Adoption and attachment; a guide for those working in education.

Produced in consultation with adoptive parents and professionals.

This booklet is intended to be shared between parents and educational settings.
The intention of this booklet is to give a preliminary introduction to supporting adopted children in education. However, it is strongly recommended that staff should receive specialist training around attachment.

Your Regional Adoption Agency should be able to signpost appropriate courses.

In April 2017 The Children and Social Work Bill specified advice and guidance for the support of adopted children in education should be available from every Local Authority. Every school with an adopted child in attendance must have a Designated Teacher to coordinate support and this person must have received specialist training.

It may be helpful to contact your relevant Virtual School

- http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/vschool/
- http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/schools-learning-parent-advice-support
The purpose of this guide is to raise awareness of the needs and responses of adopted children who have experienced trauma, and how this may contribute to their engagement and experiences at school. Although the focus of this guide is adoption, the information also applies to looked after children and any child living with loss and the effects of trauma.

Suggestions are provided on how to respond sensitively and proactively to some of these challenges, and so improve the educational experience for all, by paying attention to the needs of these most vulnerable children. However, not all of the information is relevant to all adopted children all of the time, so feel free to pick and mix what works for each individual child, revisiting and revising often as needs change and the child develops.

The need for partnership
The importance of a good relationship between home and school cannot be stressed enough. If this guide achieves nothing else, we hope it promotes positive partnerships between parents, carers and teaching staff.

Thank you for taking time to consider this information.

Remember that when first ‘placed for adoption’ with their new family, prior to an Adoption Order being granted, children will always have their own social worker, who can be contacted with worries and concerns.

The child’s social worker will organise regular Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings for the child until the child has their Adoption Order.
Adoption – the basic facts

Full Parental Responsibility
- Adoption means that a child or children have become members of a new family on a permanent basis and all legal rights and responsibilities have passed to their adoptive parents.

History
- The majority of adopted children are removed from their birth parents and brought into the care system for reasons of neglect and abuse.
- If adopted from another country, children will have likely spent time in an orphanage.
- They may have experienced a series of carers before being placed with their adopters, and as a result had their education disrupted.
- Adopted children carry with them a history of loss and separation. Many have suffered considerable trauma from their early life experiences. Their trust in adults may have been compromised, so even though they are now in a loving family it is likely they will continue to experience difficulties.

Additional needs
- As a result of their early experiences, adopted children may have been/be delayed in their development of emotional, social, physical and academic skills.
- The difficulties encountered may be the same as some other children, such as lack of concentration or aggressive behaviour. However, these may sometimes be severe, extreme and long lasting.
- Challenging behaviours may be linked to a child’s early life experiences, and strategies that succeed in the classroom with other children may not prove effective with adopted children.
Priority Admissions

All children who have been adopted from care should now receive priority for school admissions. See http://www.first4adoption.org.uk/news/government-extends-guidance-prioritised-school-admissions-adopted-children-england-wales. This means you don’t have to live within the school catchment area to be able to get into the school. Even faith schools generally have some places not reserved for their denomination and adopted children should be high on the list for the remainder of places. Check individual school admission policies as there can be differences, especially with academies.

Your Local Authority’s Schools Admissions team is a helpful source of information and may be able to advocate for your child by talking directly to schools on your behalf if necessary.
Free early education

Adopted children aged 2, 3, and 4 are entitled to a certain amount of free childcare per year. This is under the “Achieving 2 year olds” and “Free for 3 and 4” schemes. Usually, this is taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks a year, but providers who offer all year round provision may offer fewer hours per week over a longer period of time. Some parents maybe eligible for up to 30 hours free childcare depending on eligibility., see link below.

The education provider/child-minder must have signed the necessary agreement with your local authority. For 2 year olds a referral is generally done through their health visitor. For 3 and 4 year olds a form is completed several times a year by the provider.

Useful link for more details:
This is additional funding from the government given to schools in England to tackle disadvantage and close the attainment gap between eligible pupils and their peers. It is currently £1900 per year and is for students from Reception class up to Year 11. In order to be eligible, students need to have been looked after by an English or Welsh local authority immediately before being adopted.

