

'Learning and growing hand in hand together, following the footsteps of Jesus.'



St. Oswald's V.A School

Relationships Policy 2022-2023

St. Oswald's V.A School is a Rights Respecting School. We put the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at the heart of our ethos. Not only do we teach about Children's Rights, we also model rights and respect in relationships between all adults and pupils.

This policy relates to the following articles:

Article 3: Everyone who works with children should always do what is best for each child.

Article 6: You have the right to life and to grow up healthy.

Article 12: You have the right to say what you think should happen and be listened to.

Article 15: Your right to meet with friends and join groups and clubs.

Article 16: Your right to have privacy.

Article 19: You should not be harmed and should be looked after and kept safe.

Article 28: Your right to learn and go to school.

Article 29: Your right to become the best that you can be.

Article 31: Your right to relax and play.

Our school is invested in supporting the very best possible relational health between:

Parent and child

Child and child

Child and school staff

Parent and school staff

School staff

School staff and Senior Leads

School staff and external agencies

To this end our school is committed to educational practices, which Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect.

PROTECT

Our school is proactive in ensuring that the ethos, environment and relationships not only protect all children and young people from harm, but also actively promote positive emotional and mental health and social development.

To ensure we have increased 'safety cues' in all aspects of the school.



All staff will greet children as they enter the classroom.



All staff are aware of the 'PACE' modes of interaction (Hughes 2015). These including being warm, empathetic, playful and curious. This is proven to shift children out of flight/fight/freeze positions.



School staff will ensure that interactions with children are socially engaging and not socially defensive, in order to decrease chances of children relating defensively (fight/flight/freeze).



A whole school commitment to cease using harsh voices, shouting, put-downs, criticisms, shaming (proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically).



School staff will 'interactively repair' the occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness. Seeking to rebuild relationships and not being 'afraid' to apologise.





The implementation of pedagogic interventions that help staff to get to know children better on an individual basis. All classes to strongly embed "I wish my teacher knew" (what matters to them, who matters to them, their dreams, hopes). This is key to enabling children to feel safe enough to want to talk, if they so wish, about painful life experiences, which are interfering with their ability to learn and quality of life. A jar or box should be left in a safe place in the classroom and this must be checked regularly.




All vulnerable children to have easy access, on a daily basis, to at least one named emotionally- available adult, and these children know when and where to find that adult. If the child does not wish to connect with this adult, an alternative person is

found. Children check in every morning. Any children at 3 must have the opportunity to speak to an EAA.


 School staff adjusting expectations around vulnerable children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This will include removing vulnerable and traumatised children in a kind and non-judgmental way from situations they are not managing well (e.g. children who keep 'triggering' into alarm states in the main playground given access to a separate calmer smaller playground).


 Provision for children of a clear, confidential and non-shaming system of self-referral for help/talk time.


 The nurturing of school staff in such a way that they feel truly valued and emotionally regulated enough to be able to interact throughout the school day with social engagement rather than defensiveness.

RELATE

At our school we will ensure that all children and young people have access to an emotionally available adult. Children who have experienced one or more ACES (adverse childhood experiences) will have daily access to a trusted adult. This will be an adult that the child identifies that they like, respect and have a positive relationship with. Trusted adults will be readily available to children at agreed times and places and alternative plans for support will be in place when the trusted adult is not available. All adults in the school or organisation understand the importance of treating children, young people and each other with kindness, compassion and empathy and have the skills to do so.





 All school staff trained in emotional coaching to some degree and in relating to children in terms of the four key relational needs for secure attachment: affect attunement, empathy, soothing and containment.

 A whole school commitment to enabling children to see themselves, their relationships and the world more positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger or self-blame.

 Relational opportunities for vulnerable children with emotionally available adults at school to enable them to make the shift from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from self-help to 'help seeking'. This may be with classroom adults or an identified ELSA EAA.



REGULATE

At our school we are committed to reducing stress in children, young people and staff. Leaders understand the importance of positive interactions between all members of the school / community as key for calming and emotional regulation. This underpins our school's values and ethos. All adults know how to be in relationship with children, young people and each other in ways that will reduce stress and promote positive physical and mental health.

-  Within school we will implement interventions designed to bring down stress hormone levels (e.g. from toxic to tolerable) in vulnerable children, enabling them to feel calm, soothed and safe. This is to support learning, quality of life and protect against stress-induced physical and mental illness, now and in later life.
-  Evidence-based nurturing and regulatory interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic life experiences, through emotionally regulating and playful, enriched adult-child interactions.
-  The emotional well-being and regulating of staff is treated as high priority in order to prevent burn-out, stress-related absence or leaving the profession, through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued, blamed or shamed.
-  Designated staff-only spaces, which are specifically designed to support the release of natural anti-stress, pro-social neurochemicals (opioids and oxytocin). The use of the staff room is encouraged by all staff and is a place for staff to connect with each other.

REFLECT

All staff are trained in the art of good listening and 'the words to say it' for reflective and empathic responses to pupils, staff and parents. Staff will use 'WINE' language to support children with the use of consistent and non-judgemental language. We aim to deliver a high quality Health and Wellbeing Curriculum incorporating the most recent neuroscience and research into mental health and supporting young people to understand the importance of positive mental health, healthy relationships and how to live life well.

-  Staff educated in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking lots of questions/giving lectures).
-  The provision of skills and resources to support parents and staff to have meaningful empathic conversations with vulnerable children who want to talk about their lives in order to empower children to better manage their home situations and life in general.



Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with a member of staff ('working alliance'), children are to be provided with the means to symbolise painful life experiences through images rather than solely everyday words, should they wish to do so, as a key part of 'working through' and memory re-consolidation. To this end, there is the provision of different modes of expression for children e.g. art/play/drama/music/sand-play/emotion worksheets).



PSHE (personal, social, and health education) informed by current research (psychology and neuroscience) on mental health, mental ill-health (full range of specific conditions) relationship health: family, parenting, intimate relationships and tools for how to do life well. Curriculum content to enable children to make informed choices about how they relate to others and how they choose to treat their brains, bodies and minds now and in the future. The RSE curriculum, Rights of the Child and Blurt programme are all an integral part of our school curriculum.



Staff trained to help children move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences through empathic conversation in order to address negative self-referencing and help them to develop coherent narratives about their lives



Our behaviour policy, is based not on punishment, sanctions and isolation, but one that models enquiry, resolution and interactive repair. (e.g. restorative conversations).