

Evaluation of The Attachment Aware Schools Programme Final Report¹

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Miss... is basically like all of us are like planets, right, and she's like the sun because like without her we could not be in this school. (Pupil, post-Programme interview)

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Executive Summary

Background

Teachers report being insufficiently prepared in attachment and social learning theories to work effectively with young people who experience trauma and unmet attachment needs. The failure to adequately meet these needs is likely to contribute further to the high school exclusion rates, poor educational outcomes and subsequent high rates of mental health issues experienced by these young people. The Attachment Aware Schools Programme has been developed through a partnership between Bath Spa University, Bath and North East (NE) Somerset Council and the previous National College for Teaching and Leadership to address this. The Programme is based on the assumption that all children in school need to be ready to learn and achieve and that children who have experienced trauma or neglect are often not so. Schools need to be 'attachment aware' to enable this to happen.

A number of local authorities have been providing Attachment Aware Schools training covering similar areas but with some variation in delivery modes. In this context, Bath and NE Somerset Council together with Bath Spa University and Kate Cairns Associates ran an Attachment Aware Schools Programme October 2015-July 2016, the third cohort to run, through part-time continuing professional development that included sessions at Bath Spa University, e learning, consultant support for planning and evaluation and completing a practical project of their choice in school. There were 25 participants from 16 schools (6 secondary, 7 primary, 1 middle and two special schools), who were mainly teachers, with two teaching assistants and two family support workers (with a social work background). The Rees Research Centre was invited to evaluate the Programme.

Aims

The evaluation addressed the following questions:

- Do participants develop knowledge and understanding of attachment aware theory and practice including the use of emotion coaching?
- Is this reflected in changes to a) their attitudes and practices; and b) the attitudes and practices of their colleagues?
- Has the participants' confidence in addressing the needs of children and young people increased?
- What improvement has there been, if any, in the children's a) educational progress; b) well-being; and c) attendance, exclusions?
- Are there some groups of young people who appear to benefit more than others (e.g. children in need, children in care)?
- Are schools demonstrating a better understanding of their relationship to other services?

Methodology

A mixed method approach was taken which included:

- Survey of past participants in the Programme - three participants completed;
- A pre-Programme survey of the 25 participants – all completed;
- A post-Programme survey of the 25 participants – 17 completed;
- Analysis of pre- and post-Programme school audits – all 16 completed the pre-audit, 3 schools provided post audits (see Appendix 1);
- Documentary analysis of Programme materials;
- Analysis of school attendance and attainment data – 16 schools;
- Observation of three Programme sessions;

- Pre- and post-Programme school visits to interview staff, head, governor and pupils – 5 schools at start and 4 at the end.

Key Findings

Overall, there is some compelling evidence from schools that the Attachment Aware Schools Programme in Bath and NE Somerset in 2015-16 had an impact on whole staff understanding of attachment, the meaning behind behaviour and emotional well-being. The Programme appears to have had the following impact:

- The two thirds of the participants who participated in the evaluation fully, all commented positively on the impact that the Programme had had on their own attitudes and practice. They reported feeling much more confident, having greater knowledge and understanding of attachment and emotion coaching.
- Participants noted their better understanding of why pupils might behave in particular ways and referred to the theory and evidence that they had discovered through the Programme. Emotion coaching in particular was positively commented upon.
- Participants described changes in their practice, in particular recognising emotions before managing behaviours, changing communication styles and language used with pupils and other staff and for nearly all the participants, use of emotion coaching.
- Attainment overall in the schools participating in the Programme has increased in the year since the Programme ended with six primaries improving their scores in the percentage achieving expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics and the other two achieving the same results as the previous year. Three of the secondary schools have improved, one achieved the same as the previous year and two decreased their scores.
- The Bath Spa data² showed that for 46 targeted ‘vulnerable’ children from six primary schools, the numbers achieving expectations in reading, writing and mathematics were significantly improved from pre-intervention to post-intervention. No data were available specifically on the ‘vulnerable’ pupils from the other 10 schools who participated in the Programme.
- School staff and pupils described the school environment as having become calmer and more nurturing.
- Staff and pupils noted how School Meals Supervisory Assistants (SMSAs) and Teaching Assistants (TAs) had taken this on board with examples of their positive responses and effective approaches being given.
- Impact on behaviour was demonstrated through the Bath Spa data for 41 targeted ‘vulnerable’ children from 6 primary schools through improvements in SDQ scores though as mean scores across the cohort are used, wide variations between individual pupils will be masked.

² McInnes, K., McGuire-Snieckus, R., Rose, J. and Vatmanides, O. (2017) *Phase 2 Pilot Study Impact Evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Project for B&NES Virtual School*. Bath: Institute for Education, Bath Spa University.

- Impact on pupils' well-being was also evidenced by staff in both the survey and by staff and pupils in the interviews. One factor contributing to this seemed to be providing spaces in which children can calm down and self-regulate, another was having a significant adult in school that the pupil trusted.
- Senior leader commitment, support and resource allocation was crucial to effective engagement in the Programme and it having an impact on the school.

Recommendations for future Programmes

- Future Programmes should continue to maintain a balance between 'central' sessions which give participants opportunities to learn from one another across schools and whole staff development which is critical for ensuring consistent responses to pupils.
- Schools choosing to participate should be required to have a minimum of two staff, preferably more, actively engaged in the full training in order to ensure long-term sustainability of the action plan. The requirement for one of these to be a senior manager should be continued.
- Future Programmes should continue to emphasise emotion coaching and ensure that support is provided to train key groups of staff in addition to teachers (e.g. SMSAs, TAs) in this.
- The role of the consultant in data collection should be reviewed to consider which data related to which pupils are needed and to establish a realistic timescale and means of collecting that data.
- Schools participating in the Programme should have the expectation of fully participating in the evaluation on the basis that an independent assessment of progress will help them.

Recommendations for policy and practice

There is extensive interest in developing Attachment Awareness across schools in England to better address the needs of vulnerable pupils. There seems to be four areas that this evaluation suggests need to be targeted:

- Initial teacher training – many of those in this evaluation expressed a severe lack of confidence in addressing attachment needs in schools and felt unprepared for this. Very few teacher training programmes currently address attachment and the effects of trauma despite knowledge and understanding of this now being a requirement in the teaching standards.
- Professional development of school staff – all staff in schools, not just teachers are involved in responding to behaviour and this evaluation demonstrates clearly the importance and potential changes that can be brought about by the wider school staff receiving development on attachment and trauma.
- Governors – the few who participated in the evaluation seemed relatively unaware of the issues and not engaged in the developments in school. This needs to be addressed through governor training.
- Adults outside school with whom vulnerable pupils are in contact – parents, foster carers and social workers need to be adopting a consistent approach to that being implemented in the

schools. There were examples in which schools engaging parents/carers in the training had been beneficial. There was little evidence yet of what those schools involved in the Programme 2015-16 had been able to achieve with other agencies suggesting that more cross-agency training could be developed.

