



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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Holly Lockyer and Claire Horne
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Dear Holly and Claire,

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 Compass Academy 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 December 2022 to December 2024.

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:

- The personalised, individual approach to all pupils is evidenced through numerous practices, including induction and information gathering, ongoing formal and informal

assessment and observation, and reflective dialogue and practice. Knowledge of each pupil's needs across the developmental spectrum underpins relationships, interactions and planning, and you along with other members of staff provided particularly powerful evidence of this. This is a particular strength of the school, and I was really impressed by the many mechanisms you have in place to ensure that planning and support are fluid and organic, rather than static and inflexible.

- The commitment of the leadership team to developing a culture of attachment and trauma sensitivity has been demonstrated through a high investment in CPD for all staff and a willingness to make changes. Leaders' passion has led to a shared vision of how to deliver the best experiences and outcomes for all the pupils at Compass Academy. Staff are trained to a very high standard and show an excellent understanding of attachment and trauma related issues. Relationships, safeguarding, mental health and wellbeing are prioritised, with an understanding of the necessity of putting the child and his or her overall well-being and secure development at the centre of education, in order for them to achieve academically. There is a shared belief that relationship-based practice provides the foundation for academic progress.
- Staff are fully aware of the importance of viewing a child through a developmental lens rather than a chronological one. Throughout all the interviews, staff demonstrated sensitivity to children's histories and experiences. They gave examples of how they work in order to help children to notice and manage their uncomfortable thoughts and emotions. All staff interviewed demonstrated a deep curiosity about how to make the best possible provision for each individual child through meeting them at the developmental stage they are in at that time, and how they frequently have spiky developmental profiles. Viewing children through a developmental lens 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. The staff group itself provides a strong and effective circle of support around individual members. 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 referral to external services. Staff members interviewed shared that leaders are approachable, flexible and empathic. They were fully aware of many avenues of support to which staff can be referred, formal and informal, in-house and external. Care for staff is a particular strength of the school.

- There is a strong focus on multi-sensory learning and play, and many and varied examples of this were shared. This, combined with the emphasis on making learning fun and individual attention for each child, is an excellent recipe for helping children to become fully engaged with learning. The range of opportunities offered to pupils is impressive, and again, individually tailored to each child. There is a recognition of the impact of play deprivation, and many types of play are available, regardless of the age of the child. These activities will be beneficial to the children in so many ways, for example building cognitive skills, such as cause and effect reasoning; sensory development; social and emotional development; and to decompress, reflect and relax. 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. I'm delighted 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