



**Oakfield Primary School**

**Relational Behaviour Policy**

**2023-24**

'Every time we relate through quality moments together with a child or young person, we teach them that connection is paramount, that relationships are necessary to live well. That relationships can be safe and positive, and can bring safety and comfort, love and joy. The message of health and wellbeing.'

*Louise Bomber 'Know Me to Teach Me' 2020*

## **Values and Beliefs**

At Oakfield, we believe that positive relationships are key to learning, both within and beyond the classroom. Children are treated with unconditional positive regard and mutual respect is evident across our school family. We strive to create an inclusive and compassionate ethos, where children are nurtured, understood and supported to feel safe. All staff recognise the need to provide children with clear boundaries, predictable routines and high expectations of learning behaviour, whilst also acknowledging that each child is unique and at any time may require a more personalised response to supporting their personal development and well-being. We understand that behaviour is a form of communication, that it is an expression of underlying need, and that the role of adults is to address those needs in order to support a child with their behaviour. Staff respond in a way which is consistent to our values and beliefs, recognising that being fair is not about everyone getting the same, but everyone getting what they need. We understand that behaviours are not always chosen and seek to employ relational and restorative approaches rather than punitive approaches which may re-traumatise a child and further embed behaviours which cause concern.

## **The Relational Approach**

### **Developing Relationships**

Developing relationships is about the building of security, ensuring that all children feel safe, connected, understood and cared for. Adults in school will provide:

#### ***Protection:***

- Being predictable, reliable and trustworthy
- Providing safety cues
- Containing their emotions
- Providing structures and boundaries
- Anticipating things that may be picked up as threat or danger

#### ***Connection:***

- Being physically and emotionally available
- Attuning to the child by mirroring their tone and mood
- Being responsive, expressive and interactive
- Being playful in interactions
- Show the child that they like them and are interested in them
- Support wider connection

### ***Understanding:***

- Being curious about the child's feelings, thoughts and behaviour
- Accepting the child's feelings and experience
- Thinking for the child – trying to work it out
- Expressing empathy
- Helping the child to process their feelings

### ***Care:***

- Being loving and compassionate
- Holding the child in mind
- Using transitional objects
- Showing the child that you care
- Soothing and comforting the child

At Oakfield, protection, connection, understanding and care are part of all adult interactions with all children at all times; they are the cornerstones of all relationships. This is a universal approach which is applied at a whole school, classroom and individual level.

In order to ensure that all children are able to access the learning and social environment, it is essential that any barriers to inclusion are addressed. We acknowledge that, for some children, difficulties with language and literacy may significantly impact on their ability to access both learning and social opportunities, which may lead to a negative impact on their social and emotional development and wellbeing. Assessment of children's learning needs is used effectively to ensure that staff create learning opportunities which meet the diverse needs within each cohort. We seek to ensure accessibility for all children, regardless of social identity, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. Diversity is respected, valued and celebrated across the school.

All members of our school community are expected to follow 'The Oakfield Way,' which is a code of conduct devised in consultation with both children and adults in school. The three strands of The Oakfield Way are:

- We are kind, in words, in thoughts, in actions
- We are respectful, of ourselves, of others, of our world
- We are ambitious, for ourselves, for our friends, for our future

The Oakfield Way is regularly discussed with our children, so that they have a clear understanding of the expectations of our school community. In each classroom, class teachers devise whole class agreements in consultation with the children, which focus on rights and responsibilities within the room. Children understand that, if agreements are broken, their thoughts and feelings will be heard, adults will act to ensure that everyone remains safe and that there will be opportunity for repair. We acknowledge that mistakes happen, that they are a tool for learning and that the feelings, needs and rights of individuals matter. Harmful behaviour is not accepted; action taken will be different according to the situation and the needs of individuals involved.

Where necessary, individual children may be supported through a targeted Relational Support Plan. The plan ensures that consistent and predictable support is given to the child throughout the school day. It describes how the relationship needs of the child will be met

through adult-child interactions, activities, adaptations to the curriculum and any additional resources needed.

