Secure Base

The Secure Base model: promoting attachment awareness in schools

PUTTING THE MODEL INTO PRACTICE

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Introduction

- This training session is intended as a follow up to the two hour training session – 'The Secure Base model: promoting attachment awareness in schools'. It is preferable but not essential that participants will have attended the previous session. Participants may or may not have discussed the use of the Secure Base model in their school since the previous session. The current session should be used flexibly, according to the progress that each school has made.

- This training session is designed to be presented in two hours, to include a ten minute break. The amount of material to be covered requires the trainer to maintain a fairly brisk pace.

- The aim of the session is to support staff in putting the model into practice in their school. Participants should include staff members who have key roles in putting the model into practice across the school and in supporting more vulnerable pupils.

- The session is suitable for staff in high schools, primary schools and special schools. A maximum of around 12 participants is recommended.

- This script should be used in conjunction with the PPT presentation, *The Secure Base model: promoting attachment awareness in schools: putting the model into practice www.ac.uk/providingasecurebase/resources.*

- When presenting, the trainer is expected to read the heading and text from the PowerPoints, and add additional information from the notes, as seems helpful/appropriate.

Advice for trainers

- Be alert to issues of: class, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, language, religion and sexuality.

- Respectfully challenge unhelpful assumptions and stereotypes.

- Confidentiality: state that all discussion will be treated as confidential.

Preliminaries

- Ensure that participants are comfortable and able to see and hear the trainer.

- Mention location of toilets and fire exits.

- Advise phones switched off or on silent.

FOR THIS SESSION YOU WILL NEED

☐ **A laptop and projector**

☐ **PowerPoint presentation**
www.ac.uk/providingasecurebase/resources

☐ **Print out of PowerPoint Slides (optional)**

SLIDE 1:   **The Secure Base model: putting the model into practice**

SLIDE 2:   **Aims of the session**

- To explore the Secure Base model in more depth, with a focus on putting it into practice in your school

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Notes

- Outline the timing of the session and the arrangements for a break.

- Explain that this session aims to explore the model in more depth, this time with a focus on different ways in which it might be put into practice in school.

- Mention that at the end of the last session, it was suggested that it might be helpful to think about a specific child, how they are managing within each of the five dimensions of the model, and how they might be further helped. Some participants may have done this exercise, others will not. Rather than asking for feedback, make a link with this exercise by stating that the current session will look again at the five dimensions and how they interact and overlap with each other. There will be discussion on practical approaches to helping children– things that have worked well/don't work well within each of the dimensions. There will also be discussion about how ideas drawn from the Secure Base model may be used in school policies and reflected in the ethos of the school.

SLIDE 3:   **Discussion**

- Feedback from previous session and any further Secure Base model discussions or developments that have taken place in school

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Notes

- This discussion can be used to gather any comments and respond to any questions from the previous session and to gain a sense of where the school is in terms of further use of the model. There will be a range of positions. Some schools will have had further discussion and plans may have been made for implementation. Others will not have taken things forward since the last session and may or may not have made plans to do so. The session can be used flexibly to meet the particular needs of each school.

- The next 4 slides (nos. 4–7) summarise key secure base concepts, and can simply be read through, with an additional comment from the trainer (see Notes)

SLIDE 4: **What is the Secure Base model?**

- A framework for promoting secure base relationships between adults and children
- Drawn from theories of attachment and resilience
- Based in the day to day interactions between adults and children
- Strengths based

Notes

- Additional comment: The focus of the Secure Base model then is to take important theories about children's development and the significant role of relationships and translate them into practical ideas for the school and for the classroom.

SLIDE 5: **What is a secure base relationship?**

- A secure base relationship develops when caregivers reduce a child's anxiety by responding to their needs sensitively, warmly and reliably
- When anxiety is reduced, the child feels secure and is able to explore, to think and to enjoy play and learning
- Attachment theory suggests that secure base relationships are first formed in infancy and support development, including brain development, but secure base relationships can be formed at any age
- Insecure attachment relationships in early childhood make it more difficult for children to manage anxiety or trust relationships

Notes

- Additional comment: From birth through to adulthood and in all areas of life, mental health, well-being and the capacity to function successfully rely on secure base relationships. The focus is on having a secure base for exploration. Children who lack a secure base will find it more difficult to face developmental challenges, including making friends and learning at school.

SLIDE 6: **Secure base relationships in school**

- From first entering school, all children's learning and development can be supported by secure base relationships with staff members – insecure children in particular will benefit but all children feel anxious at times
- These relationships will build trust, provide reassurance, reduce anxiety and so enhance children's capacity for learning

- They also enhance children's capacity to manage their feelings and behaviour, to build self-esteem and to form co-operative relationships with staff and peers

Notes

- Additional comment: reducing anxiety in school is key to helping children to feel comfortable in class, to learn and to develop a range of interpersonal skills.

SLIDE 7:   **Providing secure base relationships in school**

- Secure base relationships in school can be developed through

  - one to one relationships with staff that the child sees regularly

  - contacts with staff throughout the school day

  - a school culture of respect for and responsiveness to every child

Notes

- Additional comment: All relationships and contacts between staff and children can be seen as helping to provide a secure base for every child and and are opportunities to create a positive change.

