

## Sheridan SCHOOL

### **POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP PROCEDURE Thrive & Trauma Informed Approach**

#### **Sheridan School Vision Statement:**

*We believe every young person has the potential to succeed. It's our vision to empower all students to excel in a safe, caring, and inclusive environment. We work as a team to prepare socially vulnerable pupils for post 16 education.*

Related Policies and Procedures	Behaviour Policy Reasonable Force/Team Teach Policy
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#### **Introduction**

This policy outlines the positive relationship framework adopted at Sheridan School, integrating a trauma-informed approach that supports students' well-being, growth, and development. We recognise 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 Trauma informed approach - **Protect, Relate, Regulate, and Reflect** and Thrive Vital Relational Functions (VRFs) to **Attune, Validate, Contain and Regulate** 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. 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' but instead recognises that children who are experiencing difficulties with relationships, either in their homelife, with staff or with their peers may communicate in certain ways, and this may be challenging. They have 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.
1. **Caring:** Encouraging emotional growth, and the development of healthy, supportive relationships.
2. **Achievement:** Encouraging resilience knowing pupils need to be ready to learn in order to achieve.
3. **Respect:** Understanding and respecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all students.
2. **Friendship:** Helping students develop self-regulation, confidence, and the skills necessary for positive engagement with others.

## 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.

### 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, use positive reinforcement and recognise that consistency in routines, structure, and responses helps students feel secure.

- The school offers a **meet and greet** system at the beginning of the school day, where children are greeted from their taxis by SLT and pastoral team and greeted again by class tutors as they enter their classrooms, ensuring 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. All students have access to sensory break out rooms and Thrive rooms which are warm engaging and safe and are guided by a student's needs and wishes.
- Through providing children with **Non-Punitive Responses:** We emphasize restorative practices instead of punitive responses, recognising 'behaviour' is separate from the young person; addressing the root causes of the relationship breakdown, rather than simply reacting to the breakdown itself. All staff have training in PACE and Thrive approach which promotes playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy in responses to relationship difficulties; staff can intervene and support in a non-judgemental way. Focus remains on what the student needs in that moment before working together to unpick and reflect on what was happening for them.
- Providing children with **Supportive, Well-trained Staff:** employing a **pastoral support team** who work in unison with the classes and the wider school community. This consists of two Positive Support Practitioners (PSPs), 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. One of our PSPs is trained in Restorative conversations and uses this expertise to work with students and staff to reflect and restore breakdowns in relationships.

All staff have carried out **Thrive CPD** and have access to Thrive online to further their understanding. Thrive assessments are carried out termly and weekly Thrive sessions take place in from time further building safe, respectful relationships built on shared experiences. We have a developing team of Licensed Thrive practitioners, including SLT trained staff.

All staff receive **trauma-informed CPD training**. The school has two Level 5 Accredited Practitioners who are trained to recognize signs of distress, respond sensitively, and avoid re-traumatizing students. They actively contribute to the wider school ethos, support staff by sharing best practise and students through designated 1:1 TIS sessions.

**On-site therapy team** – all students have access when the need arises. Therapists work closely with all involved with the child to ensure wrap around care.

Team of **Mental Health first aiders** - who can 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.

## 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.
- **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. Students engage in structured relational time through form time, structured break and lunch times, Thrive sessions, SMSC and enrichment activities providing opportunities for meaningful relationships and community building.
- **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 Pupil Voice Meetings, I wish my teacher knew classroom post boxes, pupil panels for visitors or teacher interviews.

The school celebrates diversity through an active approach through our PSHE, RSE, Citizenship and British values curriculum. The discussions around equality, diversity and protected characteristics 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.

**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 Thrive relational training 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.
- **Zones of regulation:** All staff are trained in 'Zones of Regulation' and students carry out check ins, check-ups and check outs throughout the day. There is a dedicated ZOR display in every room, including student desk copies for discrete use to make staff aware of their changing emotions. Thrive and Nest rooms are dedicated calm spaces where students can practice calming techniques with supportive materials, like sensory items, weighted blankets, and guided exercises.
- **Modelling Emotional Regulation:** Staff members model calm responses to difficult situations, showing students how to regulate emotions by managing their own; being emotionally available adults. Staff are taught to attune to a child's emotional intensity, to ensure that staff connection with children is supported. The school has an atmosphere that supports it being seen as a 'calm' site. Our 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.

## 4. Reflect

- **Guided Reflection and Restorative Conversations:** Through CPD, staff are given strategies for becoming good listeners, using open dialogue, with empathy and understanding. They use a **WIN** approach when talking to children, **Wondering if...**, **Imagining if...**, **I Notice that**, is at the forefront of any language used, 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.

- Early intervention to lower the risk of escalation with a Positive Support Practitioner if available. Informing a PSP to work with the young person in class at a specific allocated time.
- A period of reflection time involving support staff or PSP working with a young person outside of the classroom 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. The pupil is always consulted regarding possible changes to their PBSP, in order to support difficulties with relationships next time and lower anxieties and trigger points in the future.
- Restorative conversations/debriefs where students are invited to complete guided reflective work following a particular specific incident in which relationships have been damaged through harmful behaviours.
- Restorative conversations/debriefs with students and staff lead by PSP to restore relationships and move on from this.
- 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' positive behaviour support plans.
- Continued and persistent disruption may include holding a meeting with parent/carers and discuss ways of working with a pupil moving forward and review of the way that we work with that young person.

## 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 parents, therapists, 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 Thrive and Engage half-termly data analysis. Reflection sessions with students, weekly whole school pupil progress meetings, weekly targeted therapy meetings to discuss specific individual students and regular staff debriefs allow for the adjustment of strategies to better meet students' needs.

## Conclusion

Our Positive Relationship Procedure – A Thrive and Trauma Informed Approach, is not based on punishment and removes the word 'behaviour' from its core principle, but instead models aspects of enquiry, resolution and restorative repair, enabling a nurturing and trauma-informed environment. 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.