



Relational Support Policy

Version Number:

- 1

Applies To:

- APTCOO Independent Special School

Associated Documents:

- SEND Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Health & Safety policy
- Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Positive Handling Policy

Related Regulations:

- [SEND Code of Practice](#)
- [Independent School Standards](#)
- [Nottinghamshire Knives and Weapons Guidance 2022](#)
- [Behaviour and discipline in schools](#)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation at school](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Use of reasonable force in schools](#)
- [Supporting students with medical conditions at school](#)

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1. Introduction

A Place To Call Our Own (APTCOO) is an independent special school for young people aged 5 to 19. Our school offers a warm and welcoming environment where a positive education allows our young people to experience success. Our ethos is the belief that a positive, supportive, and nurturing culture is essential for creating a thriving school that meets the needs of the young people that it serves. We believe pupils need an understanding environment in which to rediscover success, self-belief and re-engage with learning.

Prior to coming to APTCOO it has been identified that our young people have not been able to make progress in either mainstream or special schools and need the specialised nurturing environment that APTCOO provides. These are often young people at the highest level of need, who will have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) that identifies but is not limited to neurodiversity, social, emotional, and mental health needs, and/or early life trauma.

Our Relational Values

This policy is based on the following values and beliefs:

- All children wish to belong, achieve, and contribute to their school, family, and community.
- All behaviour is a form of communication and the expression of underlying needs. It is not possible to support a child without addressing these needs.
- Behaviours can be a below conscious reaction that is held within the nervous system of the child as a result of their previous experiences.
- Children need personalised responses to support their personal development and well-being.
- Relational approaches are effective in supporting the development of internal control and regulation.
- Consistency does not mean always responding in the same way to each child or behaviour. Whilst each individual child benefits from a consistent approach, being consistent and fair is not about everyone getting the same, but everyone getting what they need.
- We do not use punitive approaches as these may re-traumatise children and further embed the behaviours causing concern

2. Legal Framework

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on:

- [Behaviour and discipline in schools](#)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation at school](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)

- [Use of reasonable force in schools](#)
- [Supporting students with medical conditions at school](#)

It is also based on the [special educational needs and disability \(SEND\) code of practice](#). In addition, this policy is based on: Schedule 1 of the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#); paragraph 7 outlines a school's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, paragraph 9 requires the school to have a written behaviour policy and paragraph 10 requires the school to have an anti-bullying strategy

3. Policy Statement Overview

We have developed a three-part model as a graduated response, to guide staff in their support of our children:

1. Developing Relationships

This part of our model is the universal element of our graduated response. It is through relationships that children learn to feel safe, belong, understand themselves, others, and the world. Our overriding influence of how we are in a relationship is the PACE approach (Dan Hughes); to be Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathetic.

[Pace Principles](#)

2. Responding and Regulating

We understand that due to the prior experiences, additional needs, and environmental triggers, some of our children will, on occasion, communicate their needs through distressed behaviours that can challenge those around them. In order to support them we need to be able to ensure their safety, to attune and validate. When the child is ready, we can soothe and regulate. This involves being able to empathise with their feelings and understand their thinking. We use our knowledge of brain development and the response of the body to interpret what we need to do to meet their needs.

3. Repairing and Restoring

This part of our model can only take place once the child is calm and ready to reflect and should not be initiated too early. In order to support them, we help our children to recognise what happened, why it happened, who was impacted and how they can learn different behaviours to meet their needs and move forward positively. We remember that punitive responses and shame can lead to feelings of worthlessness and helplessness and do not help our children to repair and restore or learn new more helpful behaviours to meet their needs.

Relational Approach / Educational Approach

Whilst this policy describes our relational approach in a discrete and separate way. It is essential that it is understood that it should be read and understood in conjunction with our other school

policies. In our school, our relational approach is not a bolt-on, is not separate, and is instead integrated into our culture and curriculum.

There is a strong alignment between our educational approach, outlined within our curriculum policy, and the approach detailed in this policy. They support and complement each other and are best considered as a whole.

Our Relational Approach and Safeguarding

Our relational approach has safeguarding at its core. The way that we build and maintain relationships with our children means we are able to know them, to notice small changes, to develop trust which allows them to feel safe to communicate about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and for us to contain and support them when they do.