SLIDE 8:   **Five dimensions of secure base relationships in school**

- Availability – helping the child to trust

- Sensitivity – helping the child to manage feelings

- Acceptance – building the child's self esteem

- Co-operation – helping the child to feel effective

- School membership – helping the child to belong

Notes

- Note that each dimension is paired with a developmental benefit for the child. E.g. Availability – helps the child to trust.

- Together, they combine and interact to form a secure base – a whole school environment in which anxiety is reduced and ALL children are more able to concentrate, learn and develop to their full potential.

SLIDE 9:

5

# The Secure Base model for schools

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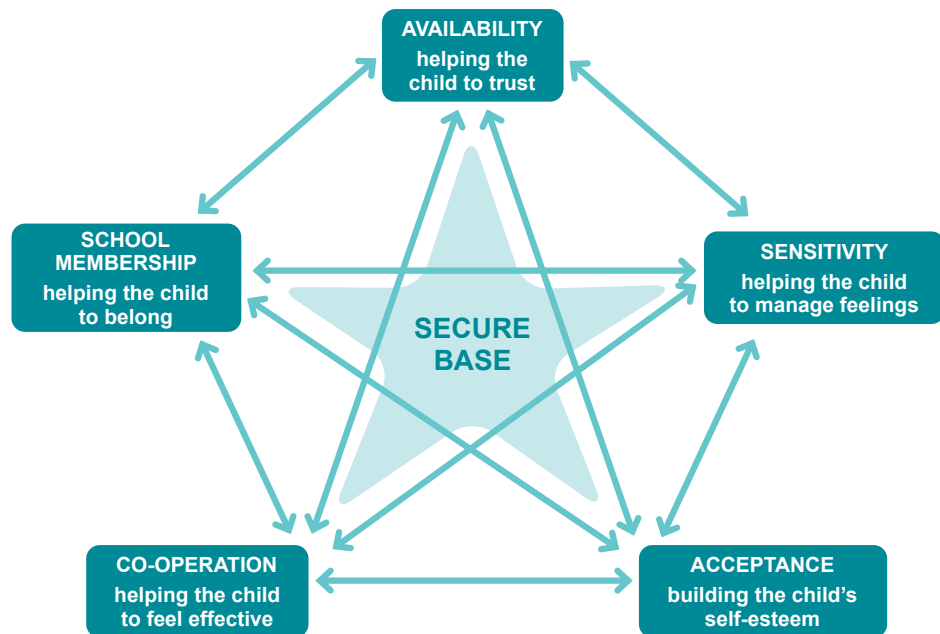
Notes

- Key here is the interaction between the dimensions – e.g. being emotionally and physically available to a child helps them to build trust in adults and is also helps the child to manage their feelings. Acceptance is linked to self- esteem AND also supports a child's sense of belonging. This simple diagram helps us to keep all dimensions in mind, while at the same time, recognising the connections between them.

The staff–child relationship cycle
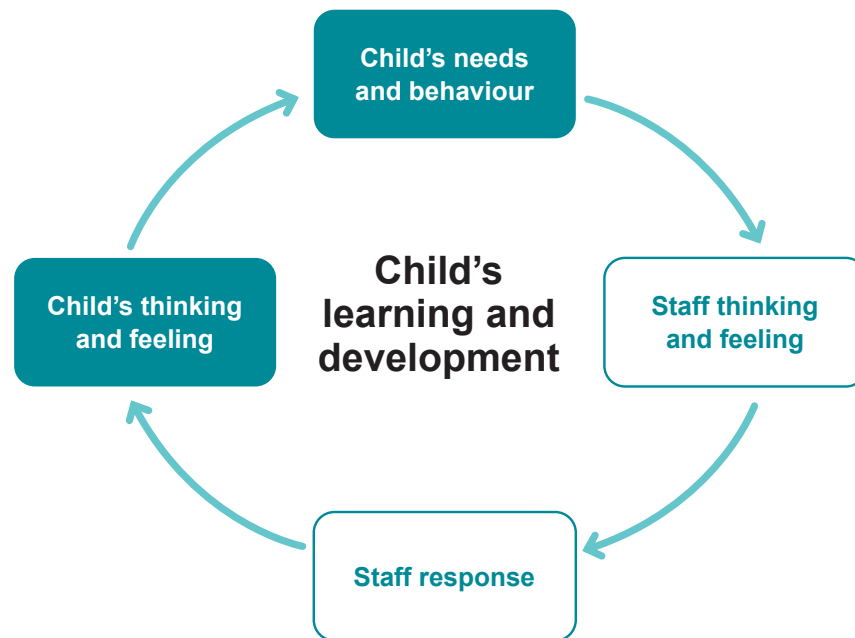
Notes

- Remind participants:

    - that the relationship cycle underpins each of the 5 dimension of secure base relationships.

    - that it makes the connections between thinking, feeling and behaviour for both staff and children.

