



Hindlip First School  
Tibberton First School



# Attachment

This guidance has been written by our partners at  
Perryfields Primary PRU.



**Perryfields Primary PRU**

## There are four different attachment styles –

- **Secure Attachment**
- **Insecure Avoidant Attachment**
- **Insecure Ambivalent Attachment**
- **Disorganised Attachment**

Each attachment style needs its own approach.

### Secure Attachment

These are children who know they can rely on adults to care for them. They're more likely to:

- Have good self-regulation
- Learn more easily and quickly
- Show more persistence and 'grit'
- Succeed at creative tasks
- Become part of strong social networks
- Can show distress when their caregiver leaves but are able to compose themselves knowing that their caregiver will return

### Insecure Avoidant Attachment

These are children who can be highly distressed when the adults are still present

- They are so self-reliant that needing an adult's help can make them feel insecure
- Tend to suffer from high levels of anxiety and harbour a strong fear of failure
- Often might not communicate with adults when they're upset or stressed
- Can appear withdrawn or isolated
- Don't outwardly show any desire for affection or closeness
- Have a strong need for choice and control
- Act with indifference to new situations
- Can appear happy or settled much of the time
- Will be reluctant to turn to adults when they need help
- Prefer activities to relationships
- May be relatively isolated as they lack emotional engagement with other children or with adults

## **Insecure Ambivalent Attachment**

These are children who can be anxious and can have a negative self-view and a feeling of rejection. They will need help to focus on and express their feelings and emotions.

- They often physically cling on to their caregivers
- They find it hard to concentrate on academic tasks
- They engage in persistent attention-seeking behaviour
- They pay close attention to what the adults are doing
- They have a poor understanding of cause and effect so they find it difficult to learn from systems of rewards and consequences
- Can act with in difference to new situations
- Could be withdrawn and quiet
- Resistant to help from the teacher but also lack confidence in their own ability
- Generally appear more self-reliant and independent than expected of their age
- Can appear happy and settled much of the time however if stressed they may show a sudden inexplicable tantrum which is quickly over

## **Disorganised-Controlling Attachment**

These are children who can display a lot of controlling, manipulative and aggressive behaviour. They can be over compliant / withdrawn, which may signal that they are feeling anxious, distressed and insecure.

- They seek control of relationships with peers and adults
- Present a limited range of emotions
- Experience high levels of anxiety that they often seek to mask with assertive behaviours
- Quickly become overwhelmed by their emotions
- Resist attempts at support or encouragement from adults
- Are hyper-vigilant of adults and other children
- May be very compliant and helpful when meeting a new adult for a short time, before completely changing their behaviour
- Controlling within peer relationships leading to lack of friendships
- Tend to be inattentive

- **May have poor stress tolerance which detracts from learning**
- **May be unable to accept being taught, and/or are threatened by others knowing more than them as this triggers overwhelming feelings of humiliation**
- **Anxiety may be expressed as controlling and knowing everything already.**
- **Can be highly disruptive in school**

## **ENABLE ME**



**To feel safe and  
secure so I am  
less anxious.**

## Supporting Strategies.

Children with attachment difficulties at times find it difficult to trust others – key relationships therefore are vital in order that trust can be built. They will need to have trusted adults supporting them in order to make them feel safe and secure.

- **Allocate a trusted adult to check in with them throughout the day. It is always useful for them to meet and greet at the start of day. This will not only give them some much needed reassurance but also will allow the adult to gauge how they are coming into school. If you can assess how they are emotionally then you can tailor support to meet their need.**
- **It is worth having designated times throughout the day when a trusted adult checks in on them. Not only will that give them the attention they crave, but also if they know this need is being met at certain times of the day, they are less likely to seek adult attention in other ways.**
- **How you communicate is key – if they start to become dysregulated use humour, distract or do something which is out of the norm to engage them and give them an interest to focus on.**
- **Don't make promises you can't keep or give consequences you aren't prepared to follow through. They need to know they can rely on you to be honest and deliver what was stated.**
- **If relationships do break down in any way – repair these quickly. If they make a wrong choice enable them to try and put it right.**
- **If an adult is supporting them and has to move away for a period, leave a transition item with them so they know you will return. "I am leaving you my green pen to look after, I will be back for it in a few minutes."**
- **Use specific positive praise to emphasis desired behaviours. "Well done you sat down as soon as I asked you to."**
- **Wherever possible give as much positive praise as you can; as they will seek attention be it positive or negative.**
- **If possible ignore unwanted behaviours providing they are not disruptive or dangerous then praise as soon as they comply.**

