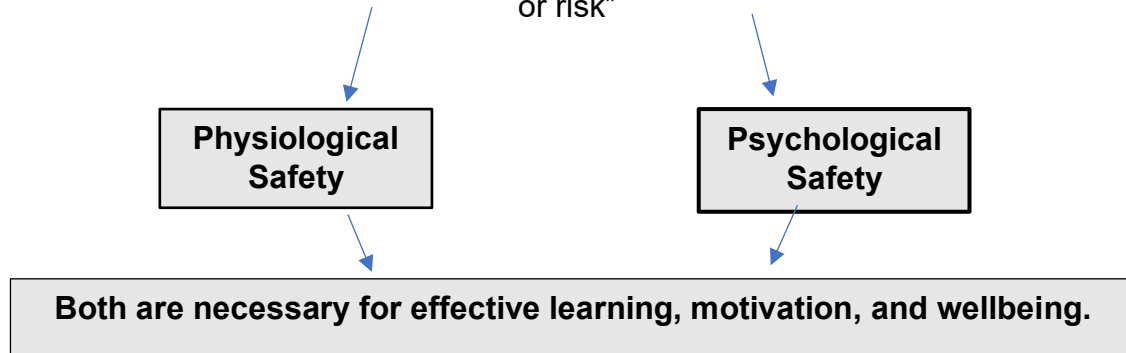


## Promoting Feelings of Safety

**Safety:** “The condition of being protected from, and unlikely to cause, harm, danger or risk”



Psychological safety can be defined as “*an environment where people feel able to express themselves without fear that others will think less of them*”.

In the classroom, this may look like:

- Asking questions during lessons.
- Indicating when help is needed, or when they haven't understood something.
- Attending all lessons, even if they are subjects that they feel less confident with.
- Interacting with different adults and peers across the school day.
- Moving around the school with independence.
- Making academic progress and accepting feedback.
- Perseverance at learning tasks.

Different factors will contribute towards the feeling of psychological safety however it is important that this is achieved before a child or young person (CYP) is able to engage in their environment, relationships, and learning tasks.

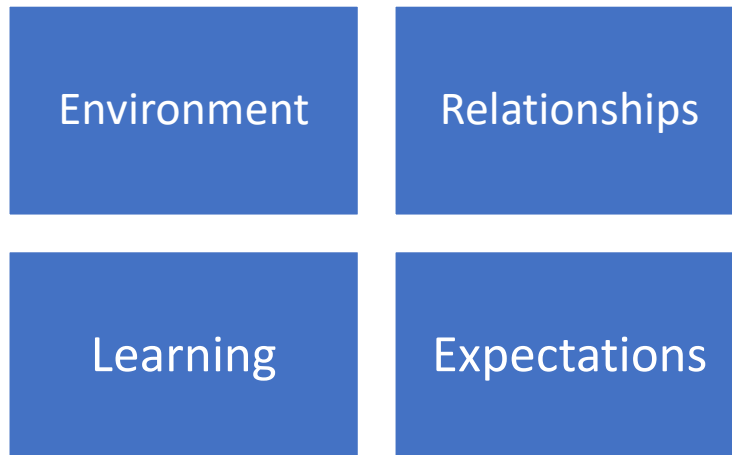


## Maslow's hierarchy of needs

If a CYP is not attending school, it may be because they do not feel safe to do so, or because an event has threatened their feelings of safety. It is therefore important to explore different aspects of their environment and school day that may be making them feel unsafe to inform effective action planning.

(Please see here for more information about gathering child and parent voice)

**Key areas to consider include:**



### **Safety in the environment:**

Does the CYP feel physically safe in their environment? Do they feel comfortable and able to engage?

**IF NOT:** They may be 'hypervigilant', easily distracted, overwhelmed, unable to enter certain classrooms/areas of the school, unsure moving around the school or nervous about different parts of the school day.

