

The image features a warm, golden-hued background with a soft, hazy light source, likely the sun. In the foreground, the silhouettes of a man and a child are visible. The man is on the left, and the child is on the right. They are holding hands, with the man's hand resting on the child's shoulder. The overall mood is one of connection and support.

Haringey Council

Attachment and Transition



What is attachment?

Attachment means the relationship between children and their parents. A child is **securely** attached if their parent is **sensitive** and responds to their needs **quickly** and **consistently**. This gives the child **confidence** to explore, without **worrying** about their parent's love for them. A child can become **insecurely** attached if their parents are **insensitive**, **angry** or **rejecting**. This can make children either **demanding** of attention, or it can make them **reject** their parents in return. Right or wrong, the behaviour of parents gives children an idea of what to **expect** from other relationships as they grow up. If a child expects **rejection** or **a lack of care** from others because of how their parents behaved, they can become **untrusting**, **unconfident** and **anxious**. However, if a child expects **love** and **care**, they will have more **self-esteem**, **trust** and **acceptance** of others later in life.

The impact of attachment on education

A **secure attachment** is very important for **learning**. Insecurely attached children find it hard to make mistakes, which makes challenges difficult. They may find it harder to **make friends** and **cooperate**. They may struggle to **control** their **emotions** and **behaviour**. There may also have difficulties with **attention** and **focus**. On the other hand, securely attached children feel safer, are more **creative** and are happy to **learn from mistakes**. This is because they feel **unconditionally accepted**, and so their **self-esteem** is **stronger** and more **stable**. These differences become **bigger** as children get older, because a **lack of confidence** and **difficult behaviour** can **impact** their education, which makes them feel even **less confident** and **less focused** at school. This makes the transition from Early Years to school very important, as we need children to feel **safe** and **secure** to learn effectively, so that **bad habits** do not set in.





Adult to child relationships

The good news is, there's a lot adults in schools can do to help children feel **safe** and **secure** at school. Adults in school can develop attachments with children also, and **stronger relationships** at school lead to better **language skills, social skills, attention** and **maths** and **reading** abilities. A successful relationships between a child and their **first teacher** leads to better relationships with other adults later on. In fact, this relationship is more important for success than **adult-child ratios, class size, the school environment** and the **curriculum** itself. This highlights what an **important role** school staff have in your child's development! Good educators show **warmth** and **positivity** to all children, **regardless** of their **behaviour** and **background**. This challenges any **negative expectations** children may have towards relationships with adults and shows them an example of what a **secure attachment** can **look** and **feel** like.

Emotion coaching

One way adults in school can show **positivity** is to take an **emotion coaching** approach. This means that before setting **boundaries** on difficult behaviours, we show **understanding** by first **talking** about the **emotions** that may have caused the behaviour. For example, an adult may begin by saying “I can see that you’re upset, it’s hard when we can’t have something we want”, only *then* setting the boundary by saying “But we don’t show anger by throwing things, we use our words and tell an adult what has happened.” This allows a child to feel **recognised, understood** and **accepted** by adults. Setting boundaries is important, but in this

way, we also address the **cause** of difficult behaviour, which is often just an attempt to seek **adult attention**. By showing **understanding** in this way, adults demonstrate that children are **accepted**, no matter their behaviour.





Effective Communication

It is also important for schools and settings to **communicate** with you as parents, so that everyone can work together to help children feel **securely attached**. You are the **experts** in your children and your **insights** can help school staff to fully **understand** the **emotions** behind **behaviours**. Children can also be **prepared** for the school they are transitioning to by making **connections**, perhaps with **early visits**, where they can meet new adults and peers.

School Bonding

Children can feel **attached** to their **school** as a whole as well. **'School bonding'** is the feeling that all your peers and adults have your **best interests** at heart. Transition is the perfect time for schools to create school bonding early on, by helping children make **connections** quickly. Children should see their school as a **"safe haven"**, a place where learning is its own reward and **all people** are shown **respect** and **gratitude**. **Extra-curricular activities** are a good way to help children feel connected, as this helps build **self-esteem** and gives opportunities to **learn additional skills** and build **stronger friendships**.

