

## **Top Tips for implementing an Attachment Aware Approach**

Developed from guidance produced by Brighton and Hove Educational Psychology Service

**All members of staff are responsible for supporting the behaviour of children and young people across the school.**

Attachment/ building relationships is everybody's business! The Senior Leadership Team must lead the whole school attachment aware ethos to promote a consistent approach that is embedded across the school, through policy development, displays, choice of language, non-verbal behaviours, and communication with parents/carers, as well as those outside of the school community. One or two 'key adults' working to support a children and young people using attachment aware approaches is not enough. You need the whole school community to be signed up to an attachment aware approach.

Use agreed tools for recording, monitoring and sharing planned strategies/support/progress around behaviour so that they can be consistently implemented.

Examples:

- Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for Children in Care and Previously in Care;
- Action and Progress Plans;
- Pastoral Support Plans (PSPs);
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs);
- Provision Maps;
- One Page Profiles.

These should highlight strengths and areas of resilience - not just within child but also family/community factors. Include key triggers to avoid escalating situations (e.g. using a loud voice/ threatening body language/ publicly admonishing/ confronting). Children and young people and their parents/carers need to be involved and central to this process. Consider who else might need to be involved in support – e.g. other key adults or agencies such as Early Help

### **Recognise behaviour as a form of communication**

Consider what might be underpinning children and young people's behaviour. Don't immediately seek within-child explanations - e.g. labels such as ADHD, ASC. Consider the children and young people holistically and in context. Their behaviour might be a very normal response to adverse life experiences.

### **Promote a positive approach**

Spot children and young people behaving well and doing the right thing. Offer specific and descriptive praise (or for those children and young people who find it difficult to accept praise, offer discrete non-verbal feedback). Avoid global statements such as "good boy".

### **Differentiate expectations**

- How long should you expect a children and young people who is hypervigilant to sit still during carpet time or assembly?
- What might be realistic expectations (in terms of approach to a task) for a children and young people who is terrified of failure?
- Remember that work-avoidant behaviour can be linked to a fear of taking risks/feelings of vulnerability – even the risk of asking for help.
- Model and explicitly teach what is needed for 'readiness to learn', including promoting a growth mindset approach.
- Set up the expectations accordingly, so that children and young people aren't set up to fail.

## **Differentiate responses**

Some children and young people perceive/experience public verbal reminders/prompts around expected behaviour very shaming. Consider non-verbal cues/gestures (agreed with the children and young people, which can also powerfully remind them that you are holding them in mind). Always ensure that any disapproval expressed is of the behaviour and not the person (i.e. maintain a sense of unconditional positive regard).

- Relationships first!
- 'Engage, don't Enrage' (Look at your own behaviour – can you remain open and engaged?)
- 'Connection before Correction'
- 'The 3 Rs: Regulate, Relate, Reason' Remember empathy comes before limit-setting/problem-solving around the behaviour. Use emotion coaching and attachment aware scripts – e.g. "I'm wondering if (you are shouting out "this is boring!" because) you feel scared about getting the answer wrong? I know what that feels like, it can be really scary to have a go at something, in case you might fail".
- A whole school approach

## **Small actions can make a big difference!**

Even smiling at/greeting a children and young people on their way into school can really add to their sense of belonging/ feeling liked, respected and valued.

## **Don't expect immediate results or returns!**

A children and young people might be very dismissive of you behaving in a kind/empathic manner towards them, but this doesn't mean that your actions weren't important, or valued! It may just mean they are not in a good place to be able to receive kindness and/or that they need lots more experiences of this positive approach/kind behaviour to even begin to internalise a positive sense of self.

## **Expect sabotage from some children and young people and name it, where appropriate**

[Dan Siegel's 'Name it to tame it' technique](#) suggests using the wondering aloud techniques. For example, "Amy, I am wondering if you trashed the room because it feels like too much pressure on you to keep showing such good behaviour all morning, and maybe you are scared of disappointing me or yourself?"

## **Recognise that what you feel is a likely indication of how the children and young people feels**

If you feel helpless/stuck/frustrated/angry, this is often an important indication of how the children and young people is feeling inside and what they are projecting out.

## **Be cautious around suggestions of a 'fresh start'**

Often people start to look for fresh starts such as another school for a children and young people when they feel stuck. Don't assume anyone else will be able to manage the behaviour any better/ feel less stuck! The problem just becomes someone else's to deal with! Always consider whether this is really best for the children and young people. Often children and young people who unconsciously push others away through their behaviour are the ones who have experienced the most rejection and are most successful at being repeatedly rejected/ excluded.