Two further issues need to be addressed at a policy level:

- Ofsted inspections are inevitably a driver for action. If Ofsted inspectors noted improvements in pupils' well-being and perhaps progress of the more vulnerable pupils, they might usefully seek to identify the contributing factors, thus encouraging other schools to develop more awareness of attachment and trauma.
 - In order to build the evidence base in this area, there will need to be agreement on what are acceptable measures of progress, what data are needed and whether these should focus only on identified vulnerable pupils or all pupils in the schools involved.
-

Main Report

Background

The needs of children and young people in care and on the edge of care are a particular challenge to teachers and schools. Teachers report being insufficiently prepared in attachment and social learning theories to work effectively with young people who experience trauma and unmet attachment needs (e.g. Damody et al. 2013; Sebba et al. 2015³). The failure to adequately meet these needs is likely to contribute further to the high school exclusion rates, poor educational outcomes and subsequent high rates of mental health issues experienced by these young people.

The Attachment Aware Schools Programme was developed to address this and a number of local authorities across England have been providing this training using slightly different modes of delivery. In this context, the Bath and NE Somerset Programme was developed through a partnership between Bath Spa University, Bath and North East (NE) Somerset Council and the previous National College for Teaching and Leadership. It was aimed mainly at teachers, senior managers and governors in schools. The materials and training were informed by research and evidence from classroom practice. The Programme was based on the assumption that all children in school need to be ready to learn and achieve and that children who have experienced trauma or neglect are often not so. Schools need to be 'attachment aware' to enable this to happen.

The core training covered an understanding of attachment theory and the evidence base to support it, the impact of trauma on the developing brain, and subsequent behaviour. There was a strong emphasis on emotion coaching (developed by Gottman and colleagues, and further translated into the Attachment Aware Schools Programme by Dr Janet Rose⁴) based on recognising that behaviour is driven by feelings. Teaching course participants about emotion coaching is designed to increase the amount of appropriate responses made by adults to the behaviour of pupils affected by trauma and/or abuse. Emotion coaching helps school staff to distinguish between behaviour and the feelings that underlie that behaviour, using empathy to validate and communicate about these feelings. They should then be able to set limits to the behaviour while continuing to acknowledge the pupil's feelings and help the young person to address their problems.

The Bath and North East Somerset Attachment Aware Schools Programme 2015-16

Bath and North East Somerset local authority, together with Bath Spa University and Kate Cairns Associates, had run an Attachment Aware Schools Programme in 2013-14 and 2014-15. In October 2015, the third cohort of participants began the Bath and NE Somerset Attachment Awareness Programme through part-time continuing professional development that included sessions at Bath Spa University, e-learning, consultant support for planning and evaluation and completing a practical project of their choice

³Darmody, M., McMahon, L., Banks, J., & Gilligan, R. (2013) *Education of children in care in Ireland: An exploratory study*. Dublin: Office of the Ombudsman for Children

Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., Thomas, S., Sinclair, I. and O'Higgins, A. (2015) *The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England*. Oxford, Bristol and London: The Rees Centre, The University of Bristol and The Nuffield Foundation

⁴Gottman, J., Katz, L. & Hooven, C. (1997) *Meta-emotion – how families communicate emotionally*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Rose, J., Gilbert, L., & McGuire-Snieckus, R. (2015) Emotion Coaching - a strategy for promoting behavioural self-regulation in children/young people in schools: A pilot study. *The European Journal of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 13, 1766-1790.

in school. In addition, some schools chose to engage a consultant (at extra cost) to undertake work on emotion coaching in school for particular groups of staff.

The Programme was designed using the criteria recommended by Professor Robert Coe in his inaugural lecture at Durham University⁵. Requirements for schools were preferably to enrol two members of staff in the Programme, one of which must be sufficiently senior to lead whole school change. In smaller schools, only one member of staff was expected to attend. The head and governors were required to commit to the school becoming attachment aware through embedding the practices at every level. The school designated an 'Attachment Lead Teacher' at senior level to coordinate activities, and training on attachment, trauma and nurturing strategies were expected to be run regularly for all staff and partner agencies. Parents and carers were required to be given support to learn about these strategies as well. Table 1 below shows the sessions held at Bath Spa University.

Table 1: Attachment Aware Schools Programme: Sessions at Bath Spa University October 2015-July 2016

Date	Time	Activity	e learning
Friday October 2 nd	9.30-4.30	Full day training on attachment (AA) and trauma and the implications for learning	1. Attachment and Brain Development
Thursday October 15 th	1.30-4.30	Half day workshop on emotion coaching (EC)	2. Emotion Coaching
Thursday November 12 th	1.30-4.30	Half day training on project planning	
Thursday January 28 th	1.30-4.30	Half day briefing for heads and governors	Secondary Trauma – for heads and governors
Thursday March 17 th	9.30-4.30	Full day training - working with challenging cases	Before the training: 3. Understanding Trauma After the training: 4. Impulsive Behaviour
Friday July 1 st	9.30-4.30	Full day conference including school presentations	

e-learning

Four core units of e-learning were provided by Kate Cairns Associates (KCA) covering attachment and brain development, whole school behavioural strategy and emotion coaching. Each unit required a notional 16-20 hours of work. These would be accessed at any time and over whatever time period the participant wishes to use them. In addition, mentoring was offered for some units at additional cost.

Consultant support for planning and evaluation

A consultant was provided to support the two participants from each school. The consultant completed pre-Programme and post-Programme school audits with the participants. They assisted the school in collecting and reflecting on data (e.g. attendance, behaviour) that might be expected to reflect the school's progress in becoming more attachment aware.

⁵ Coe, R. (2013). Improving education: A triumph of hope over experience. *Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring: Durham University*. Available at: <http://www.cem.org/attachments/publications/ImprovingEducation2013.pdf>

Practical project in school

Participants implemented strategies that they had learned and evaluated these. Schools choose the focus and scope of this action research and were encouraged to target a small group of pupils whose progress that they could track. Some of these projects were shared at the final conference at the end of the Programme.

