

A guide to the Sutton Virtual School

Building Stronger Foundations ARC Awards

The Building Stronger Foundations is a programme designed by Sutton Virtual School to offer schools the support, training and CPD opportunities to develop a whole-school relational, trauma-informed approach. The programme has been devised to provide schools a framework, whilst also providing flexibility over the use of funded CPD sessions and EP hours, so that schools can facilitate bespoke support around their individual school developmental needs.

Building Stronger Foundations offers participating schools a package of support, funded by the Virtual School, to aid the school in developing a whole-school relational approach that benefits all pupils, and especially those who are trauma-experience or have any form of additional needs. We work closely with the Sutton EPS team to deliver bespoke staff development opportunities chosen by your school, and we have invested in funding membership for every BSF school to join the ARC community, which provides resources and a national network of schools on similar journeys, which Sutton schools can connect with and share best practice.

It takes time to embed a whole-school relational approach between staff and pupils, and staff at *all* levels need time to develop and embed the approach for it to become apparent within everyday interactions including the language used with pupils. This is why the programme is designed to support schools to achieve a bronze award in their first year on the programme, silver on the second and then work towards gold and sustaining whole-school practice thereafter. In the rare and occasional exception to this, schools will have demonstrated evidence of having already undertaken some form of assess, plan, do and review cycle specifically in relation to relational, trauma and attachment-aware practice, and be able to evidence the impact on pupil outcomes are per the criteria in the pathways below.

Sutton Virtual School supports settings to develop and embed this practice within individually school settings, and then support schools to develop ways to not only sustain this but to provide external support and guidance to other settings. Sharing best practice across the local area and indeed more widely through the ARC network is a great way to showcase schools' journey. Once schools have been awarded a 'gold' BSF ARC award, they might like to contact the Virtual School to discuss working towards a nomination for the national Timpson Award and becoming a Learning Hub.

Building Stronger Foundations is a bespoke programme for Sutton schools designed by Sara Martin, Strategic Lead for Children with a social worker and those in kinship care. We have worked in partnership with the Educational Psychology service, the Limes College and the Attachment and Research Community to develop the programme. If you have any queries about the programme, please contact BSF project lead, Sara Martin, on sara.martin@cognus.org.uk.

Building Stronger Foundations: BRONZE Award

Overview

In the first year, schools commit to developing a relational approach across their setting which will support all pupils. Participating schools will undertake a self-audit to identify strengths and areas to develop and undertake training and activities to address chosen areas of focus. Staff will have training and reflective sessions to support them to develop relational practice. The Lead team will evaluate early impact of training and their activities to extend a relational approach across the school and review their audit to identify progress and next steps.

Key Activities

Choose a Lead Team

- choose a team to lead on developing a relational approach, to include the Head & DSL
- we suggest 3-5 members of staff depending on school size

Self-audit current trauma-informed provision and plan actions

- use the self-assessment audit to evaluate current practice
- choose key development strands to address and document this in your SDP or VS development plan template

Arrange a planning consultation with Virtual School and link EP

- hold a consultation meeting with the Virtual School and EP to plan how to address development areas using the funded EP hours

Facilitate staff training

- book on-site staff training
- facilitate this in Autumn term for all staff or as many as possible

Plan and facilitate follow-up CPD and activities to address development areas

- using the funded EP hours, plan opportunities for staff to reflect and follow up on training and address areas of development in the audit

Staff attend CPD sessions to reflect on practice

- This will include a minimum of one reflective session for all those who attended trauma training, held in the Spring or summer term

Participate in network meetings to discuss and share practice

- to support your school and others in developing practice

Evaluate progress, impact and emerging themes for next year

- in the Summer term, we'll ask you to re-evaluate your audit and consider how you can further embed practice in the following year

