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# Attachment Aware Schools

BATH  
SPA  
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Richard Parker

# ATTACHMENT AWARE SCHOOLS

- The issue for schools
- Where we came from
- Projects and activities
- Evidence and impacts

# IN CARE, IN SCHOOL

[Image redacted due to potential copyright issues]

# THE ISSUE FOR SCHOOLS:

## Maggie Atkinson, former Children's Commissioner for England

Why is this child, so sunny yesterday and on most days, so well behaved and learning so well, now alienating everybody today, letting nobody in to find out what the trouble is? Why can we seem to do nothing right? What must we do to avoid the breaking point?

# A NEW 'IF' (Maggie Atkinson)

If you understand the theory behind this phenomenon;  
if you learn that the nature of their attachment pattern is an important factor at the core of the problems you are dealing with in some children;  
if you can focus your practice on assuring them you are not going to let them down no matter what, and that you will support them without blaming yourself or the child;  
if your school has structures and practices in place to help and support you and the child alike, given that some days will be hard for both of you; and  
if together you work with the family or the carers and professionals who are also trying to help and support the child  
then you and your school may well succeed where others fail.

# THE BOTTOM LINE

Every teacher, and every school, should be so aware and so practising, because it is the duty of the public body to adapt to the child, not the other way round

# 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*
- National Virtual School Headteachers' Conference, March 2013



# INITIAL SCHOOL QUESTIONS

- OK we get it. So what do we do about it?
- What about the other 29?
- 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?

# 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 – 19 schools including 2 secondary schools

- 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*

# 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**

All children need support for their emotional well-being

## **A whole school approach**

# NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- **National Virtual School Headteachers Expert Group (DfE)**
- **Attachment Aware Schools Research Group** - 6 virtual schools, KCA and BSU
- **National Institute for Care Excellence (NICE) working group on attachment**, including schools
- **Initial Teacher Education** - working group 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 – input into Carter Review
- **Professional Masters Programme module in Attachment and Learning**
- **Attachment awareness training materials** for headteachers and chair of governor training commissioned by NCTL

# 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*

# HOWEVER

- **DfE advice for school staff on mental health and behaviour in schools, June 2014** – some reference to attachment issues
- **Health Select Committee, November 2014** – specific recommendation that teachers and trainee teachers have training on attachment
- **Carter Review on Initial Teacher Training, January 2015** – all trainee teachers should be educated in child development
- **DfE and DoH statutory guidance on promoting the health and well-being of children in care, May 2015** – specific reference to attachment aware schools



# 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

- 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: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

*"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 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."*

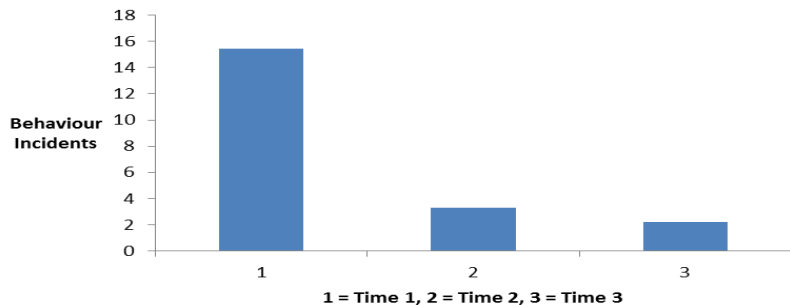
*"It's had an influence on the whole school, making us more sensitive to particular needs. We have much more empathy now."* Head Teacher

# INFANT SCHOOL HEADTEACHER

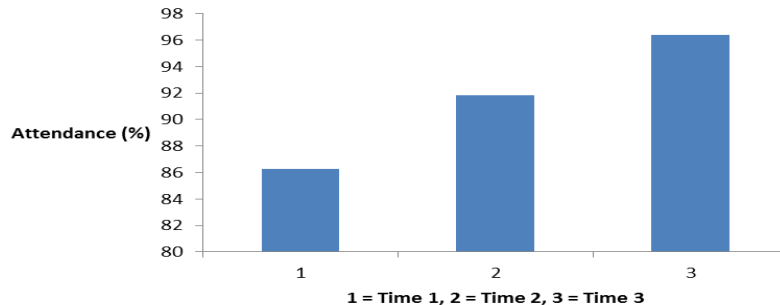
- *“Even if we were to express it in terms of crude economics, (and it is about far more than that), there is no way a school can afford not to be doing this work. These children place demands on the school system which, if not properly addressed, far outweigh the demands of learning to manage and work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

