



Relationship Policy

POLICY REVIEW AND ADOPTED BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	DATE
REVIEWED:	January 2024
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Annually
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	January 2025
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / REVIEWED BY:	Headteacher

Our school is invested in supporting the very best relational health between:

Parent/carer and child

Child and child

Child and school staff

Parent/carer and school staff

School staff

School staff and senior leaders

School staff and external agencies

To this end our school is committed to educational practices, which Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect.

Protect

- Increased 'safety cues' in all aspects of the school day, e.g. meet and greet at the school gates and entrance to the building, key worker time at the start of the day and at the end of the week. Introduction of 'Well-being Wednesday' to provide a clear emotional check-in in the middle of the week.
- School staff trained in 'PACE' models of interaction (Hughes 2015): being warm, empathic, playful and curious
- School staff to ensure that interactions with children are socially engaging and not socially defensive, in order to decrease chances of children reacting defensively (fight/flight/freeze)
- A whole school commitment to cease using harsh voices, shouting, put-downs and criticisms
- School staff will 'interactively repair' the occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness
- The implementation of pedagogic interventions that help the staff to get to know children better on an individual basis e.g. 'I wish my teacher knew' (what matters to them, their hopes and dreams). This is key to enabling children to feel safe enough to want to talk, if they wish so, about painful life experiences, which are interfering with their ability to learn and their quality of life. Introduction of 'Well-being Wednesday' to enable these approaches to be developed through key worker time. Access to ELSA's and TIS practitioner as appropriate.
- All children to have easy access on a daily basis to a least one named emotionally available adult (usually a key worker), and children know when and where to find that adult e.g. key worker time, lunchtime and/or other pre-arranged times. If a child does not wish to connect with their key workers, we will seek to find an alternative adult
- School staff adjusting expectations around children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This could include removing a child in a kind, non-judgemental way from situations that they are not managing well this could include providing a quiet space away from the situation or being removed from a lesson where the topic may be a trigger for emotions e.g. PHSE lessons with challenging topic areas. This does not mean that the school expectations are lowered, more that they are adapted to be 'firm on boundaries, gently on the child'
- Provision for children to self-refer for help/talk time through a clear, confidential, non-shaming system

- The nurturing of school staff in such a way that they feel truly valued and emotionally regulated enough to be able to interact throughout the school day with social engagement rather than defensiveness

Relate

- All school staff trained in a range of emotional coaching techniques/models and in relating to children in terms of the four key relational needs for secure attachment: affect attunement, empathy, soothing and containment. Some school staff further trained in ELSA and TIS Practitioner.
- A whole school commitment to enabling children to see themselves, their relationships and the world more positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger and self-blame
- Relationship opportunities for children with emotionally available adults at school to enable them to make the shift from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from self-help to 'help seeking'

Regulate

- The implementation of a range of strategies designed to bring down stress hormone levels in children, enabling them to feel calm, soothed and safe. This is to support learning, quality of life and protect against stress-induced physical and mental illness, now and in later life
- The emotional well-being and regulating of staff is treated as high priority in order to prevent burn-out, stress related absence or leaving the profession through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued
- Designated staff only spaces identified for staff needing a quiet space for a range of reasons

Reflect

- Staff educated in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding
- The provision of skills and resources to support parents and staff to have meaningful empathic conversations with children who want to talk about their lives to empower children to better manage their home situations and life in general
- Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with a member of staff children are provided with the means to symbolise painful life experiences through images rather than solely everyday words, should they wish to do so, as part of 'working through' and memory re-consolidation. To this extent, there is provision of different modes of expression for children e.g. art, play, music, sand play, emotional worksheets
- PSHE is informed by current research on mental health, mental ill-health, relationship health, family, parenting, intimate relationships and tools for how to do well in life. Curriculum content to enable children to make informed choices about how they relate to others and how they choose to treat their brains, bodies and minds, now and in the future
- Staff trained to help children move from 'behaving' their experiences, to reflecting on those experiences through empathic conversations in order to address negative self-referencing and help them to develop coherent narratives about their lives
- A behaviour policy, which is not based on punishment, sanctions and isolation, but one that models enquiry, resolution and interactive repair e.g. restorative conversations. Restorative conversations held after any 'significant' incident

Please note that the term *children* refers to both children and teenagers.