In order to receive this Pupil Premium funding, schools need to see evidence of a child’s adopted status so that they can enter this onto their January census. This usually means parents giving a photocopy of their child’s adoption certificate to the school as soon as the child joins a new school. Parents can blank out any details they do not wish the school to see. The school should then receive the money the following financial year, post April. For a child entering Reception, this means that the school does not receive the Pupil Premium funding until the summer term. Likewise for a child in Year 6 soon to leave Primary, the school receives £1900 just before the child moves onto another school. In this case, parents may want to talk to the Primary School about purchasing a resource such as a lap top that the child can take with them, or requesting that the funds are transferred to the Secondary School.

Unlike Pupil Premium that was accessed through the Virtual School when the child was still legally in care, Pupil premium money for adopted children comes directly from the Local Authority and is not ring-fenced for the individual adopted child. Schools can pool Pupil Premium money for numerous children to gain maximum impact from the funding. Every school should have a section about Pupil Premium on their website which explains how they have spent the money and what effect this has had on closing the attainment gap. It is a good idea for parents to talk to the school about how the Pupil Premium will be used to benefit their child.
The following are possible ways it can be spent:

- Whole school or individual training in attachment and trauma
- Additional teaching assistant hours
- Small group tuition in targeted subjects
- Specialist assessments e.g. Educational Psychologist
- Start up, or development of, a school-based nurture group
- Start up, or development of, programmes such as forest school, social groups, mindfulness
- Resources such as iPads
- Child mentoring
- Music lessons

At the moment, independent schools cannot access Adopted Pupil Premium for their students.


**Early Years Pupil Premium**

Adopted 3 and 4 year olds are now entitled to Early Years Pupil Premium to help them reach their potential. If the education provider is able to provide a copy of the child’s adoption certificate to the Local Authority, the provider will receive an additional £0.53p per hour on top of the free early education that the children receive (The maximum a provider can currently receive per year is £302.10). It is therefore up to adoptive parents to give a copy of the adoption certificate to the provider if they wish this Pupil Premium to be accessed. The provider will then claim the pupil premium funding alongside the funding they claim from the local authority for the free education entitlement. Children in adoptive placements, who are not yet legally adopted will be identified through the 3 and 4 year old funding team, and will automatically receive the Pupil Premium.
Teachers and school staff can play a crucial role in encouraging the acceptance of adoption as a valid way to build families - your knowledge and acceptance will encourage other professionals, parents and children to comprehend adoption and build understanding of different family structures.

Partnership should focus on the well-being of the child and what works for them. The best people to directly inform school of this are parents. Communication with parents on a regular basis may enable the adopted child to adjust to and participate more positively in the school environment.

Liaise fully with the parents prior to developing your own approaches or interpretations of behaviour. They will know the triggers to emotional or behavioural difficulties, and will have their own tried and tested strategies to share with you.

Identify a key figure in school who will be responsible for communicating with parents and colleagues. Communication with parents could be in the form of a school to home message book, email thread or face to face meetings, or just passing in the playground.

Adoptive parents have noted how it is vital for their children to actually see regular communication between school and home, to reduce misunderstanding or misinterpretation and to encourage comprehension of safe and shared values and aims. This joint working provides continuity and stability for the child.

Teaching staff will need to remember that some information will be very sensitive for the child/children and parents, so confidentiality will play a big part in the working relationship between home and school. It's not a case of parents hiding things from you; it's a case of parents having confidence in telling you what you need to know and not every little detail of their child's background or potential traumatic experiences. The information you are told should be kept on a 'need to know' basis within the school.

It is essential schools respect parental views on photographs and where any photographs can be shared, as this could be essential to a child's safety.
Understanding attachment

A good understanding of attachment is indispensable in order to comprehend the behaviours that all children may exhibit. Healthy attachments are paramount to a child developing well at home, school and in wider society.