# EARLY INTERVENTION PROJECT

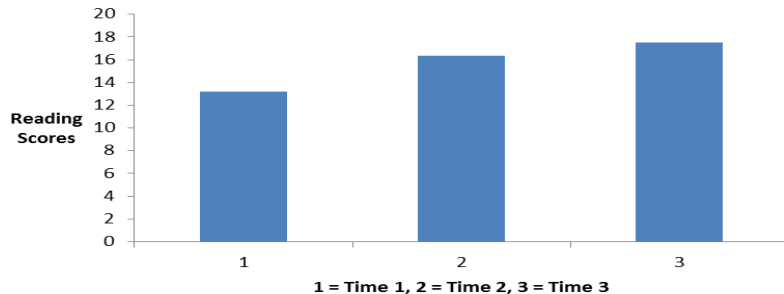
**Mean Behaviour Incidents**



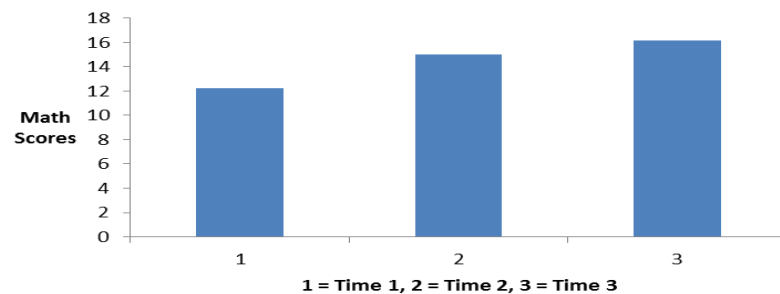
**Mean attendance**



**Mean Reading Scores**



**Mean math scores**



# SECONDARY SCHOOL

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
Totals	21	13 (>38%)	84	36 (>52%)



# SECONDARY SCHOOL – 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.’*

# SECONDARY SCHOOL 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)

# THE SOMERSET EMOTION COACHING PROJECT

- Forms part of the Somerset Children and Young People Health and Wellbeing in Learning Programme
- Project commissioned by the SCC Public Health team to help address concern about emotional health and wellbeing -highlighted by the recent Somerset Children and Young People Survey (SCYPS)
- Resonates with recent report by Public Health England (2014) which showed that:
  - pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically
  - effective social and emotional competencies are associated with greater health and wellbeing

# KEY AIMS OF THE PROJECT

- Train 100 champions in Emotion Coaching
- Improve access to services for children and young people
- Build on and strengthen collaborative work
- Promoting utilisation of the Somerset Mental Health Toolkit
- Develop county wide Emotion Coaching network
- Provided by EHCAP (*Innovative solutions for education, health, care and prison services*) and Bath Spa University

# 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

# Practitioners' views

*'These are the kids that drive you nuts but I'm now very aware that I switch something on and I'm going to go through those stages in a considered way. I can be calmer and then that helps the child to calm down'*

*'Pupils are better able to self-regulate and understand why they have certain feelings and what to do with them...They feel safe, able to confide, show feelings and know they will be listened to'*

# Young People's views

I would, like, walk off, I used to kick off and get excluded again. Now someone tries to, like, calm me down and now I calm down and regret it after. I will go back and say sorry (Girl aged 15)

They listen to you and make sure that you're OK and, like, trying to make sure you're stable and stuff and all of this helps you (Girl aged 15)



# 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 '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 ?

# FINAL PLUG!



Bath & North East  
Somerset Council



## Attachment and Trauma Aware Schools Conference Friday 26 June 2015

Commons Building, Newton Park Campus  
Bath Spa University

Hear from major international thinkers on attachment theory and its implications for schools, as well as current research and classroom practice by teachers and teaching assistants.

### Keynote speakers

Mary Gordon, Roots of Empathy Project, Toronto, Canada  
Professor Jeremy Holmes, Exeter University

### 'What works in school?'

Teachers and support staff from the Bath and North East Somerset and Stoke-on-Trent on school based attachment and trauma informed projects

### 'Thinking about Attachment'

Workshops by lead practitioners in attachment and trauma informed practice

Book your place via [www.bathspalive.com](http://www.bathspalive.com)

Cost: £120 for first participant, £90 for others from the same organisation

Visit our website [www.attachmentawareschools.com](http://www.attachmentawareschools.com)

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Teaching & Leadership



## An Introduction to Attachment and the implications for Learning and Behaviour

*"By building a child's social and emotional capabilities we enable children to be happily engaged with others and with society, and to learn, to develop fully, to attain and to achieve. In essence, it delivers school ready, life ready, and child ready members of society"*  
(The Allen Report 2011)

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