

# **EASTWOOD GRANGE SCHOOL**

## **POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP PROCEDURE – A Trauma Informed Approach**



### **Eastwood Grange Vision Statement:**

**"Supporting young people to thrive by giving them the skills to navigate challenges and understand their emotional needs, fostering independence and fulfilment beyond education."**

#### **Overview**

Eastwood Grange School is an independent, special day school for up to 60 boys and girls aged 5-19 years. The students present with a variety of differing complex to severe educational, social, emotional and mental health needs and have experienced many different school environments, many of which have been unable to meet their needs. This has impacted their personal and educational development, often resulting in our children and young people feeling very unsettled within the school context. We aim to support children and young people with their educational, social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing needs in a way which supports them to feel safe in school and thrive in their learning.

Related Policies and Procedures	Exclusion Procedure Reasonable Force Procedure Mental Health Awareness Procedure (for staff and children)
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## Introduction

This policy outlines the positive relationship framework adopted at Eastwood Grange School, integrating a trauma-informed approach that supports students' well-being, growth, and development. We recognize that many of our students have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma, which can impact their ability to form and sustain positive relationships. Our school prioritizes a supportive, safe, and empathetic environment, grounded in the principles of Protect, Relate, Regulate, and Reflect, ensuring that all students feel understood, valued, and empowered.

## Dispelling the Myth

'Trauma informed approaches are not the absence of rules, expectations, boundaries, limits or natural consequences. Without these we have an environment of chaos in which no one feels safe – this is not trauma informed!! Trauma informed approaches hold boundaries, limits and expectations firmly but are gentle and relational with the child or young person. – Trauma Informed Schools UK'

## School Ethos

The school does not use the language of 'behaviour' when referring to procedures but instead recognises that children who are experiencing difficulties with relationships, either in their homelife, with staff or with their peers are not having their needs met and that the relationship difficulties, are not a reflection of the person, but a reflection of their unmet needs. The school's aims are to support every young person entering the school through offering support in the following core values:

### Core Values

1. **Safety:** Creating a physically and emotionally safe environment where students feel secure and valued.
2. **Empathy:** Understanding and respecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all students.
3. **Growth:** Encouraging resilience, emotional growth, and the development of healthy, supportive relationships.
4. **Empowerment:** Helping students develop self-regulation, confidence, and the skills necessary for positive engagement with others.

## Our School Environment

The school, works hard to ensure that it takes full advantage of the beautiful surroundings it is set in. It aims to bring the outdoors, in, by ensuring that classroom and localised communal areas are filled with biophilia, recognising human's innate relationship with nature and its calming effects. This is evidenced through individualised pupil work rooms, for children who find it harder to form relationships easily, these are decorated taking into account pupil voice and are aimed at regulating children so that they can successfully attend classroom environments, with others. Green and blue pallets are also used in the school decoration, and school displays, and communal corridors also incorporate biophilia and following a trauma-informed environmental approach is included within the Teacher on a Page environmental scrutiny.

## Trauma-Informed Approach: The Four Pillars

Our trauma-informed approach is centred around the four key pillars: **Protect, Relate, Regulate, and Reflect**. These pillars guide our ethos, relationships, and interactions within the school community, which we establish through our school values of the Three Rs, (**Respect, Resilience and Right Place/Time**). The Three Rs help to promote a positive environment and provide purposeful opportunities and experiences which are of paramount importance in the growth, development, and welfare of pupils, and the supporting of student's relationships and exposing them to safe risk. As such:

### 1. Protect

Through providing children with **Physical and Emotional Safety**: We endeavour to foster a sense of community in which individuals have mutual trust and respect for each other. We establish clear expectations and boundaries through the school's values of the Three Rs (**Respect, Resilience and Right Place/Time**), that ensure students feel physically safe. We use positive reinforcement and

recognize that consistency in routines, structure, and responses through the Three Rs helps students feel secure. The school

The school also ensure increased safety cues in all areas of the school by operating a meet and greet system at the beginning of the school day, where children are greeted from their taxis by their support staff, greeted again in the playground by SLT and the Pastoral Team and greeted a third time as they enter their classrooms by their class tutor, ensuring their positive experiences before the school day has started.

