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Attachment awareness in schools – a model in partnership working or a sell-out to normative approaches?

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BESA

27 June 2014

ISSUES FOR TODAY

- Why attachment?
- Why us?
- Wider developments and critiques
- Evidence and impacts
- Towards a conclusion

WHY ATTACHMENT?

INTRODUCTION

- Most children enjoy life and are successful in school and in relationships. This lasts into adult life.
- But a significant minority struggle from an early stage and especially in adolescence. These children can be:
 - Unfocussed
 - Disruptive
 - Controlling
 - Withdrawn
 - Destructive
- These children tend to underachieve in school and are often punished and even excluded. Little that schools do seems to work.

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ATTACHMENT THEORY IN A NUTSHELL

The theory of attachment was first proposed by John Bowlby who described it as a 'lasting psychological connectedness between human beings' (1982). He considered that children needed to develop a secure attachment with their main caregiver in their early years. This theory has been revised to acknowledge that multiple attachments can occur with other adults throughout the lifespan, although early experiences may continue to have an impact.

Secure attachments support mental processes that enable the child to regulate emotions, reduce fear, attune to others, have self-understanding and insight, empathy for others and appropriate moral reasoning. Insecure attachments, on the other hand, can have unfortunate consequences. If a child cannot rely on an adult to respond to their needs in times of stress, they are unable to learn how to soothe themselves, manage their emotions and engage in reciprocal relationships.

A child's initial dependence on others for protection provides the experiences and skills to help a child cope with frustrations, develop self-confidence and pro-social relationships - **all qualities necessary to promote positive engagement with learning. Research has inextricably linked attachment to school readiness and school success** (Commodari 2013, Geddes 2006).

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ATTACHMENT TYPES

There are 4 identified attachment types:

- **Secure** – *'I'm ok, you're there for me'*
- **Insecure avoidant** – *'It's not ok to be emotional'*
- **Insecure ambivalent** – *'I want comfort but it doesn't help me'*
- **Insecure disorganized** – *'I'm frightened'*

The **nature** of attachment type is a **predictor** of emotional responses and **later** social behaviour and resilience

Note: Some research uses just two categories of attachment styles — secure vs. insecure—whilst other research uses a *continuum* of security in attachment (**Bergin and Bergin 2009**)

Current research suggests that:

- At least **one third** of children have an insecure attachment with at least one caregiver (Bergin and Bergin 2009)
- As many as 80% of children diagnosed with ADHD have attachment issues (Clarke et al 2002; Moss and St-Laurent 2001)
- 98% of children surveyed experienced one or more trauma event – for one in four this trauma resulted in behavioural and/or emotional disturbance (O'Connor and Russell 2004)

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WHY US?

WHERE WE CAME FROM

- In Care, In School - *perspective of young people in care & care leavers*
- B&NES Early Years Attachment Project – *‘disruptive Reception Class children’*
- Emotion Coaching – *consistent approach and message about the emotional needs of young people*

INITIAL PARTNERS

- Bath Spa University
- Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority (B&NES)
- Kate Cairns Associates (*training organisation*)

Pre pilot – 1 infant and 3 primary schools

Pilot phase 1 – 9 primary schools and 1 FE college

Phase 2 – recruiting – 2 secondary schools already signed up

- Start up funding from BSU, B&NES and NCTL
- School contributions from Teaching School and Pupil Premium

Plus data from Bath City Early Intervention and Bath Spa Emotion Coaching projects

INITIAL SCHOOL QUESTIONS

- OK we get it. So what do we do about it?
- How do we understand behaviour in the context of attachment?
- How can we develop a sustainable model of training?
- How do we embed attachment awareness across the whole school?
- How do we involve parents and other agencies?
- Does it make any difference, and if so, to what outcomes?
- What would Ofsted say?

PRINCIPLES

- Be **child-centred** and acknowledge children's **different attachment styles**
- Create **nurturing relationships** to promote children's learning and behaviour and satisfy children's innate need to have a secure '**sense of belonging**'
- **Acknowledge** adults' roles as a potential *secondary* attachment figure who can help to **reshape** insecure attachment behaviours and support the development of more secure ones.
- Create **additional infrastructures** for children with emotional and behavioural impairments (as we do for physical and learning impairments)

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5 SCHOOL COMMITMENTS

1. Senior leadership and governor support
2. Attachment Lead at a senior level
3. Attachment and trauma aware strategies in place
4. Support for and involvement of parents & carers
5. Partner agency working

MEETING A SPECTRUM OF NEED

Children who have experienced
severe trauma & neglect require

Specialist Support
e.g. Educational Psychologist

Children with unmet attachment needs
require

Targeted Support
e.g. nurture provision or additional
tutor support

All children need support for their emotional well-being

A whole school approach

WIDER DEVELOPMENTS AND CRITIQUES

DfE ADVICE ON BEHAVIOUR

In order to ensure teachers have the powers they need to maintain discipline and enforce the school rules, the government has introduced a number of reforms which include:

