



Attachment and Trauma Sensitive Schools Award (ATSSA)

A framework of support and understanding for schools and other educational establishments within which children and young people who have experienced adversity, can heal, thrive, play, and learn.

Jennifer Nock Training and Consultancy
43 Clark St
Stourbridge
DY8 3UF

Jill Wright and Marie Beale
Whitefield Primary School
Boundary Lane
Liverpool
L6 2HZ

11th November 2019

Dear Jill and Marie,

Thank you for registering for the Attachment and Trauma Sensitive Schools Award (ATSSA) at Silver Level, and for providing comprehensive evidence in support of your application. Thanks also for inviting me to your school today to conduct the verification visit for the Award.

I should like to warmly congratulate you and your staff on achieving the Award, which is an external sign of recognition of your commitment to the steps you have taken at Whitefield Primary School to further develop a culture of compassion and nurture. This, as you well know, plays a pivotal role in getting your pupils into a state of 'learning readiness'. The Award is valid for two years and will run from November 2019 to November 2021.

The evidence you have submitted comes from a variety of sources, including interviews with staff, including you and your senior team, parents and governors. Your completed Evidence Folders are rich and detailed, providing comprehensive information in support of each of

the criteria, and I appreciate the hard work that you and particularly Marie, have invested in your evidence to really 'showcase' the work that you do at Whitefield Primary School.

There are many significant points that are worthy of special mention, and I shall outline some of them below:

- Your own commitment to developing a culture of attachment and trauma sensitivity has been demonstrated through a high investment in CPD for all staff, and a willingness to make significant changes. I greatly enjoyed discussing your approach to 'behaviour management', through the Care, Courtesy and Confidence Class Values system.
- Your own passion has led to a shared vision of how to deliver the best experiences and outcomes for all the pupils at Whitefield Primary School. Staff members are trained to a very high standard and show comprehensive understanding of attachment and trauma related issues.
- The personalised, individual approach to all pupils is evidenced through numerous practices, including induction and information gathering, ongoing formal and informal assessment and observation, and reflective dialogue and practice. Knowledge of each pupil's needs across the developmental spectrum underpins relationships, interactions and planning.
- You have a range of strategies in place for supporting parents in developing understanding of child development and attachment relationships. These strategies are largely informal in nature, and particularly engage parents who may find it difficult to trust service providers, including educators. You demonstrated a depth of understanding and empathy about why some families may be described as 'hard to reach', recognising that their relationship to 'help' may not have always have been positive in the past.
- All staff spoke compassionately about the children in their care, and described with enthusiasm and in detail about the use and benefits of sensory snacks, interpreting rather than reacting to behaviour, welcoming on entry to the classroom, and the development of supportive practices at unstructured times such as lunchtime and playtime. This is just a flavour of what they shared.

- It was inspiring to hear how children and their parents are using Zones of Regulation, meditation, massage and mindfulness at home, and the example of one child sharing how he had used yoga to self-regulate during a crisis at home was heart-warming.
- The children with whom I spoke and observed conveyed an authentic feeling of belonging, of liking school and of the deep trust that underlies relationships. Kindness and compassion are at the heart of what staff provide, and attachment relationships are central to practice.
- I was really moved by the testimony given by parents and carers. You have clearly gone far beyond the extra mile to support families through many challenging difficulties, and strong relationships provide ongoing support.
- It is impossible to fully encapsulate the ethos of your provision through reference to the Award criteria. Whitefield Primary School is attachment- and trauma-responsive, with systems, practices, values and principles that are infused with sensitivity to trauma; thus, therapy is not something that the school simply *provides*, rather, the environment itself and the relationships therein are therapeutic. Trauma sensitivity is embedded across the setting, and relationships are central to practice. The evidence of the Attachment Link Governor, Lunchtime Supervisor, Class Teacher and Therapist really highlighted this, and my feeling was that attachment- and trauma-sensitivity is organic, constantly evolving and developing.
- All staff, led by a strong and visionary leadership team, take responsibility for providing a threat-free, safe environment around the children, where adults are in charge and take full responsibility for what happens, including connection, attunement, boundaries and navigation. This frees up the children from the overwhelming burden of having to keep themselves (physically and emotionally) safe.

I hope that you will celebrate your achievement with pupils, staff, parents and other stakeholders to recognise the school's commitment to embracing inclusion at its best, successfully removing barriers to learning and participation in the life of the school. I feel particularly privileged to share your journey and I am delighted and excited about supporting you through the next steps towards ATSSA Gold: Attachment Committed Level.

Tony and Bridie add their congratulations to mine, and like me, are thrilled by your achievement.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jennifer A Nock, CPsychol, AFBPsS, PhD, BSc (Hons)

Bridie White LLB MA