

# Supporting children as they settle at school

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM (MHST)  
Emotional Health Service  
Achieving for Children  
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Clinical Commissioning Group

 **achieving  
for children**

 **Are you OK  
Kingston?**

 **Are you OK  
Richmond?**

# Introduction to the MHST

The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) provides mental health support to children, young people, their families and carers and staff in school settings, within Kingston and Richmond.

We offer early intervention from a multi disciplinary team delivered as part of the Emotional Health Service provided by Achieving for Children.

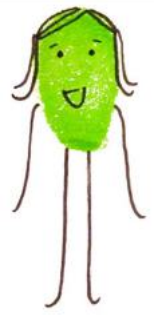
# What might this look like in my child's school?

- An Education Wellbeing Practitioner offering 1-1 brief guided self-help interventions for parents of children with mild to moderate anxiety or behaviour difficulties
- Offering Art and Music Therapy
- Group-work and workshops with groups of children
- Workshops for parents and school staff

For more information, speak to your class teacher or the school's Mental Health Lead

# Aims of the session:

**We will be thinking about...**



Building  
relationships and  
security in school

Recognising that  
skills developed  
both at home and  
in school are  
transferable

# What is school readiness?

Children who are 'school ready' have:

- the ability to **cope** emotionally with being separated from parents and carers
- relative **independence** in their own personal care
- a **curiosity** about the world and a desire to learn
- strong social skills

(PACEY, 2015)

# Transition worries and anxiety:

Starting school can be an anxious time for both parents and children.

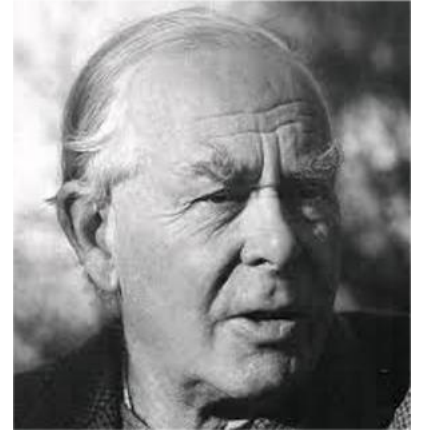
Anxiety impairs the ability to:

- take in new information and enjoy learning
- control attention and stay focused on tasks
- get along with other children and adults

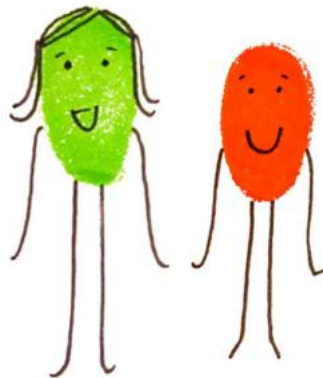
# What can help?

...promoting a child's  
attachment to school

# What is attachment?



**The “*lasting psychological connectedness between human beings*”**  
**(Bowlby 1969)**





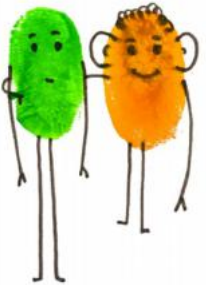
# Attachment and relationships

Attachment is...

**Co-created**

**Predictable  
and  
consistent**

**Provides  
security and  
safety**



# The Secure Base

A secure base is provided through a relationship with one or more caregivers who offer a reliable base from which to explore and a safe haven for reassurance when there are difficulties.

- Provides **sense of security**; a feeling of being loved and loveable
- **Regulation of emotion**/arousal through mutuality
- **Expression** of feelings and communication
- Base for **exploration**
- Learning **cause and effect**
- Ability to develop other attachments

# School as the secure base

As children's relationships in school develop and they feel more comfortable, **school becomes a secure base**:

- Providing **safety**
- Providing **emotional security in fear-provoking situations**
- Promotes **opportunities** for learning, play, socialising and contribution

School becomes a place where children can **feel safe to explore** and their **learning can thrive**.

