



St Edward's SEND/SET Newsletter

September 2017

Supporting pupils with SEMH: Nurture!

It is recognised that the **root cause** of social, emotional and behaviour disorders (SEBDs) is an absence of early attachment experiences to safe adults.

SEBDs are not transient or something the pupil will 'grow out of'. 40% of pupils have insecure attachment (Sutton Trust 2014) - this is something schools **CAN-NOT** ignore.

As teachers/support staff you are the attachment givers in the classroom; we model safe, positive and **nurturing** relationships everyday. To pupils who have missed this early years opportunity **you are key!**

The theoretical model that underpins

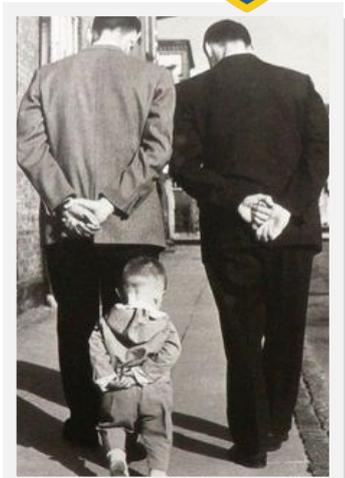
the effectiveness of nurture is Attachment Theory (John Bowlby 1965). He argues that children acquire age-appropriate behaviour through interactions with significant others.

If a child's early experiences were characterised by missing or distorted nurturing, then the 'serve and return' interaction that is so critical for brain development causes stunted social, emotional and cognitive development (the key to successful experiences in school!).

Obviously early intervention is crucial

in order to readdress the negative physiological changes in the brain, but even during adolescence the brain is still malleable; in other words our nurturing approach CAN still make a difference.

A nurturing whole school approach can make a difference **to the pupil** (improved well-being, learning and success./ better life chances!), **to the school** (improved teaching, fewer referrals/exclusions) and **to society** (long term mental health improvements, reduced cost on long term mental health, reduction in crime and overall increased educational attainment for the most vulnerable).



If you would like to learn more about Attachment Theory? Look out for CPD opportunities via the SEND Department/SET

www.nurturegroups.org
www.attachment.org

"Successful social and emotional learning interventions...seem more likely when approaches are EMBEDDED into routine educational practices, supported by professional development and training for staff."
Education Endowment

How can I provide a safe and nurturing learning environment?

The first step is to reflect on your own fundamental working models of what you think causes disruptive behavior and how you respond to it (usually based on our own experi-

ences).

Often in our busy classrooms we use a limited toolkit to respond swiftly to disruptive behavior (send the pupil out, detentions, ask for on call..).

We have little time to consider what is causing behaviour that disrupts the learning environment. Our negative response to the behaviour often affirms the child's sense of worthlessness, which in turn leads to further poor behaviour.

Prior planning for pupils identified with SEMH; small adjustments to your lesson, learning dialogue and the classroom environment based on the 6 principles of nurture, CAN make a positive difference to the learning experience of ALL pupils.





The 6 principles of Nurture

1. Learning is understood developmentally (pupils who have not experienced secure attachments are often 'stuck' developmentally and their emotional responses reflect this)

2. The classroom offers a safe base (your classroom may be the place where the pupil experiences their only safe interactions—where attachment can take place)

3. The importance of nurture for

the development of well-being (the nurturing language and experiences you provide WILL support the child's well being by supporting them to internalise controls and therefore enable them to move on to the next developmental stage)

4. Language is a vital means of communication (positive nurturing talk is vital to pupils who cannot attach/trust: use language that models appropriate interaction with others and motivates,

engages and encourages pupils who are vulnerable or have speech and language needs)

5. All behaviour is communication (consider the root cause of behaviour, plan for pupils with SEMH and aim to use an alternative toolkit—see below)

6. The importance of transition in the lives of children and young people (predictability, routine, safety, emotional refuelling)

Toolkit – some ideas

An 'emotionally well child' can demonstrate empathy, self-awareness, can manage feelings, is motivated and has good social skills.

All are prerequisites for successful learning. In addition to specialist support and interventions (Nurture Group, CAMHs, Social Skills group...)

pupils with attachment issues need **your support** to model and teach them these vital skills.

- ◆ Safe environment/warm welcome!
- ◆ Develop explicit expectations/routines– limit choices
- ◆ Don't assume the pupil has the skills to complete the task
- ◆ Teach/model the skills especially interactive skills needed
- ◆ Rehearse and practice skills
- ◆ Use the child's name when giving an instruction
- ◆ Give eye contact
- ◆ Brief instructions/check un-

- derstanding ('please tell me what I said')
- ◆ Checklist/task board
- ◆ Extra processing time
- ◆ Visual cues (pictures/timers/gestures) verbal reminders
- ◆ Word mats—explicitly teach
- ◆ Tactically ignore low level disruption/diversion ideas
- ◆ Catch the pupil doing the right thing/praise /reinforce
- ◆ Negotiated time out
- ◆ Regular praise/home-school liaison/link completed task to enjoyable outcome

- ◆ Memory aids—mind maps, memory games
- ◆ Make explicit links and reward for making constructive links
- ◆ Model humour but never use sarcasm
- ◆ Don't assume the pupil knows the protocol for social interaction
- ◆ Create opportunities for friendships/check if help is needed/seating plan
- ◆ Reflect on social interactions, practice.
- ◆ Support pupil in managing disappointment