There are likely to be occasions when working in a relationship with young people that staff will feel concerned about elements of their life, either currently or when discussing the past / future. All staff are trained in safeguarding and are aware of the effects of early life trauma, they have read the school Safeguarding Policy, as well as the relevant sections from the most current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Staff know how to report their concerns, and the school has strong procedures to ensure that any concerns are robustly responded to.

Our Expectations

Our relational approach is underpinned by our school expectations, which are designed to be few in number, simple to understand and aim to allow everyone the opportunity to thrive within our school community.

- Everyone will feel safe and thrive
- Everyone will acknowledge, encourage, and nurture strengths and talents
- Everyone will engage in positive and healthy relationships
- Everyone will be encouraged to express themselves, make choices and engage in decision making

To achieve this, we encourage our pupils to demonstrate:

- Kindness: to themselves and to others
- Curiosity: to engage in learning and be curious about their future possibilities
- Courage: to find the courage to overcome challenges
- Respect: to show respect to our school and the wider community
- Aspiration: to try their best and accept our support and guidance in order to thrive

Prohibited Items

Children are prohibited from bringing the following items into school buildings, unless given prior permission to do so by the Head Teacher:

- Weapons including but not limited to knives, blades, guns
- Any item that could be used as a weapon, including tools
- Drugs or drugs paraphernalia
- Alcohol
- Tobacco products, cigarettes, lighters or matches
- Vapes
- High Caffeine based energy drinks
- Aerosols
- Any “gang-related” clothing, symbols, or colours

If any of the above items are brought to school premises, the items must be handed in by the child to a member of staff at the start of the school day and will be given back at the end of the school day. The exception to this is anything that is illegal for the child to have or if staff have reason to believe that the child is planning to use an item for illegal activity. In these cases, the staff will confiscate the item and decide whether to call in parents/carers to collect the item or, in extreme circumstances, call the police and hand them the confiscated item(s).

When to Call The Police

In ‘Developing Relationships,’ we use our expectations to support children to understand the framework that they are going to work within so that they can keep themselves safe, understand how they can be successful themselves and contribute towards the safety and success of others.

When ‘Responding and Regulating,’ we may refer to the expectations to explain why we are responding; to remind them of our expectations.

In ‘Repairing and Restoring,’ we remind our children of the rationale behind our expectations and use them as a framework to aid reflection and learning.

Part One: Developing Relationships

In order to be successful at school, children need to develop secure relationships which enable them to feel safe, secure and to experience success. In order for this to happen, relationships and kindness are at the heart of school life.

For many children, the development of these trusting relationships will need to be explicit, meaningful, and very clearly perceived. Children who have additional barriers to building positive relationships may need additional time and support to achieve this.

Through these secure relationships, children allow adults to support them in understanding their feelings and emotions through co-regulation. Over time, they develop their understanding of social situations and develop healthy and positive feelings about themselves and develop emotional intelligence.

Our approach to developing relationships is based on providing:

- Protection
- Connection
- Understanding
- Care

Protection

All children need to feel safe and secure. Without a sense of safety and security children cannot explore, play, learn, or interact effectively with others. Children who do not feel safe tend to be hyper vigilant and have difficulty regulating their emotions.

Children get their sense of safety primarily from being in secure relationships with others. Children need to experience positive relationships with adults in school who are able to make them feel safe through being consistent, predictable, reliable, and trustworthy as well as providing containment through structure, routines, and boundaries.

Our way of interacting with the child is vital in securing a sense of safety. Safety cues are key to enabling the child to feel safe. Attuned friendly and warm facial expressions, careful modulation and frequency of the voice and non-threatening body movements indicate safety. A lack of safety cues can be interpreted as a threat.

