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The PLACE Independent School

Therapeutic Education Policy

In line with our School ethos and prospectus we have the highest standards for all our staff members around the care and nurture given to students to aid their learning, within a wider therapeutic model encompassing care and education. Our school supports staff within their training to understand, empathise and help young people succeed in line with their own individual needs, potential and goals. The PLACE Independent School utilises an approach that is DDP-informed (Dyadic Developmental Practice) and incorporates attachment-based learning to support pupils' emotional and mental health needs, and development. Dyadic Developmental Practice is a treatment method with a focus on symptoms of emotional disorders, attachment difficulties, and trauma. DDP principally looks to utilise a playful, accepting, curious, and empathic environment and approach, attuning to a child's subjective experiences, co-regulating emotionally, and utilising broad principles of attachment theory.

Admission

Upon initial referral to the School, information will be requested regarding the child's background, any difficulties or needs and any significant history which may impact upon their learning. Any detail regarding learning needs and past educational history will be requested. As part of our therapeutic educational plan for young people, we request that carers complete SDQs (Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires) for/with the young person so that we can obtain baseline measures around their strengths and difficulties. This also helps us to have a sense of any significant emotional difficulties that may impact the child's learning, or adjustments we may need to make to meet their needs. Any information regarding their attachment history and attachment-style will be requested, so that their individual timetable can be tailored to their needs. This is important in establishing what experience of safety, adults, relationships, and attachment experiences a child has had so that any timetable is adjusted to create safety as a foundation to their learning and care, and an awareness for our team to engage and adjust accordingly. The School will only accept pupils whose needs can be met by our school, after assessment of the referral information; and as detailed in their EHCP plan. Any admission is discussed with the Therapeutic Lead as to the appropriateness of this education placement, and potential interventions. All young people that are admitted to the school will do so following a clear and staged transition plan which will be agreed in the best interest of each young person (see admission policy).

Consultation and training

The PLACE young peoples company employs a Therapeutic Lead who provides regular consultation with the Head and any staff members as required and is also available outside of any scheduled

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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.

The PLACE Independent School commits to training staff members around the therapeutic model of nurture and care in line with the Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) and PLACE (Playfulness, Love, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) model. As such, all staff members receive PLACE model training, attachment based learning, Play training, Curiosity and Empathy training, Sexual Abuse Awareness training, and be given the opportunity to enrol upon DDP Level 1 with a view to accreditation to Level 2 within this practice. All senior members of the staff team will be enrolled on DDP Level 1 and provide guidance within this model of care. Staff are also given the opportunity to further develop their skills. Our Therapeutic Lead will also have scheduled and unscheduled time to make observations within the school day to ensure a high quality of consistent care/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 young people.

Therapeutic Education Guidance

As part of providing a therapeutic environment for young people to achieve their learning outcomes we will always provide a person at the School to ‘meet and greet’ upon arrival, making young people feel welcome into the environment. Young people will be assigned a key worker within the school to play the role of their safe person and person they can talk to. Pastoral care within the school plays a prominent feature and young people are given 1:1 time with trusted staff to explore and grow.

Young people are provided with high levels of structure, safe boundaries, and consistent routine in line with the therapeutic model. This includes the use of regular anchor points to help young people feel safe within their environment so that they are able to learn. They can begin to experience safety through knowing what will happen, when it will happen, who they can expect to see, and with safety as a foundation we are then able to build on this foundation to provide new experiences to increase the number of experiences and processes that are then included in their specific interpretation of what safety is.

The School will utilise reward systems as part of being a solution focussed environment, with an ethos of ‘catch them being good’ and taking ‘steps to success’ used by all staff and reiterated throughout the school day. Rewards will be regular and individualised, giving young people choice and freedom so that they can feel proud of their achievements. Young people will receive certificates of achievement on a regular basis to further enrich their learning experience and experience of achievement. Some children can struggle to accept ‘being good’ as part of their narrative due to their previous disrupted experiences, so we can provide consistent messages to embed and help them internalise an experience of being and feeling good, and starting to incorporate a sense of achievement and pride into their internal narrative.

Young people are always assisted to have positive relationships with all staff within the school as well as other pupils. There is an emphasis on positive relationship building as the cornerstone of

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creating a safe space in which young people can learn. Pupils will have access to 1:1 time with their safe person/key carer who will help them express themselves and mentor them to achieve their individual goals. Where conflict arises between a pupil and others, including staff members, a restorative approach will always be used to help young people learn how to overcome conflict. Staff will have the opportunity to train in restorative justice so that they are skilled mediators in such circumstance. Forgiveness and repair are fundamental in our approach to provide experiences based on relationships, and reduce shame, which is incredibly toxic for our children, who have often internalised shame as a sense of self, identity, based on their experiences.

Where young people perpetrate incidents which result in harm, appropriate therapeutic responses will be used in line with the Behaviour Management Policy of the School. Reparation and sanctions will be the ultimate decision of the Head Teacher and be centred upon restorative approaches to help young people 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 young people.

We recognise that transitions can be a distressing time for many young people 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.

Our Head Teacher and SENCO oversee all timetables for young people and careful thought is put into group learning environments and the structured nature of timetables for each individual learner. Young people’s wishes and feelings are considered to enable them to have responsibility and autonomy over their own learning and progress. The Therapeutic Lead will be on hand to advise the School on any additional needs young people may have around their learning and how their potential can be unlocked through therapeutic interventions or responses. Teaching staff will be supported to adapt their teaching style to meet the attachment-needs of young people; we gain insight into the young people’s attachment needs through therapeutic consultation and background information as well as working with all agencies and significant people in the pupils’ lives. Through knowledge, understanding, and awareness of the pupil we meet the needs of young people therapeutically so that they can develop in all areas of life, adapting our approach according to different attachment styles and experiences. For example, for a pupil with avoidant attachment we encourage and allow them to develop trust in adults, and for an anxiously attached learner we provide visual and other repetitive cues to help lessen anxiety [See Appendix A].

The School staff members help young people both achieve their academic and learning potential, and to help them to love learning. Our staff team help young people by utilising the principles of DDP to gain understanding of potential meaning to actions and presenting behaviours, to help them develop emotionally and psychologically, and develop emotional resilience to further help them in the future, and process complex developmental trauma.

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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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