Bronze Award pathway

- The school has committed to **participating in BSF for a minimum of a year**, ideally two, and to facilitating time for staff to undertake training and reflective sessions, to develop relational practice.
- The Lead team established have undertaken a **self-audit** to assess trauma-informed, relational provision at the beginning of the programme and at the end of the academic year to measure progress.
- All/almost all staff have undertaken **training** to support the development of a relational, trauma and attachment-aware approach.
- The Lead team has led the **development of a relational, trauma-informed approach** across the setting and undertaken activities to address key areas identified in the self-evaluation. Funded EP hours are used to facilitate targeted follow-up training/CPD sessions for staff to reflect on using and applying relational strategies.
- As a result of training, staff have a developing understanding of and awareness of children's difficulties and needs and are **increasingly applying a relational, trauma-informed approach** in practice.
- Ideally, there are **emerging examples and evidence** that **staff using relational practice** and restorative, trauma-informed approaches has led to improved outcomes for pupils and/or a reduction in the frequency and/or intensity of incidents e.g. reflected in behaviour logs.
- The school provides **feedback and evaluation** to the Virtual School about BSF and its impact.

Schools applying to the Virtual School for a bronze award will be asked to evidence completion of these strands. Schools will be provided with an example development plan template which can be used to evidence completion of the bronze award, although schools may also use their own templates too. Schools achieving the bronze award will receive a Building Stronger Foundations Attachment and Research Community (ARC) award certificate. They will also receive the official ARC logo reflecting their BSF ARC award to use on their website.

Building Stronger Foundations: SILVER Award

Overview

The second year will involve building on the training and the activities undertaken in the first year to begin to facilitate broadly consistent use of relational, trauma-informed approaches across the school. Most staff, at all levels, including those who might have been ‘behaviourist’ in approach or resistant to the relational approach at first, now adopt a relational approach in their everyday practice. The Headteacher and leadership team actively promote this. Schools working towards a silver award will devise a focus project, either within the whole-school policies and practice, or focus on a specific element of provision, and provide a case study on its impact. There will be emerging evidence of the impact of the school’s commitment to BSF in pupil outcomes.

Key Activities in addition to those outlined in the bronze award:

Self-audit/ re-evaluate current trauma-informed provision and plan actions

- use the self-assessment audit to re/evaluate current practice
- choose key development strands to address and document this in your SDP or VS development plan template

Arrange a consultation with Virtual School and link EP

- consider the area of your focus project/development work to plan ahead when planning use of EP hours.

Facilitate refresher/ bespoke training to further develop relational approaches

- book on-site staff training that revisits relational approaches and builds on strategies / your whole-school approach
- facilitate this in Autumn term for all staff or as many as possible

Devise and implement development or focus project

- This will include a minimum of one reflective session for all those who attended trauma training

Undertake activities to address development areas

- using the funded EP hours, plan opportunities for staff to reflect and follow up on training and address areas of development in the audit

Document progress and impact in a case study

- to support your school and others in developing practice
- begin supporting toehr by sharing case study/ your approach and good practice with other schools or settings

Evaluate progress, impact and emerging themes for next year

- in the Summer term, we'll ask you to re-evaluate your audit and consider how you can further embed practice in the following year to work towards the gold award