### **Responding and Calming**

Within the classroom, adults use relational responses to maintain relationships and promote a calm, harmonious and supportive learning environment. In the majority of situations, skilled interactions successfully resolve any low level disruption without the need to escalate. Staff are mindful of employing the following strategies to help children remain calm, feel understood and listened to and to refocus on the learning:

***Safety cues*** – face, tone of voice, body language

***Empathy*** – be curious, understanding and respond empathetically

***Agreements*** – remind or re-set

Adults in school use relational skills to regulate children who are experiencing strong emotions in order to support them to calm, learn how to self-regulate and settle to learning. Through repeated co-regulation with an adult, children develop the ability to self-regulate. The skills used in co-regulation are:

- Attunement
- Accepting and validating
- Containment of feelings
- Soothing

Some children may experience crisis which leads them to behave in a way which means that they or others are not safe. In such cases, an individual plan is created outlining how adults should respond in a crisis situation, and this is shared with all adults who care for the child, and the child themselves. In a situation of unexpected crisis, adults have a duty of care to make the situation safe. This may involve removing the child or other children from the location. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort, when not to do so would result in harm.

### **Repairing and Restoring**

Applying restorative approaches following conflict or incidents supports children to develop greater understanding, empathy and responsibility. Throughout school, children are encouraged to repair and restore when things go wrong. Restorative conversations are used regularly whenever there is a difficulty, and this approach supports the development of our caring, restorative ethos and resolves worries and disagreements as they arise. Adults and children also engage in restorative conversations during PSHE sessions, School Council Sessions and class discussions, allowing individuals to express their thoughts and feelings, discuss disagreements and come to an agreement, which leads to a deeper understanding of each other.

When an incident or conflict has occurred, adults use restorative exploration to support all those involved in reaching a shared understanding of what needs to happen to meet the needs of those involved. Restorative actions may be explored to repair the relationship if necessary.

Following a restorative conversation, adults involved take time to reflect on what the behaviour was communicating, whether the child has an unmet need to address, what skills the child may need support in developing and what learning opportunities should be put in place to support this.

In the case of an incident where a restorative conversation is not deemed to be suitable or beneficial e.g. if a child who has been harmed does not wish to engage with the conversation, then an adult will engage in a restorative exploration with the child who has caused the harm. The purpose of this is to help the child understand the impact of their behaviour and support them in repairing the relationship.

### **Relational Approaches in the Classroom**

Quality first teaching is vital in order to support children in managing their behaviour, and meeting the needs of all learners is the responsibility of all adults in school. The employment of relational approaches combined with inclusive teaching leads to a calm environment where all children are able to learn. In the event of a single incident of low-level disruption, adults respond using safety cues, empathy and agreements, getting alongside the individual, connecting with them and refocusing them on the learning. In the event of more persistent low-level disruption, it may be necessary to take time out of class for a longer discussion with the child, using a restorative approach. If low-level disruption is becoming a more regular occurrence, concerns will be shared and discussed with parents/carers and advice will be sought from the Inclusion Manager.

Adults in school use praise and feedback to support children in reflecting on their behaviour in a way that will support learning. Features of effective feedback include:

- Being specific
- Activity involving, not ego involving
- Individual
- Identifying clear next steps

Some children may benefit from a more targeted approach to feedback, which can include report cards, regular check-ins with an adult or review meetings. This approach allows them to receive adult attention which is focused consistently and positively on them and encourages reflective conversations.

In the event of an incident which requires a response in order to keep everyone safe, a relational approach is taken to ensure that the child understands that they are not being punished. For example, if a child has been violent on the playground, it would be unfair to send them out to play again until some developmental work has been undertaken with them. If, as a result of a restorative conversation, there is need for a consequence, the child is always involved in deciding what that should be. It is essential that the child learns from the incident, that they are able to see the impact that their behaviour has had on others and

that the consequence is a way of repairing any harm that has occurred. Response to incidents is always specific to the needs of the individual.

### **Working in Relationship Together**

The voice of our children is vital to the success of the relational behaviour policy. All children have ongoing opportunities throughout the school day to talk with trusted adults and influence all aspects of school life. Adults take time and care and listen to children with curiosity and empathy. They are treated with respect and valued as individuals.

