



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.

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Dear Lisa,

Thank you for registering for the Attachment and Trauma Sensitive Schools Award (ATSSA) at Bronze Level, and for providing comprehensive evidence in support of your application. Thanks also for inviting me to conduct the verification for the Award today. I should like to extend my thanks to you, your senior team and other staff for making the virtual visit so purposeful and enjoyable.

I should like to warmly congratulate you and the rest of the staff on achieving the Award, which is an external sign of recognition of your commitment to the steps you have taken at Newark Primary School to 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 May 2023 to May 2025.

All the criteria have been evidenced adequately, and in most cases, more than adequately. The evidence you have submitted comes from a broad variety of sources: case studies; extracts and examples of key documents and policies provided by you; from your website; and from interviews with a range of staff, including you and other members of the team. You provided me with much evidence to further support my own data gathered today and previously, and this has added depth and context to the completed evidence folders.

There are a number of significant points that are worthy of special mention:

- You have a range of strategies in place for supporting parents and carers in understanding child development and attachment relationships. The support you have demonstrated with regard to workshop on dyslexia for parents and your 'Roots of Empathy' programme demonstrates a depth of understanding and compassion for families. You demonstrate deep empathy in relation to the daily struggles that families face. You understand 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. Staff support in connection with family wellbeing centres further enhances these relationships. Evidence about the support you offer to children and families was compelling and moving, particularly the strong references made toward the importance placed family events within the school. Connection with and care for families is a particular strength of the school.
- Quality staff care and emotional support to protect mental health and well-being is multi-levelled and provided through the leadership team. Leaders are aware of the multiple risk factors to staff mental health and well-being and are proactive in providing support to cope with the psychological and emotional demands of the job. There is an extensive range of processes and strategies to protect staff from 'overwhelm' or burnout, including wellbeing check-ins and debrief and recovery sessions after challenging situations. Staff members interviewed shared that leaders are approachable, flexible and empathic. Staff were fully aware of many avenues of support to which staff can be referred, formal and informal, in-house and external. In service days, where staff have the opportunity to talk and reflect with other staff members adds strength to the quality support staff feel at Newark Primary School. Care for staff is a particular strength of the school.
- A broad range of strategies to support executive function is being used consistently throughout the school. The use of a staff induction handbook, which includes universal strategies and updated annually, is a fantastic way of giving a voice to pupils, parents and staff about what they feel might support learning. Staff who were interviewed demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by children who have difficulties with organisational and regulation skills, and clearly make links between the developmental vulnerabilities of developmental delay, self-regulation and executive function.

- Activating and energising activities are used for pupils who are disconnecting or ‘switching off’. Staff described numerous methods that are used to help children who are disengaging from learning and were able to explain reasons why this might be. Short chunk activities, one-to-one adult time and personal motivators were mentioned as ways of reconnecting pupils to the task in hand. Recognising the importance of using sensory activities to re-engage pupils is a particular strength of Newark Primary School.
- The methods the school uses to Meet and Greet pupils are thoughtful and comprehensive. Using staggered starts to ensure one-on-one interaction with those who need it shows a strong understanding and empathy of the needs of the child. Staff spoke about the importance of allowing children to express their emotions when arriving at school, again showing knowledge and care towards the wellbeing of the children. The environment you have created on arriving at Newark Primary School is a particular strength.
- Methods for eliciting, hearing and responding children’s voices are broad and extensive. You described numerous strategies to ensure that no pupil is denied participation and all pupils, including the most vulnerable are enabled to communicate. Eliciting pupil voice at Newark Primary School is not limited to formal methods; every opportunity is taken to have meaningful encounters, which can take place at any time: in the playground; having lunch; in the classroom; during lessons and interventions. Staff have numerous methods and skills for helping children to communicate uncomfortable, even painful emotions, and provide them with a broad range of strategies and resources to elicit their voices. Children are actively encouraged to be authentic in their communications. All approaches are individualised and truly personal to meet each child’s needs. There is an authentic drive to truly ‘hear’ and ‘see’ children and staff are genuinely curious about what matters to the pupils. This is a particular strength of the school.

I hope that you will celebrate your achievement with pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and other stakeholders to celebrate the school’s commitment to its children, successfully removing barriers to learning and participation in the life of the school and I am thrilled that you intend to register for the Silver Award – Attachment and Trauma Friendly.

Yours sincerely,

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

Bridie White LLB MA

