



Spotlight on Adoption Support Practice in Brighton and Hove Schools

Throughout Brighton and Hove schools, there are examples of positive practice and use of the Pupil Premium Grant to support children who have been adopted from care and their families. The following examples have been selected to illustrate the types of support in place. There are other schools who are likely to be providing positive support too and we are keen to hear more about practice in schools. Please contact sarah.lindfield@brighton-hove.gov.uk to discuss. The following summaries have been devised in collaboration with schools and are in alphabetical order:

Balfour Primary School is an ‘Attachment Aware’ School. The Learning Mentors act as Key Adults with designated time to support Children Adopted from Care, Children in Care and other children eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant. This can either be on a 1:1 basis, or in a small group. Weekly team meetings are held if required, involving the Inclusion Coordinator (INCO), Learning Mentor and Class Teacher.

The ‘Team Around the Child’ and other staff may:

- ▶ Meet and greet
- ▶ Check-in with the child throughout the week
- ▶ Create a safe space for them
- ▶ Develop calm boxes with children
- ▶ Work with transitional objects
- ▶ Use the outdoor space (including the sensory garden and play apparatus) for small groups to access away from the busy playground
- ▶ Produce personalised transition passports with the child and share them with relevant staff
- ▶ Involve parents/carers in half termly meetings

Additionally, the school offers a differentiated curriculum to incorporate learning time and brain/sensory breaks.

All staff have received updated training from Louise Bomber - a leading expert on attachment.

Dorothy Stringer Secondary School provides a range of adoption support in consultation with parents and focussing on individual student/pupil needs.

These include:

- ▶ Counselling/therapy in and out of school
- ▶ Financial support for school trips
- ▶ Learning/study aids e.g. ipads/laptops
- ▶ Key attachment figures in addition to form tutors
- ▶ Music lessons and learning an instrument
- ▶ Extra lessons in Core subjects

Additionally, Stringer facilitates an Adopter Network group where parents can discuss common issues and key adoption ‘hot spots’. The group is in the early stages of developing a resource for the school that identifies key challenges/opportunities, for children who have been adopted from care, in their secondary school learning journey.



Downs Infant School expanded their Inclusion Team to give them the capacity to offer a 'Key Adult' role to support children who attract Pupil Premium Plus Grant.

The SENCO carries out termly reviews with class teachers and, together with the Headteacher, a tailor made support package is developed for all children adopted from care and/or under Special Guardianship Order. Each package is designed to be holistic and comprehensive, addressing a range of needs, including learning targets and any IEP targets.

For example, the Key Adult might:

- ▶ Support a child in the classroom to access the curriculum
- ▶ Run nurture groups
- ▶ Engage a child in the Social Use of Language programme
- ▶ 'Bridge' a child into school/class every morning
- ▶ Work on playground social skills with a child

Additionally, the school run the Family SEAL programme, inviting Adopters to take part with other parents.

Downs Junior School have employed a Teacher, with a therapeutic background, to focus on the needs of children who are adopted from care, are on Special Guardianship Orders, or are in long term foster placements. School staff, parents and governors together developed the Job Description and Person Specification (which are available on request via Virtual School).

The Teacher does not have classroom responsibilities and therefore is able to, for example:

- ▶ Provide whole school training and raise awareness about attachment issues across the school
- ▶ Develop support plans, alongside parents and other key staff, to create tailor made support packages, which are flexible and adaptable to changing needs
- ▶ Be available to parents
- ▶ Provide Forest School activities with children at lunchtime and in an after school club - including, for example, risk taking within safe boundaries, building resilience and self confidence
- ▶ Develop 'calming' kits for each child
- ▶ Create safe spaces
- ▶ Ensure that sensory breaks are built into timetables
- ▶ Focus on strengthening peer relationships
- ▶ Access the adoption support fund
- ▶ Run Theraplay activities

Additionally, the school uses a Key Adult system. The Key Adult works directly with the child and links with parents, the specialist teacher and all other school staff, to ensure the child's plans are followed through and are meeting their support needs.

Since December 2014 the school have run a half termly group for parents. The parents group can be described as a 'social with a purpose', providing parents with opportunities to share their experiences and identify common issues for action. The school used to run a parallel 'film night' (film and popcorn) for their children supported by a Teaching Assistant but no longer do so.



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Elm Grove Primary School is working towards becoming an ‘Attachment Aware’ school and the school Behaviour Policy emphasises behaviours as communication. The school ethos is that of ‘....a culture of care and respect, where ‘fair’ means that everyone gets what they need, not that everyone gets the same.’

Support for young people Adopted from Care will be planned through the Personal Education Plan process involving the SENCO and parents. The school Business Manager is also involved in determining the Pupil Premium Plus spend. An Inclusion Mentor has been employed to work specifically with Young People in Care and Adopted from Care.

A range of support is offered by a team that includes the SENCO, Inclusion Mentor, Learning Mentor and Teaching Assistants (TA):

- ▶ Parent/Carer forum
- ▶ Communication Passport to support the Transition between school years, involving parents current and future class teachers and SENCO/Inclusion Mentor
- ▶ Nurture Groups
- ▶ Lego Club
- ▶ One to one support with Inclusion/Learning Mentor
- ▶ Life Story work
- ▶ Additional clubs e.g. Music lessons
- ▶ Support for school trips - incl subsidies

Additionally, external agencies offer support including: Counselling, Managing Anxiety Workshops for children (and separately for their parents), Family Support Service - through City Centre Partnership.

