

Relationship Policy

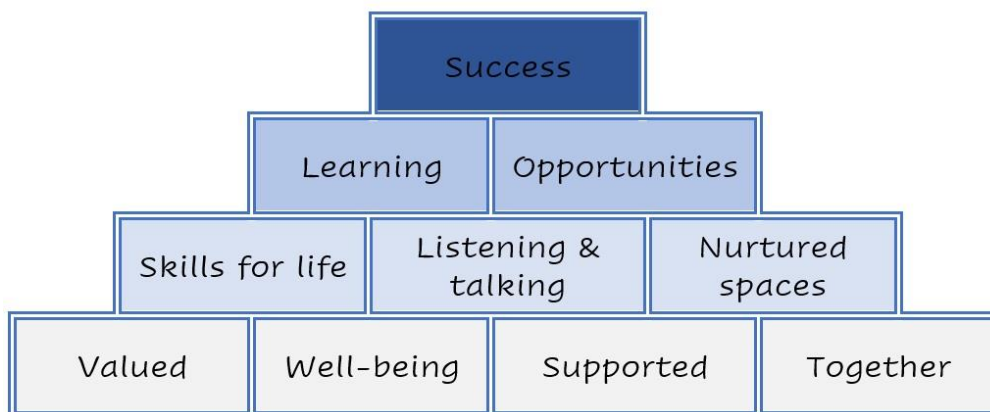
March 2024

This policy was written by Emma Foster, Deputy Head Teacher. It was reviewed by Tessa Saunders, Headteacher. The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is up to date and reflects the practises in school.

Woodfield Way

At Woodfield Primary and Nursery School we have created these blocks to visually represent the key areas that are important for **supporting** our children. We believe it is our responsibility that children's essential needs are met and **nurtured** to ensure that they are ready to aim high and achieve **success**.

"Learning today, for success tomorrow"



Context

At Woodfield Primary and Nursery School, a relational approach underpins all that we do and is central to our success as a Primary and Nursery school. Relationships where children and staff feel valued and supported are integral to children being able to thrive and staff feeling respected and motivated to provide the very best in education for all. Trusting, honest and caring relationships must exist between all members of the school community - most importantly, relationships must be authentic.

All staff understand that they have a part to play in developing positive relationships with our pupils. They know that building relationships is key to communication and this ethos underpins the Behaviour Policy at our school. We understand that behaviour is a form of communication and that poor behaviour is a sign of an unmet need. Our aim is to provide emotionally available adults who can offer non-judgemental support and have been trained in ways that help everyone to work together in a positive, nurturing and productive way to support the emotional needs of our pupils.

"When learners are struggling they need support, not red lines and stern faces. They don't need the dark suits of doom, but rather a learning coach, detached from any process, to support, mentor and guide. (A problem solver, not a process monkey, remember?) A skilled, empathetic specialist who can work with the learner to meet their immediate needs and stem the flow of poor conduct."

— Paul Dix, *When the Adults Change, Everything Changes: Seismic shifts in school behaviour*

Our approach to relationships is based on the teachings of Trauma Informed School UK (TISUK), which is underpinned by the educational practices; Regulate, Relate and Reason. This approach is further strengthened by Emotional Logic, a personal development tool used to improve emotional intelligence in difficult situations and thus allowing pupils to harness emotional energy to face life's challenges, build emotional resilience and embrace change.

Regulate

Research has shown that children who are stressed and anxious find it very difficult to use parts of the brain that allow them to engage in social interaction or to have the ability to think things through. At our school, staff understand that for a pupil to engage with their learning, peers or with any adults in school, they must first feel regulated. They must feel physically and emotionally calm - we must first help the child to regulate and calm their fight/flight/freeze response, thus ensuring the elimination of toxic stress.