SLIDE 11: **Using the Secure Base model in school**

The model might be used in the following ways:

- Practice – staff are alert to the model when thinking about and responding to children in lessons and at other times in the school day

- Policy – school policies, documentation and ethos include awareness of the model

Notes

- These ideas are drawn from feedback received from schools who use the Secure Base model

- Practice: all staff (including lunchtime supervisors, support staff and so on) are aware of the model and able to think about using the language and approaches suggested by the model in their day to day contact with children.

- Policy: consider using the model in the policies (e.g.behaviour policy) and documentation (e.g. the website) of the school. NB. Using the model does not have to imply a new set of policies and documentation; the language and approaches of the model can be blended in to existing documents.

- The next two slides provide examples of using the model, firstly in practice and then in policy.

SLIDE 12:   **Practice: providing availability – helping the child to trust**

I have a boy in my class at the moment and he can be very disruptive. But I've found that if I stand near his desk when I'm talking to the class and just give him that little bit of physical closeness, he's often much more calm and attentive.

Notes

- This is an example of a simple approach to signalling availability to a child. For this child, the teacher's physical proximity seems to reduce his anxiety, reassure and settle him.

- Point out that all approaches must feel comfortable and acceptable to the individual child. For some children, the close proximity of an adult might raise, rather than lower anxiety. In this case, a positive tone of voice or using the child's name might be more helpful.

SLIDE 13:   **Policy: using secure base concepts in behaviour policies**

We believe that everyone in school has the right to be treated as an individual and with respect. Good relationships are vital to the successful working of a school. We value achievements of every kind – academic and non-academic – and we believe that everyone should have equal opportunity to achieve their potential.

Warm, friendly relationships between all members of the school community are the best incentive to good social behaviour. Boundaries are set early and once these are established, good behaviour is rewarded highly. We are an inclusive school and understand that some children with additional needs may sometimes require a different approach in terms of behaviour management.
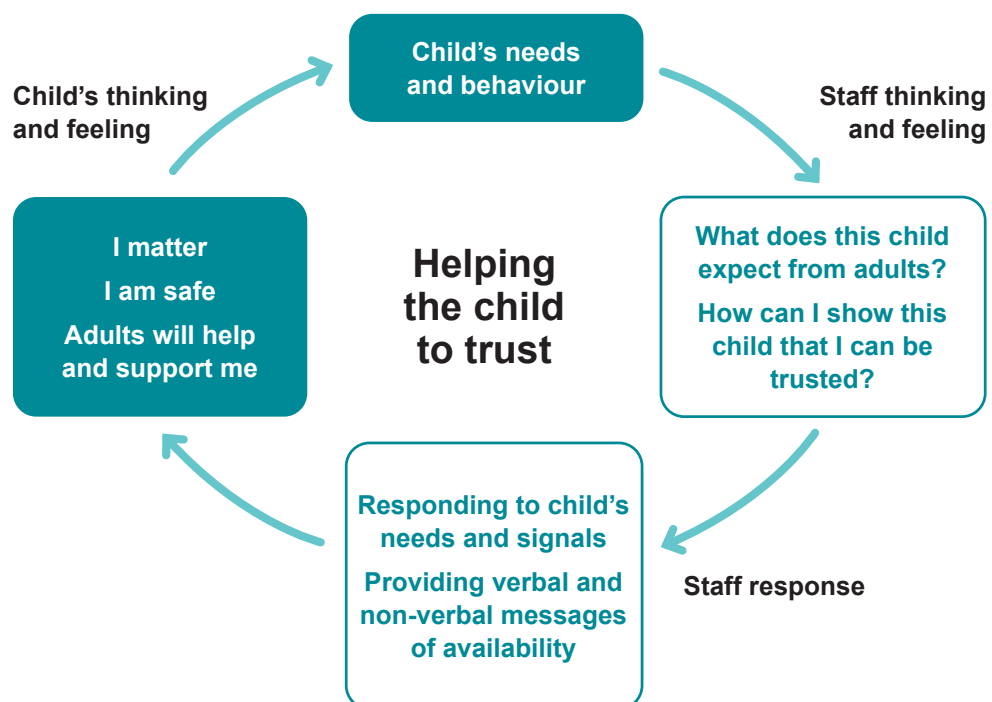
Notes

- These are examples from school behaviour policies which use secure base concepts.

- Read through the two examples and highlight significant words and phrases e.g. 'treated as an individual and with respect' (Acceptance – builds self esteem)', 'Warm, friendly relationships between all members of the school community' (School membership – helps the child to belong).

- Explain that the group will now be considering each of the five dimensions of the model in turn, and thinking about:

- How each of them is already reflected in the school

- The challenges involved in achieving this

- How these challenges might be overcome and any further steps that might be taken to further develop practice and policies within this dimension

SLIDE 14:

Availability – helping the child to trust

Notes

- Physical and emotional availability means signalling your interest and concern to all children in ways that reduces each child's anxiety and builds their trust- can be particularly challenging for children who lack trust for a range of reasons e.g. experiences of loss, trauma, rejection, bullying, school failure

- Read through the boxes – emphasise links in the cycle between thinking and behaviour of staff and thinking and behaviour of the child. Small changes in the staff approach can make a big difference to an anxious child. Place emphasis on the goal for the child's thinking and feeling – i.e. I matter, I am safe, adults will help and support me. This is the desired outcome for the child in this dimension.