- Through providing children with **Safe Spaces**: Our school has dedicated safe spaces where students can go if they feel overwhelmed or need a break from the classroom environment. This not only includes all classes having access to class breakout room but also recognises that sometimes, some of the students have needs which may mean they need high staff ratios in separate rooms from others until they can be carefully integrated. These rooms are warm engaging and safe and are guided by a student's needs and wishes.
- Through providing children with **Non-Punitive Responses**: We emphasise restorative practices instead of punitive responses, addressing the root causes of the relationship breakdown, rather than simply reacting to the breakdown itself. All staff are taught to cease using harsh voices, including shouting, put-downs, criticism and shaming, when considering responses for breakdowns in relationships, and when breakdown of relationships occur, all staff take into account the nature of the breakdown but importantly the reasons behind it, such as a child's current mental health concerns, so that they can intervene and support in a non-judgemental way. Childadviceaware.org suggests that the reasons for many high-level tariff incidents that could even potentially lead to fixed term exclusions, are due to 'unresolved and ongoing mental health concerns, which manifest in physical negative behaviours.' Where a member of staff has become triggered or on the defensive with a student, time away in the quiet area is provided for reflection and an opportunity for that member of staff to interactively repair the situation, we are all, after all, only human.

Because of the school's emphasis on focussing on non-punitive responses by employing well-trained a pastoral support team who work in unison with the classes and the wider school community. This consists of two Positive Relationship Managers (PRMs), who support students proactively, when it is noted that a student is having relationship difficulties; this may be in the moment on a day by day basis or may be more long term as identified and as discussed in the schools' weekly therapy meetings, where a course of sessions is put in place where the pastoral team may have a programme of supportive work to help a child to try and heal a relationship issue. The aim of course is always to get the children to be in an emotionally resilient position to continue with their learning. The school also employs four staff trained with Restorative Justice 4 School Certification to support students actively, when relationships with staff and students have already become more difficult and a degree of reflective learning is required. The school also has 10 Mental Health First Aid Trained staff, who are able to support both children and staff at the school, recognising that a mentally well attuned staff are best place to be emotionally available for the children that they support.

Where through providing children with **Supportive, Well-trained Staff**: All staff receive trauma-informed CPD training, delivered by Level 5 Accredited Practitioners, of which the school has five. They are trained to recognize signs of distress, respond sensitively, and avoid re-traumatizing students. This is embedded within the school CPD calendar. The support and understanding of colleagues and the sharing of agreed strategies for supporting relationship breakdowns is important, therefore, training is also vitally important. These training opportunities include therapy intervention sessions on working with children with specific SEN, and modules for learning and extended learning opportunities via the school's Learning and Development Portal. The school recognises that it is very fortunate in its locality and the closeness of nature to our children and staff and has ensured that two members of staff are Level 3 trained in delivering Forest School activities so that children can gain a full experience of relationship building as well supporting mental health and wellbeing and sleep patterns.

Through this training staff are taught the PACE modes of interaction, being **Playful, Accepting, Curious** and **Empathetic** in their approach, supporting regulation and a fight, flight or freeze response, and thus

supporting reduced incidence and ensuring a calm site. All children have What Works for me Support Plans (WWP), where emotionally available adults are identified as a main person but alternatives in case of unavailability.

The school ensure that staff are nurtured and well cared for in terms of their mental health and wellbeing, by having a whole school mental health vision, **ONE**, ensuring that the school has an **Open** culture, **No-blame** culture and an **Empathetic** culture. This openness ensures that where staff defensiveness is apparent, other supportive staff are able to be open with staff, from a supportive non-blaming and empathetic approach, stepping in and allowing them chance for time out or to talk later in the day from a non-child facing environment. Where required, staff will direct staff who are seeking further mental health support to the mental health lead or mental health first aiders. Ensuring that all staff have the right mental attitude for working with our children all of the time.

