Secure Base

The Secure Base model: promoting attachment awareness in school

PUTTING THE MODEL INTO PRACTICE

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Aims of the session

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

Discussion

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

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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

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

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

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

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

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The Secure Base model for schools
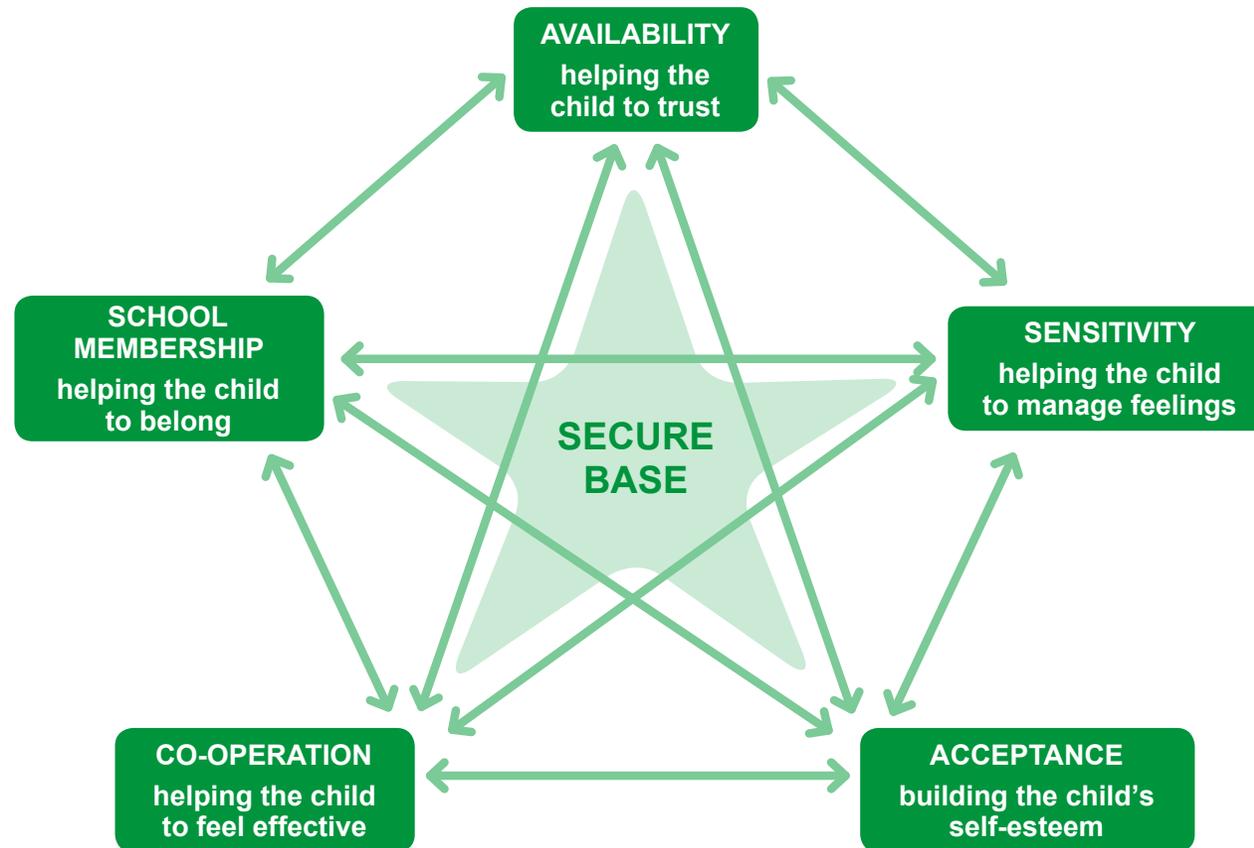
The staff–child relationship cycle
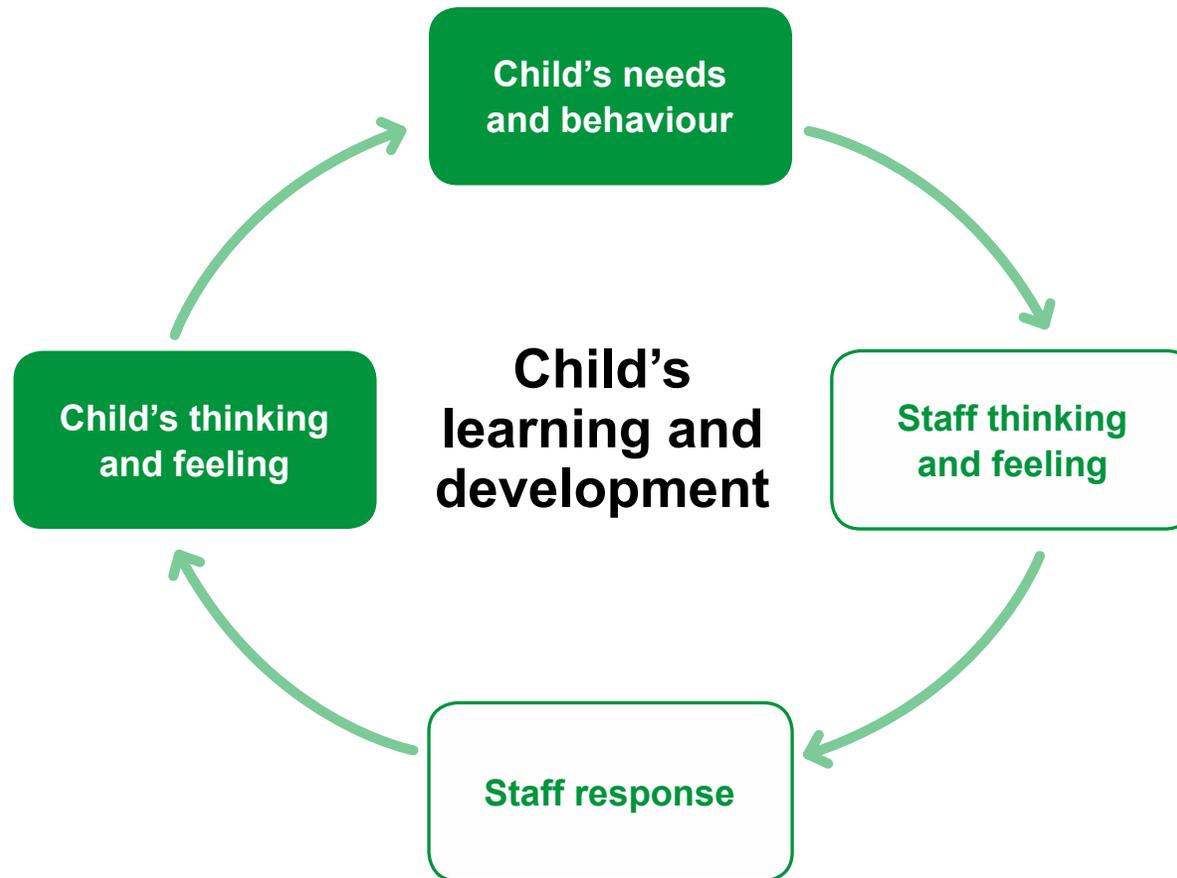
Using the Secure Base model in school