SLIDE 15:

Availability – helping the child to trust

Child's thinking and feeling

Child's needs and behaviour

Staff thinking and feeling

Helping the child to trust

I matter
I am safe
Adults will help and support me

What does this child expect from adults?

How can I show this child that I can be trusted?

Responding to child's needs and signals

Providing verbal and non-verbal messages of availability

Staff response

- How is this dimension already reflected within your practice and in the policies and ethos the school?

- What are the challenges in meeting children's needs in this dimension?

- How might challenges be overcome / availability be further developed?
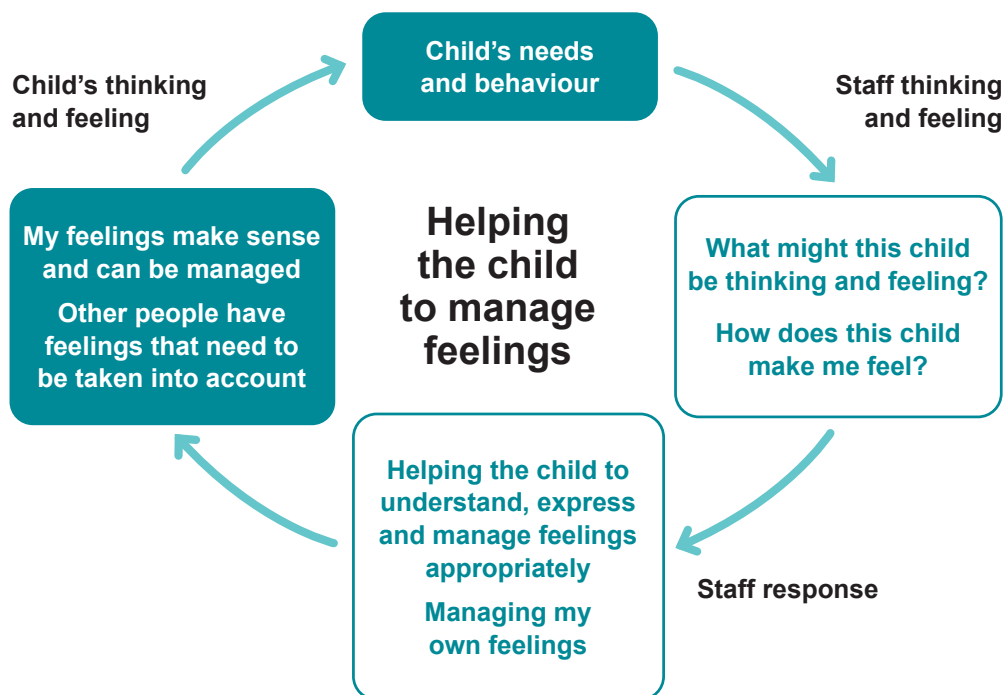
Notes

- Allow around 10 minutes for this discussion.

- Emphasise the importance of each dimension for staff as well as children e.g. staff need to know that others are available/ there for them and that there is mutual trust within the staff group. This will, in turn, help staff to provide availability/build trust for children.

- Suggest that this is an opportunity to develop ideas, both at a practice and policy level. Participants can consider the question from their individual role perspective.

- They might want to consider:

  - Any resources needed (e.g. time, money, books)

  - Support needed

  - Short and longer term timescales

  - Points at which progress can be reviewed

SLIDE 16:

Sensitivity – helping the child to manage feelings

Child's thinking and feeling

Child's needs and behaviour

Staff thinking and feeling

Helping the child to manage feelings

My feelings make sense and can be managed

Other people have feelings that need to be taken into account

What might this child be thinking and feeling?

How does this child make me feel?