Although nobody is born attached, we are born with the drive to form attachments, primarily with our birth mother. Attachments are formed in infancy through the meeting of physical and emotional needs. All babies have needs; if a baby’s caregiver recognises and meets those needs consistently in the first year of life, then the baby begins to trust that their needs will be met. This trust creates a secure attachment, which gives a child a safe base from which to explore the world around them and return to when they need comfort and safety. This attachment will lay the foundation for future relationships.

The power of primary attachment

Adopted children are unlikely to have had this chance to build attachment security and this can make life hard for them. This is because the first attachment between birth mother and baby is critical to survival, so it is the one that sets the template for all other relationships in life.

When a child has experienced neglect, trauma, abuse or pain, attachment difficulties may be severe. Poor attachments may be exacerbated by pre-birth exposure to maternal drug or alcohol abuse and the effects of maternal stress caused by domestic abuse. These problems may be further compounded by the cumulative effect of multiple moves and care providers. As a result these children tend to have an insecure attachment style that shows up as an anxious, avoidant, angry/ambivalent or disorganised way of relating to others and the world. They are also likely to have found alternative ways of trying to get their needs met. These behaviours are referred to as “attachment difficulties”.

For more information about attachment styles, please refer to the grid on page 12 and 13.
It should be stressed that these behaviours are a result of an 'internal working model' of how a child has learnt to survive in an unsafe world. And as such children will struggle to change the way they think, feel and behave. Only through a process of intensive re-parenting by adopters can they learn to feel safe enough to relax and learn new ways of relating to the world. School staff can support parents with this approach.

Behaviour is the language developed before we have the words to name needs and feelings. Behaviour continues to be the adopted child’s first language.

Symptoms of attachment difficulties;
The child with attachment difficulties may be dealing with

- Defiance and aggression
- Controlling behaviour
- Attention seeking
- Lying or stealing
- Lack of empathy or conscience
- Inability to make or keep friends
- Short concentration span
- An ability to accept or recognise help
- Poor working memory
- Poor organisation
- Panic
- Rage
- Desperate efforts to please
- Difficulty dealing with loss
- Helplessness
- Need to control
- Poor sense of identity
- Low self-esteem

How does this affect children at school?

Imagine you are a child dealing with these feelings and experiences and are placed in the school environment, away from your attachment figure for several hours a day competing for adult attention with up to 30 children, having your work and behaviour criticised and trying to manage dozens of relationships.

The bottom line is that a child needs to feel physically and emotionally safe in order to benefit from learning opportunities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment Type</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>What this means for the child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **AVOIDANT** (I'm OK, you're not OK) | Withdrawn - unable to make or keep friends  
Bullies other vulnerable children  
Refusal of help with work  
Loses or destroys property  
Talks all the time asking trivial questions  
Demanding teacher attention all the time  
Hostile when frustrated  
Poor concentration, fidgeting, turning round | I have to rely on myself and nobody else. I have to respond to frightening situations by fleeing. I don’t expect other people to like me. I pretend to be strong by making other children do what I want.  
I was left helpless before. I’m not going to be left helpless again!  
I have no sense of the value of anything. I have little interest in things if they are not mine. I am angry and I take it out on things.  
I feel safer if I do all the talking. I want to communicate, but I don’t know how.  
I fear that if I don’t let you know I’m here you may leave me on my own. Even negative attention is good. I fear getting it wrong.  
I will feel shame and humiliation if my difficulties are exposed.  
I must scan the room all the time for danger. I must stay hyper-aroused. I dare not relax. |
| **AMBIVALENT** (I'm OK, you're not OK) | Refuses to engage with work  
Tries to create chaos and mayhem  
Oppositional and defiant  
Sexually aggressive | Getting things wrong is frightening. Being wrong will lead to rejection AGAIN.  
It feels chaotic inside so it feels safer if it is chaos outside.  
I need to stay in control so things won’t hurt me. I do not want to be exposed as stupid. You are horrible like all adults.  
I know from past experience that sex = power and I want to be in control. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible triggers</th>
<th>What might you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce a buddy system. Consider 'circle of friends' approach. Encourage the child to help around the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singled out for 1:1 support.</td>
<td>Encourage work in pairs or small groups. Ask the child to help another who is less able.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                  | Validate the child's feelings, "I can see that you are angry..."  
                  | Help the child repair/restore where possible - together. |
|                  | Have set routines. Make sure all first tasks are simple and achievable. Seat child close to you. Allow child to wait quietly. |
|                  | Notice the child explicitly. Give child something to look after for a while. Give child responsibilities for things (not people). |
| Task that is hard/new/unusual. | Small step differentiation. User a timer to divide tasks. |
|                  | Arrange seating so here is no one behind the child but where you can stay in contact. Laugh with the child even at silly things. |
| Task that is hard/new/unusual. | Make sure both are acceptable and accessible! Make lessons/tasks very structured (use multiple choice/closed questions). All materials to hand. |
|                  | Focus on modifying most serious behaviour. Validate the child's feelings. "I can see that you are angry/upset..." |
| Task that is hard/new/unusual. | Be assertive but keep emotional temperature down. Avoid showing anger, irritation or fear. Start each day with a clean slate. |
| Variety of stimuli including stress. | Record all incidences very clearly. Seek advice from other agencies. |
The **PLACE** attitude for teaching traumatised children

