Editorial
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School non-attendance among children and young people was the focus of
this journal, volume 41(1), published last year and continued here in the first three papers. To
introduce the previous issue, the editors highlighted the now familiar issues of the significant
increase in school non-attendance in recent times, particularly since the Covid period. The
needs and experiences of some particular groups of children and young people whose
learning or emotional needs may not be currently so well met in school were noted (Bond et
al., 2024); as was the need to consider wider factors in the learning environment that may
contribute to reluctance to attend school. Thus, the issue's papers collectively identified how
educational psychologists (EPs) can attend to those features of school ecologies that continue
to need to evolve in order to optimise the learning environment and curriculum, welcoming
and engaging young people. Since then, governmental initiatives to review Special
Educational Needs and Disability systems and provision in mainstream schools has gathered
pace (e.g. DfE 2024), and alongside this, a curriculum review is well underway (DfE 2023).
Both these initiatives encompass some of the wider systems questions raised in the earlier
issue, regarding how schools can be supported to optimise engagement and attendance in
schools. The attendance-focused papers in this current issue all continue to address these
issues in various ways, and signal the importance of those current reviews as part of the
macro-system for school attendance.

It seems important to note that Bond et al.(2024) referred to the shifting terminology, to
encompass a breadth of perspectives and orientations to the issues around school attendance.
This can be seen, for example, in Want and Gulliford's (2024) adoption of the term 'barriers
to attendance', when conceptualising non-attendance, in order to signal the likely need to
focus attention on the ecological and interactional nature of the issues involved without
presuming an 'emotionally-based' component of some definitions. Terminology is therefore
important in reflecting and supporting the varied conceptualisations used by EPs regarding
the phenomenon of non-attendance and their responses to it. This continues to be evident in
the papers in this issue, where terms and the consequent focus varies, reflecting the
breadth of response by professional EPs.

This issue commences with an account of pupil voice. Musenga-Grant, MacFarland
and White consider school non-attendance in the Scottish context, exploring what primary
school aged children consider may support school attendance. Drawing
on the term emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA) these authors
employed focus groups, followed by a questionnaire, to gain insight into those supportive
factors, utilising both thematic analysis and analysis of children's drawings.
Among promotive factors identified, relational aspects and health and wellbeing were to the
fore, as were extra-curricular and learning factors. The authors argue the need for young
people's voices to be positioned within the literature and professional work around school
attendance, and their conclusions illuminate how children see there is a complexity of issues
that may contribute to non-attendance, encompassing school-based as well as individual
factors.

Sawyer and Hampton then offer a paper that begins by noting how the EP's role in this area
can be constrained through the well-known capacity issues faced by Services at present. The
authors suggest that in that respect Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) can play
a meaningful part in supporting school attendance, specifically through supporting school

belonging. Their systematic literature review of the effects of ELSA intervention on school belonging identified eighteen papers, reviewed though thematic analysis. A number of themes were captured, which included exploring and expressing emotions, the therapeutic relationship, building connections, access to learning, and promoting positive perceptions. Importantly, the authors note some mechanisms in the identified effects of ELSA, specifically whole school ethos and ELSA wellbeing. The former, 'whole school ethos', highlights how the ELSA intervention cannot stand alone, but must be part of a consistent school culture, which incorporates clear staff expectations and understanding of the processes and the collaboration needed to support the approach. This theme points to the need for EPs to consider carefully how they support and optimise the ELSA programme's delivery in schools. The conclusions therefore again echo the need for a broad-based approach to attendance and belonging, encompassing the holistic dimensions of a young person's school experiences.

In the final paper on school attendance, Greig, Ledsom, Munro and Myburgh continue the intervention focus, undertaking a study of a multi-agency training package in secondary schools, addressing non-attendance (ANA). This account draws on a conceptualisation of non-attendance as complex and multi-factorial. Working in two schools, a broad programme of training to support staff understanding of, and responses to, non-attendance was explored through illuminative enquiry-based approaches. The findings indicate some positive impacts of a range of training to support staff in understanding and identifying attendance risks. The scale of the work here carries implications for the delivery of this broad approach: the authors conclude with a commentary on the importance of employing individualised approaches to working with each school, informed by implementation science orientations, as unique sites with unique communities. They also note the importance of wider community and agency collaboration in support of school engagement and attendance.

Together, these three papers supplement the account in Volume 41(1), and give a strong steer to EPs to clearly position pupil voice, and systemic perspectives, within their school attendance work.

In addition to the three attendance-focused papers discussed earlier, this issue includes two papers from the general submission section that offer valuable insights for educational psychologists:

Davies, Sargeant, and Wright present a systematic review and meta-analysis exploring the relationship between adolescent masculinity and homophobic name-calling (HNC). Their findings indicate that HNC often functions in two ways: as seemingly benign peer-group banter and as targeted homophobic bullying. Both forms, however, are rooted in enforcing hegemonic masculinity. The study identifies masculinity, peer dynamics, and bullying as intersecting contributors to HNC, and emphasises the importance of whole-school strategies and targeted interventions that challenge gender norms and support inclusive environments.

Wallace et al. offer a narrative review on gendered ethnic mental health inequalities in the UK before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The review highlights how pre-existing inequalities were exacerbated during the pandemic, particularly affecting Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) women, including mothers. Findings emphasise structural barriers to mental health care, cultural stigma, and intersectional stressors, such as socioeconomic disadvantage and overcrowded housing. The paper brings to the fore the relevance of these insights for educational psychologists, especially when supporting children and families from

marginalized communities where caregiver wellbeing directly impacts pupil engagement and mental health.