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

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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. (Teacher)

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

W arm, 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.

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Availability – helping the child to trust

Child's needs and behaviour

Child's thinking and feeling

Staff thinking and feeling

I matter

I am safe

Adults will help and support me

Helping the child to trust

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

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Exercise: Availability – helps the child to trust

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Child's thinking and feeling

Staff thinking and feeling

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Helping the child to trust

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?

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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

Exercise: Sensitivity – helping the child to manage feelings

Child's needs and behaviour

Staff thinking and feeling

Child's thinking and feeling

Helping the child to manage feelings

What might this child be thinking and feeling?

How does this child make me feel?

My feelings make sense and can be managed

Other people have feelings that need to be taken into account

Helping the child to understand, express and manage feelings appropriately

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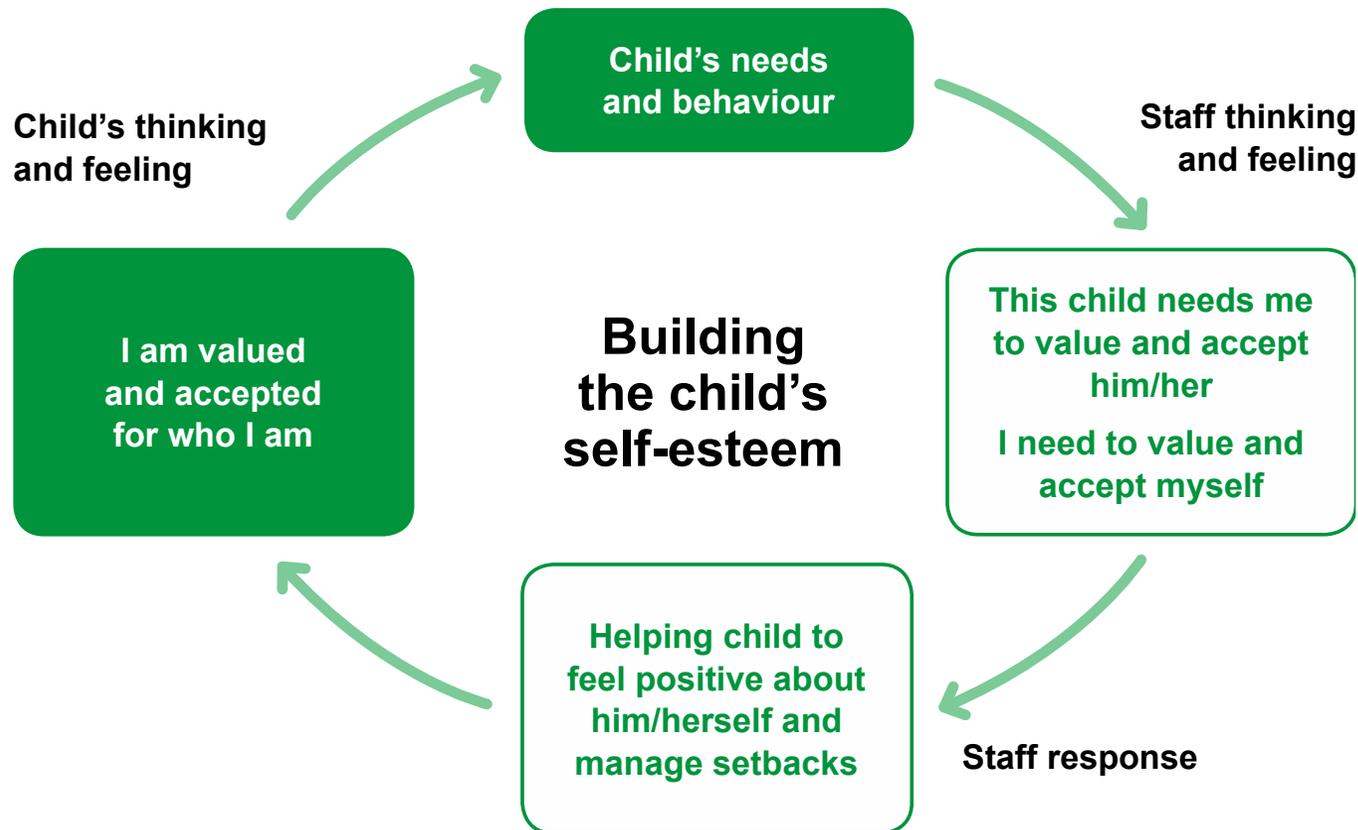Centre for Research on Children & Families

