

# TIS UK Award Visit Report

<b>School/Organisation</b>		<b>Connor Downs</b> Mutton Hill, Connor Downs, Hayle TR27 5DH	
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Special</b>	<b>PRU</b>
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<b>Headteacher/CEO</b>		<b>Janice Eddy</b>	
<b>Date:</b>		<b>20/10/23</b>	
<b>Consultant:</b>		<b>Jules Sanders</b>	

## Documents received prior to the visit included:

- Exclusions data - discussed
- Newsletters/website links
- Estyn report
- Behaviour policy
- Completed implementation checklist (self-assessment)
- School agreed timetable for the day
- Evidence and self/assessment implementation checklist for Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect (Used by the consultants during the visit)

## Protect

	Criteria	Evidence
1	Ensuring children feel psychologically safe in school due to an established culture of warmth and social engagement in staff-pupil interactions	Connor Downs is a nurturing, and friendly setting in which pupils are well supported by adults and relationships are warm, safe, and consistent.
2	The environment supports and promotes the psychological safety of children and young people	The physical environment of Connor Downs has been carefully considered to meet children's needs. Sympathetic use of natural resources (such as hessian and cotton), soft lighting, and muted colour tones promote an environment which allows both pupils and staff to feel psychologically calm and safe.
3	Key interventions implemented to support a culture of warmth and social engagement in staff-pupil interactions	The outdoors has also been thoughtfully developed and the recognition of the importance of green and blue spaces to support and encourage positive mental health, sensory needs, self-development, and relationships is highly effective.
4	Staff trained in empathic and playful modes of interaction (attending specifically to use of their language and voice)	The relationships between staff and parents/carers are clearly a significant strength and all adults have been trained to understand the significance of social engagement. On arrival, as part of the morning routine, children and their families are greeted with real warmth by adults (including the Headteacher, teachers and TAs). Younger siblings are also greeted with genuine enthusiasm which will undoubtedly help future transitions.
5	Staff using empathic and playful modes of interaction (attending specifically to use of their language and voice)	Any children needing additional support to transition smoothly from their parents or carers are given the time and space that they need to enable a transition that feels

	PACEFUL approaches are used effectively.	comfortable to them. Any concerns or issues are conveyed immediately as part of this morning routine which means they can be effectively dealt with. Children arriving late receive the same level of attention and recognition as others and are welcomed, settled, and escorted into class by their class teacher. Throughout the school day one of the Trauma Informed Practitioner checks in with individual pupils, which adds to the feelings of psychological safety for all. The atmosphere of the school is one of calm and positivity. Interactions between adults and children are authentic and warm. Staff have been trained to use the language of Wondering, Imagining, Noticing and Empathising (WINE) and they convey this with real empathy and curiosity. They use the WINE approach as a default and this clearly supports both staff and children to be curious about each other, their learning, and the environment in which they operate amongst. All staff have also been trained in the use of PACE and key relational skills. They clearly understand how to use these skills in their interactions not only with children, as emotionally available adults, but with each other.
6	Vulnerable children knowing when and where to find at least one specific and emotionally-available adult	During break and lunchtimes high levels of playfulness and a real 'joie de vivre' was observed during 'active play' sessions as children and the adults supported them engaged collaboratively in playing, dancing, talking, and laughing together. Pupils are given a choice of environments to access at lunchtimes and breaktimes. For vulnerable pupils, or those in need of extra support, there is an option to access an engaging and fun nurture club offered by one of the skilled TI practitioners.
7	Vulnerable children having daily, easy access to at least one specific and emotionally-available adult	Every child within the school has created a 'Hand Model' which depicts at least one specific and emotionally available adult that they can talk to. Some children identified as vulnerable have key adults to support them and a number of children have individual sessions with the TIS trained practitioners. Other adults check in with pupils regularly throughout the day to ensure that no child goes unsupported. There are weekly welfare meetings involving key members of staff which carefully consider the needs of individual pupils and their packages of support. The minutes of these meetings are shared with all staff to ensure that pupils' needs and support are clearly communicated and understood.
8	The school community actively promotes equality and acceptance. It addresses discrimination in terms of race, culture, religion, sexuality and all forms of difference with rigour and compassion	The well designed and effectively utilised outdoor learning space particularly helps to support both pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing. This valuable resource is significantly enhanced by the Cultivating Futures provision which is led by a skilled outdoor learning teacher who is passionate about both the outdoors and nature and offers engaging and inspiring sessions to the pupils.
9	Promote and value the development of the whole child to ensure that children understand that their self-worth and the worth of others cannot be measured simply by tests/exams. 'Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all' Aristotle	Children at Connor Downs enjoy a vast range of experiences that foster their love of learning and desire to explore the world around them. The curriculum offer is rich, and designed to develop learners who are healthy, confident, creative, ambitious, and ethical by developing enriched environments that stimulate the SEEKING system. The ethos of Connor Downs is fundamentally rooted in providing a caring and
10	Continually provide experiences for the child that promote and foster a child's love of learning, protect their innate joie de vivre and desire to explore the world around them and engender a sense of purpose in life.	
11	School staff adjusting expectations and practices around vulnerable children to correspond with those children's developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress and loss	
12	The emotional wellbeing of staff is a high priority that is reflected in policy and practice across the school. The school demonstrates proactive and high-quality interventions in discharging its duty of care	