Participants

This evaluation took place in the third year that the Programme had run in Bath and NE Somerset. There were 25 participants from 16 schools (6 secondary, 7 primary, 1 middle and two special schools), who were mainly teachers, with two teaching assistants and two family support workers (with a social work background). The 25 participants included 9 from secondary schools, 10 from primary schools, 2 from a middle school and 4 from special schools. Those that were teachers had between one and 36 years teaching experience, seven having had less than five years' experience, nine having more than 10 years' experience and four more than 20 years' experience.

Aims and Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation aimed to:

- provide an independent assessment of the outcomes of the Programme in developing attachment aware attitudes and practice in schools;
- provide quality assurance through evaluative feedback as the Programme was implemented;
- inform the future development and improvement of the Programme;
- make recommendations regarding future sustainability, capacity-building and roll out.

Specifically, the evaluation addressed the following questions:

- Do participants develop knowledge and understanding of attachment aware theory and practice including the use of emotion coaching?
- Is this reflected in changes in a) their attitudes and practices; and b) the attitudes and practices of their colleagues?
- Has the participants' confidence in addressing the needs of children and young people increased?
- What improvements have there been, if any, in the children's a) educational progress; b) well-being; and c) attendance, exclusions?
- Are there some groups of young people who appear to benefit more than others (e.g. children in need, children in care)?
- Are schools demonstrating a better understanding of their relationship to other services?

Methodology

The data collected for this evaluation are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of data collected

Method	Aspect targeted	No. targeted	No. achieved
1. Survey of past cohorts of participants	Achievements of previous participants	63 previous participants were e-mailed	3 responded and completed the survey
2. Pre-Programme survey of all participants	Current knowledge, understanding & practice of AA and EC. Expectations of the Programme	Pre-training: 25	Pre-training: 25 (100% of attendees)
3. Post-Programme survey of all participants	Progress achieved, on-going implementation, future plans	Post-training: 25 (100% of attendees)	Post-training: 17 (68% of attendees)
4. Analysis of pre- and post-Programme school audits (see Appendix 1)	Actions identified pre-Programme and progress made on these post-Programme	16 schools	3 schools*
5. Analysis of Programme documentation	Understanding the coverage of attachment provided	-	Training materials Course Programme Handouts at conference
6. Analysis of schools' data on attendance and attainment	Any possible changes in patterns that might be attributed to changes in school culture	16 schools	16 schools
7. Observation at 3 of course sessions; introductory session, heads and governors and final presentations by participants	Coverage of material, responses from participants	-	-
8. Pre-Programme Interviews with participants from five schools – Jan 2016	In-depth exploration of current knowledge, understanding and practice of AA and EC. Expectations of the Programme	9 participants	8 participants
9. Interviews with governors, head teachers, designated teacher(s) for LAC/inclusion if not participants, five schools – Jan 2016	In-depth exploration of current knowledge, understanding and practice of AA & EC. Expectations of the Programme	5 headteachers 5 governors 5 SENCO's/ designated staff**	2 headteachers 2 Governors 4 designated staff (one teacher, 3 support staff)
10. Post-Programme interviews with participants from five schools – Oct 2016	Progress achieved, on-going implementation, future plans	9 participants	3 participants 1 response via email***

11. Post Programme interviews with governors, head teachers, designated teacher(s) for LAC/inclusion if not participants from five schools – Oct 2016	Progress achieved, on-going implementation, future plans	5 headteachers 5 governors 5 SENCO's/ designated teachers	3 headteacher interviews**** 1 headteacher via email 1 designated teacher 1 SENCO/designated teacher
12. Post-Programme interviews with students, non-LAC and LAC	Observations on any changes in ways that behaviour is addressed and support provided		13 students
13. Analysis of data by Bath Spa University ⁶ including: Attainment data for 46 targeted vulnerable children***** from 6 primary schools – pre and post intervention Mean SDQ data from 41 targeted vulnerable pupils from 6 primary schools	Achieving expectations in reading, writing and mathematics Behaviour as reflected in SDQ scores		46 'vulnerable' children from 6 primary schools 41 children as above

*Audits for 3 schools only were made available to the evaluation team

**Often the SENCO was the designated teacher and a participant on the training

***Of the 8 interviewed in Jan 2016, two had left, one was on leave and one declined to be interviewed

****One school decided not to participate in the post Programme face-to-face interviews

*****'Vulnerable' children included those with SEMH difficulties, CLA, CIN and those attracting pupil premium

Key Findings

Participants in previous cohorts

The three participants from previous cohorts who completed the survey all reported that their schools had made significant progress. One headteacher reported that her knowledge and understanding of attachment and emotion coaching had hugely increased and all three respondents noted that staff understanding of unmet attachment needs had led to much more sensitive and effective support and appropriate responses to behaviour. All three gave examples of significant changes including a breakfast tutor group that provided vulnerable students with a calm, well-fed and smooth start to the day. All three judged the emotion coaching to have been particularly important and extensive in its impact on staff's capacity to handle situations more effectively. One recounted:

A huge impact especially on one young man who was violent towards staff and pupils when in crisis. He is now able to verbalise that he is angry or upset and he no longer lashes out when in crisis - he also rarely has crises in school now. (Participant, previous cohort survey)

All three stated that they would have preferred less on-line learning that required a lot of writing, and more contact between schools, which they had found particularly beneficial.

One of the presentations at the conference in July 2016 was from a school that had been involved in the Programme two years earlier. This primary school reported on significant changes in behaviour and in particular, noted that staff in general, not just teachers, had changed the narrative when a child displayed

⁶ McInnes, K., McGuire-Snieckus, R., Rose, J. and Vatmanides, O. (2017) *Phase 2 Pilot Study Impact Evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Project for B&NES Virtual School*. Bath: Institute for Education, Bath Spa University.

extreme behaviour for example, by asking 'I wonder if you might be upset because...'. This had been very hard to start with but through the Programme, the staff understood the importance of valuing how the child was feeling.

Pre-programme findings

Challenges in participating in the Programme

Challenges that interviewees identified in participating in the Programme included time and buy in. There was awareness of the time it takes in a school to commit to and see the benefits of change and the participants anticipated that progress might be slow. Secondly, participants noted the barriers to change encountered with some staff who had been either in the school for a long time or teaching for many years and tended to interpret the behaviours of these children as just being 'naughty'.

Expectations of the Programme

Eleven participants specifically stated wishing to improve their knowledge and understanding of attachment, others expressed the intention to develop their skills and strategies in addressing the needs of children with attachment issues. Young people's lack of trust in the adults in school was reported to affect their academic progress, development, well-being and their ability to develop relationships. Attachment needs were observed to manifest themselves in behaviour which could be volatile and destroy the relationships that have been built with key workers. Nearly half (10) of the participants explicitly stated their plans to work with the whole staff of the school to raise awareness of attachment, improve understanding and implement more effective strategies.