Helping the child to understand, express and manage feelings appropriately

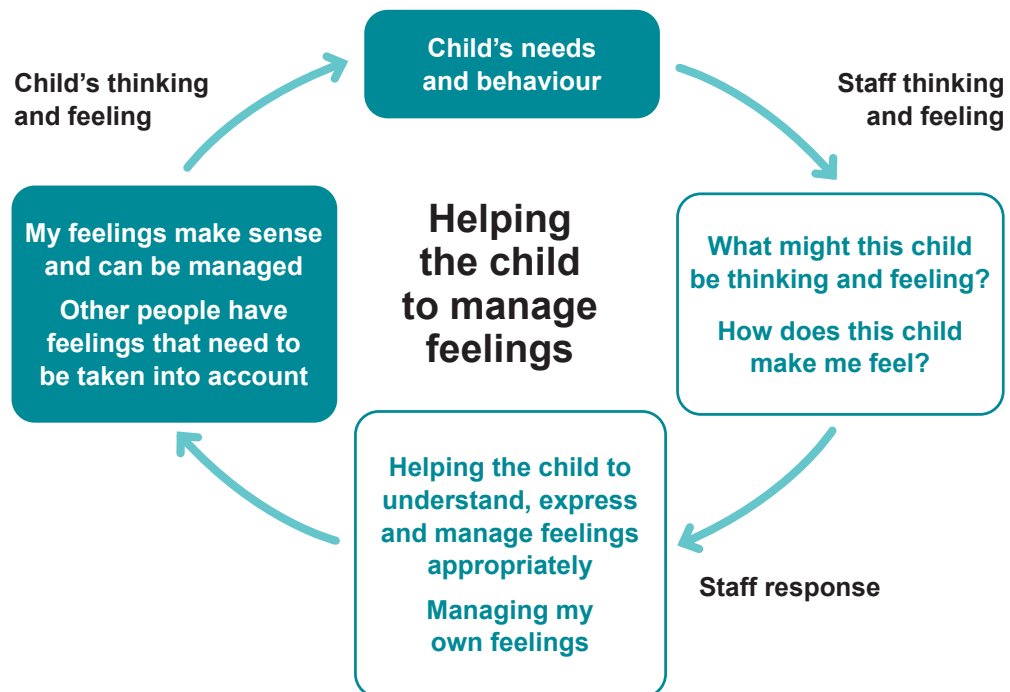**Managing my own feelings**

Staff response

Notes

- Sensitivity refers to the adult thinking about what the child might be thinking and feeling and taking this into account in how they respond

- Read through but do not expand on the contents of the boxes. Place emphasis on the goal for the child's thinking and feeling i.e. My feelings make sense and can be managed. Other people have feelings too. This is the desired outcome for the child in this dimension.

SLIDE 17:

Sensitivity – helping the child to manage feelings

Child's thinking and feeling

Child's needs and behaviour

Staff thinking and feeling

Helping the child to manage feelings

My feelings make sense and can be managed

Other people have feelings that need to be taken into account

What might this child be thinking and feeling?

How does this child make me feel?

Helping the child to understand, express and manage feelings appropriately

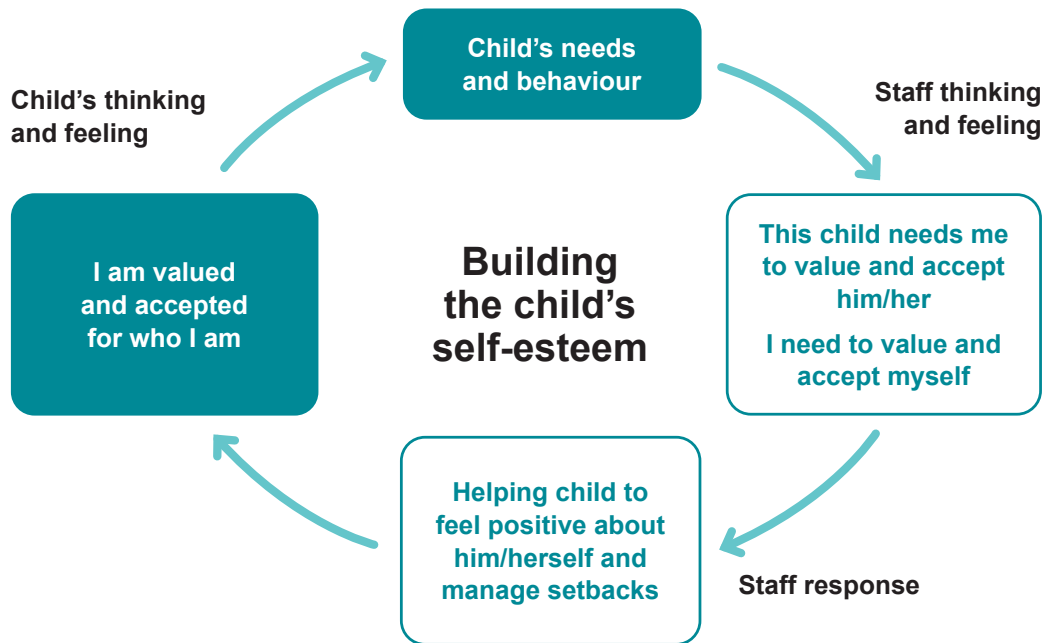**Managing my own feelings**

Staff response

- How is this dimension already reflected within your practice and in the policies and ethos the school?

- What are the challenges in meeting children's needs in this dimension?

- How might challenges be overcome/sensitivity be further developed?

Notes

- Allow around 10 minutes for this discussion.

- Emphasise the importance of each dimension for staff as well as children e.g. important for staff to be able to openly share and reflect on their own feelings and to receive support as needed.

- Suggest that this is an opportunity to develop ideas, both at a practice and policy level. Participants can consider the question from their individual role perspective.