## 2. Relate

- **Building Trusting Relationships:** Staff members actively engage with students in positive ways to build trust and understanding, developing a foundation of connection that encourages openness. Support staff play a vital role in the classroom and beyond and are aware and involved in all aspects of school life with the children they support, throughout the day. The school does this from the very start of the day, where support staff meet and greet children from their taxis, SLT and the Pastoral meet and greet them in the school's courtyard before they go to class, where they are greeted once more by their form tutor. The school feels this embeds the support required for each child for the day and provides them with that initial **Safe Space** feeling. This also allows the day to flow more actively if a child is having relational difficulties through the day.
- **Relational Time:** Additionally, staff play an integral part of the overall support that the school provides to the pupils, particularly in helping them to overcome relationship breakdowns and difficulties. and students engage in structured relational time through mentor-mentee programs, buddy systems, and small-group sessions, providing opportunities for meaningful relationships and community building. Because the school has 5 Trauma informed Level 5 Practitioners it is able to lead on school CPD to ensure that staff emotional availability is at the forefront. Staff are able to model sand tray work, big empathy drawing, and emotions card so that all staff are able to be armed to get the best out of building relationship with our children. Trauma Informed Practitioners ensure that all staff are utilising appropriate use of emotional coaching via the Termly CPD calendar.
- **Celebrating Diversity:** The school environment embraces the diverse backgrounds and unique identities of all students. We celebrate individuality and ensure that every student's voice is heard and respected. The school achieves this through active half-termly School Council Meetings, student welfare walks with a member of staff and student across all classrooms, where they can bring to the attention of the school that are concerning for them. Pupil voice is also provided to the school's governing body through face-to-face consultation.

The school celebrates diversity through an active approach to teaching about faiths and beliefs, which it does through the subjects taught in the Identity Curriculum from year one to year thirteen. Through this curriculum, children are given the opportunity to learn and discover about such topics as, (in the earlier Key Stages): Making Friends, Being a Good Friend, Playing with Others, Working with Others, Diverse Communities, Manners and Respect, to the latter Key Stages and such topics as: Sexism and Gender prejudice, Gender + Trans Identity, Same Sex Relationships, Community Cohesion and Prejudice and Discrimination.

The discussions around equality, diversity and protected characteristics covered via the Identity Curriculum, help to support children's tolerance to change and difference and is viewed as an important stepping stone to pathways both in and out of school. The identity Curriculum is taught as Eastwood Grange School's fourth core subject, with equal emphasis placed on its curriculum inclusion and English, maths and science. The teaching of relational subjects ensure that children have a greater understanding and positive tolerance of themselves, the wider community and the world around them in preparation for adult life.

- **Consistency in Relationships:** Staff consistency in responding with empathy, understanding, and care builds a stable, predictable environment, which is essential for students. The school ensures that a trauma-informed ethos and the relational training that this involves is embedded within the schools CPD calendar, so that every child has access to an emotionally aware adult, and staff are aware that this consistency forms the building blocks for forming bonds of trust so that children can move away from self-help to self-seeking values.

### 3. Regulate

- **Teaching Self-Regulation:** Our school focuses on helping students understand and manage their emotions through mindfulness, breathing exercises, and sensory tools available in classrooms and common areas. This helps to reduce stress hormones, reducing body toxicity and enabling tolerance.
- **Emotional Regulation Zones:** Classrooms and school areas include dedicated "Regulation Zones" where students can practice calming techniques with supportive materials, like sensory items, weighted blankets, and guided exercises. All staff including new members of staff are trained in 'Zones of Regulation' Training, by the school's Speech and Language Therapist. This is included in the schools CPD calendar. Every class area has a breakout space as well, which are decorated on an individualised basis. These areas as well as classrooms have personalised sensory toys and equipment to support resilience to learning.
- **Modelling Emotional Regulation:** Staff members model calm responses to difficult situations, showing students how to regulate emotions by managing their own. Staff are also taught to meet a child's emotional intensity, whether that be positive or negative, on an energetic level, to ensure that staff connection with children is supported. The school has an atmosphere that supports it being seen as a 'calm' site. Staff emotional regulation is also key to ensuring that they model well at every opportunity and so the **ONE** approach is adopted to ensure that staff mental health and wellbeing are also well considered. This also includes providing staff with a safe space, a quiet space and a space where they can reflect. This space is used as nothing else but as a quiet room.
- **Routine and Predictability:** Eastwood Grange School, ensures that it establishes predictable routines and transitions to help students feel more in control and less reactive to unexpected changes, which aids in emotional self-regulation. It does this by having designed and planned three Curriculums to address and support students, moral, ethical and character development, via the school values of **Respect, Resilience and Right Place/Time** and The Character Curriculum, it ensures that it addresses and supports the student's uniqueness and individuality as laid out in their EHCP, via the Identity Curriculum and these curricular routines and predictable occurrences ensure that student's more readily are able to access the National Curriculum. Success of these curriculums are formulated in terms of their Pupil Progress Passports, which identify successes in all areas, Flight paths, SDQ data, EHCP successes linked to a student's IEP, improved attendance and reduced patterns of negativity through relational data. All of these joined up elements support the successes that we have when working with traumatised students.