- Stronger powers to search pupils.
- Removal of requirement to give parents 24 hours' written notice of 'after-school' detentions.
- Clarification of teachers' power to use of reasonable force.
- "Charlie Taylor checklists" on the basics of classroom management.
- Simplified advice on bullying.
- Anonymity for teachers when accused by pupils.
- A new system of independent review panels that ensure that a school's decision to exclude is not undermined by an appeal process...
- Using the benefits of a military ethos to improve pupils' attainment, behaviour and attendance

'School behaviour and attendance: research priorities and questions' March 2014

INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS?

“We need a system that aims to prepare pupils to solve hard problems in calculus or be a poet or engineer – a system freed from the grip of those who bleat bogus pop psychology about ‘self image’, which is an excuse for not teaching poor children how to add up.”

Michael Gove’s spokesperson, September 2013

“Resilience seems to involve several related elements. Firstly a sense of self-esteem and confidence; secondly a belief in one’s own self-efficacy and ability to deal with change and adaptation; and thirdly, a repertoire of social problem solving skills”

Rutter M (1985), quoted in DfE advice for school staff on mental health and behaviour in schools, June 2014

OTHER NATIONAL MESSAGES

- Joint NICE/DfE working group on attachment, including schools
- Children and Families Act 2014: Statutory role of Virtual School Head
- Pupil Premium Plus - £1900 for each child in care, under the control of the Virtual Head
- Sutton Trust report on attachment in early years
- Attachment materials commissioned by NCTL for headteacher and chair of governor training, at <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/Media/Education/attachment-and-the-implications-for-learning-and-behaviour.pdf>
- 'Attachment Matters for All' – Centre for Excellence for looked after children in Scotland (CELCIS)

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

- **National training programme including Masters in Attachment and Learning** with local teaching school, private sector training organisation and other virtual schools
- **Initial teacher education** – position statement and curriculum model based on Teachers' Standard 7 – behaviour with virtual headteachers, Teach First, the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT), the Teaching Schools Alliance, and the Consortium for Emotional Well-Being in Schools
- **Research funding bid** to provide robust national evidence base to inform practice, including a quality mark for schools and a kitemark for trainers, involving five virtual schools and the Institute for Recovery from Childhood Trauma

BUT...

- Little robust empirical research, other than practice based guides eg Cairns and Stanway (2004) Bomber (2006, 2011)
- Most literature is largely within Psychology, social Psychology and Neuroscience eg Kennedy (2008)
- Virtually no critical theoretical models

Assumes the approach is transformational because it

- is opposed by the conservative right
- challenges top down curriculum models and behaviourist approaches

CRITIQUE FROM THE RIGHT (and well-meaning left of centre)

- Political rhetoric eg Gove
- Media driven eg Zoe Williams, Guardian 26 April 2014
- Functionalist/scientific paradigm
- 'Scientific' validity eg Meins (2014)
- Overly simplistic presentation of Bowlby eg Michael Rutter, BBC, 3 June 2014

Reinforces hegemonic nature of top down curriculum and behaviourist approaches

AN ALTERNATIVE CRITIQUE?

- Fails to take into account the 'liberal' educational values of some elite institutions and their role in maintaining social hegemony
- Supports a neo conservative individualist approach eg Edward Timpson on corporate parents: *'Someone with elbows just as sharp, and ambitions just as high, as any other parent'*
- Is at best neutral in promoting social mobility and change
- Limits learning potential and aspiration among disadvantaged groups

VIEW FROM A CRITICAL FRIEND

[This could be] an agenda that reduces education to something akin to a 'therapy culture'; one where education becomes both means and ends (the purpose of education is education). The question is: what is virtuous about a world in which you are encouraged not to go beyond what already is? Surely this has implications for social mobility and class culture.... What would be particularly interesting is to see how students from more privileged backgrounds view education and the role of teachers.

VESTED INTERESTS – THE ROLE?

- Trendy new area (MA in bandwagons?)
- Attracting students - marketing
- Profile
- Knowledge exchange
- Partnerships and funding
- ITE – professional integrity v Ofsted/ teachers' standards
- Relationships with schools/trusts, especially in the shift towards school based ITE approaches
- National developments
- Implications for research agenda

EVIDENCE AND IMPACTS

SUCCESS CRITERIA FROM PILOT

1. Increased sense of belonging
2. Improved well being
3. Decrease in disruption
4. Improved learning outcomes
5. Improved partnership working

PRIMARY SCHOOL A (PRE PILOT)

- Less need for physical intervention
- Adults around the school deal with children in a much calmer way – ‘hardly any need to raise voice or even shout’

OfSTED inspection (Feb 2014)

‘This is a very caring school where pupils are treated as individuals. Pupils understand the school’s code of behaviour, and discrimination is not tolerated. In and around the school, pupils are polite and respectful.’