- They might want to consider:

  - Any resources needed (e.g. time, money, books)

  - Support needed

  - Short and longer term timescales

  - Points at which progress can be reviewed

SLIDE 18:

Acceptance – building the child's self-esteem

Child's needs
and behaviour

Child's thinking
and feeling

Staff thinking
and feeling

I am valued
and accepted
for who I am

**Building
the child's
self-esteem**

This child needs me
to value and accept
him/her

I need to value and
accept myself

Helping child to
feel positive about
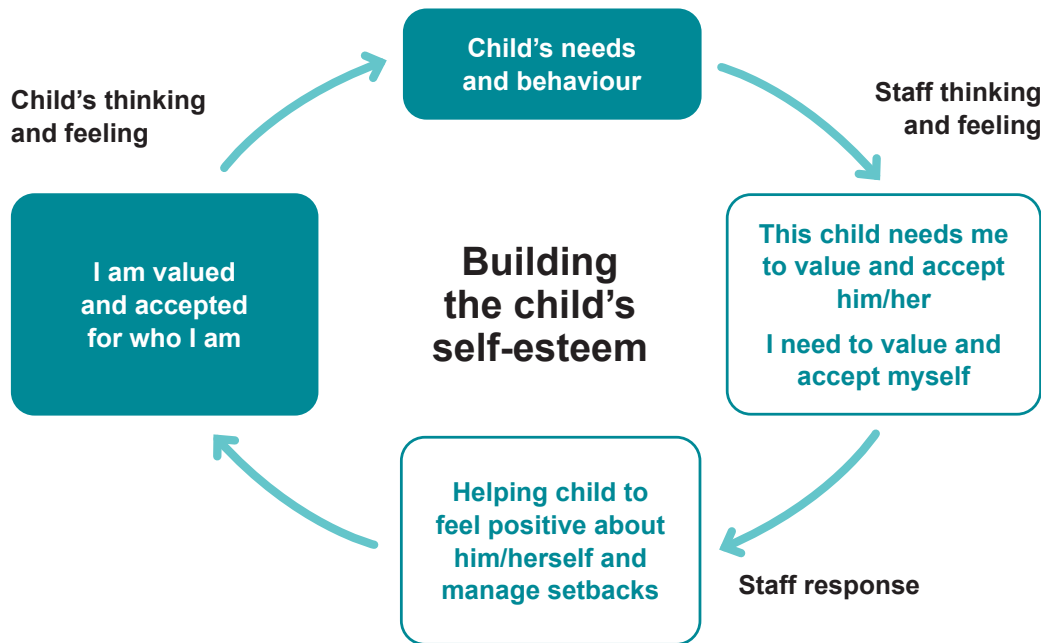him/herself and
manage setbacks

Staff response

Notes

- Acceptance involves relationships in which each child is accepted for who they are

- Read through but do not expand on the contents of the boxes at this stage. Place emphasis on the goal for the child's thinking and feeling i.e. I am valued and accepted for who I am.

Acceptance – building the child's self-esteem

- How is this dimension already reflected within your practice and in the policies and ethos the school?

- What are the challenges in meeting children's needs in this dimension?

- How might challenges be overcome/acceptance be further developed?

Notes

- Allow around 10 minutes for this discussion.

- Emphasise the importance of each dimension for staff as well as children e.g. important for staff to feel accepted and valued within the school, and to be supported through setbacks

- Suggest that this is an opportunity to develop ideas, both at a practice and policy level. Participants can consider the question from their individual role perspective.

- They might want to consider:

  - Any resources needed (e.g. time, money, books)

  - Support needed

  - Short and longer term timescales

  - Points at which progress can be reviewed

Co-operation – helping the child to feel effective

Child's needs and behaviour

Child's thinking and feeling

Staff thinking and feeling

I feel effective

I can co-operate with others

Helping the child to feel effective

This child needs to feel effective and competent

How can we work together?

Helping the child to co-operate and feel effective within rules and boundaries

Staff response

Notes

- Co-operation means encouraging and enabling children to work together with staff members and each other to achieve shared goals

- Read through but do not expand on the contents of the boxes at this stage. Place emphasis on the goal for the child's thinking and feeling i.e. I feel effective, I can co-operate with others. This is the desired outcome for the child in this dimension.

Co-operation – helping the child to feel effective

Child's needs and behaviour

Child's thinking and feeling

Staff thinking and feeling

I feel effective
I can co-operate with others

Helping the child to feel effective

This child needs to feel effective and competent

How can we work together?

Helping the child to co-operate and feel effective within rules and boundaries

Staff response

- How is this dimension already reflected within your practice and in the policies and ethos the school?

- What are the challenges in meeting children's needs in this dimension?

- How might challenges be overcome/co-operation be further developed?

Notes

- Allow around 10 minutes for this discussion.

- Emphasise the importance of each dimension for staff as well as children e.g. important for staff to feel effective/listened to/able to make a difference within the school environment

- Suggest that this is an opportunity to develop ideas, both at a practice and policy level. Participants can consider the question from their individual role perspective.