nurturing environment which ensures that children develop as fully rounded individuals. Rather than purely focussing on the academic pupils are given a diverse range of opportunities to enable them to develop their skills, interests, and abilities as individuals. Outside of the curriculum offer there is a list of 100 things to do before pupils leave Connor Downs, featuring activities such as cooking on a campfire and eating with chop sticks to help the children to explore the world around them. There are numerous opportunities to adopt positions of responsibility with roles such as Student Council, Prefect, Wellbeing Team, and Sports Leader being given great importance by both children and adults.

Staff clearly care about the pupils, and each other, and do their utmost to implement a 'What happened to you' rather than a 'What's wrong with you?' approach. As a result, an accepting, inclusive environment has been created which caters incredibly well for the community that it supports, including pupils with additional needs, those who are in care, or who come from vulnerable families.

Adults clearly understand that not all children are in a place to learn and make considered provision for these children, supporting them to feel safe and more able to move to a place of readiness in the future. Time out is used effectively alongside an emotionally available adult when needed and staff makes effective use of sensory breaks, regularly using green and blue spaces and biophilia to help to regulate pupils. Staff and leaders are clear that they feel that their emotional well-being is a priority. Wellbeing is high on the school's agenda and a standing item on staff meeting minutes. The Trust offers a package of wellbeing support which includes annual health checks, a counselling service, access to a wellbeing app and discounted gym membership. These services are welcomed and well used by the staff.

Work life balance is carefully considered with a suggested email cut off time to preserve wellbeing and a carefully considered marking policy that avoids excessive workloads whilst carefully meeting pupil need.

The school is led by an experienced, nurturing and exceptionally calm Headteacher whose values are highly child-centred and shared widely with and by the whole staff team. The Headteacher is clearly visible around the school, very approachable and has an open-door policy. The adults spoken to during the visit discussed the support that is offered by SLT and the genuine interest in the wellbeing of the team. This commitment is evident.