Silver Award pathway

- The school has committed to participating in *Building Stronger Foundations* for a **minimum of two years**. The Headteacher and Lead team have actively driven the development of a **whole-school relational approach**.
- **Audit data indicates improvement in at least two identified areas** of development against the school's self-audited baseline
- The Lead Team has **evidence of successfully addressing the key areas identified in the audit** having addressed them through action planning. Examples of evidence could include pupil data, case studies, the impact in supporting individual members of staff to be more relational, or similar.
- The Head has worked proactively with staff to **promote systematic change/ development** of relational practice.
- All/almost all staff have undertaken **training** to support the development of a relational, trauma and attachment-aware approach **and are increasingly applying this** in day-to-day practice. The Lead team has facilitated targeted **follow-up training/CPD sessions** for staff to embedding relational strategies in their practice.
- Staff consistently take a relational approach and **build on good teacher-pupil relationships to support pupils**, particularly when pupils display behaviours that challenge.
- **Staff at all levels consistently use trauma-informed language** in their interactions which is apparent throughout the school and within its ethos. As a result, there is **emerging evidence of a reduction in incidents/ suspensions**.
- The school has devised and implemented a **focus project**, either within a whole-school approach or an aspect of the school's provision, that better support pupils who are trauma-experienced and/or present difficulties in regulation or SEMH. The school has **evidence of its impact on pupil outcomes**, which could include:
 - data showing impact of application of relational practice on pupil outcomes
 - evidence of the impact of staff using appropriate and consistent trauma-informed language and terminology (in practice and policy)
 - evidence of trauma-informed approaches when developing individual support plans
 - data measuring the well-being of trauma-experienced children
 - developing the curriculum through a trauma-informed lens
- The school has documented the **impact** of their journey to extend/embed relational, trauma-informed practice, in a **case study** shared with the Virtual School and BSF/ ARC community.
- The school provides **feedback and evaluation** to the Virtual School about BSF and its impact.

Schools applying to the Virtual School for a silver award will be asked to evidence completion of these strands and an impact report or equivalent. This will include a case study and a summary of the impact of BSF activities on pupil outcomes, which we ask that you make available to other BSF/ARC schools to share learning and support others on their journey to become more relational. Schools will be provided with an example case study/project proforma which can be used to evidence completion of the silver award, although schools may also use their own templates too.

Schools achieving the silver award will receive BSF Attachment and Research Community award certificate. They will also receive the official ARC logo reflecting their BSF ARC award to use on their website. We encourage schools to then work towards a gold award and develop ways to sustain and refine relational approaches in their school.

Building Stronger Foundations: GOLD Award

Overview

Schools working towards the gold award will have already established a whole-school relational approach based on trauma-informed practice and be working to sustain this in everyday practice throughout the setting. To achieve this, schools will have demonstrated ongoing work, refining practices at different levels over time with evidence of the assess, plan, do, review cycle. Schools achieving the gold award will have successfully supported staff at all levels to be consistently using relational approaches in their interactions with pupils, working in a trauma-informed, restorative way when incidents occur and using trauma-informed language. Alternatives to isolation will be in place and support pupils to work through their difficulties, which will be reflected in a reduction in suspensions/exclusions and in other pupil outcome data as appropriate to the setting.

Schools working towards gold will also offer some form of external support or guidance to other BSF schools and potentially a wider network across Sutton and regionally through the Attachment and Research Community (ARC). They will be committed to sharing their BSF journey with other schools and provide the Virtual school a report summarising their journey and its impact. They will have utilised the bronze/ silver funded package of support successfully to work towards embedding relational approaches within.

Schools achieving a gold award will then be able to work to sustain the award thereafter and liaise with the Virtual School to request being considered to be put forward for the national Timpson Award. Schools sustaining gold might also like to work with the Virtual School to become a national Learning Hub. Please contact BSF Lead Sara Martin at sara.martin@cognus.org.uk if you'd like to find out more or discuss these pathways.

Key Activities in addition to those outlined in bronze and silver:

Review audit to identify how to embed approach across setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school undertakes activities to embed at all levels, including support staff, midday supervisors and office staff
Devise a strategic plan to embed relational, trauma-informed approaches across the setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> support the consistent use of trauma-informed language in staff-pupil interactions, and plan targeted activities to address areas for development
Review policies and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to include ensuring the behaviour policy and other relevant policies are in line with a relational approach
Review the impact of your focus project from last year and refine/extend it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> where appropriate, to include a reduction in behaviour incidents/suspensions, and/or improved wellbeing or engagement
Monitor and evaluate the impact on pupil outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider how to further develop or extend across your setting
Provide impact report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> summarise the impact of activities on pupil outcomes. This could include attendance rates, exclusion/suspension data, wellbeing data or achievement.
Develop a mechanism to monitor the achievement of CWSW/kinship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitor their achievement and how this data is used to inform the school's provision. Ideally, Heads will include in their reports to the Governing Body.
Provide external support and/or advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to other BSF and ARC schools, and to the local area- discuss with the Virtual School or EP for ideas
Develop a mechanism to sustain provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> both across the setting, and in training new staff