- They might want to consider:

  - Any resources needed (e.g. time, money, books)

  - Support needed

  - Short and longer term timescales

  - Points at which progress can be reviewed

# School membership – helping the child to belong
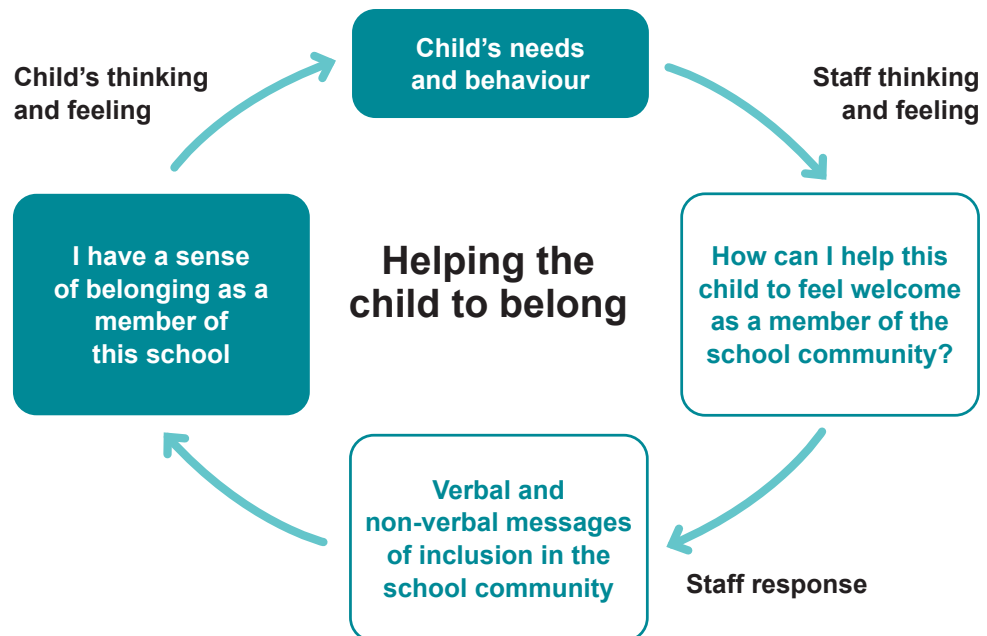
Notes

- School membership is indicated by the extent to which the child identifies with the school and participates in academic and non-academic school activities

- Read through but do not expand on the contents of the boxes at this stage. Place emphasis on the goal for the child's thinking and feeling i.e. I have a sense of belonging as a member of the school. This is the desired outcome for the child in this dimension.

SLIDE 23:

# School membership – helping the child to belong
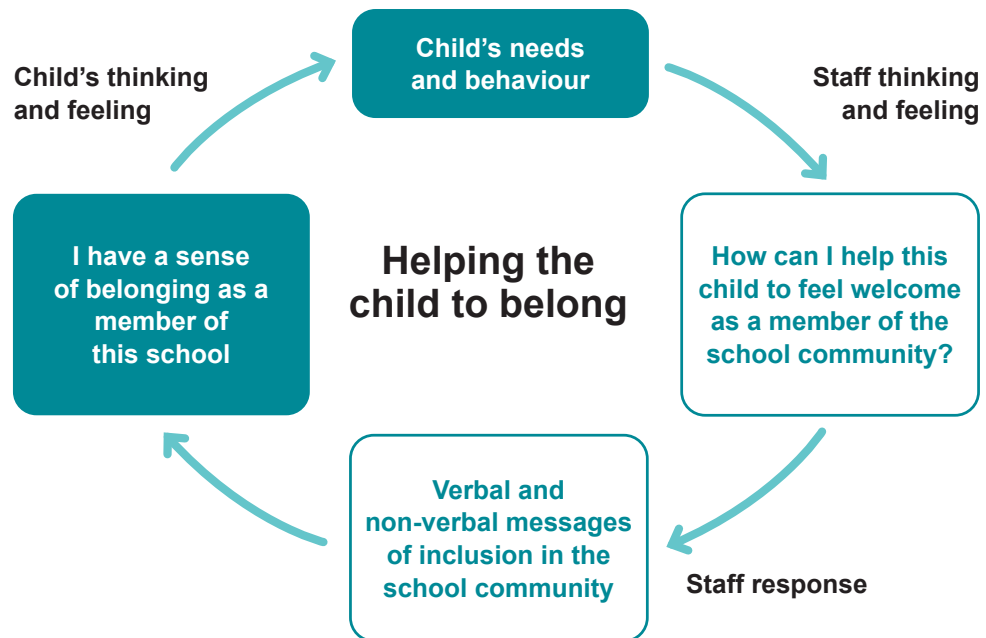
- How is this dimension already reflected within your practice and in the policies and ethos the school?

- What are the challenges in meeting children's needs in this dimension?

- How might challenges be overcome/school membership be further developed?

Notes

- Allow around 10 minutes for this discussion.

- Emphasise the importance of each dimension for staff as well as children. E.g. important for staff to have a sense of belonging within the school environment

- Suggest that this is an opportunity to develop ideas, both at a practice and policy level. Participants can consider the question from their individual role perspective.