Helping children to feel safe:

- Be predictable, reliable, and trustworthy. Telling a child that you are those things will not be enough. They need to be shown by what you do. If things change and you are not able to do what you have said that you will do, explain why this has happened, acknowledge and validate the potentially difficult emotions that this may have evoked and put in place an alternative plan.
- Provide safety cues. Being aware of the cues you are giving is especially important, particularly through your facial expression and frequency and modulation of your voice. Consider other safety cues such as movements which could make them feel safe. Take care to ensure open and friendly body language. Be aware that your intended communication of safety may not appear as such to some children; for example, a smile may be interpreted as a grimace if the child is outside of their window of tolerance.
- Provide structure and routine. This will provide containment for many children by providing external structures that help them to feel safe. These need to match the child's needs and be communicated to them in a way that they understand, and which is meaningful.
- Pre-empting changing needs. By knowing the individual preferences, likes and dislikes, triggers or early signals that indicate changing needs, we can adapt our practice.
- Managing change and transitions, Unfamiliar sounds in the environment, unfamiliar people, or situations, change in routine, unfamiliar physical contact or sudden movement can all trigger feelings of fear. Sometimes just a lack of safety cues can trigger a defensive response. Changes can be large and small, even transitions such as moving from activity to activity may need to be supported.

Connection

We are biologically social creatures. To optimise our mental health and success we need to be able to socially engage. Connection can be considered on several levels: to the place, the curriculum, the adults, and the children.

Developing a sense of connection and belonging is vital in terms of the development of social skills and understanding, a positive sense of self and agency.

We need to take care that we are truly connecting with children at their level and in a way that is meaningful to them. It is about them feeling a connection that they associate with emotional significance.

Authenticity is key. Children want to know that you are being you and that you genuinely want to connect with them. They may feel anxious if they feel you are trying to be something you are not. Verbal and non-verbal communication need to match.

Helping to connect with children (PACE): [PACE Principles](#)

Playfulness – is about creating a feeling of lightness and interest when you communicate. An open, ready, calm, relaxed and engaged approach. Playfulness allows children to cope with positive feelings. Being playful isn't about being funny all the time. It is about helping children be more open

to and experience what is positive in their life, one step at a time. It also gives hope. If you can help the child discover their own emerging sense of humour, this can help them wonder a little more about their life and how come they behave in the ways that they do.

Acceptance – is about actively communicating to the child that you accept the feelings, thoughts, urges, motives, and perceptions that are underneath their presentation. Unconditionally accepting a child makes them feel secure, safe, and loved. A fresh start is always offered. The child's inner life simply is it is not right or wrong. Accepting the child's intentions does not imply accepting behaviour, which may be hurtful or harmful to another person or to self. The child does not feel judged nor criticised.

Curiosity – is showing the child that you are interested in what is going on for them and are willing to do something about it. It is important to use a quiet, accepting tone that conveys a simple desire to understand the child: this is not the same as agreeing with their perception of the event but shows your interest in understanding it and accepting the feelings that were involved. Adults should try to avoid asking "Why?" and instead might ask:

- "Is it ok if I share my idea of what is going on for you?"
- "What do you think was going on?"
- "What do you think that was about?"
- "I wonder what...?"
- "I imagine that..."
- "I noticed that..."

Empathy – is when you are showing the child that their feelings are important to you, and that you are alongside them in their experience. You are showing that you can cope with the strong emotions with them, and you are trying hard to understand how it feels. Understanding and expressing your own feelings about the child's experience can often be more effective than reassurance.

Understanding

'Being aware of how you feel is also very important for children recovering from traumatic experiences, who's thermometer is sensitive and set on alert, and who are watching you and expecting negative things to happen. So being aware of how you come across is vital, as when a child's emotions re highly aroused this can overwhelm him/her and spin him/her into a fight-flight-freeze response'.

Reflective Parenting (2016)

Children who have had interruptions in their emotional development during their lives through traumatic experiences may have an impact on their ability to develop and maintain trusting relationships can have difficulty understanding and processing their emotions in order to regulate themselves.

Difficulties with relationships are often associated with literacy difficulties and / or language impairment and so it is important to assess language, and literacy needs alongside a child's relational needs.

Executive functioning difficulties including, working memory, self-control and emotional regulation can have a significant impact on the child's capacity to learn and may go unrecognised. Children may also have a difficulty with social skills which has arisen due to a lack of social learning opportunities.

Sensory needs can have a significant impact on all areas of life and can most definitely influence behaviours and presentation. Children with sensory needs can be hyper or hypo sensitive.

