Card Sort

This card sort activity, based on a School Refusal Assessment Scales, developed by Kearny (2002), has been devised by Derby City EPS as a tool to support staff to develop a greater understanding of a young person's school avoidance. The 24 statements are colour-coded by the function of behaviour identified by Kearny and Silverman (1990). By asking a pupil to sort the statements or by talking about each one, mentors may find that using the cards can support an understanding of the function of the school avoidance behaviour.

With thanks to Lancashire County Council.

Blue, Function 1: To avoid something or situations that elicits negative feelings or high levels of stress or anxiety (e.g. fear of the toilets; the noise in the playground; lots of people moving all together in the corridors between classes, tests/exams).	**Red, Function 2:** To escape difficult social situations (e.g. feeling left out at playtime, reading out loud in class or other public speaking/group task, working as part of a group).
Green, Function 3: To get attention from or spend more time with significant others at home (e.g. change in family dynamic, concerned about the wellbeing of a parent).	**Yellow, Function 4:** To spend more time out of school as it is more fun or stimulating (e.g. to watch TV, go shopping, play computer games, hang out with friends).

How the statements could be used with a pupil:

- Cut up the statements.
- Ask the pupil to sort the statements into three groups, shown on the white cards: a bit like me, most like me and least like me.
- Using the key below, consider if any patterns are noticeable and whether some functions are more prevalent than others.
- If the pupil is comfortable, discuss the statements to help build a richer picture.
- Consider together how this information can help plan the next steps.

Most Like Me

Least Like Me

A bit like me

I stay away from school because I feel embarrassed in front of other people at school.	I stay away from school because it is hard to speak with the other kids at school.
I stay away from school because I do not have many friends there.	I stay away from places in school (e.g. hallways, places where certain groups of people are) where I would have to talk to someone.
If it were easier for me to make new friends, it would be easier for me to go to school.	I often stay away from people in school compared to other kids of my age.
I stay away from school because I will feel sad or depressed if I go.	I have bad feelings about going to school because I'm afraid of something related to school (e.g. tests, school bus, teacher, fire alarm).
I feel worse at school (e.g. scared, nervous, sad) compared to how I feel at home with friends.	If I had less bad feelings (e.g. scared, nervous, sad) about school, it would be easier for me to go to school.

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I have bad feelings about school (e.g. scared, nervous, sad) compared to other kids of my age.	I have bad feelings about school (e.g. scared, nervous, sad) when I think about school on Saturday or Sunday.
When I am not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), I leave the house and do something fun.	When I am not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), I talk to or see other people (other than my family).
I stay away from school because I want to have fun outside of school.	It would be easier for me to go to school if I could do more thing I like to do after school hours (e.g. being with friends).
When I am not in school during the week (Monday to Friday), I enjoy doing different things (e.g. being with friends, going places).	I would rather be doing fun things outside of school more than most kids of my age.
I would rather be taught by my parents at home than by my teacher at school.	It would be easier for me to go to school if my parents/carers went with me.

I would like to be home with my parents more than other kids my age.	I would rather be with my parent(s)/carers than go to school.
I think about my parent(s)/carers or family when in school.	I would like to be home with my parents/carers more than other kids my age would.