

Relationships Policy

Policy Owner:	Headteacher
Queries to:	Headteacher/SENDCo
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This is a Trauma Informed Schools Relationship Policy.

Our school, **Brunel School**, is invested in supporting the very best possible relational health between;

- Parent and pupil
- pupil and pupil
- pupil and school staff
- Parent 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; 'meet and greet' at the gate, the classroom door and an open-door policy for informal discussions with parents/carers.
- Staff trained in 'PACE' modes of interaction (Hughes 2015); being warm, emphatic, playful and curious (proven to shift pupils out of flight/fright/freeze positions).

- Staff ensure that interactions with pupils are socially engaging and not socially defensive, to decrease likelihood of pupils relating defensively (flight/fright/freeze).
- A whole school commitment to cease all use of harsh voices, shouting, put downs, criticism and shaming (proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically).
- Staff 'interactively repair' occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness.
- Pedagogical interventions that help staff to get to know pupils better on an individual basis e.g. 'I wish my teacher knew'. (What matters to them, who matters to them, their dreams, hopes). This is key to enabling pupils to feel safe enough to talk, if they wish, about painful life experiences, which are interfering with their ability to learn and their quality of life.
- Vulnerable pupils have easy and daily access to at least one named, emotionally available adult, and know when and where to find that adult. If the pupil does not wish to connect with the allocated adult, an alternative adult is found.
- School staff adjust expectations around vulnerable pupils to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This includes removing vulnerable and traumatised pupils in a kind and non-judgmental way from situations they are not managing well (e.g. pupils who are continually triggered into alarm states in the main playground can access calmer, smaller areas with emotionally regulating adults).
- Provision of a clear, confidential and non-shaming system of self-referral for pupil's help/talk time. The nurturing of staff in such a way that they feel truly valued and emotionally-regulated and in so doing to support them to interact throughout the school day with positive social engagement rather than defensiveness.

Relate

- A whole-school commitment to enabling pupils to see themselves, their relationships and the world positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger or self-blame.
- Vulnerable pupils are provided with repeated relational opportunities (with emotionally available adults) to make the shift from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from self-help to 'help seeking'.

Regulate

- Relational interventions specifically designed to bring down stress hormone levels (e.g. from toxic to tolerable) in vulnerable pupils, 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.
- Evidence-based interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic life experiences, through emotionally regulating, playful, enriched adult-pupil interactions.

- The emotional well-being and regulating of staff is treated as a priority to prevent burnout, stress related absence, or leaving the profession through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued, blamed or shamed.

Reflect

- Staff training and development and training in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking a series of questions/ giving lectures).
- Provision of skills and resources to support parents and staff in meaning empathetic conversations with vulnerable pupils who want to talk about their lives. This is to empower pupils to better manage their home situations and life in general.
- Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with a member of staff (working alliance), pupils are given the means and opportunity to symbolise painful life experiences through images as well as words, as a key part of 'working through' these experiences and memory reconsolidation. Means include the provision of different modes of expression, e.g. art/play/drama/ music/sand/emotion worksheets/emotion cards.
- PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and psychoeducation as preventative input, informed by current research psychological and neuroscience) on mental health, mental ill health (full range of specific conditions), relationships (including parenting) emotions, social media and tools for how to 'do life well'. Curricular content enables pupils to make informed choices about how they relate to others, how they live their lives, and how they treat their brains, bodies and minds.
- Staff development and training to help pupils move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences, to reflecting on those experiences. Staff learn to do this through empathetic conversation, addressing pupil's negative self-referencing and helping them develop positive, coherent narratives about their lives.
- A behaviour policy based not on punishment, sanctions, resolution and interactive repair (e.g. restorative conversations).