We understand that each of our children will experience challenges that are unique to them, and we will adjust our responses accordingly. Our school is committed to research-based approaches and our ongoing training, workshops and reflective debriefs ensure that staff have the tools to understand the children they support.

Care

Repeated experiences of being cared for, loved, and soothed enables the child to feel good about who they are over time, effective, worthy of attention and able to calm themselves.

Helping to care:

- Showing them that you care. Notice things about them (a new coat, haircut, or pencil case) and remember details about them including birthdays, interests, favourite sporting teams or bands. Let them know that you are thinking about their basic needs.
- Holding them in mind. Let them know that you think about them even when they are not with you. Finding opportunities to let them know they were in your thoughts is important in enabling the child to understand that relationships can be secure.
- Seeing every interaction as a possible intervention. Letting them feel that we care so much that we want to take every opportunity to let them grow and develop.

Part Two: Responding and Regulating

'There is much still to learn about which approaches best help build resilience after childhood trauma. One thing we know is that all children are different. As adults, we need to be interested and curious about an individual child: their strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes – as well as the nature of their early relationships and experiences'

Prof. Eamon McRory: [Childhood Trauma, the Brain and the Social World](#)

It is normal for children of all ages to be playful, challenge authority and to test boundaries. Most children will at some point overstep a boundary and will need reminding about agreements and

expectations. Our relationships, and the relational skills we utilise should be our first port of call at these times.

It is important to be mindful of the additional barriers that many of our children have and the impact this has on their stress regulation system. They may have a narrower window of tolerance and so the frequency with which they enter a state of fight / flight / freeze may be higher.

It is at these points that our children will need repeated experiences of trusted adults alongside them, supporting them to regulate and feel secure in order to support the development of their own regulation systems and expand their window of tolerance over time.

Sometimes, when a child is experiencing strong emotions, the resulting behaviours may not be safe. In these circumstances, containment and making the situation safe should be the primary objective.

When responding and regulating to the needs of a child whilst they are experiencing strong emotions, we must remain steady within our own self; to be aware of our own hooks and triggers, which may bring about emotional responses that might impact upon the effectiveness of our support. Learning to put our own ego aside and focusing on the needs of the child is helpful in the moment.

As we begin to respond and regulate, it is important to go in with an open mind. The role is to learn about the child's perspective, to de-escalate and to help them to become regulated and safe. If you go in with an intention in mind, it may not transpire to be aligned with the needs that you are about to learn about.

The strategies laid out below are based on latest research. It is suggested that the order is the most ideal flow in helping a child to become regulated but there are situations where using the strategies 'out of order' is appropriate if the individual circumstances make this an appropriate response.

Although the approach can assist the development of new trusting relationships, it is often most effective when it is carried out by adults who already have strong and positive relationships in place.

Strategies to support:

Attunement. To be alert to how the child or young person is feeling and their emotional state. We do not rush to calm and instead understand that calming can only come after attunement. We are assessing, listening, observing and making sure that the child knows we are there, that we understand them and their state through our reflection of their emotions. We listen and assess before we respond.

Accepting and validating. Validating how the child is experiencing an event, even if it is quite different to how you have / would experience it. We try to understand their story through their lens.

At times this is just about being alongside the child and holding the space. We do not try to distract or persuade the child out of having the feelings they are experiencing, rather affirming, understanding, and recognising those feelings. It is important to be open and curious. It can be helpful to retell the story back to a child; explaining what you have heard and letting them know that their feelings and emotions have been heard. This is not the time where we try to correct or reframe their view of the experience, which comes later. An example of accepting and validating is:

- Child: “I am rubbish at Maths” (Instinctive Reassuring Response: “That’s not true. You are good at Maths.”)
- Accepting and Validating Response: “I hear that you feel that you are not good at Maths at the moment; that must be hard for you.”

Containment of feelings. Being able to stay in a relationship alongside a child, whilst they are experiencing intense feelings and emotions. Some behaviours that may be displayed could be aimed at pushing adults away. By demonstrating that we can bear these strong feelings will deepen the trust between the child and the adult. Some describe this as the child consciously / unconsciously confirming whether the adult will continue to be there for them and will continue to like them, even after they have shared their strong feelings with them. We must try to resist the temptation to ‘fix’ and know at times it is enough to hold this space with the child allowing them the space to feel these big feelings safely.