In terms of the perceived benefits to the pupils of school staff participating in the Programme, most participants mentioned the pupils' behaviour being better understood, some referred to children feeling safe and secure and others to empathy, the need to give appropriate support, managing children's emotions and helping them to manage these themselves. This was considered likely to improve behaviour and in turn, learning. A consistent theme in the interviews was about schools wanting to 'unlock' success for the most vulnerable students, to help them develop both academically and personally. One participant encapsulated what many others had expressed:

Children will feel better understood and accepted through adults being aware of the needs they may have. Adults' understanding of why children might behave the way they do will hopefully lead to children making progress, both with their personal development and their ability to learn in school. (Participant, pre-Programme survey)

Knowledge and understanding of attachment aware theory and practice at the start

All participants were aware of children in care in their school currently or in the past and all but five had some experience of working with them. Five out of the 25 participants reported that they had no prior knowledge of attachment. The other 20 listed psychology degrees or psychology components of degrees or higher degrees or previous training, eight having attended previous training in attachment and two in emotion coaching. Two participants came from a school which had been involved in this Programme through a previous cohort.

There was a general acknowledgement that staff were aware of the children in school who were looked after partly because this knowledge was crucial to their role in school. Governors tended not to know who these students were. A wide range of support for children in care in schools was identified by the course participants. Staff with designated responsibility for children in care, those with special educational needs and staff with pastoral roles were all mentioned. Nine participants reported that their schools addressed

the needs of children in care through Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings or reviews, extra support, technology, activities provided through Pupil Premium Plus or having a designated teacher. The PEP meetings were the only context in which social workers were mentioned in the pre-Programme survey or interviews. Five mentioned one-to-one support, two mentioned nurture groups, another two noted the use of Thrive and a further two reported an area of the school in which pupils could 'calm down'. One also noted the use of Place2be and others mentioned SEAL and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA). Two participants felt that they could no longer request external services due to financial cuts.

Participants described how, prior to the Programme, it had not been clear to them that lack of early attachment had a detrimental impact on learning for students. Furthermore, this knowledge was secured by a scientific understanding of the neuroscience which provided evidence of a direct link between the impact on brain development and emotional development.

...all of that research basically proved to me that children will really struggle to learn effectively whilst they're still dealing with the attachment issues if they're not ready to learn, they can't learn so we have to get them ready to learn ... (Headteacher participant, post-Programme interview)

Prior knowledge and understanding of emotion coaching

Only two participants had been involved in training in emotion coaching previously. Many stated that they expected emotion coaching to provide a key strategy for staff to interact more appropriately with young people who have attachment issues. They suggested that the emotion coaching for staff was an aspect in which they anticipated making a significant improvement. One participant noted the importance of using the appropriate language with young people and anticipated all staff becoming better at this through the emotion coaching.

Impact of the Attachment Awareness Training

The impact of the Programme on pupils, staff and schools was evidenced through the post-Programme survey of participants, interviews in four schools (the fifth one visited before the Programme declined a visit post-Programme) and analysis of pupil data. In addition, data were collected by Bath Spa University and some have been included here.⁷

Changes in the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and practices of participants in the Programme

It was widely recognised by participants that attachment was vital in aiding the development of children. They acknowledged that, crucial to this development for students, is having a trusting relationship with a key adult in school. The 17 participants who completed the post-Programme survey all commented positively on the impact that the Programme had had on their own attitudes and practice. They noted their better understanding of why pupils might behave in particular ways and referred to the theory and evidence that they had discovered through the Programme. Several commented on how useful the emotion coaching was in particular. One noted:

Teaching our midday supervisors about emotion coaching helped me remember and apply what I had learned (Participant, post-Programme interview)

⁷ McInnes, K., McGuire-Snieckus, R., Rose, J. and Vatmanides, O. (2017) *Phase 2 Pilot Study Impact Evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Project for B&NES Virtual School*. Bath: Institute for Education, Bath Spa University.

Using emotion coaching strategies was considered to have gone beyond the 'pastoral' aspects of their work in managing behaviour, into their approach to teaching and learning. Half stated that they had delivered whole staff training and several referred to the introduction of restorative justice meetings following detentions or periods of isolation. The creation of 'drop in' or 'safe haven' areas with dedicated members of staff were also evidenced. A typical response to the question of what has developed as a result of the Programme came from one secondary school:

Extending our nurture support to cover lunchtimes by setting up a 'drop in' for children who are vulnerable (self-referral) with a dedicated member of staff, establishing a key worker system for vulnerable or challenging pupils at lunchtimes where they work with one midday supervisor and have opportunities to build up an empathic relationship with them and some progress towards establishing nurturing relationships in the classroom between adults and children.
(Participant, post-Programme survey)

Participants described changes in their practice, in particular recognising emotions before managing behaviours, changing communication styles and language used with pupils and other staff and for nearly all the participants, use of emotion coaching. They described the school environment as having become calmer and more nurturing.

Changes in the attitudes and practices of other colleagues in schools

Most of the survey respondents reported an improvement in staff understanding and practices. There was particular emphasis on how SMSAs and TAs had taken this on board, senior managers' commenting for example that 'SMSAs have really opened up to this since the project's start and have fed back successes. Their awareness of children they work with has increased'. One young person noted:

The dinner ladies. ... If you're upset or if you're hurt, they look after you.
(Young person, post-Programme interview)

Evidence of progress made in the attitudes and practices of other colleagues also came from school audits, (see Appendix 1), for example:

Primary school 2: post-Programme audit

- Evidence of most staff taking AA approach
- SMSAs in particular, are participating in addressing children's needs more appropriately and reporting successes
- Drop-in space great success, used by more than 75 children, six daily and year 6 approaching transition
- Supervision model needs further development

Secondary School 3: post-Programme audit

- Whole staff undertook Emotion Coaching training but not all staff fully understand AA
- SEND team, TAs and pastoral staff fully AA
- Senior leader doing Emotion Coaching training
- Time out system working very effectively. Try to get students back into lessons to generate feeling of success
Students involved in identifying needs for regulating emotion and 'take themselves out' when necessary

A greater understanding of emotion coaching has developed as a result of the training, the knowledge has deepened. There is now the knowledge that there are symptoms behind the behaviour and by acknowledging the emotions, staff can aid students with managing those feeling and ensure students feel supported. For example:

So, for some of our students they're not, you know, they're not in a place emotionally to be in lessons and I think a lot of that, that heightened awareness about their emotional state has come through the attachment training. (Participant, post-Programme interview)

And

Because they [teachers] like talk with them, like they talk about their feelings and what might happen and things that you might get upset about. (Young person, post-Programme interview)

However, it was also noted that it was important to be explicit about retaining behaviour boundaries for staff to take Emotion Coaching seriously.