### 4. Reflect

- **Guided Reflection and Restorative Conversations:** Through CPD TIS training staff are given strategies for becoming good listeners, using open dialogue, with empathy and understanding. They may use a **WINE** approach when talking to children, **Wondering if...**, **Imagining if...**, **I Notice that**, ensuring an **Empathetic** approach is at the forefront of any language used, and thus encouraging children to reflect on their relationship difficulties and emotions in a supportive manner. Through structured conversations, they learn to understand the reasons behind their reactions and think about alternative responses. After incidents or conflicts, we use restorative conversations that focus on understanding feelings, perspectives, and the impact of actions. This helps students learn from situations rather than feeling punished. All staff are skilled at doing this, but as further intervention and support the Pastoral team including the PRMs and RSJ4S Teams are available for further intervention and reflective thinking.

Low tariff reflection may include:

- Early intervention to lower the risk of escalation with a Positive Relationship Manager (PRM) if available.
- Informing a PRM to work with the young person in class at a specific allocated time.

- A period of reflection time – Involving support staff or a PRM working with a young person outside of the classroom environment, (ideally The Sunflower Room, which is an intervention classroom, fully kitted out with 'Zone of Regulation', comfy seating and Interactive White Board, computers and classroom desks), but certainly within the school environment, to address any social and emotional issues on a short-term basis to try to integrate the young person back into class or to reflect on breakdown in relationships.
- Restorative Justice' sessions wherein students are invited to complete guided reflective work following a particular specific incident in which relationships have been damaged through harmful behaviours. Students are directed to discuss the thoughts and feelings that lead up to harmful behaviour incidents in a non-confrontational, empathetic way, with the aim of encouraging empathy and insight into the thoughts and feelings of other people, to try and reduce the feelings that drive confrontation and aggression towards others. (There are four RSJ4S practitioners in the school).

Higher Tariff reflection may include:

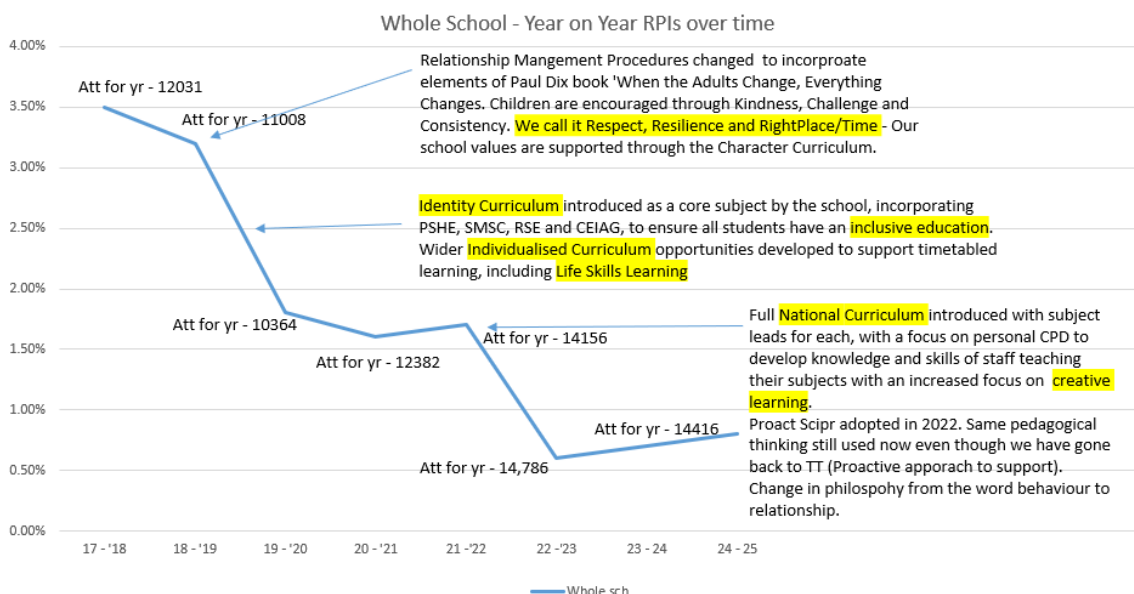
- Organised education away from the school site with a member of school staff, a PRM or RJ4S staff, to ensure that a young person does not miss out on the reflective learning experience, is in attendance with a member of school staff and is ultimately safe during the hours of education.
  - Where risk of educating off-site is assessed as too high then a young person may get reflection time, involving support staff, a PRM or a RJ4S staff, working with a young person outside of the classroom environment. However, within the school environment, to address any social and emotional issues on a short-term basis to try to ensure reflection time has taken place.
  - At a suitably appropriate time, pupil de-briefs will be done involving the PRM's, RJ4S staff or school staff.
  - Meetings may be held within the school involving therapists, school staff and other staff involved with the pupil's education to discuss new ways forward. These may be added to the pupils What Works for me Plan (WWP).
  - The pupil is always consulted regarding possible changes to their WWP, in order to support difficulties with relationships next time and lower anxieties and trigger points in the future.
  - Continued and persistent disruption may include holding a meeting with parent/carers and Local Authorities, to discuss ways of working with a pupil moving forward and review of the way that we work with that young person.
- The aim of the guided reflection time and restorative conversations is to improve a student's **Growth Mindset**: Reflection sessions emphasize growth and improvement, helping students understand that they are capable of learning new skills and adapting positive behaviours over time. As part of a student's weekly timetable, our school's Therapy assistant, delivers social and emotional wellbeing lessons in small groups or on an individualised basis through SELFIE Sessions (Self Esteem, Language and Friendship intervention at Eastwood). This supports the day-to-day development of a student's growth mindset, focussing on specific social and emotional needs identified in section 5 of a student's EHCP and supporting students working through some of these emotional objectives. SELFIE sessions are guided by the Speech and Language and Occupational Therapist but planned and delivered by the Therapy Assistant to ensure continuous provision. The Therapy Assistant also delivers Lego Therapy to support students to emotional wellbeing and relational experiences.
  - **Personal Development Plans**: Staff collaborate with students to set personal growth goals, reflect on progress, and celebrate small successes, fostering self-awareness and resilience, via a student's What Works for me Plan. These address likes and dislikes, triggers and levels of support required. The school follows a proactive approach to working with students on the What Works for me Plan, choosing to discuss with a student, the escalation cycle and how staff can work co-operatively with a student proactively and actively, to reduce the need for reactive approaches. This approach helps all staff, but particularly staff who have direct relational trust with a student, to monitor and intervene quickly to support at an early stage.

## Implementation Strategies

1. **Staff Training and Development:** All staff participate in continuous professional development focused on trauma-informed care, positive relationship management, and positive relationship-building techniques.
2. **Consistent Communication:** We maintain open and consistent communication with students, caregivers, and staff, ensuring everyone understands and supports the goals and values of the positive relationship policy.
3. **Collaborative Interventions:** Collaboration with mental health professionals, counsellors, and external support services provides students with tailored support to address individual needs.
4. **Regular Policy Review:** The policy is reviewed annually with input from staff, students, and caregivers to ensure it remains responsive to the evolving needs of the school community.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Our Positive Relationship Procedure's effectiveness is measured by tracking relational incidents, student feedback, and overall well-being indicators, via SDQ half-termly data analysis. Reflection sessions with students, and weekly targeted therapy meetings to discuss specific individual students and regular staff debriefs allow for the adjustment of strategies to better meet students' needs. Through a continual and consistent Trauma-Informed Approach to supporting our children at EGS the school has managed to reduce the use of restrictive physical interventions (RPIs) over the years, the last two years have seen RPIs used at 0.6%, and 0.7% of whole school yearly attendance.



## Conclusion

Our Positive Relationship Procedure – A Trauma Informed Approach, is not based on punishment and removes the word 'behaviour' (and thus isolation), from its core principle, but instead models aspects of enquiry, resolution and restorative repair, enabling a nurturing and trauma-informed environment through Protect, Relate, Regulate, and Reflect. By embedding these principles in every aspect of school life, we create a space where students can learn, grow, and build meaningful relationships that prepare them for successful futures, beyond Eastwood Grange School.