- Children with heightened anxiety are often hyper-vigilant and will be monitoring closely what is happening in the classroom. Try to pre-empt this by giving them as much information as possible as to what will be happening that day. In particular ensure they know if visitors are coming into class and for what purpose as this can cause huge concerns for them resulting in a fixation on the visitor which then becomes a distraction

Children may have difficulties in recognising their own identity. This could make it tricky for them to determine their likes and dislikes, be unsure of their role in certain circumstances, overact to particular incidents, lack social awareness, have poor self – regulation or be able to show little empathy.

- Play games to try and establish what they like or dislike.
- Encourage turn-taking to help achieve some independence in activities.
- Look at emotions – both their own and others in various ways – use a mirror so they can look at various expressions, make sure your face is matching what you are saying, label experiences, and emotions. Model emotions, “I can see you are really excited about that, look at my face I am so happy.”
- Offer lots of sensory experiences to make them aware of their senses. Link these into how their body feels as a result of feeling certain ways. A good resource to use for this is Warm Fuzzies and Cold Pricklies.
- Organise concrete, mechanical and rhythmic activities help soothe an over-aroused child.
- Limit the level of positivity however, they might be wary of too much praise as they could consider it to be non- genuine. Remain positive however keep it low key.
- Model empathy to try and encourage them to show it towards others.
- Use opportunities such as when they are hurt to be empathetic and encourage them to do so with others.
- Have a scheme that allows the child space when they need to cool down – they may need a person or an activity to help them to achieve this – try physical exercise to burn off feelings.

Children could be hypersensitive to criticism. If they feel shame their response could potentially be rage as they may not be able to regulate their emotions. In addition to this children who are consumed with anxiety or shame are unable to concentrate enough to form new memories.

- Be careful how you communicate with them – keep instructions and feedback simple to avoid any misinterpretations.
- Validate their feelings using language such as:
  - ✓ “I can see that you get angry when that happens. I would feel angry if that happened to me. It’s okay to feel like that”
  - ✓ “I can see you’re frowning and you’re kicking the wall and you’re expressing a lot of energy. I would be feeling like that too if I didn’t want to do something”
  - ✓ “I noticed you looking around at the other children who are working on their projects. I think you might be feeling nervous right now about whether your work will be ok. Have I got that right?”
  - ✓ “This is not a safe place to be angry. Let’s go to a safe place and then we can talk”
  - ✓ “You need to sit either by Ruth or sit by your key adult in front of me – which do you want to do?”
- Tell the whole class your expectations instead of directing to them individually.
- If you do need to discuss inappropriate behaviour – pull them aside and do it discreetly.
- Give simple instructions
- Play memory games
- Use lists and visual prompts
- Try to stick to set routines
- Divide longer activities into smaller chunks.



- **Be careful not to induce shame if they forget something**
- **Use calm non-confrontational responses and empathy**

Children with attachment issues will have an over developed Reptilian brain (maintains basic “keeping alive” body functions) and the Limbic system (emotional brain) is over stimulated. This results in the Neocortex (thinking brain) shutting down. It is really important therefore to try and allow the child to activate the thinking part of the brain.

- **Provide repetitive activities to calm and relax prior to them learning. Something as simple as rolling a tennis ball back and forth on a table can be really effective.**
- **Before introducing something new regulate the Reptilian part of the brain by allowing them to complete some physical activities – jumping jacks, stretching etc.**
- **Have a brain break if needed between learning.**
- **Reduce excitement and provide calm, predictable and low key routine.**
- **Do not use loss of playtime as a consequence for negative behaviour, children benefit from physical play.**

Transition could be difficult for them so it is key this is supported.