One secondary school described the work done with the staff regarding welcoming all students warmly into the lesson before the lesson begins. Another described the use of student reflection forms by all staff when students are 'exited' from lessons leading to greater student awareness of their feelings.

Increased confidence in addressing the needs of children and young people.

Thirteen participants expressed some confidence at the outset but along with most others, felt that they needed more training to improve their skills in this area. Three had reported at the start not feeling at all confident and the other nine felt they were developing confidence but needed more. After the Programme, 16 of the 17 who completed the survey reported feeling much more confident, attributing this to the training, greater knowledge and understanding of attachment and emotion coaching.

Participants and school staff from their schools noted increased support in place to develop participants' capability to work with looked after children. Staff were generally more aware of the children and the impact that attachment has on students. Existing guidance and support was reported to be more effectively utilised.

I think I have accessed ... more like-minded people so actually the capacity in school to then be able to think about their needs, I think has improved so it has a positive effect on my role.

(Participant, post-Programme interview)

Improvements in the children's educational progress, well-being and attendance

Attainment and progress

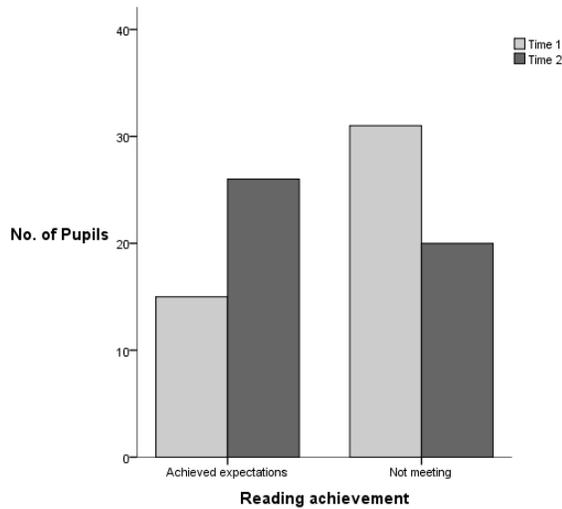
Many of the staff reported in the survey and interviews that the attainment of students had improved, though their comments made clear that they were referring specifically to the more vulnerable pupils who they were targeting in their attachment work in school.

The Bath Spa data⁸ show that for 46 of these targeted 'vulnerable pupils' (see methodology) from six primary schools, improvements in reading, writing and mathematics were significant, though it is likely that the six schools returning data had made greater progress than some of the 10 schools whose data

⁸ McInnes, K., McGuire-Snieckus, R., Rose, J. and Vatmanides, O. (2017) *Phase 2 Pilot Study Impact Evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Project for B&NES Virtual School*. Bath: Institute for Education, Bath Spa University.

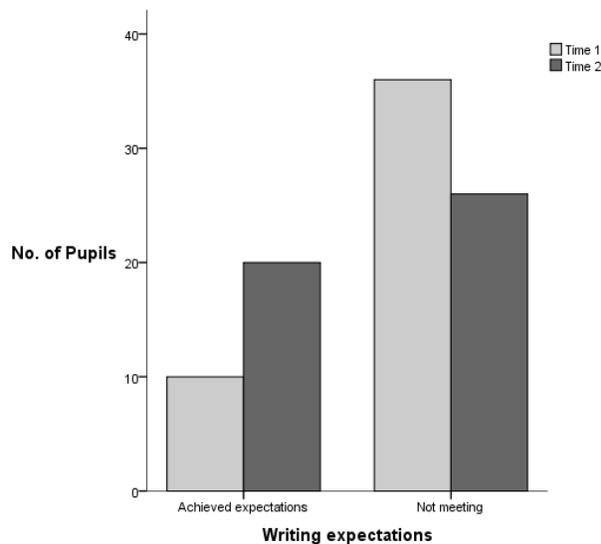
were not included. The number of pupils meeting reading expectations increased from 15 to 26 as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Number of pupils achieving and not meeting expected reading achievement from Time 1 to Time 2 (from McInnes et al., 2017)



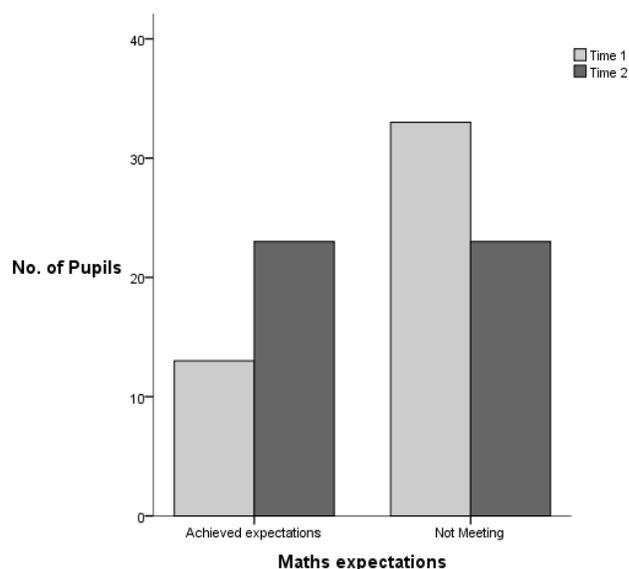
In writing, 10 pupils achieved expectations at Time 1 and 20 pupils at Time 2 as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Number of pupils achieving and not meeting expected writing achievement from Time 1 to Time 2 (from McInnes et al., 2017).



There were 13 pupils achieving expectations in mathematics at Time 1, and 23 pupils at Time 2 as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Number of pupils achieving and not meeting expected levels of achievement in mathematics from Time 1 to Time 2 (from McKinnes et al., 2017)



Furthermore, at Time 1 there were 2 pupils exceeding expected achievement in mathematics, and at Time 2 there were 9.

Published data for all pupils in the 16 schools in the Programme provides another perspective.

