

Version	Date	Updated by
1.0	25-09-23	Cate Tumman

Therapeutic Education Policy

To be read in conjunction with

- Positive behaviour policy
- Admission & transition policy
- Intimate care policy

It is a primary aim of our school that every member of the school community “BELONG”

Believe-in themselves and others to achieve their potential.

Empathise- with others around them. Empathise for each person’s life journey so far

Love- their surroundings and learn to love learning

Opportunity- to be themselves, experience life to the fullest

Nurture- feel nurtured and safe

Guidance -receive guidance from safe adults at all times.

We are a caring community, whose values are built on mutual trust and respect for all. Our school supports staff within their training to understand, empathise and help children succeed in line with their own individual needs, potential and goals. Silver Linings School utilises an approach that is DDP (Dyadic Developmental Practice) and PACE (Play, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) informed and incorporates attachment-based learning to support children’s emotional and mental health needs, and development. DDP principally looks to utilise the PACE environment and approach, attuning to a child’s subjective experiences, co-regulating emotionally, and utilising broad principles of attachment theory.

Consultation and training

Silver Linings School employ a Therapeutic consultant who provides regular consultation with the Head and any staff members as required and is also available outside of any scheduled meetings and consultations for a more immediate response or intervention, or for overall advice and observations. These consultations provide insight into the young person’s attachment style and experiences, including emotional and behavioural strategies to provide the most appropriate and safest responses to presenting issues, and provides guidance to all staff on therapeutic management of the young person within the education setting so that any barriers to progress can be overcome.

Silver Linings School commits to training staff members around the therapeutic model of nurture and care in line with the Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) and PACE (Playfulness, Love, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) model. As such, all staff members receive PACE model training, attachment-based learning, Curiosity and Empathy training delivered by qualified DDP practitioners. Our Therapeutic consultant will also have scheduled and unscheduled time to make observations within the school day to ensure a high quality of consistent education, and can form the basis of recommendations and support for the team and child, and for any potential interventions that may best support our children.

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Therapeutic Education at Silver Linings Education

Connection

Children learn (grow, feel safe, thrive) best when they feel connection—or as Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs taught us, "a sense of belonging and significance". Extensive research shows that we cannot influence children in a positive way until we create a connection with them. It is a brain (and heart) thing. Sometimes we have to stop dealing with the misbehaviour and first heal the relationship. Connection creates a sense of safety and openness. Punishment, lecturing, nagging, scolding, blaming or shaming create fight, flight, or freeze.

Dis-connection are inevitable, we may deliberately or non-deliberately fail to notice someone’s needs, misinterpret, or misperceive needs or actions and may be thoughtless, careless or engage in behaviours that result in disconnect. We may notice instantly that this disconnect has occurred and can address it and at other times it may take longer to notice, however the importance is that the adult recognises and acknowledges to reconnect with the child. Raptures that are not repaired become ‘an elephant in the room’. If someone is mad at us or a family member it becomes very difficult to maintain attention or intention unless we are all paying attention to ‘the elephant’. Our children will experience the repetitive experience of co-regulation affect, intersubjectivity where there is a shared attention and intention and ongoing bombardment of safety signals, to allow them to learn to build trust relationships.

Relationships

Relationships take time to develop we at Silver Linings school recognise that for children that do not trust it is not a quick transition from mis-trust to trust, therefore in year one we focus on trust and safety with adults and from year two onwards we develop and widen the circle of trusted adults and begin to introduce ‘trusting peers’.

As part of providing a therapeutic environment for children to achieve their learning outcomes we will always provide a person at the school to ‘meet and greet’ upon arrival, making children feel welcome into the environment. Children will be assigned a key worker within the school to play the role of their safe person and person they can talk to. In addition, the key worker will be the parent carers ‘key contact’ point, allowing for all adults supporting the child to feel ‘safe and secure’ in best supporting the child. Pastoral care within the school plays a prominent feature and children are given 1:1 time with trusted staff to explore and grow.

Children will have access to 1:1 time with their safe person/key worker who will help them express themselves and mentor them to achieve their individual goals. Where conflict arises between a pupil and others, or disconnect with adults, a restorative approach will always be used to help children learn how to repair.