- They might want to consider:

  - Any resources needed (e.g. time, money, books)

  - Support needed

  - Short and longer term timescales

  - Points at which progress can be reviewed

SLIDE 24:

The Secure Base model for schools
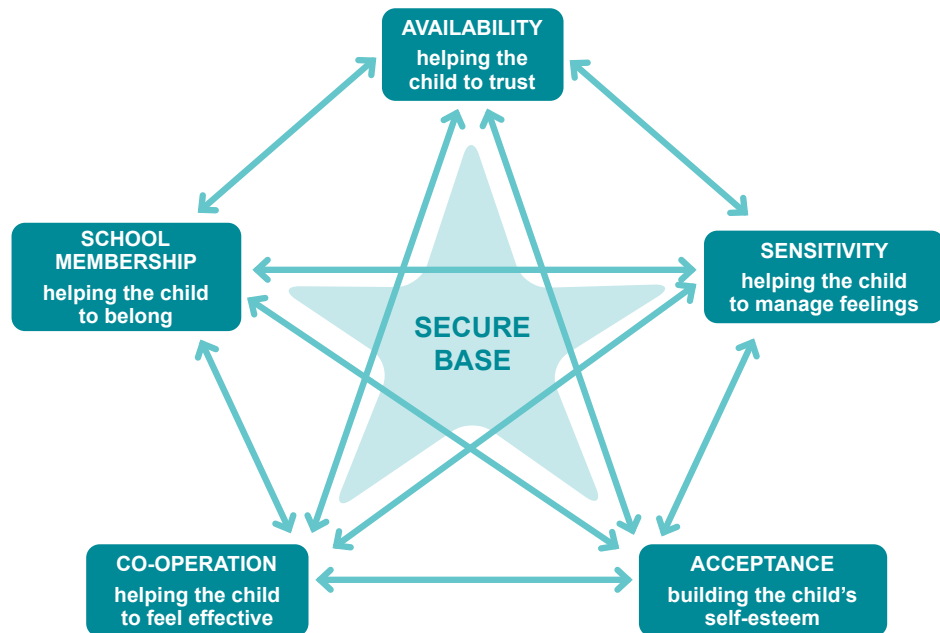
Notes

- The model is shown here as a summary of the five dimensions. Again, emphasise that the five dimensions do not operate in isolation from each other. Instead, they connect and interact with each other to create a secure base from which children can explore and learn.

SLIDE 25: **How can the school provide a secure base for children at key times?**

- Consider key moments of the school day
  - The first few minutes of each morning
  - The beginning and end of lessons
  - Lunchtime and breaks
  - The end of the day
- The transition to Reception/Year 7
- Are there ways in which each child can be offered a sense of the school as a secure base at these times?

Notes

- Depending on time available, this slide may be discussed by the group and experiences and ideas shared during the session, or it may simply be read through by the trainer and left with the group to refer to as they think further about putting the model into practice in school.

**SLIDE 26:** **Some questions for putting the Secure Base model into practice**

- How could it be conveyed to parents and Governors that the Secure Base model is being used as a framework in the school?

- How could it be conveyed to children that the Secure Base model is being used as a framework in the school?

- How could new staff be made aware of the Secure Base model?

- How could the Secure Base model be used to support the range of meetings held to discuss children's progress and behaviour?

Notes

Depending on time available, this slide may be discussed by the group and suggestions/ideas shared during the session, or it may simply be read through by the trainer and left with the group to refer to as they think further about putting the model into practice in school.

SLIDE 27:

The Secure Base model for schools
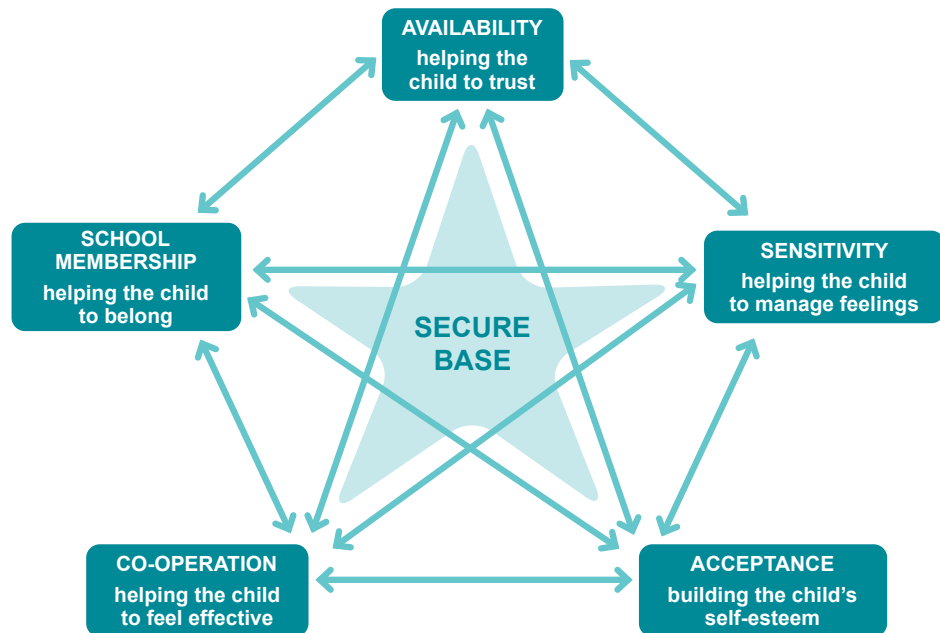
Notes

- Finish the session with a brief recap of the experiences and ideas shared and suggest that these form a positive picture of the school as a secure base, which might now be further developed and taken forward in a range of different ways, as feels appropriate for the school.