When a child's needs are such that a graduated approach is required, the child is involved in the 'assess, plan, do, review' process and they are listened to and involved at all stages; they are encouraged to describe what is going well, what is difficult and be involved in planning ways forward and support needed. If a child is not able to express their views, specialist support, such as an Educational Psychologist, is sought to advocate for the child. Parents and carers are encouraged to be involved in the process – their knowledge, experience and perspective on their child is invaluable. We seek to create warm, welcoming and open relationships with parents and carers so that they feel that they can contribute safely. Our communication with parents and carers is clear and concise, ensuring that they feel able to understand and engage. We work closely with parents and carers to ensure that they receive any support that they might require; this may be at school level, through our pastoral support team, or through external services such as Early Help.

Where it is identified that a child has significant need or if the child is not making progress through several assess, plan, do, review cycles, the support of external services will be sought. This may include Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

### **Supporting Staff Wellbeing and Professional Development**

At Oakfield, we recognise that, in order to support the wellbeing of our children through providing secure relationships, it is essential that the wellbeing and relationships of adults are supported. Respectful relationships where all adults are valued, listened to and encouraged to contribute are essential. Staff are encouraged to share ideas and reflect on and develop their practice in partnership with colleagues. In situations where staff are working with children who have experienced trauma and loss, school leaders are mindful of the impact that this can have on the adult and seek to provide appropriate support. This may take the form of informal reflective conversation or more structured supervision, coaching or mentoring.

The development of positive behaviour is the responsibility of all adults in school, and it is essential that all staff understand their role in the relational approach. All staff have received training and are included in continued professional development opportunities. New staff inducted into school are provided with initial and ongoing training to understand and implement the approach.

## **A Graduated Response**

Where it is recognised that a child is experiencing significant difficulties with their emotional health and wellbeing, a graduated approach will be implemented, using the 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle.

*Assess:* seeking to understand what the child's behaviour is telling adults about their underlying needs, gather information from the child, school staff, parents/carers and where appropriate, external agencies.

*Plan:* identifying key areas for support, including universal support and targeted intervention. Devising a relational support plan and a responsive co-regulation plan. Establishing a team around the child.

*Do:* Implementation of the plan, monitoring and recording of progress made, child and adult reflection opportunities, continued dialogue with parents/carers

*Review:* reflection on how well provision is meeting need, whether any factors have changed, feed back to assess part of the cycle

It is important to recognise success at all points of the cycle without reducing support too quickly. Developing secure relationships takes time and children should be allowed to experience this gradually.

## **Special and Exceptional Circumstances**

In cases where a child cannot remain in lessons, where they or others are not safe, or their behaviour is preventing others from learning, there is a planned option for the child to leave the room which is detailed in the responsive co-regulation plan. Dependent on the child's individual needs, they may benefit from time with a trusted adult, or time in a safe place where the environment provides low social and sensory demand and regulatory activities.

Where the demands of the curriculum are too much for a child, they may be provided with an alternative and flexible timetable which enables them to access a programme focusing on their social and emotional development and wellbeing. This may involve nurture provision, Forest School intervention, mindfulness, emotional literacy intervention or more specialist intervention such as counselling or play therapy.

Fixed term suspension is only used as a last resort, as this can be extremely damaging to relationships and have a lasting impact on later life chances. Where suspension is used, it is a short term measure with the sole focus of improving outcomes. It should be used to enable further planning and assessment and provide an opportunity for reflection for both the child and adults involved.

Risk assessment processes will be applied where a child's unpredictable and distressed behaviour give concern in respect of their safety and the safety of others. The risk assessment will outline the steps deemed necessary to support the child in preventing harm to themselves or others.

Permanent exclusion from school is only used in exceptional circumstances where it is recognised that a child's needs cannot be met in our school setting and a more specialist provision is required, or where we are unable to guarantee the child's safety or the safety of

others. We acknowledge that permanent exclusion can have a significant negative impact on a child's future life chances and seek to avoid this wherever possible.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- ELT Suspension Policy
- RSE Policy

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