Key considerations:

- The sensory environment (noise and lighting levels, presentation of information, use of sensory toys/strategies, sensory diets, uniform etc.). This may be helpful: [SEMh.co.uk - Sensory Suggester](https://www.semh.co.uk)
- The CYP's position in the classroom (near the door, near a safe adult/ peer, away from 'dangerous' equipment)
- Transition and break times (movement around the school, exposure to busy corridors, identifying 'safe' areas of parts of the school day.
- School culture and ethos (inclusion of marginalised groups, representation and curriculum). These may be helpful:
  - [Online Courses - The Proud Trust](#)
  - 'More than words: Tackling Racism in Schools' (Soyei & Hollinshead, 2022)
  - [Whole school audit tool](#)

### **Safety in Relationships**

Does the CYP have positive and trusting relationships with adults/peers in school? Do they have a sense of belonging and feel valued?

**IF NOT:** They may have difficulty sharing their views or asking for help. They may find it difficult to separate from adults at home or seek attention from adults when in school. They may experience a lack of belonging which lowers their motivation and feelings of wellbeing in school.

#### **Key considerations:**

- Having a key adult/ team of adults (forming trusted relationships with dedicated time each week, or clearly accessible adults that have taken time to know the young person out of the classroom). [See the Ideal Key Worker activity.](#)
- Ways of communicating (offering different ways to share their views, and regular opportunities to do so, giving them a toolkit or the vocabulary to share their feelings with a trusted adult).
- Starting/ending the day (opportunities to transition into school and debrief at the end of the day) and promoting consistency.
- Peer groups (opportunity to share interests/ meet socially and feel safe to do so).
- Activities to strengthen relationships and make interactions seem less threatening (e.g. safe spaces/ use of visual aids/ breaks). [See the Maintaining Connections document.](#)

### **Safety in Learning**

Does the CYP feel safe to engage in learning? Do they feel safe to accept challenge and make mistakes? Do they feel supported in the classroom?

**IF NOT:** They may be reluctant to engage in some subjects to attempt challenging/ novel learning tasks. They may be dependent upon adult support to engage in learning, demonstrate low levels of motivation or attention, and low self-esteem.

#### **Key considerations:**

- Missed learning opportunities (has the child missed time in school/ certain lessons that means that they have gaps in the learning? How can this information be shared? Are catch up sessions available?)
- Is there an unmet need? (Is the child experiencing unmet learning difficulties that require additional support in the classroom? Do you need support from an external professional to identify/meet these?)
- Opportunities to experience success (Is the learning pitched at a level that the CYP is able to access? Are they learning alongside peers? Do they have ways of asking for help?)
- Gathering the child's voice (Do they have subjects that they prefer/ feel more confident with? Would they like more support? Do they prefer to learn in different ways?)
- [Suffolk Mainstream Inclusion Framework.](#)

## **Safety in Expectations**

Does the CYP know what is expected of them across the school day? Is this realistic?

**IF NOT:** They may be afraid of asking for help or breaking the rules. They may be frequently excluded or in detention. They may be frustrated by challenge.

Key considerations:

- Behaviour policy (Is it zero-tolerance? Does it incorporate restorative approaches? Does it may adjustments for those with SEND/ trauma/ attachment needs?). This may be helpful: BOOK.
- Is there a safe space to go when feeling overwhelmed? Consistent use of scripts and approaches? Do staff share good practice and successes?
- Adjustments to uniform and timetable
- Priorities (are you prioritising academic engagement over wellbeing and mental health?)
- CYP's self esteem and emphasising their strengths, successes, and coping strategies.

### Helpful links and resources:

Ideal Safe School: [LINK](#)

Recovery Curriculum: [Link to more information?](#)

Trauma-sensitive classrooms: [Creating a trauma sensitive classroom - edpsy.org.uk](https://edpsy.org.uk/creating-a-trauma-sensitive-classroom/)

EEF Improving behaviour Guidance : [Improving behaviour in schools \(d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net\)](https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/improving-behaviour-in-schools/)

Blob classrooms: [Blob Classroom | blobshop \(blobtree.com\)](https://blobshop.blobtree.com/)

Restorative Practices: [What is restorative practice? \(anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk\)](https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/what-is-restorative-practice/)