PRIMARY SCHOOL A:BEHAVIOUR

**Number of more serious behaviour incidents (Level 4 or Level 5) recorded (by location)
e.g. disrupting learning, persistent disrespectful behaviour, physical assault**

	2012-2013 Attachment Aware CPD programme & Introduction of Emotion coaching across the school	2013-2014
Classroom	104	65
Playground	21	19
Dining room	26	20

“School staff report the school being a different place with a focus on learning rather than behaviour management.”

INFANT SCHOOL B - PILOT

"It gave me a light-bulb moment about children I knew in school, the way they behaved and how I responded. From then on, my mind-set started to change." Deputy Head

"If a child comes to a school with a wheelchair, a school has to put in a ramp. These children have a different need. We need to make sure the environment is good for them. It's basically inclusion."

"It's had an influence on the whole school, making us more sensitive to particular needs. We have much more empathy now." Head Teacher

"It took a series of children with needs that we just found hard to identify until we started to apply attachment theory thinking. And it just unlocked these children and made us able to understand what was going on with far greater clarity. As a result we got to make much more progress with them."

INFANT SCHOOL B

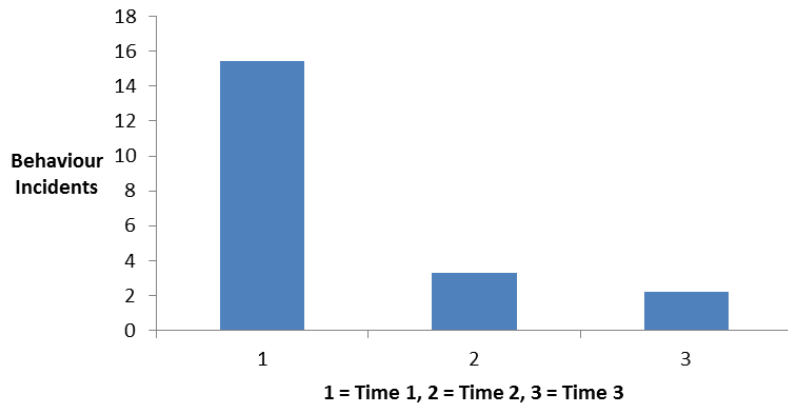
“Even if we were to express it in terms of crude economics, (and it is about far more than that), there is no way a school can afford not to be doing this work. These children place demands on the school system which, if not properly addressed, far outweigh the demands of learning to manage and work with them properly” (Head Teacher)

PRIMARY SCHOOL C - PILOT

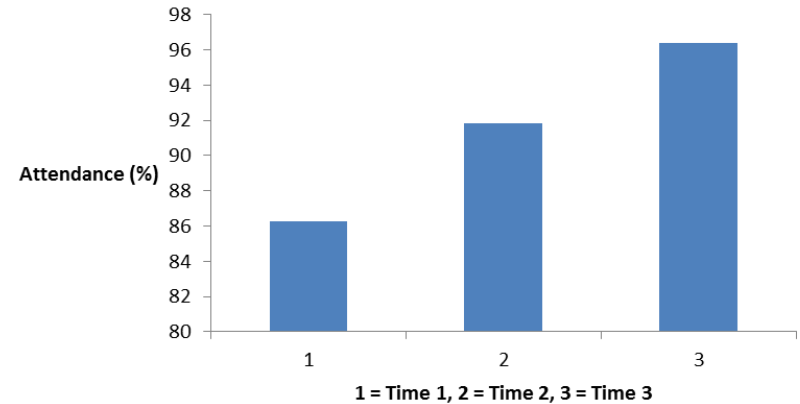
“There’s a more unified approach to how we respond to children’s behaviour. It’s changed people’s mind-set about understanding the emotions behind behaviour and how they see children, especially the support staff and the lunch-time supervisors” (Head Teacher)