## Protect

Criteria	Evidence
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Relate		
	Criteria	Evidence
14	A Relationship Policy or protocol (for staff) alongside Behaviour Policy (for pupils) is in place.	<p>The school behaviour policy has been thoughtfully developed and makes clear reference to the expectations and importance of positive relationships and engagement at all levels. All staff have been trained in the use of PACE and WINE and have undertaken whole school TIS training so have an awareness of the importance of being an emotionally available adult as well as the qualities needed to be as effective as possible. The school have worked hard to establish a safe and inclusive environment where adults are emotionally available, and take on the role of EEA, for the children, for each other and for the wider community. Interactions observed between staff and children showed how well relationships are valued and how well each individual is known across the school by the adults they come into contact with.</p> <p>The skilled TIS practitioner provides repeated high quality positive experiences for pupils and offers a good range of evidence-based interventions that are carefully adapted to suit the needs of the individual child, using techniques such as grounding activities and the Draw to Talk intervention in her sessions. There have been a number of bereavements within the school community over recent years and she has also been trained by local bereavement charity, Penhaligan's Friends, which is a great asset.</p> <p>The absorbing and interactive sessions provided by Cultivating Futures enable pupils to access the time and space needed to develop positive self-esteem by engaging within the natural environment.</p> <p>During the visit pupils talked positively about the help that is available to vulnerable children and how they can access this help. There is an effective way of pupils sharing information with adults using the colourfully decorated 'I Wish My Teacher Knew' boxes which are available in each classroom. It was evident during pupil discussion that the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings in this way is greatly valued by the children.</p> <p>The in-depth knowledge of all pupils and their home situations ensures practices and expectations of staff are adjusted appropriately according to need.</p> <p>Children are supported through clear routines and structures, nurture time, adapted lunch and break times etc. There is also an after-school Health and Wellbeing club offered for identified children which is a positive and nurturing environment led by one of the TIS practitioners.</p> <p>SLT check in with all staff daily, welcoming the team every morning. The staff care for one another and describe the team as being 'close and supportive, with a family feel' where individualism and different ways of working are supported. The staff have a range of ongoing positive relational experiences such as; access to the Headteacher who operates an open-door policy, the staff shout out board, a buddy system for staff known</p>
15	Staff trained in interventions that help them get to know children better on an individual basis	
16	Staff using interventions that help them get to know children better on an individual basis	
17	A whole-school approach to supporting vulnerable children to see themselves, their relationships and the world more positively	
18	Helping vulnerable children shift from 'blocked trust' to trust, and from self-help to help-seeking	
19	Provision of repeated positive experiences for children with key emotionally available adults	
20	Staff work within an environment and culture that supports them to have daily repeated positive relational experiences	

as 'Guardian Angels', opportunity to attend staff social events, a warm and inviting staff room where complimentary hot drinks are provided and the knowledge that it is OK to take time out if needed as support will be there. During the visit numerous staff spoke about what a supportive environment the school is and how there is no other school they would rather work at.

## Regulate

Criteria	Evidence
<b>21</b> A variety of evidence-based interventions designed to bring down stress levels in vulnerable children from toxic to tolerable	The school have worked incredibly hard to create an environment that reduces stress levels and supports regulation. Classrooms have been decorated in neutral tones and the environment is calm and sensorily rich with dedicated areas for interventions (for example the nurture room) as well as calm spaces in each classroom.
<b>22</b> Evidence-based interventions that may go some way to repair brain damage caused by painful life experience where there was no social buffering	The school grounds have been thoughtfully developed to support a love of the outdoors as well as being an extension to the classroom. The positive benefits of outdoor learning are well understood across the school and pupils have regular opportunities to access the outdoor learning areas and Cultivating Futures area. There are animals that can be stroked and cared for, a pond for pond dipping, an area with a forest school feel where children can build dens, or sit around a campfire, and raised beds for planting. The opportunities for animal care (using animals rescued from animal shelters) enhance pupils learning experiences on many levels.
<b>23</b> Whole-school training has been undertaken in the evidence-based research on emotional regulation	The school currently have two fully trained TIS practitioners who share their skills and knowledge with others through induction training, refresher training, training on PACE and how to use WINE sentence stems. All staff are included in training, and each is valued for their contribution. Additional training in areas such as Draw to Talk and supporting bereavement has been made available for some staff.
<b>24</b> School Staff apply knowledge gained in training to ensure that there is a whole school approach to regulation using PACE (play acceptance curiosity and empathy) PRRR, Key Relational Skills and cues of safety including when working with distressed/ stressed parents, staff, and other adults so the whole school community feels calmed, heard, connected with and valued	TIS practitioners model PACE, PRRR and Key Relational Skills exceptionally well – not only during their interactions with students but with other staff as well. All staff witnessed during the visit interacting with children were calm, attentive, and playful when appropriate. The care shown for children was clearly visible.
<b>25</b> Senior Leaders to be aware of high stress states in staff	TIS sessions take place regularly for children using games and strategies from the TIS training. The use of Margot Sunderland’s therapeutic stories along with strategies from Motional support vulnerable children very well.
<b>26</b> Senior Leaders to provide stressed staff with sufficient emotional regulation e.g., ‘Reflect and Restore’ staff-only spaces and evidence-based stress reducing interventions, e.g. clinical supervision, timetabled time in a protected calm environment e.g. sensory zone, or for mindfulness	SLT have a good understanding of the needs of the staff and encourage them to make full use of the Trust health plans, which includes a counselling service. Staff know that they can take time out if necessary and that they will be supported by the leadership of the school if they need to, however, were very keen to explain that this does not happen often because the working environment at Connor Downs is so positive.