Therapeutic behaviour strategies

The school will utilise reward systems -see positive behaviour policy

We often assume that everyone loves praise and that praise is motivating, for our hurt children however this praise can be scary and uncomfortable. Being told they have done a good job is so far removed from their sense of self that it feels like a lie or a ploy to manipulate them. We also have to ensure that our children do not feel that our relationships are conditional on them ‘doing good’. We need to be careful not to label something as a ‘good job’ when it really isn’t, children quickly see when adults are just trying to make them feel better about a ‘mediocre job’. For a non-trusting child this will make it harder to trust an adult. Never giving positive or corrective feedback is not the answer either, we have to be able to tolerate both to be in a reciprocal relationship. As with fears we begin this journey by naming and organising what we feel the child might be thinking and feeling or emotionally experiencing.

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Where children perpetrate incidents which result in harm, appropriate therapeutic responses will be used in line with the positive Behaviour Policy of the School. Reparation and sanctions will be the ultimate decision of the Head Teacher and be centred upon repair and reconnect approaches to help children learn and develop positive relationships, providing appropriate consequences that directly relate to the presenting issue or behaviour, and can help to make sense of the process for children.

Structure of a day

A typical day at Silver Linings school could be described as ‘structured flexibility’ -flexible within planned structure. There are planned daily/weekly/termly timetables with organised and planned lessons with an aim to meet educational goals as with any other school/classroom. However, with the knowledge and acceptance that there may be the necessity to take an alternative route at any given time.

Our Head Teacher and SENCO oversee all timetables for children and careful thought is put into group learning environments and the structured nature of timetables for each individual learner. Children’s wishes and feelings are considered to enable them to have responsibility and autonomy over their own learning and progress.

Our staff are always connected and attuned to our children and recognise the moment when we need to divert from the original plan. Structured flexibility allows us to find the balance between ‘follow and lead/ direct and indirect’ and allows us to prioritise the dominant need of the child at the time. This will ensure that we avoid power struggles over academic tasks when emotional regulation is required.

Through knowledge, understanding, and awareness of the pupil we meet the needs of children therapeutically so that they can develop in all areas of life, adapting our approach according to different attachment styles and experiences.

We recognise that transitions can be a distressing time for many children with complex attachment needs and past trauma, therefore we encourage the use of transitional objects to reduce anxiety around these periods, and tailor transitional processes individually.

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Appendix A

LEARNING PROFILE OF PUPIL
LINKED TO RESISTANT/AMBIVALENT
ATTACHMENT

**Approach to the school
and the classroom**

- high level of anxiety and uncertainty •

Response to the teacher

- need to hold onto the attention of the teacher •
- apparent dependence on the teacher in order to engage in learning •
- expressed hostility towards the teacher when frustrated •

Response to the task

- difficulties attempting the task if unsupported •
- unable to focus on the task for fear of losing teacher's attention •

Skills and Difficulties

- likely to be underachieving •
- language may be well developed but not consistent with levels of achievement •
- numeracy may be weak •

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LEARNING PROFILE OF PUPIL
LINKED TO AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT

Approach to school/classroom

- apparent indifference to uncertainty in new situations •

Response to the teacher

- denial of need for support and help from the teacher •
- sensitivity to proximity of the teacher •

Response to the task

- need to be autonomous and independent of the teacher •
- hostility towards the teacher is directed towards the task •
- the task operates as an emotional safety barrier between the pupil and the teacher •

Skills and difficulties

- limited use of creativity •
- likely to be underachieving •
- limited use of language •

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LEARNING PROFILE OF
PUPIL LINKED TO
DISORGANISED/DISORIENTATED
ATTACHMENT

Approach to school/classroom

- intense anxiety which may be expressed as controlling and omnipotent

Response to the teacher

- great difficulty experiencing trust in the authority of the teacher but may submit to the authority of the head of the school
- may be unable to accept being taught, and/or unable to 'permit' the teacher to know more than they do

Response to the task

- the task may seem like a challenge to their fears of incompetence, triggering overwhelming feelings of humiliation and rejection of the task
- difficulty accepting 'not knowing'
- may appear omnipotent and to know everything already

Skills and difficulties

- may seem unimaginative and uncreative, and find conceptual thought difficult
- likely to be underachieving and possibly at a very immature stage of learning

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