

## Attachment Aware Schools

### What is an attachment aware school?

- 1) The **whole staff** responsibilities
- 2) Specific support for **Developmental Vulnerabilities** in -
  - 1) Executive functioning
  - 2) Regulation
  - 3) Psychological development

### 1) An attachment aware school is one where the whole staff:

- Have a good understanding of the impact of significant relational traumas and losses upon pupils
- Have attachment principles firmly embedded within all their policies
- Use an attachment framework to understand behaviours
- Know who the troubled pupils are in their school
- Prioritise employing and supporting key adults to build special relationships with troubled pupils
- Allocate a TouchBase team (4/5) to the pupil – Key Adult, Teacher/Form tutor, INCO/SENCO, Assistant Head/Head of Year, Head teacher who ensure consistency of approach
- Engage in quality staff care to optimise care giving capacities and ensure stability and retention of staff
- Research the starting point of pupils in their care, tracing back over their lives from pregnancy onwards to reflect upon the possible impact of relational traumas and losses experienced
- Know the developmental age of the pupils in their care differentiating emotional and social tasks and expectations
- Develop individual development plans for individual pupils that run over a course of 2-3 years
- Engage in relentless care
- Direct any conflicts or difficulties with the pupil through the Safe Base team allocated rather than getting too involved themselves
- Facilitate relational proximity rather than distance at times of difficulty with the pupil
- Integrate and channel any advices from outside agencies into the IDP via the Key adult and/or Safe Base team
- Engage in a careful balance of both nurture and gentle challenge to support troubled pupils into learned security
- Work closely with the family to develop a shared understanding of the pupil reflecting on possible stressors and calmers.

**And** are addressing the developmental vulnerabilities of troubled pupils.

### 2) Developmental vulnerability

Pupils who have experienced significant relational traumas and losses in their short lives to date often have developmental vulnerabilities in the following areas – in their executive functioning, regulation and psychological development.

An Attachment Aware School ensures that these three areas are attended to by the KA, TouchBase Team and whole staff.

**Developmental vulnerability (1) - Executive functioning:**

- Provide increased structure and supervision for individual pupils
- Prepare pupils for all kinds of transitions big and small, allowing additional processing time
- Use co-modelling regularly
- Create exit plans to use together with their pupils for times of overwhelm
- Take responsibility, hold boundaries and use parts language rather than using sanctions and threats
- Use chunking, writing frames, checklists and multi sensory cues to support organisational vulnerability.
- KAs facilitate reparative opportunities for when things go wrong together with their focussed pupil
- Think out loud making connections on behalf of the pupil
- Model how to remember

**Developmental vulnerability (2) - Regulation:**

- Watch the state continuum of the pupils in their care and use appropriate state dependent interventions
- Use sensory breaks regularly throughout the school day to dampen down stress and to enable pupils to engage in the pre frontal cortex part of their brain to optimise learning.
- Activate and energise troubled pupils who are switching off
- Down regulate troubled pupils who are engaging in hyper active behaviours
- Build in pauses and down time during the school day to support pupils manage overwhelm/sensory overload
- Set up Safe Spaces for pupils to use together with their Key Adults for Time In.
- Increase sensory comfort in their classrooms and school environment to support those who have experienced relational traumas and losses
- Use co-regulation with troubled pupils to settle them
- Reflect upon stressors and calmers for individual pupils to inform practice and optimise learning opportunities

**Developmental vulnerability (3) - Psychological development:**

- Engage in regular check ins with individual pupils throughout the school day and week
- Engage in sensitive attuned care
- Engage in over compensatory empathy
- Prioritise relational interventions
- Are flexible and creative in their interventions
- Use parts pictures and language
- Encourage playfulness and fun in all interactions and learning
- Cultivate curiosity in staff and pupils about why we might do what we do
- Commentate rather than interrogate
- Use reflective dialoguing including wondering aloud, noticing out loud, connecting phrases
- Use specific praise
- Check back understanding of other's motives and intentions, not making any assumptions

- Facilitate over compensatory experiences for developing a pupil's sense of safety, security and stability in school
- Use transitional objects and connector phrases to support the pupil to know they can be 'kept in mind' in and out of school
- Focus on building the pupil up
- Facilitate opportunities to develop the pupil's strengths. For example creative folder for daily pictures if artistic.
- Use containing doubling, role play, social stories, comic strips and the hand of options to support social understanding.
- Facilitate opportunities for the pupil and his/her KA to build bonds of attachment. For example through Theraplay, PACE and DDP informed practices.
- Use relational influence rather than rewards