

Our mission statement at St Anne's is;

***“To help every person here to achieve his or her best in work and in play.
To celebrate whatever is good and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus by supporting and forgiving each other, for the Honour and Glory of God”.***

Rationale

In line with our Mission Statement we recognise that we have responsibilities to all our children and their uniqueness. As such, this Policy is designed to support school staff working with children who experience “attachment issues” in order to ensure that each child achieves their very best in work and in play.

Every child is unique. However, children in or who have been in the care system are particularly vulnerable due to their experiences of serious loss or disruption to their most important relationships.

Some children will have experienced significant relational traumas through neglect or abuse. These experiences can impact on children's development and affect their social, emotional, behavioural development and academic progress in school.

What is attachment?

Attachment is described by Bowlby (1969) as the ‘bond that ties’. It is the deep and enduring early connection established between a baby and his/her main caregiver/s. These relationships are our most important relationships.

Research suggests that our earliest relationships are important for:

- The physical development of the brain
- The development of the ability to regulate emotional state
- The ability to develop empathy and relationships with others (reciprocity)
- The development of executive functioning skills (the collection of processes that are responsible for guiding, directing and managing cognitive, emotional and behavioural functions)
- The development of a sense of self.

Attachment theory

Attachment theory suggests that our earliest relationships form the blueprint, or template, for what we expect from all relationships we go on to develop.

These blueprints are developed at a time before we have language and therefore are very resistant to change. Even when children form new relationships they continue to expect the pattern of responses from adults they have experienced in the past.

If a child has experienced early care where the adult is available, responsive and able to meet his/her needs (and has developed a secure attachment), the child will expect adults in the future to be similarly available, responsive and able to meet his/her needs.

If a child has experienced early care where the adult is unreliable, unresponsive, not attuned to his/her needs, threatening and/or abusive (and developed an insecure attachment), the child will expect the same from adults in future relationships.

In order to provide the very best for each of our children we will adhere to the following Guidelines:

Guidelines

- Understand the pupil's personal history - walk in his/her shoes, consider what experiences s/he has had. This can only be compiled after close liaison with parents/carers and all relevant professionals. The child should be included where appropriate.
- Ensure that all key staff are aware of any vulnerable children.
- Agree a Personal Education Plan with parents and any other relevant professionals.
- Support each other in and out of school. Arrange regular times when staff can meet to share their experiences and seek support.

- Work in partnership with the pupil's carers and share good practice.
- Provide opportunities for the pupil to talk when needed.
- Encourage him/her to express emotions and discuss difficulties etc. This is often best done while 'helping' to do a job. However, be aware of giving too many jobs.
- Be aware of possible triggers in PSHE - for example, stories about abandonment or loss etc.
- Be aware that some pupils may find PE lessons particularly difficult. PE lessons differ from the usual structure of lessons. Challenges include: getting undressed, leaving possessions unattended, a dramatic change in pace (and the expectation to return to a ready to learn state at the end of the session. This can leave pupils feeling exposed and vulnerable.
- Make a 'Success Book' – keep records of good work, successful playtimes/break times, positive comments etc. This should be looked after by an adult to avoid it being destroyed/ripped up when the pupil feels he is 'rubbish'.

Supporting the development of emotional regulation

- Children with attachment difficulties may not have learned how to recognise and control their emotional state.
- They may be reliant on others to support them to do this.
- Difficulties with emotional regulation can be addressed but it should be recognised that it will take time.
- Set emotional and social expectations based on the Child's emotional age rather than his/her chronological age.
- The child's emotional age may be significantly different from their chronological age.
- THINK TODDLER!

Policy First agreed: February 2015

Reviewed September 2016

Will be reviewed annually