Parents and teachers can achieve a great deal through being **Playful**, **Liking**, **Accepting**, **Curious** and **Empathic**, even in the absence of other strategies or resources.

**Playful** – A relaxed and playful environment is a more effective way of influencing a child’s behaviour than rewards, sanctions or anger based discipline.

Playfulness engages children at precognitive levels and recognises their limited ability to follow instructions.

Simply delighting in the child also conveys acceptance, regardless of their achievements or misdemeanours.

Positive non-verbal communication such as soft eye contact and facial expressions, good touch and welcoming body posture communicate positivity, as does maintaining a happy school environment.

**Liking** – show the child that you like them by staying calm even when they misbehave.

Do not reject the child even if they reject you, and reconnect with them quickly after absences or disciplining.

Find something valuable about the child and try to like that part of them when their behaviour is challenging.

Remember, the behaviour gets worse when the child is frightened or stressed. As a baby or toddler they may have been frequently in this state.
**Accepting** – It’s easier for adopted children to stay regulated and start to change if you can show you accept their behaviour.

Reminding yourself that traumatised children often ‘can’t do’ rather than ‘won’t do’; that they are doing their best, and their behaviours are a way of communicating needs and fears, can help you develop an accepting attitude.

You can use accepting expressions like, ‘I really like having you in my class, but it is still not okay to hit people. Let’s see if we can find a better way for you to show me what you need’.

**Curious** – being curious rather than angry about why children act in certain ways can help them to change.

You can convey curiosity by wondering out loud why the child is behaving in a certain way. Simply saying something like, ‘I wonder why it is so hard for you to wait your turn/queue up for lunch’ etc can help a child to stop, think and begin to make sense of their feelings and behaviours. This is usually more effective than asking directly what’s bothering them.

A child who has ‘switched off’ their feelings may not know why they are upset. They may say something trivial, or withhold the information through lack of trust. An educated guess such as, ‘I wonder if you are worried about the school trip on Friday’, can also be an excellent way to open discussion, in which you can listen empathetically. It is important to restrict this curiosity to present circumstances and not be tempted to speculate on past experiences.

**Empathy** – is the most important quality you can have when working with adopted children.

To understand the child’s needs we have to put ourselves in their shoes and convey to them that we ‘get it’. For example, ‘I know that these spellings are hard for you to remember’. ‘Your knee is really red, I bet that hurts’.

Empathy allows the child to feel their feelings and encourages the relief of grief, fear and rage behind emotional and behavioural problems. Try to empathise with the child before disciplining and throughout the employment of disciplinary measures. It is vital that you remain genuinely empathic, not flippant or sarcastic.
Developmental Trauma
Abuse and neglect in infancy gives a child a deep sense of shame about who they are; they tend to feel unworthy of care, have little trust in adults and frequently feel unsafe in their environment.

