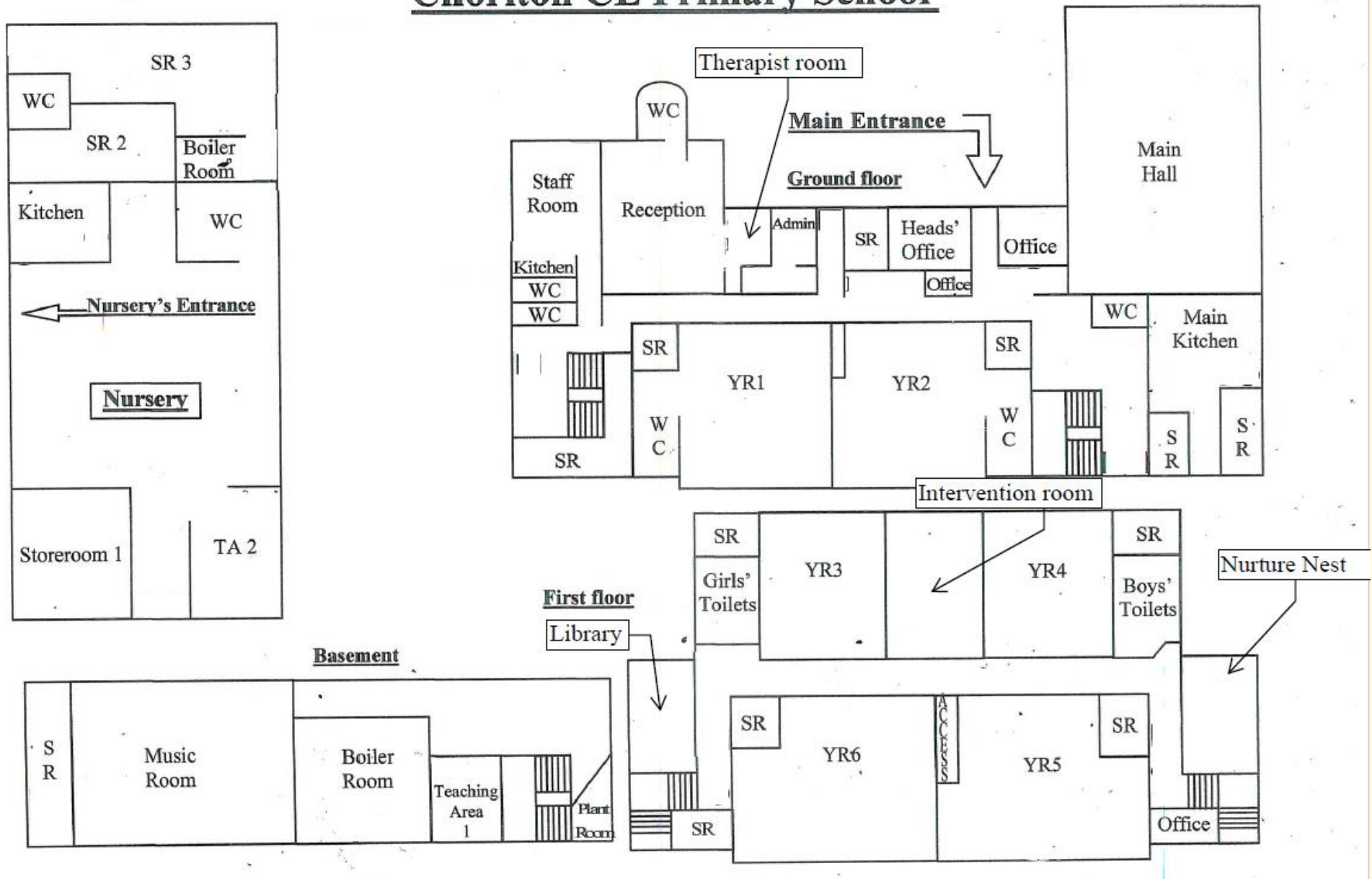


Travelling to school

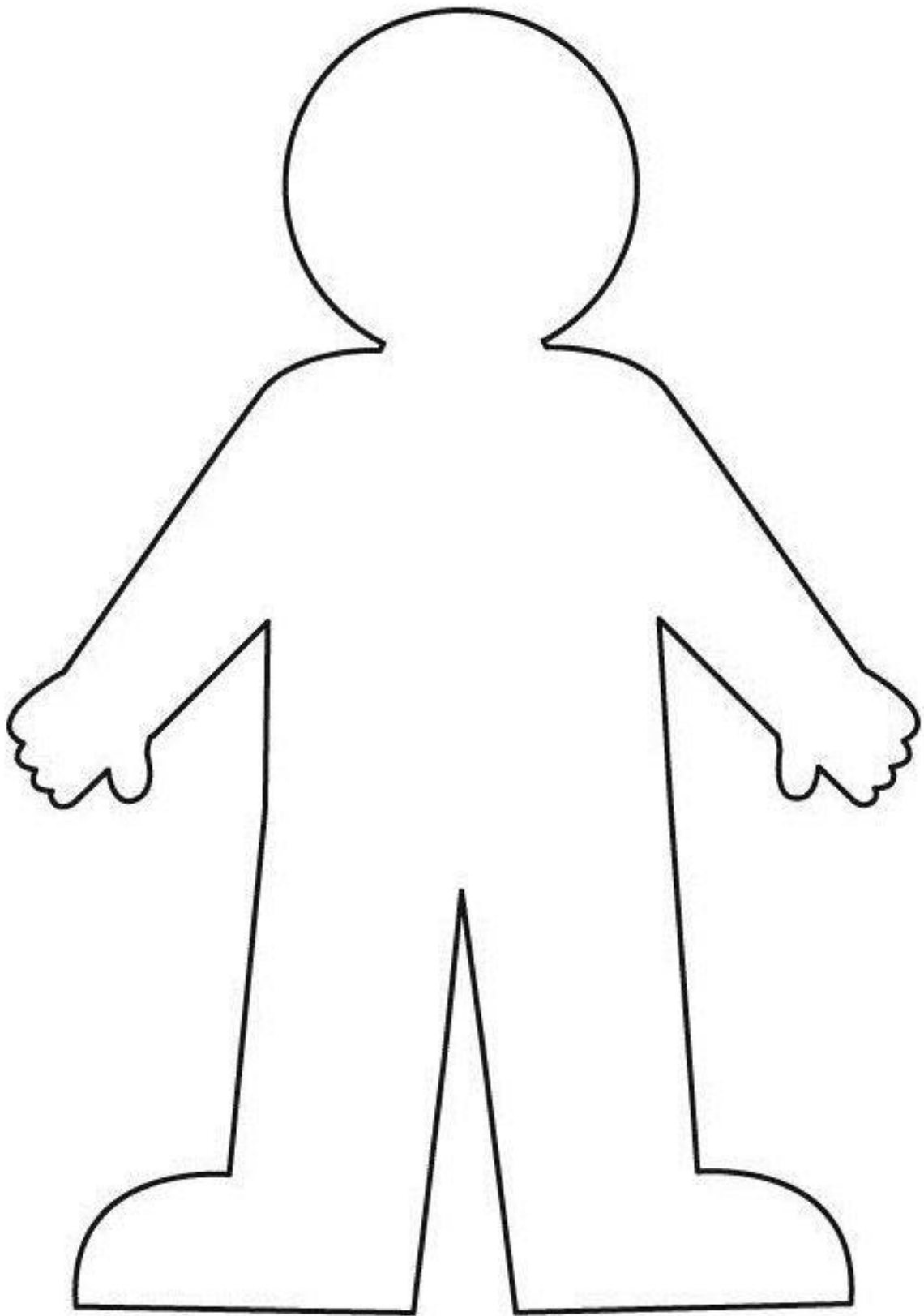


The toilet being busy

# Chorlton CE Primary School










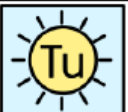





Appendix 3 – Body map



## Morning Routine

How many smiles can I get?

 CHORLTON C-E PRIMARY SCHOOL	 Out of bed on time	 Have breakfast	 Clean teeth	 Get dressed on time	 Remember glasses	 Leave the house on time	 Arrive at school on time
 Monday							
 Tuesday							
 Wednesday							
 Thursday							
 Friday							