

School's ban on talking between lessons

Gavin Williamson has called for 'strong discipline' in schools. In an interview with Sky News on a visit to a highly disciplined school in East London, he said schools where pupils *walk* to class in *silence* should be 'replicated across the UK'. I was just perplexed when I heard an Education Minister brandishing silence from students between lessons as a model to be rolled out nationally. This zero tolerance facade will have a serious impact on our vulnerable SEMH students, who are being increasingly excluded from the mainstream setting. Senior Mental Health Leads in every school cannot come too soon. (Bob Law, SEBDA Chair)

Study with us wherever you are !

On a recent trip to New Zealand, Bob Law, SEBDA Chair, was delighted to meet up with Leanne, an international student currently studying on the SEBDA post-graduate distance learning course. "It was fascinating to learn how similar our education systems are with parallel challenges for SEND and in particular SEMH."



Attachment for Teachers

Howard Steele writing in the TES explains:

- Attachment difficulties are very rare according to NICE. Children can have many attachment figures. How a child reunites with a carer at the end of the day is more significant than how they separated at the beginning.
- School staff can help children through creating safe environments that give children a secure base from which to explore.
- For Steele it is important that schools use research carried out in schools as it will have more direct relevance.

Reference: Attachment TES 20/12/19 P 26

POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Oxford Brookes University, in partnership with the Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Association (SEBDA), offers two postgraduate courses for professionals working with children and/or young people with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

- **Understanding and Managing Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)**
- **Advanced Study in SEMH difficulties**

These Master's-level courses are delivered predominantly online as a flexible distance learning option and will enhance your understanding and skills in working with this vulnerable group. Both courses involve an optional residential weekend in September and a further University-based study day in the spring. Each course lasts 1 year.



Take both postgraduate certificates and a dissertation year and you can achieve an MA Education with a specialism in Social Emotional and Mental Health.

For more information please contact: pgeducation@brookes.ac.uk

How a student relates to school does matter

Externalising and internalising problem behaviours are linked to a student's sense of belonging to their school. The link has predictive power. School based mental health providers can use measures of 'belonging' to support mental health and educational outcomes.

(G. Arslan, 2019. *Education and Child Psychology* Vol.36 no. 4 pp 22 - 33)

Continuing Professional Development

SEBDA has a range of experienced and qualified trainers in many aspects of SEMH. Together they are able to provide a range of training opportunities which can be designed to meet individual or organisational needs.

Email admin@sebda.org for more information.

Why 1 IN 10 ?

One in ten schoolchildren have a diagnosable mental health condition. 50% of adult mental health problems exist before the age of 14. Some 70% of these will not receive the support needed. This is a growing crisis that calls for action. SEBDA is working to change this through supporting all those working with children and young people.

Learning and Relationships

Learning occurs within a relationship and the better the relationship the more efficient the learning. When learning you leave your comfort zone, you take risks. Children need a secure base from which they can reach out, take a risk and leave their comfort zone so they can learn. Strategies that help build these secure relationships through attachment can make a difference to the potential for a child to succeed in education.

The theory of attachment recognised the 'invisible emotional bond' that exists between a mother or primary carer and their child and that it is 'fundamental to normal development', it is a physical need and a social prerequisite. Positive attachment relationships teach a child that they are worthy, others are responsive, and the world is safe.

Understanding the development of the attachment relationship can help us use strategies that bring us alongside a distressed and aggressive young person to help them change their aggressive behaviour, so they can calm. Understanding the concept of the 'secure base', described by attachment provides the foundation for the development of a relationship that can make a difference.

The principles that underly **Theraplay**[®] suggests an approach that might provide the means for the nurturing of positive relationships.

- Theraplay[®] is a child and family therapy that enhances attachment between children and their carers.
- The activities that are used in this therapy are personal, physical and fun and are based on the natural patterns of playful, healthy interactions between a parent and child.
- The warmth and joy created through playful interactions nourishes a child's brain which enables them to form a secure relationship.
- Attachment theory proposes that initial relationships teach us what to expect from future interactions which are then verified or disputed according to new experience.

Taking this to its logical conclusion suggests that using these playful, fun and engaging attachment activities can form the basis of new experiences that can ultimately rewire a child's brain to accept that they; are worthy, can trust adults and feel safer in the world.

Creating opportunities for playful, joy and fun with the young people we are trying to connect with enhances relationships. This is measurable with a study (Salisbury, 2018) of the use of activities using these principles showing:



- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire overall stress scores reduced for all children and on average by 29%.
- The Boxall Profile showed improvement in scores that indicate that the children were more able to 'accept constraints' and 'accommodate and respond constructively to others'.
- Pianta's 'Student-Teacher Relationship Scale' results indicated an improvement in closeness and an even better reduction in conflict in the relationships.

The activities were the only change to the children's routine, so the inference is that the intervention created the conditions for change.

Salisbury, S (2018) *Using Attachment Enhancing Activities based on the Principles of Theraplay[®] to improve adult-child relationships and reduce a child's overall stress as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire SDQ Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties*, 23:4 pp424-440

P.A.C.E.

Dan Hughes specialises in supporting children who have serious social, emotional and mental health issues combined with difficulties in forming secure attachments. His therapeutic approach involves:

- Playfulness
- Acceptance
- Curiosity
- Empathy

D. Hughes (2017) *Building the Bonds of Attachment*.

Join SEBDA

- Share good practice
- Have a national voice
- Network
- Campaign
- Receive quarterly issues of the international academic journal 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties'

Join at www.sebda.org