Table 3: Attainment and progress for all pupils in the participating schools
Secondary - % A*- C English & Maths, from 2016-17 % Grade 4 or above English & Maths
Primary - % Level 4+ Reading, Writing & Maths, from 2015-16 meeting expected standard

Schools	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16*	2016-2017**
Primary 1	75	79	30	64
Primary 2	70	71	32	44
Primary 3	86	84	64	79
Primary 4	93	84	63	63
Primary 5	100	94	88	88
Primary 6	68	90	42	67
Primary 7	81	84	53	64
Primary 8	84	78	49	60
Special 1	0	KS2 0 KS4 0	KS2 0 KS4 4	KS2 0 KS4 4
Special 2	0	KS2 0 KS4 0	KS2 0 KS4 0	KS2 0 KS4 0
Secondary 1	56	58	60	63
Secondary 2	69	72	76	83
Secondary 3	71	61	64	69
Secondary 4	44	65	66	57
Secondary 5	40	40	59	38
Secondary 6	51	61	71	70

*Changes in reporting requirements in primary to % reaching expected level limit comparisons
 **Changes in reporting requirements in secondary to % grade 4 or above in maths & English (closer equivalence than Best 8 GCSE score which has become main benchmark)

Table 3 supports a positive trend in increasing attainment across the schools. Four of the six secondaries improved from 2014 to 2015 before starting the Programme at the same or greater rate than subsequently but three have improved their scores and one stayed the same in the year since the Programme. Changes to the reporting requirements in primary schools in 2015-16 make comparisons with earlier years very limited though six primaries have improved their scores in the year since the Programme ended and no primary schools have had a decrease in score.

Participants commented on improvements in academic attainment and progress of the targeted pupils:

the data that we captured in January to what we captured in July, all of them have improved.
 (Participant, post-Programme interview)

And

Our LAC students are all progressing in line with their targets and have high attendance and no behaviour issues (Participant, post-Programme interview).

Well-being and behaviour

The Bath Spa data show that for 41 targeted ‘vulnerable pupils’ (see methodology) from six primary schools, improvements in their SDQ scores were significant, though it is likely that the six schools returning data had better scores than some of the 10 schools whose data were not included. The mean total difficulties score at Time 1 (pre-intervention) was 19.2 compared with 15.1 at Time 2 (post-intervention). Their scores on emotional, conduct, hyperactivity and peer problems all improved, the hyperactivity most markedly and the prosocial scale also improved as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Strengths and Difficulties Scores for 41 children from 6 schools (McInnes et al., 2017)^{9,10}

Strengths & Difficulties Scale	Mean score Time 1: pre-intervention	Mean score Time 2: post-intervention
Emotional problems	4.7	3.6
Conduct problems	3.7	3.0
Hyperactivity	6.5	5.5
Peer problems	3.6	2.9
Pro-social behaviour	4.8	6.1
Total difficulties score	19.2	15.1

The impact on pupils’ well-being since completion of the Programme was also evidenced by staff in both the survey and the interviews. Pupils acknowledged that they couldn’t learn if they are upset:

Like obviously when we’re, when I’m in a bad mood I don’t learn, I choose not to learn. If I’ve come into school and I’m upset, I’m upset for the rest of the day so I won’t bother to do anything.
 (Pupil, post-Programme interview)

⁹ The differences between the means are statistically significant though using aggregated means across the sample can mask major individual variations.

¹⁰ McInnes, K., McGuire-Snieckus, R., Rose, J. and Vatmanides, O. (2017) *Phase 2 Pilot Study Impact Evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Project for B&NES Virtual School*. Bath: Institute for Education, Bath Spa University.

Specific examples of impact on pupils were provided, for example:

...successes this year with some of the more vulnerable students in school...one particular boy who was seriously at risk of permanent exclusion no longer is. Emotion Coaching has been used extensively with this boy and also introduced to his parent to help her support her son... this helped her to understand the 'teenage brain'. Outside agencies were aware of the need to emotion coach too... successes with these children do not always result in better classroom behaviour, but more on their ability to cope with school generally (Secondary school, post-Programme audit)

Attendance

The attendance in the schools engaged in the Programme is given in Table 5 for years 2013-14, 2014-15 and the year of the Programme 2015-16.

Table 5: Attendance of all pupils in the participating schools

Schools	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Primary 1	96.3	96.3	95.5
Primary 2	95.0	94.8	95.4
Primary 3	96.7	96.9	96.7
Primary 4	96.2	96.4	95.4
Primary 5	97.5	96.9	97.3
Primary 6	97.0	96.8	97.1
Primary 7	95.9	96.2	95.9
Special 1	94.2	93.4	91.2
Special 2	92.3	90.7	91.3
Middle 1	94.8	94.7	94.7
Secondary 1	94.7	95.2	94.9
Secondary 2	96.1	96.0	95.6
Secondary 3	94.4	93.8	94.1
Secondary 4	95.5	95.5	94.8
Secondary 5	89.5	88.4	89.1
Secondary 6	95.5	95.6	95.5

While the data in Table 5 suggest that in 10 of the 16 schools' attendance had reduced (though negligibly in three of the schools), many participants reported that attendance had improved and that exclusions were down. This discrepancy between the published data on attendance and participants' perceptions might reflect the participants' focus on persistent absences which reduced in some of the schools in which overall attendance had not improved. Improvements were attributed by participants to changes in the approach to excluding children, through staff looking at the reasons for the behaviour rather than just responding to it. Pupils interviewed confirmed better attendance:

Overall like I've moved from [another school] to here and in myself, I've seen like a massive change, I'm going to school a lot more than I was (Pupil, post-Programme interview)

Looking at the data on only those children who were looked after in March 2016 across Bath and NE Somerset, absence rates for looked after children were similar to the previous year – overall absence decreased very slightly from 4.0% in 2015 to 3.9% in 2016. Unauthorised absence remained the same (at 1.0% of sessions missed).

Impact on particular groups of pupils and/or staff

Some schools noted that they had made more progress with the most disturbed students but less with what were often referred to as 'low level' problems. They felt that this would take more time.

In terms of skilling up the wider staff group, logistical difficulties were mentioned. Some staff do not see the targeted pupils regularly. In most schools, the SEN team saw each of the targeted students regularly and knew them well, but many staff do not meet them every week. Form tutors and pastoral leaders (house leaders) had more opportunity to do so.