Acceptance – building the child's self-esteem

Child's needs and behaviour

Staff thinking and feeling

This child needs me to value and accept him/her

I need to value and accept myself

Staff response

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

I am valued and accepted for who I am

Child's thinking and feeling

Building the child's self-esteem
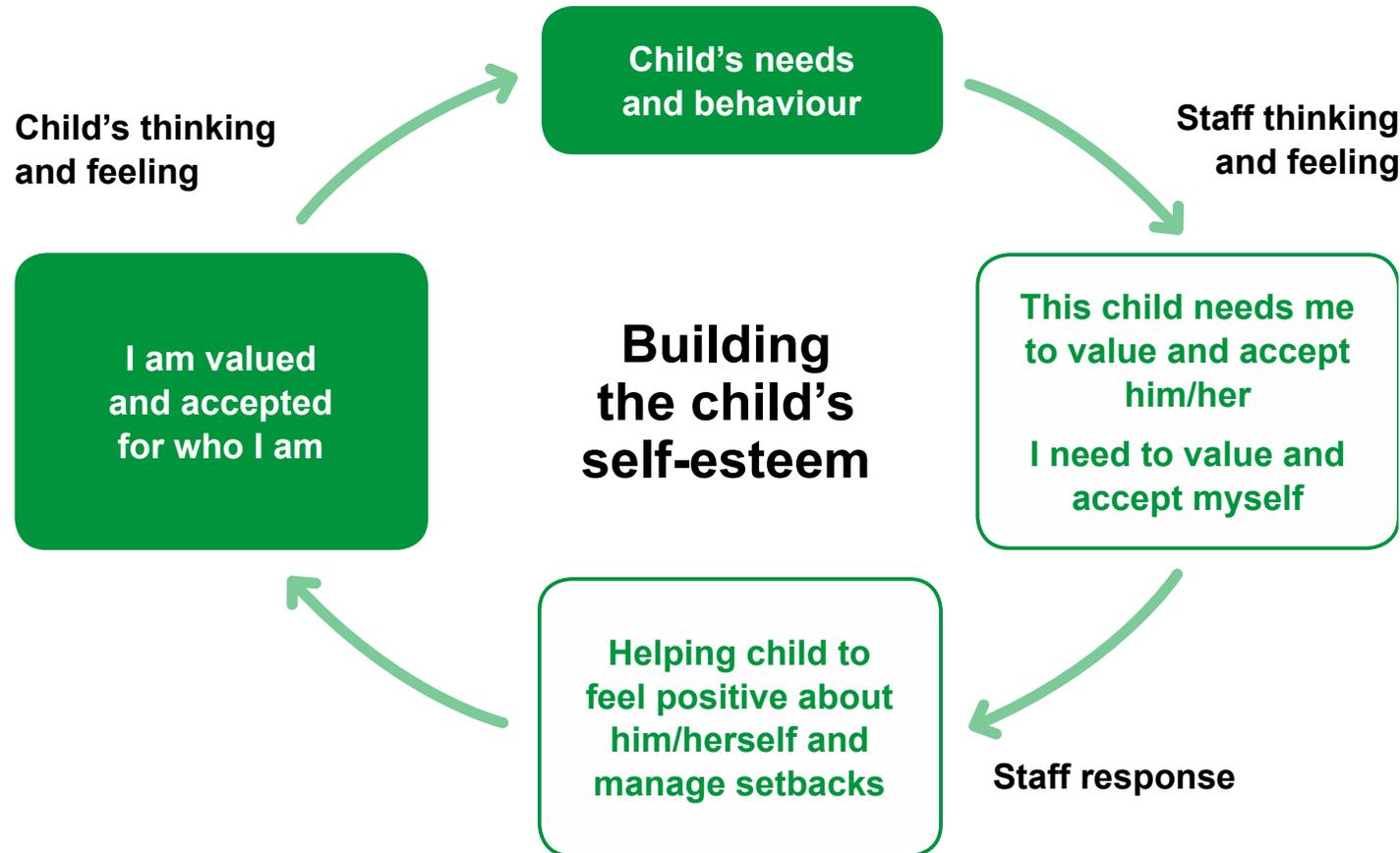
Exercise: Acceptance – builds self-esteem