Gold Award pathway

- The school has committed to participating in *Building Stronger Foundations* for a **minimum of two years and to sustaining practice thereafter**. The school is **committed to supporting staff at all levels to consistently use relational approaches** and to offering some **external advice /support** to other BSF or ARC schools.
- **Evidence of plan, do, review cycles over time to continually embed approach** (i.e. the school having been through cycle of review over 1+yrs) and **evidence of the impact of their chosen focus project**.
- The school has successfully used the **audit to identify and address areas of development and can evidence** that relational, trauma-informed practice is **largely embedded** across the school.
- The Lead Team have **evidence** of implementing a whole-school relational approach that has **impacted on pupil outcomes, such as suspension and exclusion rates, attendance data, or pupil attainment/progress**. Data should include children who have or have had a social worker, to reflect how whole-school practice supports these pupils.
- The Lead team has facilitated targeted **follow-up training/CPD sessions** for staff to embedding relational strategies in their practice. As a result, **suspension/exclusion rates are low/lower**, or there is evidence of **improved pupil engagement or wellbeing at school**.
- The school has developed **innovative solutions** meeting the needs of pupils who are trauma-experienced and/or present difficulties in regulation or SEMH and has evidence of its **impact**.
- Relational practice is a key part of **school culture and ethos**.
- All staff have received training in a relational, trauma and attachment-aware approach and **practice is largely consistent and embedded across the school** and across staff in all roles. Most staff describe behaviour using trauma-informed language and there is a clear plan/mechanism to ensure all new starters joining the school receive training.
- **School policies and/or practices have been modified** in line with relational and trauma-informed theory.
- The school has a **relational behaviour policy** that reflects these approaches.
- These school policies/practices feature **alternative options to isolation and exclusion**, offering the use of safe spaces and restorative approaches. Sanctions are trauma-informed and restorative.
- The school **monitors the achievement of children with a social worker** and those in kinship, and has measures in place to ensure early identification of need and support where necessary.

- The school extends culture change or impact **beyond their setting** to the wider community, parents/carers, and/or other schools. The school offers to share their experience and learning with others.
- School **Governors** understand how trauma can impact a child's learning, and how to **monitor the effectiveness of the school's provision** for children who have/had a social worker as a Governing Body. Ideally, Governors have undertaken trauma training and have built this monitoring into their role.
- The school provides **feedback and evaluation** to the Virtual School about BSF and its impact and provides .
- The school remains committed to **sustaining a whole-school relational** and takes steps in its policies and processes to achieve this.

Schools applying to the Virtual School for a gold award will be asked to evidence completion of these strands and an impact report or equivalent. Evidence of the impact of BSF activities on pupil outcomes will be clear and impact on key data such as suspensions, attendance or academic achievement. We ask that you make your report available to other BSF/ARC schools to share learning and support others on their journey to become more relational.

Schools achieving the gold award will receive BSF Attachment and Research Community award certificate. They will also receive the official ARC logo reflecting their BSF ARC award to use on their website. Schools achieving gold are encouraged to explore ways to sustain provision and to continue to offer guidance about their journey or relational practice to the wider educational community, in Sutton and through the ARC community if wished. We ask that gold schools are committed to supporting other BSF schools and continue to attend networking events to share best practice.

Schools sustaining gold award standards can liaise with the Virtual School to request nomination for the ARC Timpson award and work to become a Learning Hub.