Soothing. Soothing in conjunction with addressing the other relational needs above, can develop stress regulating systems in the brain which control the body’s defence pathways. This is where we demonstrate emotional co-regulation by soothing their distress and allowing them to decompress. For each child this may look different and will take different amounts of time, but all young people need repeated experience of being soothed with and alongside others before they can learn how to self soothe:

- Physiological regulation; movement, walking, breathing (e.g. four/seven breathing). Co-relational regulation: to be able to spend time with an individual with whom they have a close relationship with.
- Cognitive regulation: the adult thinking out loud and supporting the child to see the sequence of solution focussed thinking, e.g. offering a sorting / making activity might engage their thinking brain so that emotions and feelings can begin to be processed.

A Personalised Approach

There is no universal script or approach that will work with all young people. How we develop relationships and learn about preferences, interests, and successful strategies is critical to ensure our responses are the right ones for the individual we are supporting.

As we learn about the elements that make the support of each individual successful, we record these using the Learner Context - Relational Support Plan.

Restrictive Physical Intervention (please refer to the Positive Handling Policy for further detail)

Restrictive Physical Intervention is a last resort and should only be used when there is no

practicable alternative and when it is wholly necessary to prevent a greater or more significant harm. Restrictive Physical Intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, and necessary and must never be used as a punishment: It should only be used if there is an immediate and significant danger to the child and/or staff.

Restrictive Physical Intervention must only be used if all other strategies have failed. It must neither be threatened nor employed in a punitive manner, nor to force compliance with staff instructions and should never use more force or last longer than the minimum that is required. It is important to understand the impact of using Restrictive Physical Intervention can have on the stability of relationships and on the emotional state and development of the child. The decision to use RPI is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always be dependent on the individual circumstances.

Types of incidents where the use of Restrictive Physical Intervention may be necessary fall into 2 broad categories:

- 1) Action due to imminent risk of injury to self or others
- 2) Action due to developing risk of injury to self or others

Restrictive Physical Intervention may be used where a child is on school premises or elsewhere in the lawful control or charge of a staff member and must be reasonable, proportionate, and necessary to the circumstances.

Permissible physical interventions (*please refer to our Positive Handling Policy*).

In line with our Positive Handling training, the following strategies may be employed:

- Standing or seated holding or guiding techniques to prevent a child from carrying out physical aggression that may harm themselves or others
- Guiding a child away (one or two staff standing to the child's side to escort away from a volatile situation).
- In extreme circumstances more restrictive holds may be used

Involvement of Police

There may be occasions when an incident is / has been significant, and that staff consider whether to contact the police for support. There are occasions when this is appropriate and necessary but equally, careful thought should always be given to the decision. When viewed through the context of the significant barriers that many of our young people already have to achieving a happy, safe, and fulfilled adulthood, we should be mindful of the additional barrier that criminalisation and involvement with the criminal justice system can become.

Research has shown that once a child becomes 'known' to the police and the criminal justice system, the chances of them progressing to commit further crimes increases significantly. We know that the sometimes-complex needs, early childhood experiences and diagnosis of our young people are often significant factors in the situations that lead to their involvement with the police and criminal justice institutions. Often, a relational approach, such as the one outlined in this

policy represents the best intervention to avoid incidents becoming long term patterns of behaviour.

The National Police Chief's Council has produced guidance which will be referred to when considering whether to contact police.

Part Three: Repairing and Restoring

Whilst our relational approach leads us not to challenge many behaviours in more traditional ways, its effectiveness is reliant upon us having high quality restorative conversations to Repair and Restore after the event. If this component is not present, positive change is unlikely to occur. These conversations, which are designed to help our children to be able to reflect and understand the impact of their behaviours and what they might do differently in the future are essential. We acknowledge that by removing some of the more traditional sanctions / consequences, we must 'fill the space' with a high-quality alternative. To not do so risks our children failing to feel the containment that is so critical to their regulation and progress.