## Reflect

	Criteria	Evidence
27	All staff trained in the art of active listening and have the words to say it' for empathic response to pupils, staff, and parents	Staff respond to pupils effectively, taking the time to listen carefully. When questioned children shared that they felt they could go to any adult in the school for help and that if they were worried about something they would always be listened to and kept safe.
28	Key staff trained in reflective conversations to enable vulnerable children to edit the inaccurate narratives they have told themselves and move towards trauma recovery.	It was evident during the visit that the TIS practitioners are highly skilled at facilitating reflective conversations with children. They understand the importance of helping the pupils understand and edit inaccurate narratives and have undertaken training to enable them to feel competent to do so. This important work is supported and understood by all staff and very much valued within the school.
29	No child left without help to process, talk through and make sense of major painful life events when they want to, with someone trained to provide empathic response.	Children are taught about neuroscience, the psychology of emotion and mental health across the school at age and stage appropriate levels. Some high quality PSHE lessons were observed during the visit, both of which were highly suitable, engaging and thought provoking for the pupils being observed. The school offers a range of provision for children to work through difficult experiences. This includes working with animals, Draw to Talk, Lego therapy, puppet work, sandtray, therapeutic stories and more. All staff have an understanding of the ways in which these activities support children dealing with stress and trauma.
30	Children provided with the means (e.g., through poetry/music/art/sandplay/drama) to symbolise painful life experiences through images not just words	The school also has nominated mental health champions and mental health first aiders who provide confidential support and signposting at times of need and these services are utilised effectively.
31	Through the teaching of the curriculum, the wider curriculum and other opportunities children and young people are well informed by the latest research on the neuroscience and psychology of emotion and mental health and ill-health (causes as well as symptoms).	All adults are well trained to support and allow pupils to feel their feelings, giving them permission to feel cross /sad/anxious as needed. Children are taught about the way in which their bodies are reacting during times of anxiety, fear and anger. They are taught about flipping their lid. All children have Motion Time which is spent learning about simple neuroscience including how the brain and body are interlinked and the psychology of emotion and this is followed up in every-day conversations, even with the very youngest of children. Assessments are carried out termly which are reviewed by the TIS practitioner to identify which children require further individual or targeted support. Regular TIS sessions take place for those children as needed.
32	Through the teaching of the curriculum, the wider curriculum and other opportunities children and young people are informed by the latest research on the neuroscience and psychology of relationships that harm and relationships that heal and on how to use life well.	

## Reflect



	Criteria	Evidence
33	Senior Leaders to provide staff with a forum to talk in confidence about their feelings and particular stress triggers from their work	The school staff describe themselves as a close-knit team and are incredibly supportive of each other. They feel listened to and know that they can speak to anyone at any time. The Headteacher offers an open-door policy and ensures she is available when a chat may be needed to offload or talk in confidence. The Headteacher knows the staff well and is committed to ensuring that they are as supported as possible enabling them to be the 'best that they can be' for the pupils they support.