In the first instance, we teach children to use self-regulation and metacognition strategies to enable them to monitor and evaluate their own learning strategies and behaviours. This might be through teachers modelling their own thinking to demonstrate metacognitive strategies or opportunities for pupils to reflect on and monitor their strengths and areas of improvement, and plan how to overcome current difficulties.

Where a child is suffering from toxic stress or has become dysregulated, we know one of the best ways to support the child is through meaningful conversation with a trusted adult.

This is often achieved by:

- Providing children with time with an emotionally available adult, who they trust, to help them to calm down and to be ready to reflect.
- Ensuring interactions are emotionally regulating, using PACE - Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy.
- Ensuring staff do not engage in socially defensive behaviour, especially when correcting behaviour.

Relate

At our school, we understand that positive relational experiences promote optimal development of the frontal lobes of the brain associated with the executive functions key to emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, planning, problem solving and learning. We also understand that the ability to form relationships is fundamental to mental health and happiness. Therefore, it is crucial that staff relate and connect with the child through attuned and sensitive relationships. This is achieved by:

- Attachment training for all staff.
- Staff are aware of relational skills including affect, attunement, empathy, containment, calming and soothing.
- Daily positive relational experiences. (PACE).
- Children and adults are helped to express their emotions and are not shamed or undermined.

- Adults are emotionally available.
- Adults are aware of facial mobilisation and present as warm and always engaging.
- Adults have opportunities to engage with each other in environments that are supportive and pleasant.

Most importantly, adults are consistent and adjust their expectations around vulnerable children to meet their needs.

Reason

For pupils (and staff) to fully understand their feelings and behaviour, they need to be given the opportunity to reflect. Reflection allows pupils to make sense of what has happened as well as developing a language for their emotions. At our school, we understand that pupils at times may require support from a non-judgemental adult, to reflect and to ultimately repair ruptures in relationships. It is important that reflection, often in the form of restorative conversations, only takes place once the child is calm and regulated.

To support this:

- Staff are trained in the art of good listening.
- Restorative conversations are used after all behaviour incidents.
- Therapeutic approaches may be used.
- Behaviour is understood to be a form of communication.

Emotional Logic

Underpinning the concepts of regulate, relate and reflect, Emotional Logic strategies are implemented throughout the school to support pupils in self-regulation following an incident. Key adults in the school have worked collaboratively to develop a planned teaching sequence of lessons. These lessons are used to help children to be the following: **Aware** of their own emotions or feelings in their body; **Breathing** techniques to help them the regulate and calm; **Choose** a safe place to go to and create a plan of what to **Do** to help.

Our learning environments, based on Elizabeth Jarman's 'Communication Friendly Spaces', are carefully considered to ensure that they are calm and provide children with an optimal space in which to thrive. The Emotional Logic support tool is threaded through the environment to provide safe places that can help the children to regulate, relate and reason.

See appendix 1 for an example of a support tool that we use as part of our Emotional Logic teaching in school.

Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to conduct themselves in keeping with this policy. Furthermore, behaviours described should be modelled by all adults as well as all adults promoting positive behaviour.

Appendix 1



Emotional Logic

Everyone has emotions and we all need to learn how to understand them and manage them so that they don't impact on ourselves or others in a negative way.

Aware 

How does your body feel?

Choose 

A safe place to help you feel calm

Breathe 

Taking deep breathes to calm your body

Do 

Time for action, make a plan to solve the loss

The incident or problem...

Aware 

What emotions are you feeling? How is your body feeling?

1	2	3	4	5
I am not that bothered	This sometimes bothers me	This is making me feel wobbly	I am finding this difficult	This might make me lose control

Breathe 

Help to control your breathing to help you to feel calmer

- Bunny breathing
- Five finger breathing
- Square breathing

Choose 

Choose a safe place

- Somewhere you go to; think tank, library, book corner
- Something to do; drawing, playdoh, poppet
- Someone to help; trusted adult

Do 

Think about what you can do

- What is the loss and what can you do to get it back
- Make a plan and follow it