A range of training has taken place, or is planned in the near future which includes:

- ▶ 2 Day Attachment Aware training - SENCO and 2 class teachers
- ▶ Staff meeting and TA training on Attachment
- ▶ 7 day Attachment Lead Training course (2 staff)
- ▶ Improving Communication with Children in Crisis training for mid day supervisors and TAs

Hove Junior School aim to be an ‘attachment aware’ school. A plan is developed for each child adopted from care, based on an attachment assessment. Parents, class teachers, Inclusion lead/SENCO, Individual Needs Assistants and other staff linked to the child, are involved in the assessment and planning process and a Team around the Child (TAC) is created. A Key Adult is allocated to each child.

Staff in the TAC may:

- ▶ Meet and greet the child at stressful times in the school day
- ▶ Wear a badge with the child’s name and acknowledge them by name each time they see the child around the school
- ▶ Create a safe space for the child
- ▶ Display pictures of their family
- ▶ Support the child to access additional support, such as
 - Baking Nurture Group
 - Better Reading Partners
 - Lunchtime fun activity group
 - Lego therapy groups



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As part of their inclusion policy, the school are using a staff meeting to deliver attachment training, focussing on best practice in supporting children with attachment issues and their families.

Additionally, the school have facilitated a forum for parents since November 2014. The group runs as a Breakfast Club, meeting every 6 weeks straight after school drop off. An agenda is sent out in advance and topics already addressed include:

- ▶ Sensory breaks/processing
- ▶ Speech and language
- ▶ Transitions

The Club is open to Parents who are adopters and to Carers with SGO's or Residence Orders. All staff involved in a TAC may also attend.

Saltdean Primary School's support for young people Adopted from Care is planned through the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process involving the parents, class teacher and SENCO. We also use pupil voice when possible to ensure the child's views are heard. During the PEP process children's challenges and strengths are identified in order to develop an individual plan of support for each child. A range of support is offered by a team that includes the SENCO, Learning Mentor and Teaching Assistants (TA).

SEMH support: The school uses a Key Adult system. The Key Adult works directly with the child and liaises regularly with parents, class teacher and the SENCo to ensure the child's needs are being addressed. Key adults often meet and greet their pupils and settle them into the class.

Key adults and specialist TAs run nurturing groups, circle of friends and social skills sessions for identified pupils. These sessions often include guidance on developing and building on positive behaviours and skills and supported social experiences to practise these skills. Key adults also work with pupils on a 1-1 basis, focusing on key areas identified in the PEP for example developing calm boxes, using theraplay informed activities or supporting them with sensory breaks.

- ▶ Lunchtime and playtime can be very stressful for some children. We offer a range of supported play and lunchtime sessions including:
 - Cosy café - a quiet, lunch space, supported by a TA
 - Social club - indoor lunchtime activities - run by our Learning Mentor
 - Gardening Club - run by a TA
 - Book club - run by our Learning mentor
- ▶ Our learning mentor trains Peer Mentors to work with younger pupils. The children meet weekly, supported by the leaning mentor, to talk and a play a game. These sessions develop confidence in both mentor and mentee and are an opportunity to further develop social skills.



Cognition and Learning:

- 1-1 tuition with a specialist teacher, based on targets identified in the PEP process
- Targeted reading interventions
- Small group and individual maths interventions
- Gross and fine motor activities, for example, Busy Hands, Touch-typing.
- In class support

St Andrews Primary School employ 1.5 Attachment Co-ordinators to work with children who are adopted. Their role includes:

- ▶ Communicating with parents
- ▶ Assessing children's needs
- ▶ Developing intervention strategies to respond to identified needs
- ▶ Linking with other staff within a whole school approach to support
- ▶ Creating 'personal statements' for each child identifying their strengths and difficulties
- ▶ Classroom based support
- ▶ 'Meet and greet' in the morning and 'handover' at the end of the school day
- ▶ 'Parts' work with children
- ▶ Providing extra support on 'difficult days'

For the last two years the school have invited parents who are adopters to attend a 'Cheese and Wine' evening to introduce new parents to the school and to meet other parents of children adopted from care, as well as key school staff.

St Luke's Primary School ground their support for children who have been adopted from care in their general pastoral system. Sociograms are used throughout the school to identify children's sense of belonging and connectedness. Children on the margins are then offered support to develop their friendship skills and experience positive ways of relating with their peers. This includes: guidance on positive behaviours and skills, constructed social experiences to practise skills and open reflection on what works.

Additionally, the school have employed an Attachment Mentor to work specifically with children who are not living with their birth parents. In relation to children who are adopted from care, the role of the Attachment Mentor includes:

- ▶ Meeting with parents to go through the child's life story - for the school to build on, rather than parents having to tell and retell
- ▶ Mapping of emotional hot spots for a child in relation to the school day/week/year and the curriculum
- ▶ Identifying children's challenges and strengths and developing an individual plan of support for each child
- ▶ Working alongside a team of Learning Mentors to create a team around the child



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Children can, for example, be offered:

- ▶ A key attachment figure
- ▶ Work on anxiety including learning self-soothing strategies
- ▶ A counsellor/therapist
- ▶ Coaching e.g. friendship skills, ‘parts’ work and growth mindset
- ▶ Support to grow a talent - then generalise to other areas of their life
- ▶ Calm spaces
- ▶ A celebration of their Adoption Day

The school facilitates a group for parents/carers of children not living with their birth parents.