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Strategies to Support Adopted and Care Experienced Children in School

Early childhood experience can impact on the ability of any child to learn and form relationships with their peers and adults. A secure home environment, responsive carers and a stable experience in school are crucial factors in children’s health, and physical and emotional development.

Below are a number of simple strategies to support adopted and permanently placed children in school to

- Feel Safe
- Build Trusting Relationships with adults
- Manage their strong feelings
- Learn and make progress



Feeling Safe

- Make the world predictable using familiar routines and rituals e.g. ‘On Tuesdays we always...’
- Have a designated safe space, and make a plan with the child for when and how they can use it.
- Minimise noise and chaos in the environment through a commitment to ‘no raised voices’ and a strong adult presence as children move around the school.
- Use mindfulness exercises to ground the child in the present moment e.g. Tell me the different sounds you can hear; tell me the green things you can see in this room.

Building Trusting relationships with adults

- Allocate a key worker who regularly spends time building a relationship with the child
- Use transitional objects and postcards over the holidays to maintain a connection with the child, letting them know that they are held in mind even when they are not at school
- Encourage the child to seek and accept help: ‘When you get in a muddle you can come to me and we will always be able to sort out the muddle together’
- Reconnect with the child and make a repair when things have been difficult: ‘That was a tricky day, wasn’t it? I’m looking forward to seeing you back in my class tomorrow.’

Managing strong feelings

- Name and validate children’s difficult feelings: ‘I know it feels sad to come inside when playtime is over. I know you want to play for longer.’
- Be curious, ‘wondering aloud’ about what the child is feeling, and how this links with what is happening in the environment
- Work with the child’s parent to identify what helps to soothe and calm the child e.g. doing a repetitive activity, or using the senses of touch or smell.
- Keep the child close by so you can soothe and help them, rather than sending them away to manage their feeling all alone

Learning and making progress

- Differentiate tasks according to the child’s concentration level.
- Help the child to get started and to stay on task using prompts and visual cues.
- Model making mistakes and getting things wrong, to help the child become more willing to take risks in their learning.
- Regularly revisit and reinforce previous learning, applying it in different contexts

Resource Links

[10 mindfulness exercises for kids | BBC Good Food](#)

[51 Mindfulness Exercises for Kids in the Classroom – Waterford.org](#)

[30 Children’s Books to Foster Mindfulness – Teaching Expertise](#)