When you have had to 'Respond and Regulate,' it is important to ensure that there is an effective follow up of 'Repair and Restore.' The timing of this part of the process is sensitive. It is important that enough time has passed to ensure that the child is soothed and regulated, however we don't want too much time that the young person struggles to remember the event.

For children with additional communication needs, attachment insecurities or other barriers, the support they receive to repair relationships is vital to their success. We are providing a learning experience which has the power to challenge the perception that relationships do not last or are not worth having.

We must work to 'Repair and Restore' using empathy and compassion. We should expect that the child may expect the experience to be a negative one and so may put in place barriers or defence mechanisms to protect themselves. We want to break the cycle that they have experienced previously but this can take time and must be done in a way and at a pace that they can manage.

Our relational approaches acknowledge that all behaviour is a form of communication and is often an indication of an unmet need. Instead of spending time investigating incidents in order to then attribute sanctions, they seek to explore thoughts and feelings in order to gain understanding and promote repair and restoration.

We should remember that some of the incidents and behaviours that are likely to be discussed have their basis below consciousness / have not been chosen by the child and are linked to prior life experiences and or neurodiversity.

We want to support reflection, deepen understanding and provide support to develop alternative responses that are able to meet need in a more positive way next time without causing a sense of

toxic shame that is so often the consequence of an incident for children who have struggled in school. Staff engaging in a strong 'Repair and Restore' interaction:

- Are mindful of their relational skills (safety cues, curiosity, empathy, containment, soothing etc.) as described in the earlier sections of this policy.
- Believes and shows that every individual, regardless of their behaviour, is a worthwhile person who has a right to be listened to and taken seriously.
- Knows there is no one truth about a given situation and is curious about how others see the same situation, inviting them to tell their story and acknowledging their right to their point of view.
- Acknowledges and accepts feelings – does not judge feelings as right or wrong. Attunes to, validates and contains feelings with care and compassion.
- Is reflective about how thoughts, feelings, needs, and behaviour are influencing each other, both in terms of themselves and then others. Is able to hear and express feelings and needs within the stories they hear and tell.
- Has the intention of listening and talking in a way that builds, maintains or repairs relationships in order to support participants in finding a mutually acceptable outcome or at least a way to cope with the situation as it is.
- Consider where the child is in their development of understanding physical sensations, feelings, and emotions.

Children must feel that they can trust the process to make the situation better and that they will be safe throughout.

With a trusted adult alongside them exploring, our 'Repair and Restore' approach invites and supports the child to consider:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking?
- How were you feeling?
- Who else has been affected by this?
- What do you need, and what needs to happen now, so that we can 'Repair and Restore'?

For many of our children, accessing these questions in a meaningful way is challenging and requires a variety of personalised approaches.

Personalised Approaches

There are a number of strategies that can help children to access a 'Repair and Restore' interaction. In these cases, the following can be helpful:

- Change the environment; it is important to consider the location of the communication; meetings in offices, particularly with professionals in authority

may have considerable associations with previous traumatic interactions and could cause fear and anxiety. Consideration of the adult letting the child choose where they would like to meet, or meeting somewhere neutral can be helpful. Often a 'walk and talk' or meeting off site can feel less intimidating.

- There can be a preconception that the 'Repair and Restore' conversation has to be with certain people; perhaps with the adult who was most involved in the incident or the most senior member of staff. In fact, it might be appropriate to allow the adult who has the best relationship with the child to lead on the process.
- It can be helpful to work through others. For example, communicating with parents / carers and allowing them to scaffold the conversation at home can be helpful if the child does not yet have a strong enough relationship to feel able to engage with staff in school.
- Preparation and pre-warning can help. If a child knows ahead of time what will be discussed, what the potential outcomes might be, where it will be held, how long they need to be there and who will support them, they will feel empowered to engage more readily.
- Changing the format can help. A conversation is a complex interaction and may be too difficult. An exchange of notes or letters, or reflections through visuals or creative processes such as art / crafts, role play, or comic strips can make an interaction more accessible for some.
- Group meetings and conversations can help some children. Whilst this may need support, it can be incredibly powerful in assisting them to own and be accountable for their own responses.