# School relationships and children's outcomes

Positive relationships are associated with:

- high social competence (problem solving, social skills)
- improved achievement (intellectual curiosity, academic performance)
- high self-esteem
- good relationships with peers as well as adults
- ability to manage emotions effectively
- engagement in learning

# How can you help build this secure base?

- Talk about school as a fun and interesting place.
- Share stories about school with your child.
- Model talking to school staff and share how these interactions make you feel.
- Get ready for the day ahead after tea together with lots of chat about what's coming.
- Give yourselves extra time in the morning to reduce time pressures so this is a positive time too.

# Other skills that will build 'school readiness' include:

Autonomy and self care

Managing emotions

Developing empathy

Social skills

Communication skills

Routines

# Autonomy and self care

**What is  
autonomy and  
self-care?**

**Why is this  
important?**

**What can you do to support your child  
with this?**

- Keep practising at home
- Build up gradually
- Finding fun way or games such as the 'flip trick' for coats
- Labelled praise
- Tasks to grow independence

# Managing emotions

**What do we mean by managing emotions?**

**Why is this important?**

**How can you support your child with this?**

- Help your child to reflect on their own feelings
- Offer your child suggestions to deal with intense emotions eg. “I can see you’re frustrated with your new toy. Take a few deep breaths.”



# Developing empathy

**What is empathy?**

**Why are empathy and prosocial skills important?**

**How can you support your child with this?**

- Show warmth, sensitivity and kindness - model it as much as possible
- Use story books and everyday situations to explore how others may be feeling
- Explain how actions can affect others and grow the skill of seeing another person's point of view.



# Social skills

**What are social skills?**

**Why are social skills important?**

**How can you support your child with this?**

- Lots of **modelling**.
- Provide **opportunities** for your child to spend time with and socialise with other children
- **Praise** your child for positive social behaviour.

# Communication skills

**What are communication skills?**

**Why are they important?**

**How can you support your child with this?**

- Support both **talking** and **listening** through **play, sharing books, rhymes** and **songs**.
- Find **opportunities for using words** and initiating questions e.g. imaginary play / role-play as well as in day to day conversation
- Use lots of **modelling** and **targeted praise**

# Routines

**Why are routines important?**

**How can you support your child with this?**

Routines to keep going at home:

- The time to get ready in the morning
- Bath times, mealtimes and bedtimes
- Play time, reading, family time and outdoor play
- 'Family rules'

# Take home messages:

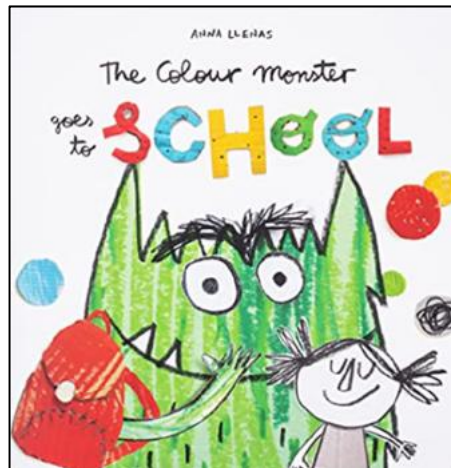
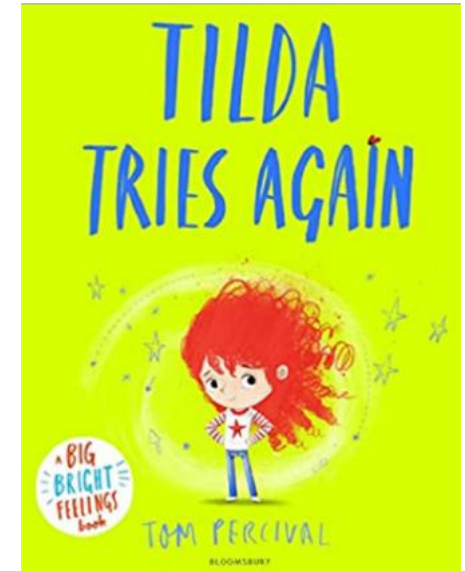
Promoting relationships and a secure base is important

Effective learning happens when children feel safe and settled

Important themes that support this transition can work across school and home



# Resources:







# Questions - Ideas - Feedback