Child's needs and behaviour

Staff thinking and feeling

Child's 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

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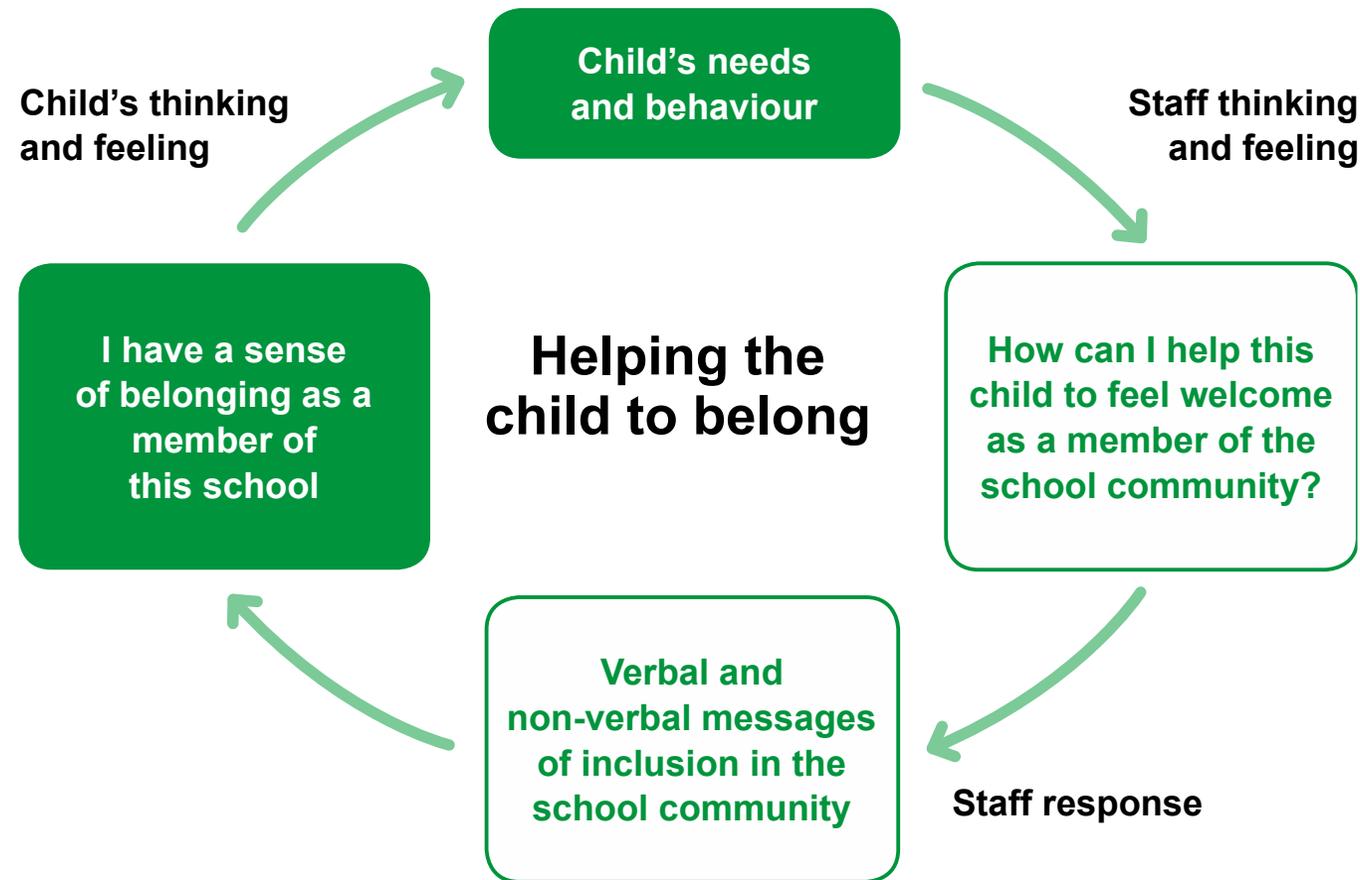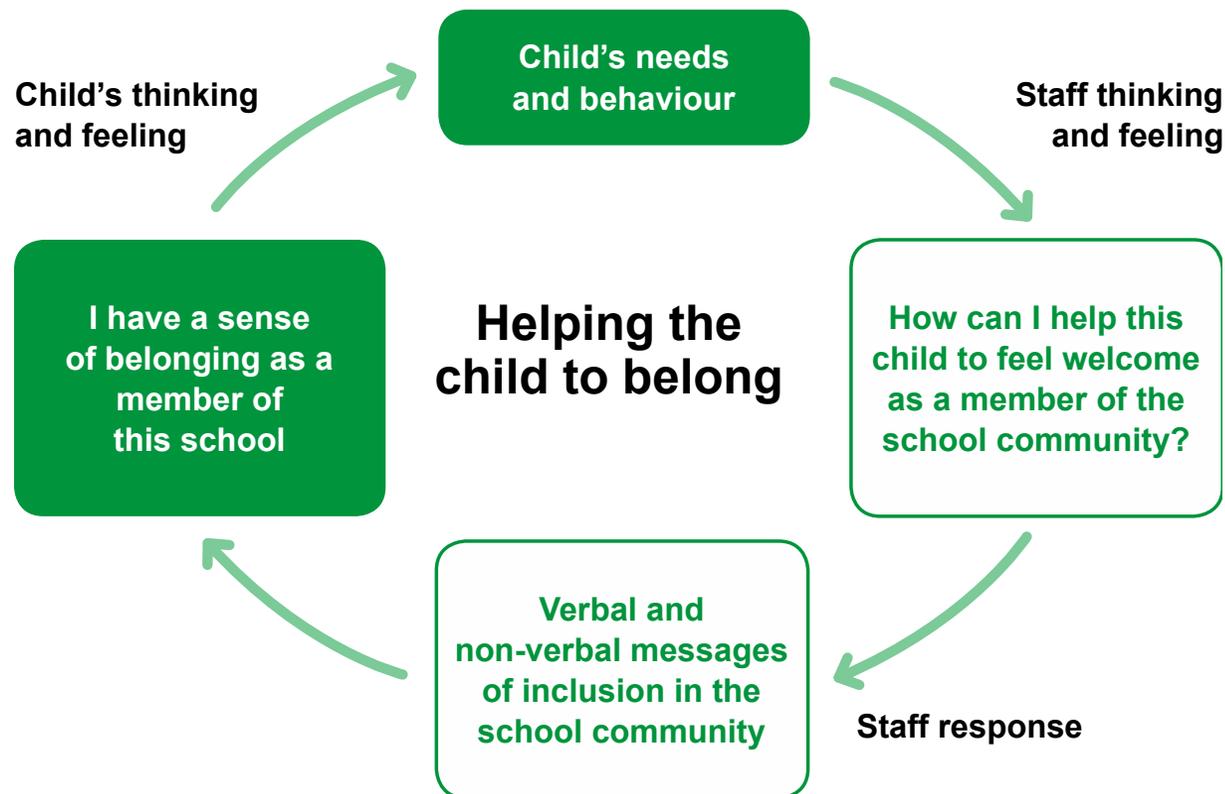
Co-operation – helping the child to feel effective

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

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Exercise: Co-operation – helps the child to feel effective

Child's thinking and feeling

Child's needs and behaviour

Staff thinking and feeling

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I can co-operate with others

Helping the child to feel effective

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Staff response

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

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

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School membership – helping the child to belong

Child's thinking and feeling

Child's needs and behaviour

Staff thinking and feeling

I have a sense of belonging as a member of this school

Helping the child to belong

How can I help this child to feel welcome as a member of the school community?