- **Use visual timetables to outline the day’s tasks.**
- **Give them plenty of notice where possible that change is happening.**
- **Plan additional visits for new environments such as moving up to a new class.**
- **Inform them if their supporting adults are changing even if for a short period – gradually increase separation and don’t reduce their support too quickly.**
- **Plan beginnings, separations and endings.**



- Provide highly predictable and structured routines.
- Read with them and then discuss stories about separation, identity and independence.
- Support their anxiety of the unknown

Children could battle for control at times in particular if they feel unsafe or unsecure.

- For children that are hyper-vigilant consider carefully where they sit. It is often better for them to have a sight line to the door from their seat as this makes it easier for them to quickly look at who is coming into the classroom before returning to their task.
- Make sure that children who are hyper-vigilant always have an exit strategy. If they are in a different location to normal give them an opportunity to get to know their surroundings prior to settling them to a task. This will prevent them from scrutinising their environment instead of engaging with their activity.
- Ensure they have structure, clear boundaries and consistency – this will encourage them to feel safe and reduce anxiety as the decision making has been done for them.
- They will want control but at times finds this overwhelming as they may not be able to handle the responsibility. Intervene where necessary and let the adult take control when needed.
- Allow them to develop independence slowly.
- Use a sand timer to help calm anxieties during short independent tasks.
- Encourage turn – taking to help achieve some independence in activities.
- Be reliable, consistent, and fair and set clear boundaries which you stick to, ensure all the adults supporting are following the same boundaries.

- You keep control but give them choices. For example “You can either write me 3 sentences or draw a picture and write 10 words around it” You set the literacy task but they have some choice in how to complete it.
- Try to use positive re-enforcement rather than consequences. For a child with low self – esteem the shame of a consequence will only re-enforce that they feel they are “rubbish”.
- Acknowledge how they are feeling and validate this but keep firm boundaries.
- Give them **TIME IN** not **TIME OUT**.



Some of the resources in this pack were gathered from:

[www.mentalhealthconnect.org](http://www.mentalhealthconnect.org)

[www.worcestershire.gov.uk](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)



A CHILD AND ADOLESCENT  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

<https://healthyyoungmindspennine.nhs.uk/>



<http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/attachment-disorders-practical-advice-for-the-classroom/>



Beacon

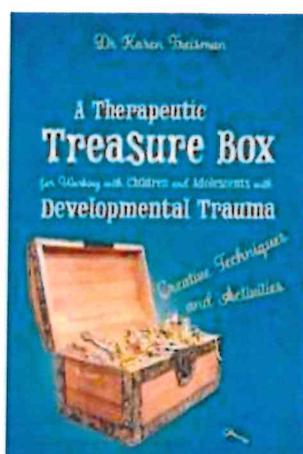
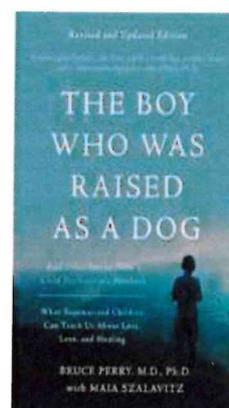
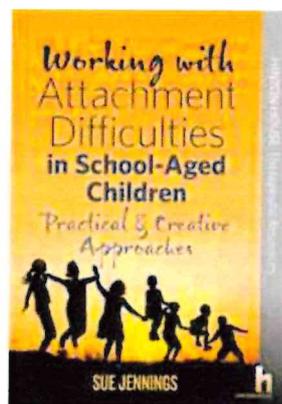
<https://www.beaconschoolsupport.co.uk/>



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## Book Recommendations



**Working with Attachment Difficulties in School – Aged Children - Sue Jennings**

**The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog – Bruce Perry**

**A Therapeutic Treasure – Dr Karen Treisman**