



Attachment and Trauma Sensitive Settings Award (ATSSA 0-5)

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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Dear Natalie,

Thank you for registering for the Attachment and Trauma Sensitive Settings Award (ATSSA 0-5) 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 all 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 Abercromby Nursery School to develop a culture of compassion and nurture. This, as you well know, plays a pivotal role in getting your children into a state of 'learning readiness'. The Award is valid for two years and will run from July 2026 to July 2028.

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.

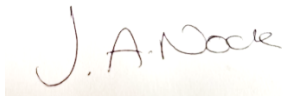
There are a number of significant points that are worthy of special mention:

- Children's physiological needs are given the highest priority and are recognised as fundamental to their emotional wellbeing, development and sense of self. Throughout the setting, everyday care routines such as mealtimes, rest, personal care and physical comfort are seen as valuable opportunities to build trusting relationships rather than simply tasks to be completed. Staff approach these moments with warmth, sensitivity and what is often described as *professional love*, communicating through their consistent, nurturing care that every child is valued, worthy of attention and deserving of kindness. This reflects key attachment principles, recognising that children develop a positive sense of themselves through the repeated experience of being cared for by attentive, responsive adults. As described by John Bowlby, children come to value and care for themselves through first experiencing the tenderness, protection and care of others. When adults consistently notice and respond to children's physical needs, they also help children develop interoception, that is, their awareness and understanding of the signals coming from within their own bodies, such as hunger, thirst, tiredness, discomfort and the early signs of emotional arousal. Over time, children begin to recognise these internal cues, understand what they mean and learn that their needs will be met with care and responsiveness. This lays important foundations for self-regulation, emotional resilience and lifelong health and wellbeing. By placing such importance on responsive, nurturing care, the setting creates an environment where children feel physically safe, emotionally secure and deeply valued. These everyday interactions strengthen attachment relationships, foster a healthy sense of self and support children to develop increasing confidence in understanding and caring for both their bodies and their emotions.
- Children's histories are used as a framework within which to interpret behaviour. Staff have a deep understanding of how children's life experiences influence their emotional wellbeing, development and behaviour. Practitioners gather meaningful information about children's early experiences, family circumstances and developmental history, enabling them to build a rich understanding of each child's individual story. This knowledge informs practice throughout the setting, with staff recognising that behaviour is a form of communication and responding with empathy, curiosity and compassion rather than judgement. Staff demonstrate a high level of skill in recognising

and responding to children's emotional and sensory regulation needs, providing timely and effective co-regulation that supports wellbeing and engagement. They are proactive in noticing early signs of dysregulation and respond sensitively to help children feel safe and supported before distress escalates.

- Adults know the developmental, social and emotional age of the children in their care and recognise and respect that children behave in ways that are appropriate for their developmental stage. It was particularly encouraging to see the emphasis placed on responding to children's developmental stage rather than their chronological age. Staff understand that children develop at different rates and that early experiences can influence emotional regulation, relationships and learning. By meeting children where they are developmentally, practitioners provide personalised support that helps children feel safe, understood and valued. Predictable routines and flexible, sensory-informed practice further support children to engage successfully, while thoughtful adaptations ensure individual needs are met. This nurturing approach promotes emotional wellbeing, strengthens relationships and enables children to build confidence, resilience and the skills they need to thrive at their own pace.
- Staff demonstrate an attachment- and trauma-aware approach to behaviour by responding to children's individual needs rather than relying on punishment, sanctions or isolation. They recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and seek to understand the underlying feelings and needs that may be influencing a child's actions. When children become dysregulated, practitioners respond calmly, sensitively and with a focus on restoring a sense of safety through co-regulation rather than correction. Children are supported through "time in" with a trusted adult, where they receive comfort, connection and help to regulate their emotions, rather than being removed or isolated through "time out". Staff understand that children may require responsive, developmentally appropriate support to regain emotional regulation before they are able to engage in reflection or problem-solving. This relationship-based approach helps children feel safe, preserves their dignity and strengthens their ability to develop emotional regulation over time.

I hope that you will celebrate your achievement with children, staff, governors, parents/carers and other stakeholders to celebrate the nursery's commitment to its children, successfully removing barriers to learning and participation in the life of the setting. I have felt particularly privileged to share your journey and really hope that you will register for the Silver Award – Attachment and Trauma Friendly . I already look forward to continuing to support you through the next steps!

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "J. A. Nock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Dr Jennifer A Nock, CPsychol, AFBPsS, PhD, BSc (Hons)