Verbal and non-verbal messages of inclusion in the school community

Staff response

Exercise: 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?

The Secure Base model for schools
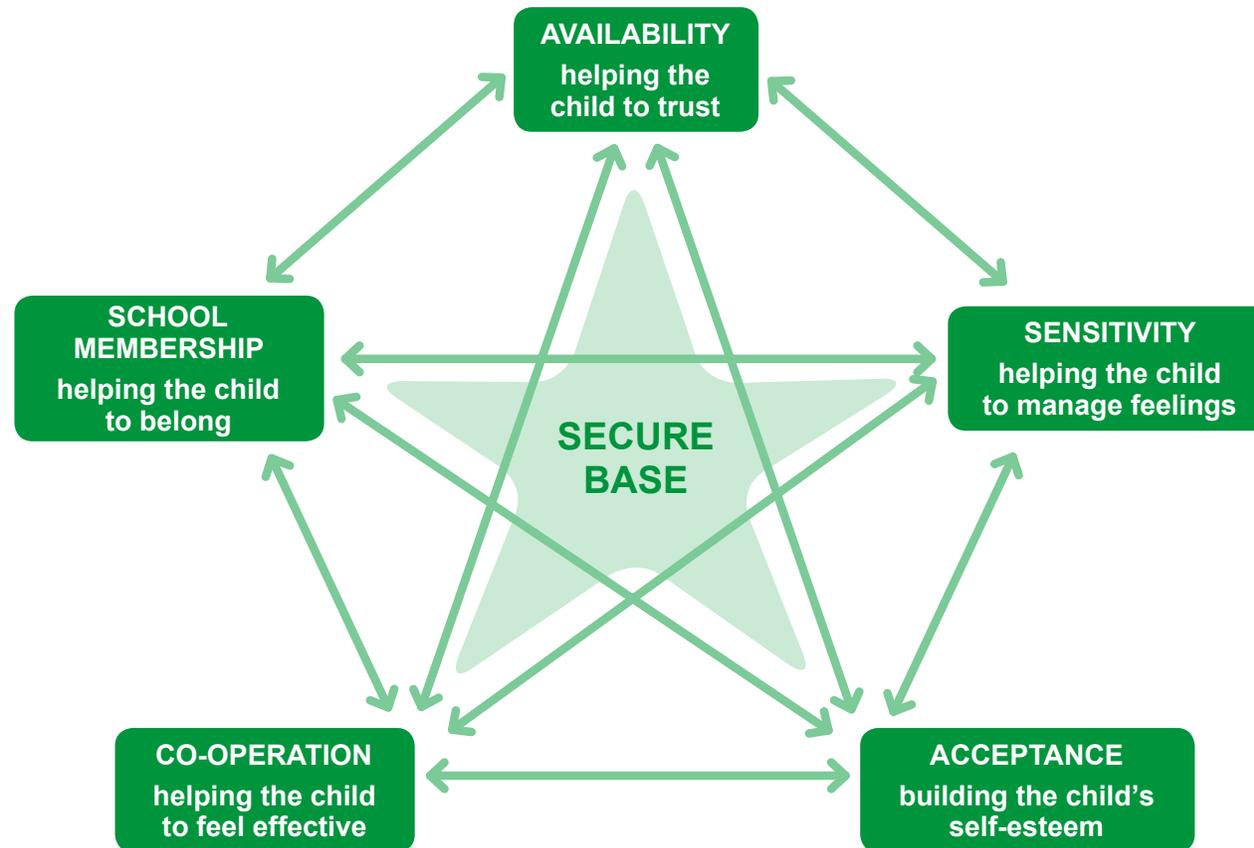
How can the school provide a secure base for children at key times?

- 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?

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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?

The Secure Base model for schools