Learning for the Adults

It is critical that the 'Repair and Restore' process is not solely about reflection on the part of the child. There will almost always be learning on the part of the school and of individual staff. Staff should model humility and where appropriate, share what they feel they might do differently next time as part of the process.

This policy sets out the support that will be afforded to our children when they experience difficulties. It is acknowledged that staff may also need support as part of their own 'Repair and Restore' processes. The school takes this responsibility seriously and has processes that offer the support that they need.

Sanctions / Consequences

We do not believe in punitive sanctions or punishments. Research shows that they do not change behaviours and can reinforce the feelings that a child is not good enough, is not worthy and should feel shame. These feelings and emotions are not helpful in promoting meaningful learning over time and do not support the development of skills.

There are times where it is appropriate however, to consider natural consequences. A natural consequence is where a child is helped to understand the natural consequences to them in terms of the effect a particular behaviour has on themselves or others.

Examples of natural consequences, applied through the approaches detailed within 'Repairing and Restoring' include:

- If something is broken, 'can we fix it'?
- Where damage or disruption to the school environment has been caused by a child, then assisting to put this right is a useful consequence that could aid learning.
- If a child's behaviour causes harm to someone else, an attempt to restore and repair may be an appropriate natural consequence, but it is important to ensure this is genuine and not forced. A child being encouraged to apologise when they do not understand or agree with doing so has little value.
- If a child's presentation whilst learning in a particular context was judged to be unsafe, the school may make adjustments to their timetable and the child's Learner Context – Relational Support Plan to ensure that they can be more safe; e.g. if a child is not safe whilst in school transport, the risk assessment and relational support plan is updated to allow for a period of time where they do not travel in school transport and instead focus on developing skills so that they can do this again later.
- If a child is misusing school equipment (e.g. craft scissors, kitchen knives, IT equipment) and the result is that there is risk or harm or of disruption to learning, a temporary period whereby they do not have access to the equipment might be considered (whilst understanding the importance of always prioritising learning how to use equipment safely in the longer term).
- If a behaviour causes concern, staff may choose to call parents / carers to inform them of the behaviour. This is not to punish or humiliate the child but to facilitate effective communication and a consistent approach to support the child to develop their skills.

Roles & Responsibilities

Implementation

All service staff will be responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Support, Advice and Communication

Please refer directly to the Headteacher.

Appendix 1 - Our Planning Documents

The Learner Context – Relational Support Plan

The school's Learner Context-Relational Support Plan is a critical tool for managing and planning for various aspects of support, ensuring that everyone is working consistently and predictably together and that the support given throughout the child's day at school is joined up.

Our Learner Context-Relational Support Plan includes:

- The child's strengths, qualities, and interests.
- Strategies that will aid the development and maintenance of strong trusting relationships.
- Strategies of how we work in relationship with the child to keep them safe
- Strategies of how we work in relationship with the child to support them to engage with their learning experiences
- Triggers to be avoided e.g. eye contact

Individual Learner Context-Relational Support Plans should be updated as a live document in response to the information flowing in, or as and when required. As a matter of course we should review every 6 weeks in tune with any Social, Emotional and Mental Health outcomes within and individuals Education Health Care Plan as they should be working together.

At times we acknowledge that our child's may need more support. We have identified the following trigger points for a more in-depth Focussed Intervention Plan (risk assessment/safety plan) to be implemented -

Trigger Points:

- Prolonged disengagement
- Persistent absenteeism
- Requirement of a therapeutic intervention that is currently not addressed within EHCP or covered as part of the provision agreement
- Risk taking behaviour that is a safety concern for self and others

Our process if no improvement has been made and in partnership with parents we may request a multi professional approach that would involve a call to [Early Help](#) following the tiered approach on the [Pathway to Provision](#). Should a Focussed Intervention Plan be required this should be reviewed a minimum of once every 3 weeks if no progress or little progress is being made after 4 reviews the school may consider calling an Emergency EHCP Annual Review.

***This** section refers to documents in the Learner context and RSP?

Based on our strategy of providing personalised responses, these documents detail the individual strategies that support the individual needs and support the team in providing the responses that are most appropriate in any given situation. Both documents are considered to be live and can be updated at any time. The processes in place post incident will often suggest or direct a staff member to review either or both of these two planning documents to ensure that they remain current as circumstances change.