Schools' understanding of their relationship to others

There was not much evidence of changes in the ways that schools worked with both other agencies in the community and parents (or carers) of pupils in the school. There was some limited evidence of a greater understanding of the perspective of social workers:

I think how it's helped is that you know, when they're coming, when Social Workers are sort of coming from a therapeutic sense, you know, we have an understanding of that now, we have an understanding of a child's needs in terms of the emotional support, so I think that's been helpful (Participant, post-Programme interview)

The ways in which a few schools work with families has also changed with increased meetings, and training parents in emotion coaching:

... we've rolled it out to parents so some of the parents we were working with, with the challenging children, we did the basic attachment, this is the theory, this is what we're working on, which they loved, so we've done that over four sessions. And then we've done the emotion coaching so we're sort of getting the prompt cards, this is what you try, and they've said that the turnaround of being able to bring the children down at home has changed. (Participant, post-Programme interview)

Facilitators and Barriers to progress

Role of the senior leadership team

As in so many other 'school improvement' Programmes, the commitment and support of the senior leadership team did emerge as important in facilitating change. The intention of the Attachment Aware Programme is that one participant from the school, in some cases the only participant, should be senior enough to lever change. There was evidence from the schools that embraced the Attachment Aware practices and those who embedded emotion coaching, that senior leaders were committed to the approach and supported staff at every level including SMSAs and TAs to implement the principles and practices. Time was identified and protected for whole school training and this was followed up by the participants with one-to-one sessions with staff. As a consequence of this training, staff who had been wary at the start, fully supported the developing ethos, culture and practices.

It was important for all schools that those who were enrolled on the Attachment Aware Programme remained in position within their school and led the staff development. In a few schools, the departure of the Programme participants to other schools (not in the Programme) led to lack of progress, as did changes in senior leaders in the school more generally. This reinforces the importance of responsibility for the implementation in schools being carried by a small team rather than one individual in order to maximise longer-term sustainability.

The role of a significant adult

The role of a significant adult with whom the pupil could develop a trusting relationship was mentioned time and time again. This was sometimes in the context of designated staff in specific 'drop in' rooms but often could be an adult with whom the child feels safe in the wider context of the school:

... I still don't really trust anyone in this school to be honest other than Miss ... and a few other people so it's kind of hard for me (Pupil, post-Programme interview)

And

And the problem is, is that we need some, we need something, we need some teachers that are more of a friend, like the school nurse I used to speak to ..., she kind of gets me because she's a school nurse and she's been trained to know what kids are about, she kind of gets what I'm going through with my family and like other teachers will say just like kind of like, I kind of feel deflated sometimes when the teachers don't understand you. (Pupil, post-Programme interview)

This was acknowledged by the participants as well as the young people interviewed:

...school can become the safe haven that children need to be able to explore life more confidently and that attachments made with a significant adult through school can be important for a child's development (Participant, post-Programme interview)

Through the whole staff training, the Programme is trying to establish responses to pupils from staff throughout the school that are more supportive and address feelings rather than only behaviour. However, it is important to accept that for each individual pupil there might remain only one or two adults in the school whom they really trust and these may not be teachers.

Creating safe spaces in schools

One factor contributing to progress seemed to be providing spaces in which children can calm down and self-regulate, which was mentioned in relation to a third of the schools. One young person interviewed referred to this as 'a proper chill out room'. The impact of these changes was evidenced by participants, for example, in one primary school, a drop-in centre was reported to have been used over the year by more than 75 children, six of whom use it daily, and year 6 have accessed it more as transition approaches.

Staff interviewed in one secondary school described students coming up to the rooms where the SEN team are based to prepare for the day and calm down if necessary before or during the day. Students indicated that they felt supported in the new spaces and that this helped them with either returning to school (e.g. following absences or exclusions) or into lessons. They appreciated the support given to them by the staff:

Miss [name] was basically there for me through everything ... I had to work in her room just to get back into school because I stopped coming into school completely, so for me to come back into school I worked up in Miss [name's] room so I felt more comfortable getting into the routine of school again and just becoming more confident. So, there is still some lessons that I work upstairs just so I can have her support. If I need time out I go up there and I get that time out, like she is literally like my life support in a way because she does everything, she understands me completely. (Pupil, post-Programme interview)

Another student commented that the new space aided in her coming to school:

I do think it is mainly Miss ... and just the kids in our, like not, it's not our but in that room, it just makes me feel like I want to be there (Pupil, post-Programme interview)

Strategies described by the Programme participants and other school staff in interviews were confirmed by the pupils:

...you like stay in Support and Guidance so like calm down and then when you're ready you could go back to your lesson or you can get these time out cards what you can use (Pupil, post-Programme interview)

There is strong evidence that these 'safe spaces' were well used, appropriately staffed and that they enabled pupils previously unable to cope to remove themselves from the situation. Several staff gave examples of pupils who had calmed down and were coping much better since the school had created such a space.

Some limitations of the evaluation

The challenges of busy schools agreeing to participate in research are experienced in most research projects. The priorities in schools are understandably ensuring that pupils learn, Ofsted inspection requirements met, staffing shortages addressed and the safety of pupils guaranteed. Schools undertaking this Programme had agreed to participate in the evaluation but in the eventuality, eight did not complete the post-Programme survey (and those staff that did so, did not all answer all the questions), one school refused the post-Programme visit, in some others visited, the Programme participants or headteacher couldn't be interviewed as they had left and those replacing them knew little about the Programme. Only three school post-Programme audits were accessed.

The availability of data on attainment and attendance is often delayed beyond the completion of planned evaluations as it was in this case. In addition, there was the issue of whether it is appropriate to consider data from all pupils in the school given it is a whole school intervention, or only those targeted specifically as having 'attachment issues'. Furthermore, the changes made in the national assessment and data reporting have limited the capacity to look at primary attainment trends in particular.

Attribution of progress in the schools specifically to this Programme is challenging given the number of other Programmes that were running alongside the Attachment Aware Programme, such as [Thrive](#), [Place 2B](#), [ELSA](#) and [Mindfulness](#). However, these Programmes were mostly in place in primary and middle schools and not in the secondary schools. Furthermore, the triangulation of evidence from the survey of all participants, interviews with different stakeholders and documentary evidence, provide some confidence that the changes reported here are linked specifically to the Attachment Aware Programme.

Conclusions

Overall, there is some compelling evidence that the Attachment Aware Schools Programme in Bath and NE Somerset in 2015-16 had an impact on whole staff understanding of attachment, the meaning behind behaviour and emotional well-being. Specifically, the Programme seems to have had the following impact:

- The two thirds of the participants who participated in the evaluation fully, all commented positively on the impact that the Programme had had on their own attitudes and practice. They

reported feeling much more confident, having greater knowledge and understanding of attachment and emotion coaching.

