

First Friends

Managing children's 'big feelings' based on well-being and mental health led approach

Background

First Friends is a Flying Start setting in Blaenau Gwent and has been operational since 2010. CIW inspectors acknowledged their exceptional leadership and their bold and innovative approach to driving continuous improvement across the setting.

What are they doing?

The new approach started with training for staff, with the focus on improving attachments and relationships in the setting.

The training taught staff to better understand the value of, and how to work in a trauma and attachment informed way. Staff had always taken the time to get to know the children and form relationships, but this new approach built on that, supporting the children to manage their emotions and 'big feelings'. Staff are now responsive to children's cues and support them with these big or tricky feelings, rather than trying to distract them from or minimise the feelings.

Staff also encourage children to explore and are mindful not to interfere. They stay close so that they can support if needed and children know that they can turn to the adults for help if required.

Impact ...

- Transforming challenging moments into opportunities for growth by helping children navigate their emotional journey
- Staff now recognise when children reach out for connection, transforming how they respond. They are also more responsive and receptive to children's cues and better equipped to support them
- Staff no longer try to distract or minimise feelings
- Children are happier, more relaxed and love coming to the setting

“ It's had an impact on me as a parent as well as a childcare assistant. I just respond differently, rather than saying “you'll be ok” I really take the time to let my child express how they feel and be with them in that moment. ”