Neuroscience shows that a baby’s brain grows to 80-90 per cent of its adult size in the first three years of life. Each individual brain develops to ensure our survival in the environment into which we are born, so children born into hostile environments have a brain wired for stress and fear. The damage caused by these early experiences is so pervasive and enduring it is now recognised as developmental trauma. Affected children may have many of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder plus learning difficulties and an inability to articulate how they feel because much of the hurt happened before they had developed language.

Key points about trauma

- **Adoption does not fix it.** Trauma can be triggered by stress and sensory reminders for years. When activated, children typically respond by becoming hyper-aroused and/or dissociating.

- Many adopted children will have some level of developmental trauma, which can be reactivated by experiences in school.

- The trauma is relational and so it can be helped by good relationships or triggered by difficult ones. Adopted children need adults to be trustworthy, and to engage with them in a friendly, fun, nurturing and structured way.
Developmental Gaps

Adopted children often feel, think and act much younger than their chronological age. It’s as if they get ‘stuck’ at critical development stages which leaves gaps in their development.

**Common developmental gaps include:**

- Having the emotional control and concentration levels of a toddler
- Inability to wait for reward or attention
- Difficulty controlling behaviour
- Difficulty regulating stress and responding to stimulation
- Difficulty playing or socialising appropriately
- Sensory issues and difficulties with motor skills
- Being excessively clingy or overly independent
- Experiencing overwhelming shame

These gaps can create challenges at school, where adopted children are expected to behave with the same maturity as their securely attached classmates. This can be frustrating for a child who may have the concentration and stimulation levels of a much younger child and may need learning tools, play activities, nurture, supervision, targets and boundaries appropriate to their developmental, rather than their chronological age.

A good rule of thumb when parenting or teaching a child with attachment difficulties is to “think toddler”. In other words, actions that you would accept as normal in a much younger child may be linked to attachment, trauma and loss in school age children. “Babyish” behaviours can become more pronounced in periods of stress when we all naturally revert to earlier patterns of behaviour and more primitive survival responses, but less obvious gaps can persist unnoticed throughout childhood and adolescence.
**Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)**

This is due to developmental trauma that occurs before birth. It is an umbrella term for several diagnoses that are all related to prenatal exposure to alcohol. The term "spectrum" is used because each individual with FASD may be on a spectrum of mental and physical challenges. It is not known exactly how many children suffer from FASD, but the condition is widely under-diagnosed and a diagnosis can be difficult to obtain.

Some children with FASD will display certain facial features, but this is dependent on when exactly the birth mother was drinking, during pregnancy. Many children will have brain damage without any physical features of FASD and so their condition may not be recognised when they are babies.

For more information see the FASD trust website [www.fasd.co.uk](http://www.fasd.co.uk)

**Sensory Processing Difficulties**

There is a higher prevalence of sensory processing difficulties among adopted children. Sensory refers to the way the nervous system receives messages from the senses and turns them into appropriate motor and behavioral responses. A child that struggles with sensory processing will often find it difficult to process and act upon information received through the senses, which creates challenges in performing countless everyday tasks.

If sensory processing difficulties are suspected, it may be beneficial to involve the assistance of an Occupational Therapist (OT) who can explore some of the following strategies:

- Fiddle toys
- Sensory breaks
- Need for calm spaces
- Physical Activity

**Special Educational Needs**

There is a significantly higher prevalence of SEN among children who have been in care. Their needs may be physical, cognitive or behavioural. Early assessment and intervention followed by systematic review will be particularly helpful to adopted children and their families.
Certain areas of the curriculum may need further consideration for adopted children as they have the potential to cause anxiety or distress to children who have been adopted.

When looking at these areas it may be beneficial to discuss them with parents beforehand, and perhaps consider tailoring the subject matter. Please bear in mind this list is not exhaustive:

**Topics**

**Family history:** children may not have the information needed, or want to talk about it.

Asking a child to write about their *earliest memory* or bring in baby *photos* or birth certificates may trigger distress, confusion or unwelcome behaviour.