- Participants noted their better understanding of why pupils might behave in particular ways and referred to the theory and evidence that they had discovered through the Programme. Emotion coaching in particular was positively commented upon.
- Participants described changes in their practice, in particular recognising emotions before managing behaviours, changing communication styles and language used with pupils and other staff and for nearly all the participants, use of emotion coaching.
- Attainment overall in the schools participating in the Programme has increased in the year since the Programme ended with six primaries improving their scores in the percentage achieving expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics and the other two achieving the same results as the previous year. Three of the secondary schools have improved, one achieved the same as the previous year and two decreased their scores.
- The Bath Spa data¹¹ showed that for 46 targeted 'vulnerable' children from six primary schools, the numbers achieving expectations in reading, writing and mathematics were significantly improved from pre-intervention to post-intervention. No data were available from the other 10 schools who participated in the Programme.
- School staff and pupils described the school environment as having become calmer and more nurturing.
- Staff and pupils noted how SMSAs and TAs had taken this on board with examples of their positive responses and effective approaches being given.
- Impact on behaviour was demonstrated through the Bath Spa data for 41 targeted 'vulnerable' children from 6 primary schools through improvements in SDQ scores though as mean scores across the cohort are used, wide variations between individual pupils will be masked.
- Impact on pupils' well-being was evidenced by staff in both the survey and by staff and pupils in the interviews. One factor contributing to this seemed to be providing spaces in which children can calm down and self-regulate, another was having a significant adult in school that the pupil trusted.
- Senior leader commitment, support and resource allocation was crucial to effective engagement in the Programme and it having an impact on the school.

¹¹ McInnes, K., McGuire-Snieckus, R., Rose, J. and Vatmanides, O. (2017) *Phase 2 Pilot Study Impact Evaluation of the Attachment Aware Schools Project for B&NES Virtual School*. Bath: Institute for Education, Bath Spa University.

Recommendations for future Programmes

- Future Programmes should continue to maintain a balance between 'central' sessions which give participants opportunities to learn from one another across schools and whole staff development which is critical for ensuring consistent responses to pupils.
- Schools choosing to participate should be required to have a minimum of two staff, preferably more, actively engaged in the full training in order to ensure long-term sustainability of the action plan. The requirement for one of these to be a senior manager should be continued.
- Future Programmes should continue to emphasise emotion coaching and ensure that support is provided to train key groups of staff (e.g. SMSAs, TAs) in this.
- The role of the consultant in data collection should be reviewed to consider which data related to which pupils are needed and to establish a realistic timescale and means of collecting that data.
- Schools participating in the Programme should have the expectation of fully participating in the evaluation on the basis that an independent assessment of progress will help them.

Recommendations for policy and practice

There is extensive interest in developing Attachment Awareness across schools in England to better address the needs of vulnerable pupils. There seems to be four areas that this evaluation suggests need to be targeted:

- Initial teacher training – many of those in this evaluation expressed a severe lack of confidence in addressing attachment needs in schools and felt that their training had not prepared them for this. Very few teacher training programmes currently address attachment and the effects of trauma despite knowledge and understanding of this now being a requirement in the teaching standards.
- Professional development of school staff – all staff in schools not just teachers are involved in responding to behaviour and this evaluation demonstrates clearly the importance and potential changes that can be brought about by the wider school staff receiving development on attachment and trauma.
- Governors – the few who participated in the evaluation seemed relatively unaware of the issues and not engaged in the developments in school. This needs to be addressed through governor training.
- Adults outside school with whom vulnerable pupils are in contact – parents, foster carers and social workers need to be adopting a consistent approach to that being implemented in the schools. There were examples in which schools engaging parents/carers in the training had been beneficial. There was little evidence yet of what those schools involved in the Programme 2015-16 had been able to achieve with other agencies but perhaps more cross-agency training could be established.

Two further issues need to be addressed at a policy level:

- Ofsted inspections are inevitably a driver for action. If Ofsted inspectors noted improvements in pupils' well-being and perhaps progress of the more vulnerable pupils, they might usefully seek to identify the contributing factors, thus encouraging other schools to develop more awareness of the impact of attachment and trauma.
- In order to build the evidence base in this area, there will need to be agreement on what are acceptable measures of progress, what data are needed and whether these should focus only on identified vulnerable pupils or all pupils in the schools involved.

3. Know that their emotional state is the biggest influence on the 'emotional climate' in their setting?					
4. Know what attachment difficulty is?					
5. Identify young people affected by attachment difficulty?					
6. Know what trauma is and can they identify those affected by it?					
7. Identify young people affected by trauma?					
Sub total for Individuals - knowledge	0	0	0	0	0
Individuals – Competence – Are staff able to.....					
8. Manage their own response to a child under stress in a way that helps the child to self-regulate [calm down and feel safe]?					
9. Change what they do according to what is most effective with individuals?					
10. Reflect on their own responses to stress e.g. knowing when they have gone into 'fight, flight or freeze'?					
11. Help children talk about and reflect on their feelings?					
12. Work within the limits of their own ability and ask for help if they need it?					
13. Manage behaviour through relationships? [As opposed to relying heavily on rewards and sanctions to 'manage' behaviour for them]?					
Sub total for Individuals - competence	0	0	0	0	0

<u>Teams</u>					
14. Do teams recognise the different skills of team members in responding to children’s behaviours?					
15. Do teams ask for and use support when they need it?					
16. How effectively do teams solve problems together when dealing with children with difficulties?					
17. Is <u>training</u> about the needs of children with difficulties done with <u>multi-agency teams</u> ? (including carers/parents, psychologists, non-teaching staff, crossing people, health visitors, taxi drivers?)					
18. Are <u>strategies to support</u> children with difficulties <u>planned with the full multi- agency team</u> (including the child (as appropriate) carers/parents, psychologists, health visitors, CAMHS etc.)?					
19. Do written plans [e.g. IEP, PEP, EHC etc.] reflect 14 to 18 above?					
Sub total for teams	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Environment</u>					
20. Are there easily accessible spaces where children can calm down [self-regulate] safely?					
21. Does everyone know <u>which children</u> can access these spaces?					
22. Does everyone know <u>when</u> , <u>how</u> and <u>with whose permission</u> children can access these spaces?					
Sub total for environment	0	0	0	0	0

<u>Children and adults – direct support</u>					
23. Do all children have an identified 'support person' when they need one?					
24. Do all staff have an identified 'support person' when they need one?					
25. Are children and staff clear about when and how to go to their support person?					
26. Are staff clear about when and how to go to their support person?					
27. How much high quality, specialist supervision is there for staff working directly with children with attachment and trauma difficulties?					
Sub total for children and adults	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Senior Leaders - overview</u>					
28. What overall score would the senior leadership team give itself in relation to all the questions above?					
29. How well developed is the setting's strategy for supporting the learning of children with attachment and trauma difficulties?					
30. How well developed is the involvement of governors in this strategy and in training?					
31. How well developed is the involvement of other partners, including parents and carers, in this strategy and in training?					
Sub total for senior leaders	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	0	0	0	0	0