

## Relationship policy 2023-2024

**Nominated Member of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy:**  
**Rebecca Hocking (Inclusion leader)**

**Named Governor with lead responsibility:**

**Date written:**

**January 2024**

**Date agreed and ratified by Governing Body :**

**June 2024**

**Date of next review:**

**January 2025**

**This policy will be reviewed at least annually,  
and following any concerns and / or  
updates to National and Local guidance or procedures**

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## Introduction

*The Porter Croft relationship policy embodies our culture and ethos developed through a Trauma Informed approach where relationship is at the heart of every interaction and supports the whole school community to include our staff, our pupils, parents and/or carers and all other agencies working with us.*

*“The ability to form meaningful relationships is fundamental to mental health and happiness. Its the quality of contact we have with other people that is arguably the most important determining factor in our quality of life. We can only truly develop ourselves through relationships with others.” (TISUK, 2019).*

***Porter Croft is a Church of England Academy Trust and holds to the Christian faith in which relationship is key. We hold the belief that we are called into relationship with ourselves, each other, God and the world – restoring and nurturing this relationship is fundamental to who we are.***

## Purpose

We are committed to ensuring that our school develops and implements a Trauma and Mental Health Informed Approach to education to ensure that all of our pupils develop and sustain positive mental health and resilience to engage fully in life and learning in school and out in the wider community. It is our aim to create an environment of safety and comfort that has strong, positive and supportive relationships at its heart.

Our priority is to ensure psychological and environmental safety first, as this is the foundation that everything else depends on. Through a trauma informed approach, our focus is not only on the physical environment but the relational environment. It requires emotionally available adults (EEAs) who can provide essential calming and containing of our pupils, their parents/carers, other agencies and each other when they are overwhelmed by an event, a situation or their feelings.

It is essential that our response to distress and challenging behaviour is supportive and focusses on how best to support the person to relate to the world and each other in a healthier and more productive way, rather than employing punitive sanctions that are detrimental to the child’s future development and learning of self. To best support our pupils, we need to acknowledge that behaviour is a form of communication and is, as a result, of an unmet need, adverse childhood experience (ACEs) or their neurocognitive or neurochemical profile.

*“Just one emotionally available adult in school, in the community or at home can make all the difference.” (TISUK, 2019)*

Our positive behaviour management and relationship policies reflect a trauma informed approach and our behaviour strategies are both developmentally and trauma-informed. We do not operate a ‘zero tolerance’ or ‘one size fits all’ approach to distressed behaviour, however, we do have high

expectations of behaviour for all and support is available to those pupils having difficulty meeting those expectations. We have specially trained Trauma Informed practitioners in school to support members of staff to meet children's individual needs. This support may be offered on a 1:1 basis, in a group situation or in a whole class setting and aims to support the child to make sense of their experience, find ways to manage their emotions and feelings and ensure they maintain the capacity to learn, despite difficult events that may have happened to them.

All staff are responsible for adhering to positive practice that promotes a pupil's ability to engage in and access learning. This is based on the understanding that pupils best achieve, develop and reach their true potential when staff are fair, flexible, trustworthy, respectful and model positive relationships.

We believe that parents know their children best and we are committed to working in partnership to identify the best ways of providing support for everyone within school. We aim to develop positive, non-judgemental working alliances with our parents.

### P and the three R's

Our school has adopted relational and educational practices which protect, relate, regulate and reflect as follows:

#### PROTECT – we aim to:

- ◆ Increase safety cues in all aspects of the school day for our pupils and each other, e.g. meet and greet for all children at the classroom door, an open door policy informal discussions with parents/carers, timetabling opportunities for vulnerable children to work alongside their emotionally available adult, regular check-ins using the Zones of Regulation.
- ◆ Train staff to develop nurturing attachments through a PACE approach (Play, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy). This means our pupils are met with an empathic, playful and curious team to enable them to move out of fight/flight or freeze and into relationship.
- ◆ Ensure all interactions are socially engaging and not socially defensive. All members of our community are encouraged to reflect and repair occasions when they have themselves moved into defensiveness.
- ◆ Adjust expectations of our pupils, their families and carers in accordance with their developmental capacities and experience of traumatic stress. This may sometimes involve removing a vulnerable child in a kind and non-judgemental way from a situation they are not managing.
- ◆ Cease the use of punitive approaches in response to pupils' behaviour, challenging or otherwise, such as harsh voices, shouting, put-downs, criticism, shaming, isolation and seclusion.

#### RELATE – we aim to:

- ◆ Make a whole school commitment to enable children to see themselves, their relationships and the world positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger and self-blame.
- ◆ Ensure all vulnerable children have access to repeated relational opportunities (with an emotionally available adult) to make the shift from 'blocked trust' to trust and from self-help to 'help seeking'.

#### REGULATE – we aim to:

- ◆ Treat the emotional well-being and emotional regulation of staff as highly important to prevent burnout, stress-related absence, stress-related illness and the feeling of blame or undervalued.

- ◆ Prioritise relational interventions specifically designed to bring down stress hormone levels (from toxic to tolerable) in vulnerable children, enabling them to feel calm, soothed and safe.
- ◆ Provide interventions that aim to repair psychological damage caused by traumatic experiences, through emotionally regulated, playful and enriched interactions.

**REFLECT – we aim to:**

- ◆ Provide staff training opportunities in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding.
- ◆ Engage in empathic, meaningful conversations with children who want to talk about their lives to empower them to better manage their home situations and life in general.
- ◆ Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with an adult, give children the opportunity to symbolise painful life experiences through images as well as words, such as through art/drama/music/sand/play/emotion cards.
- ◆ Implement a Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) curriculum, which incorporates psycho education as a preventative input, to teach children how to 'do life well', how to live their lives and how they treat their brains, bodies and minds.
- ◆ Provide staff training opportunities to help children move from 'behaving' their trauma to reflecting on those experiences, through empathic conversations and developing positive, coherent narratives about their lives.
- ◆ Implement a behaviour policy based not on punishment and sanctions but based on resolution and repair, through restorative conversations (restorative practice).