Talking about *inherited characteristics* may be uncomfortable for the child, particularly for those who are trans-racially adopted and do not share physical characteristics with their adoptive family.

Some stories or texts may *emphasise parallels* to a child’s own story causing distress and anxiety.

A child that has *suffered sexual abuse* in their earlier life may have an unusually early awareness of sexual issues and may make inappropriate comments or actions.

Children may find films or literature about *pregnancy and birth* upsetting, as their experiences may differ from the expectation that all others (and wider families) bond, love and care for their babies.

Children who have been abused may feel *uncomfortable when they are required to change* for physical activities.

Topics such as *substance misuse* may be a reminder of painful and confused circumstances, which may have brought children into the care system and continue to affect contact plans.
It is important for teachers to prepare the best way to respond to other children when they are enquiring about their adopted classmate or adoption in general. It is helpful for staff to prepare possible answers, in advance, in conjunction with adoptive parents. Similarly, if an adopted child discloses elements of their past to their peers, questions may arise that need careful answering.

**FLASH POINTS**

The following points highlight areas of school life that can trigger challenging behaviours. These triggers can be hard to identify and will be individual for each child. However, we have tried to identify some of the more common ones.

**Celebrations** during the year may be particularly difficult for adopted children - for example; a birth family birthday may create complex emotions and making a card for mother’s day or father’s day could contribute to confusion.

**Christmas** can cause significant distress for some adopted children.

Adopted children generally have some form of contact with their birth families, either through direct contact (generally only with siblings), and/or Letterbox Contact, which is the exchange of letters with birth relatives. This can cause complex feelings and emotions for the adopted child.

Some children have been trans-racially adopted so sensitivity will be required to help children celebrate their identity in ways that value their own ethnic origin and that of their new family.

**Use of the word ‘adopt’**

Some schools may ‘adopt’ an animal, which may convey difficult messages to adopted children and their families. Teaching staff could consider using the term ‘sponsorship’ rather than ‘adoption’ should this arise.
Managing ‘schoolwork’ outside the school environment and routine can be a particular source of stress for some adopted children. Adopted children can have huge difficulties with organisation and may appear lazy or uncooperative – homework needs to be clearly set and achievable.

Homework can also lead to control struggles if a child refuses to comply and this can lead to parenting battles which can compound difficulties that children can experience. Some adoptive parents may independently decide that it is not productive for their child to complete homework, due to the amount of stress it may bring to the family home. Consequently teaching staff should look at each child/children/family individually in order to find the route that will work for them.

Transitions
Adopted children frequently struggle with transitions:
- Moving between activities
- Beginning and end of day
- Moving between year groups
- Moving schools: primary > secondary

Careful planning, additional visits and strategies such as the creation of a bespoke transition booklet can help greatly.
Increasing feelings of security

Afternoons can be particularly stressful for adopted children as the longer they are separated from their family the more anxious and unsettled they may feel. Parents can alleviate this by giving their child a 'transitional object' to take to school and return to their parents at the end of the day. A photograph of the family in the child’s bag may also help soothe the child.

- **Predictability will help a child feel safe and contained**, therefore transitions and routines should be carefully managed and prior warning given to the child of any changes. A visual day planner can prove to be invaluable for this.

- **Unstructured times**: such as playtime can feel very unsafe for adopted children, so they may benefit from close supervision at these times.

- **Safe place/calm corner**: children may climb under a desk, hide, run off or simply ‘switch off’ when frightened or over stimulated. If they are to learn anything they will need time out to regulate.

- **Providing a sensory-comforting space** in the classroom can allow them to do this. Ideally, the child would go to the space with a trusted adult. The child needs to know that it is a place of safety because you care and not a punishment zone.