### The following strengths were evident:

<p>Connor Downs is an extremely happy, nurturing school where pupils are cared for as individuals and are provided with a real sense of belonging. The school is highly inclusive and values every child, recognising their own unique strengths and needs. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are cherished and the family atmosphere that has been created greatly supports children to feel safe, and nurtured. Pupils know that they can approach any adult in school if they need help, and they are happy to do so.</p> <p>The children enjoy a vast array of experiences that foster their love of learning and desire to explore the world around them. A great deal of thought has gone into making the school environment as enriched as possible. The thoughtfully developed outdoors area known as 'Cultivating Futures, and the skilled staff that work there, are a huge asset to the school. The focus upon biophilia, its links to mental health and also the way it supports to ignite the CARE, SEEKING and PLAY systems is a considerable strength.</p> <p>Staff have had good levels of both TIS training and other CPD and all staff are skilled in their understanding and use of PACE and empathic listening which they use across the school to support all pupils. Trauma informed practices are clearly embedded at Connor Downs and are woven into the ethos of the school like a golden thread running throughout. The TIS practitioners model their skills exceptionally well and have championed the approach with the support of the highly committed Headteacher which has enabled it to become fully embraced by all other members of staff.</p> <p>The school staff display excellent relational skills, and all staff readily adopt the role of EAA for both children and other adults. As a staff they are a close team and are highly supportive of each other. They are led by a calm, caring, child centred Headteacher who really drives the nurturing and inclusive ethos of the school.</p>
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### Areas to consider developing:

<p><b>Protect</b></p> <p>Continue to build capacity by training further staff as TIS practitioners. It may be helpful if other TAs were trained to ensure for succession planning if needed.</p>
<p><b>Relate:</b></p> <p>Consider further staff training to develop the skills of class-based staff to help children make meaning of events. This would widen the number of children who can be supported and help in the process of developing mentalisation for children. Utilising big empathy drawings, worry bubbles or emotions cards would really support this.</p>
<p><b>Regulate:</b></p> <p>Continue to support the excellent work that is being undertaken in 'Ancarva' by developing the physical environment further – gentle lighting, plants and further soft furnishings would really add to the sense of environmental safety and nurture.</p>

**Reflect:**

Consider how the supervision offer could be extended and developed to ensure that more (or ideally all) staff have access to supervision.

**Evidence of Impact (e.g., attendance/exclusions/learner engagement/learner outcomes/staff absence/retention etc)**

Exclusion data – 0 permanent exclusions in the period 2019 to date.

**Best practise / case study requests: (if applicable)**

Cultivating Futures and the use of the outdoors environment  
100 things to before you leave Connor Downs  
Active Play sessions and nurture break and lunchtimes

**Further support discussed/required:**

NA

**Overall Assessment:**

Connor Downs is a happy and caring school which both children and staff don't want to leave. There is a strong focus upon community and the supportive, family feel ensures pupils, and their families are provided with a safe, caring, and engaging environment where positive relationships, which are consistent and PACEful, exist between adults and children. The school is led by a calm and nurturing, effective Headteacher whose values are deeply child-centred and shared widely with the team. The commitment to embed trauma informed approaches to underpin the direction of the school is clearly evident. The TIS practitioners are highly skilled, enthusiastic, and dedicated to their work. They ensure every child is nurtured and valued as an individual. The children express that they feel safe in school, are treated fairly and they can talk to any adult if they need help or feel sad.

Connor Downs clearly meets the criteria for the TIS award and it was a real privilege to visit the school and to spend some time with both pupils and staff. The school radiates a palpable sense of care and of family with visible empathy and kindness pervading all relationships and interactions. Classes are warm, welcoming, and inclusive and pupils are offered a real sense of belonging and are seen absolutely for who they are rather than what they can or cannot do.

Great thought has been given to ensure that the school environment provides opportunities for pupils to explore, take considered risks, learn, and think about themselves, others and the world around them. The Cultivating Futures provision is an incredible asset to the school.

Please share a heartfelt thank you to both the staff and pupils for their warm and incredibly friendly welcome. Children talked with enthusiasm about the school and clearly enjoy being part of the Connor Downs family. Staff also love being part of this team and are clearly committed to and enjoy their work. It

is evident from all the comments shared that Connor Downs is a school to be incredibly proud of! The school undoubtedly deserves to be reaccredited with the Trauma Informed School Award.

**Trauma Informed School Award:**

- Recommended
- Deferred pending further evidence

**Copies sent to:**

- Headteacher
- Rachel Toller (TISUK)

Reported completed by:	Jules Sanders
Date:	03/11/2023