EARLY INTERVENTION PROJECT

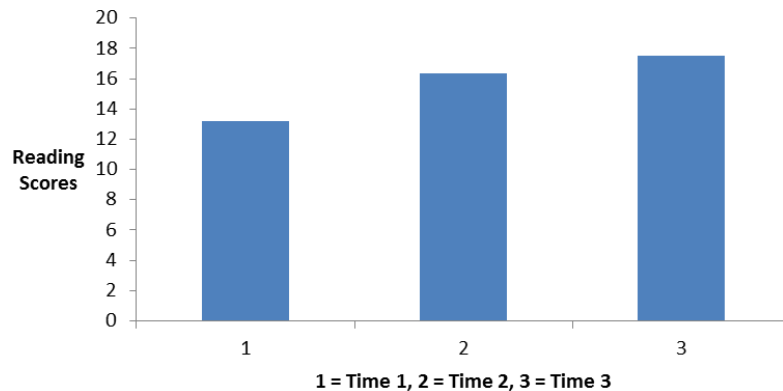
Mean Behaviour Incidents



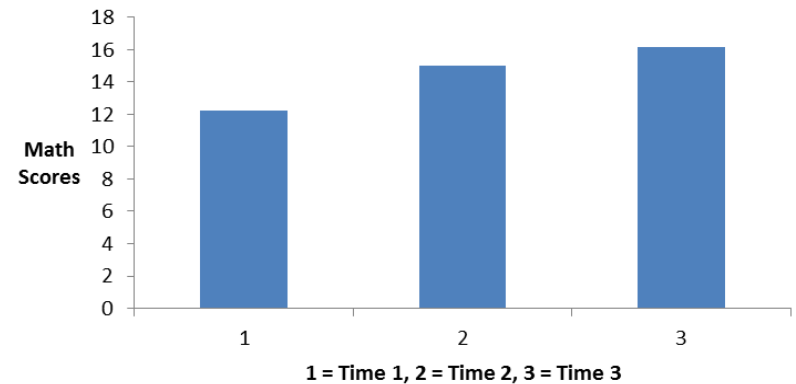
Mean attendance



Mean Reading Scores



Mean math scores



SECONDARY SCHOOL D (EMOTION COACHING PROJECT)

We invited parents into school for an initial meeting to talk about their sons - about how they were underachieving and how their behaviour was holding them back... We outlined the principles and gave parents the scripts that they could use at home... Since we have run this course only 2 of the 7 boys has had a Fixed Term Exclusion. 3 of the 7 have improved their attendance and of the others the decline in attendance has only been as dramatic as expected, in one case. The total drop in numbers of internal exclusions – from 21 to 13 - and call outs – from 84 to 36 – shows real improvement. Assistant Head)

BEHAVIOUR FOR 6 YEAR 8 BOYS

	Internal exclusions		Calls out	
	2010/11	2011/12	2010/11	2011/12
Pupil 1	6	5	23	20
Pupil 2	4	1	9	3
Pupil 3	5	5	15	6
Pupil 4	0	1	12	2
Pupil 5	2	1	16	3
Pupil 6	4	0	9	2
	21	13 (>38%)	84	36 (>52%)

SECONDARY SCHOOL D – Ofsted Report, September 2012

Relationships between staff, teachers and students are a key strength and result in strong partnerships and a positive climate for learning...

The school has positively created a strong climate of inclusion, trust and support. This has subsequently led to the students' successful achievement, noticeably at Key Stage 4.

SCHOOL D: CHANGING BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY

On 25 June we launched a new behaviour strategy in school. Until now, detentions had been done centrally supervised by Senior Leadership Team, with nothing restorative as students sat in silence in the hall for twenty minutes at lunchtime. Most staff wanted something more restorative and to facilitate this we decided that Emotion Coaching would be the ideal vehicle. We have long had a tradition of using Restorative Justice, but Emotion Coaching with its three simple steps of validating, limit setting and solution finding provided a framework for discussions between students and teachers. I went through the principles of EC with all staff and then gave staff the opportunity to role play situations using the scripts as a back-up. We begin our new behaviour strategy on 2 July. Watch this space. (Assistant Head)

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION?

HOW ARE WE DOING?

1. Increased sense of belonging - yes
2. Improved well being - yes
3. Decrease in disruption - yes
4. Improved learning outcomes – not yet proven, but some positive indications
5. Improved partnership working – not yet proven

WHO IS IT IMPACTING ON?

- Caveat - most of the anecdotal reports are from senior staff.
- Ofsted reports corroborate impacts on individual pupils, and staff- student relationships
- School reports suggest greater involvement of support staff and MDSAs
- Some limited evidence of parental involvement
- Limited evidence of change in whole school procedures

ONGOING QUESTIONS

- What theoretical models can/should we employ to investigate this approach?
- How is it impacting on the learning of children as a whole?
- Are disruptive children simply being cooled out by the attachment-informed practice approaches, or are they actively engaged in developmental learning?
- Will they gravitate towards teachers who they perceive as sympathetic rather than opting for subjects which interest them?
- How will schools ensure internal consistency of approach to avoid this?
- Will schools be more willing to admit of 'difficult' children, and will they be able to maintain and support them?
- What are the long term-implications for children's life chances and for society as a whole
- What has it actually changed?

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