

Guidelines for Supporting Pupils who have Experienced Significant Relational Traumas and Losses

Identifying These Pupils:

There are a group of pupils within the school context who are currently identified in many different ways: children in care, fostered, looked after, adopted, special guardianships, on residency orders, in need, vulnerable, concerning, troubled, at risk...However, these pupils all belong to the same tribe. They have all experienced significant relational traumas and losses.

Relational Trauma and Loss:

Significant relational trauma and loss can include: emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, parental substance misuse, moving away from birth family and/or country of origin, different placement moves, witnessing domestic violence or violence against family members as a result of unrest or war. However, this list is not exhaustive. Many pupils who are in care or adopted have sometimes experienced five or six of these relational traumas or losses or more. Many of the pupils who are adopted nowadays have been part of the care system. We must never underestimate the level of pain around for these pupils, often buried deep down. This pain surfaces in all kinds of ways. With so much unresolved grief around, we need to support these pupils to grieve their losses and to move forwards towards adaption and recovery. They cannot do this alone.

Key Points:

- The earlier the trauma and/or loss the more extensive the consequences on the child's development.
- There is often developmental vulnerability as a result. Pupils may present on many different levels as much younger than their peers and this is because they are less mature in some parts of their brain.
- Memories can be stored both in a sensory and a cognitive format and so whatever the age of the injury or loss pupils will 'remember'.
- Many of these pupils are hard wired for self - protection. Their defences and alarm systems will have served a survival purpose in another context but can interfere with their learning capacity within the school context.
- Developing quality relationships with these pupils can be powerful vehicles towards adaption and recovery. Every relationship has the capacity to either confirm or challenge all that has gone on before.
- The brain has the capacity to re-organise itself based on nurturing experiences that are repetitive, during a time of protected stability.
- The earlier we can recognise a pupil's needs and put in place supportive interventions the better, as the brain takes longer to re-organise the older we become.

The 'Big Ask' in School:

- Trusting grown ups
- Following the lead of grown ups
- Relinquishing some control to grown ups
- Being free from anxiety
- Being free from toxic shame
- Feeling safe
- Managing multiple transitions
- Feeling that they belong
- Feeling special and significant
- Being freed up enough to engage in curiosity and exploration
- Taking the risks required in learning
- Managing sensory overload
- Negotiating key developmental stages such as adolescence
- Being self and others aware so that they can have the capacity to make wise choices

The main aim of support in school: *To settle the pupil to learn.*

What these pupils need:

- A Key Adult who forms a meaningful and genuine relationship with the pupil on a 1:1
- Relationally rich contexts in school: Team Pupil
- Sensory interventions on a regular basis
- Using state dependent interventions
- Encouraging and facilitating playfulness whatever the age
- Relentless care
- Nurture and gentle challenge

Read about these in greater depth – from the work of Louise Michelle Bomber, Dan Hughes, Bruce Perry, Daniel Siegel & Margot Sunderland

What these pupils don't need:

- The adult increasing power, authority and control
- Relational withdrawal
- Stress
- Shaming
- 'One size fits all' approaches
- Rigidity
- External controls such as stickers, charts, points

Helpful Interventions Maximise Opportunities for: RELATIONSHIP and REGULATION

Bomber (2007): Inside I'm Hurting : Practical strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in schools

Bomber (2011): What About Me? : Inclusive strategies to help pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day

Bomber & Hughes (2013) :Settling to Learn : Why relationships matter in school

Bomber (2015-16) Attachment Aware School Series : Bridging the Gap (5 pocket sized books in the series for Team Pupil & parent/carer)

Geddes (2006) : Attachment in the Classroom : The Link between childrens' early experience, emotional well being and performance in school

Perry (2009): Teenagers & Attachment: helping adolescents to engage in life and learning

ATTACHMENT AWARE AND
TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH IN SCHOOL

VS BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH

Facilitating relative dependency	vs	encouraging further pseudo independence
Creating emotional safety through sensitive attuned care	vs	the use of more authority, power, control
Becoming stress managers	vs	managing behaviour
The adult being responsible for holding boundaries	vs	more consequences for the pupil
Flexibility of approach	vs	rigidity of approach
Focussing on strengthening a pupil's internal controls	vs	imposing external controls that the pupil might not be developmentally ready for yet
Encouraging relational proximity - time in for the pupil	vs	relational withdrawal or distance - time out for the pupil
Being responsive	vs	being reactive
Being preventative	vs	being crisis driven
Expectations and tasks based on emotional and social age of pupil	vs	expectations and tasks being matched to the pupil's chronological age
Adapting the environment to the pupil	vs	expecting the pupil to adapt to the existing environment
All transitions to be identified and prepared for	vs	only identifying the major transitions that a pupil might face
Accountability for the processes used by education staff	vs	only accountability for performance/outcome of pupils
Using the pupil's history so far as a framework in which to interpret behaviour	vs	blank canvass approach
Strengthening a pupil's sense of self	vs	assuming the pupil is robust enough to manage everyday opportunities and stressors
Using relational influence to create motivation	vs	the use of rewards and sanctions to create motivation
Attending to the attachment needs of the pupil	vs	assuming all attachment needs have been met

FACTFILE for vulnerable pupil: -

HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL

(Only to be read on a need to know basis by the small educational team around the pupil (Key Adult, Class Teacher, SENCO/INCO, Head of Year/Headteacher). Please store in confidential filing cabinet)

Do not leave out

Relational traumas and losses experienced: -

Main Stress Triggers known: -

Strategies to bring pupil back to calm/being regulated

The information above will be passed on each year within PCS unless informed otherwise.

Parent/Carer: _____ Date: -

Parent/Carer: _____ Date: -

Social Worker: _____ Date:-

Attachment Lead Teacher: _____ Date:-