Case Study Early Years Thrive: Joshua

Background
Josh, just coming up to 4 years, had been attending Pre School for one term after moving to the area with his mum. He was a lively, energetic boy who enjoyed activities, but he'd quickly been labeled as the "naughty boy" by staff & children & parents alike.

Observed behaviours
He was very lively and physical & would frequently lash out if he did not get his way, & show violent behaviour towards other children & staff, biting, hitting, throwing, sometimes with an eruption of noise.

Assessment
The Thrive assessment indicated that Josh had a Thinking need. In particular he needed help to put some thinking in place in between his feelings & his actions
His assessment also highlighted some elements of Being.

Review
The worker doing the assessment asked to take over as his key worker, recognising that she needed to first of all go back & attend to his Being needs, making sure he felt safe & special in the setting, & building a trusting close relationship with him. She did this through special times & activities, focusing on world of face, e.g. face "painting" with feathers, and by noticing & appreciating him at every opportunity.

From this trusting base she worked with him on thinking about his feelings. Each time he lashed out she would first use Vital Adult/Child Regulating Functions to acknowledge his feelings, put words to his possible feelings/sensations for him, & help him to calm down. Then she'd explain that she understood how he felt but that she couldn't accept his behaviour & why. She then got him to have a sign with her – she'd put her hand up & say "stop" if she saw something building up, to catch him before it blew up, & they would go & quietly talk it through, getting him to Feel/ Think /Behave instead of Feel/ Behave. At the same time she praised every little thing he managed well. He quickly began to look for her & appeal to her for help when in trouble rather than lashing out on his own – a sign he was beginning to think & make choices before acting.

Additional notes
- As a 3 year old, Josh was at a chronological age only just beyond the Thinking building block. Without this early intervention Josh would have been in danger of continuing his naughty/difficult label & of his behaviour becoming more & more unacceptable as he progressed up to school. Instead his key worker was able to look underneath his behaviour to see the difficult feelings this child could not manage. Through the Thrive approach she used her relationship with him to support him to practice thinking about feelings and managing strong feelings, building his emotional development.
- The assessment & action plan can be used in Early Years to understand & respond to behaviours we find concerning or puzzling, and whether the assessment shows the dominant building block is at the child's actual chronological age or an earlier block, the strategies will support their emotional learning.
- Although his dominant emotional need was at Thinking, attention needed to be given to his Being needs first to build trust & safety.
- Within a short time of her using the strategies, he was starting to become more able to manage his feelings & ask for his key worker's support to do this. Staff could see this

working & his key worker brought on them board to use the same strategies with him. This helped staff shift from labeling him as the difficult naughty child & treating him accordingly, to having more compassion for him, and feeling confident to support him, & to see him as special & loveable.

- Children stopped seeing him as "the naughty boy" & he gained in popularity, making friends & even getting his 1st invite to a party.
- His key worker involved his mother in the action plan. His mother had been struggling with his behaviour & was distressed by his reputation with other parents from playgroup. She now saw that he was being accepted, & felt herself accepted & not judged. She was supported to use the same strategies at home & began to feel in control again.