- **Mentor/Key Person**
Appointing a member of staff to act as a key contact can help the child feel valued: duties could include: greeting the child on arrival, being available when times are hard for the child, giving the child special tasks of responsibility, making positive comments.
Use of behaviour charts - shame and self-esteem

A child with healthy attachments can understand the difference between “I am bad” and “I did something bad”. Sadly, many adopted children have developed an overwhelming sense of shame - a belief that “I am bad. I don’t deserve love”.

Some approaches to discipline, such as behaviour charts, can create such a painful state for a child with a history of harm that a signal is sent to the brain that more danger is coming and a flight/flight/freeze will be triggered.

A gentle approach, helping the child to calm themselves and meeting their shame with empathy and curiosity, is more likely to be successful in helping them not to repeat certain behaviours. These children may also find it hard to accept praise - low-key, specific praise will be most easily accepted as you seek to build self esteem.
Looking at things from the adopted parents perspective

Having children can be exhausting. For adopters, instant parenthood can be overwhelming and leave them feeling vulnerable. They will have much to contend with:

- A range of emotional, social and behavioural issues
- Often no gradual nurturing into the education system via playgroup and nursery
- The need to build up a supportive network of other parents
- A feeling of being different from other parents
- If a child is experiencing difficulties in school, parents are likely to be concerned by the negative feelings expressed by other parents
- A possible incomplete picture about the child's past - they may not have the detail you require

Like to know more?
Becoming an Attachment Aware School
www.adoptionuk.org/schools-campaign

If you would like to know more about any of the topics raised, please contact your local RAA, they will also be able to inform you of appropriate training.

Inside I'm Hurting
Louise Bomber.

Practical strategies for
supporting children with
attachment difficulties in
schools.

Book Recommendation:
Notes and ideas . . . .

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________
The most important things to remember about me

Please try to think less about managing my behaviour and more about reducing my anxiety - reducing anxiety will lead to better behaviour. Behaviour is how I signal my needs and fears. I first experienced need when I had no language to describe it, so my behaviour is my first language. I will revert to it when I'm stressed or anxious.

I learn much better when I feel safe - emotionally and physically. I need you to like me and I need to like you, otherwise I just won't learn and school will be harder for both of us. Deep down I feel I am bad and that nobody would want to care for me, so I will challenge your interest in me. Please don't get angry when I don't trust you. Use the PLACE attitude and give me consequences for my misdemeanours - without anger! This will help me build cause and effect thinking, reduce my shame and encourage a healthy sense of guilt. Try to end each day on a positive note.

Please avoid threats of removal or exclusion, as these will simply reinforce my perceptions of being unworthy and unlovable. Remember ‘time in’ rather than ‘time out’ at times of stress, it helps me to be closer to you rather than being sent away.

I may act much younger than my years. Because difficult things happened to me when I was young, parts of my development got stuck, so I find it hard to get through the day without my mum or dad and I may need sensory reminders of them to make me feel safe. I need you to supervise me, give me boundaries, and relate to me as you would to a much younger child. With me the motto is always, “think toddler”.

I am not good with change or surprises. I need a timetable for my day, so I know what is coming next. I need you to prepare me for any changes in teacher, classroom assistant, or pupils. Also, if we are going on a school trip, to a different class or if lunch or break arrangements are going to change. If I am sent out of class for any reason, please tell me where I am going and who I will be with. If I am sent to a different teacher as a discipline, please let it always be the same teacher, where possible. If I go somewhere new, let me check out the space before we settle down to learn. Please don’t leave me isolated or alone at any time.

Please remember that you, me and my family are all doing our best. Don’t take my behaviour personally; it may feel personal, but it is not about you and it is not deliberate. Model how you want me to behave. It helps if you can say “sorry” if you get it wrong and “thank you” even when my behaviour is bad e.g. “thank you (name) for showing me that it is hard for you. Now let’s see if we can find a better way for you to show that you need help”.

Look after yourself

Finally, you may pick up on my feelings and begin to feel anxious, demoralised and deskilled yourself. Please get support if this happens. You make a real difference to children’s lives, we need you to take good care of yourself.

Thank you