Appendix 2 - Post Incident Process

Incident Recording

It is critical to record incidents promptly and accurately to ensure that there is sufficient reflection and learning in the period afterwards. It is by observing and recording carefully that we start to see patterns over time, can start to understand the thoughts and feelings that are behind some of the behaviours that we see and can work to offer the appropriate support in response.

Staff record and share their observations and according to the nature of the incident, it is considered as one of the following categories. The categories allow for analysis depending on the nature of the incident and to allow for staff to differentiate and respond according to the level of need that is being communicated.

Level One - Distress	Challenges that are very real for the child themselves but do not significantly impact on others.
Level Two - Disruption	Behaviours develop that begin to interrupt the learning of others (may include lower-level damage).
Level Three - Damage	Significant disruption to learning and safety caused by damage to property.
Level Four - Dangerous	Significant disruption to safety caused by risk (or actual harm) to children, staff or others.
Level Five - Crisis	Incidents that are actually or potentially critical (potentially life ending / potential for life-long impact).

All incident reports must be written on the day that the incident occurred and reviewed by one of the Curriculum Coordinators, Headteacher/DSL within 24 hours.

SLT should be alerted to any incident that is severity Level 3 or above on the day. In addition, CPOMs will send notifications to all DSLs to make them aware of any safeguarding incidents that are severity Level 3 or above.

Post Incident Review

After an incident a post incident review meeting must take place in order to ensure that the appropriate responses have been made, that sufficient support has been provided to the children and the team around them so that everyone can learn and move forward towards improved outcomes. The amount of follow up work is dependent on the level of incident and will include the input of all involved, the Headteacher and DSL's.

Monitoring over time

As well as the learning and reflection that occurs after each individual incident, it is also important to analyse over time, so that patterns can be explored and further adjustments for support and

provision can be arranged. To this end, each child is assessed according to their individual need and presentation and is reviewed proportionately by the school as part of their graduated response.

	Description of Presentation	Nature of Review
1	Incidents occur less than fortnightly and only ever at L1 or L2	Incident data is reviewed as part of the school's weekly staff meetings. Early warning signs are reviewed so that early intervention can be put in place proactively. The team discuss appropriate responses and the identify if the Learner Context-Relational Support Plan needs to be updated in line with strategies informing how we are in relationship to keep learners safe and how we are in relationship to support the learner to be engaged with the curriculum.
2	Incidents occur less than weekly and are mostly L1, L2;	
	Incidents occur less than weekly and are mostly L1, L2;	place pro-actively. The team discuss appropriate responses and the identify if the Learner Context-Relational Support Plan needs to be updated in line with strategies informing how we are in relationship to keep learners safe and how we are in relationship to support the learner to be engaged with the curriculum.
3	L 1 and L2 Incidents occur more than once a week and may include some L3 incidents;	Incident data requires analysis daily from the Curriculum Coordinators and Headteacher and DSLs to improve engagement with the school's expectations through weekly staff meetings. Staff may be adapting the timetable to support the needs of the child and reviewing the strategies within the Learner Context-Relational Support Plan alongside the curriculum being offered. Analyse the incident to carefully inform decisions being made, communicating with parents will be required to have an agreed and consistent approach of support.
4	Incidents occur multiple times each week and are often L3. The placement is successful, but more intervention is required to further stabilise.	The Headteacher/SENCO and family along with the child would work together to create an effective plan of support. On occasions this may include the use of external professionals such as an Educational Psychologist or Clinical Psychologist. APTCOO have access to a network of psychology support following training in attachment and trauma.
5	A Focused Intervention Plan is in place with an increased level of support - the Incidents are not reducing and are remaining common. They create a worrying trend which significantly impacts the safety and learning culture of the school. The placement requires significant attention in order to stabilise.	The Focused Intervention Plan will be monitored by the Headteacher. An Emergency Annual Review may be called to review the resources required to support the placement.

Our Graduated Response

The principles of how we respond to individual incidents is outlined above within the 'Repairing and Restoring' and 'Post Incident Review' sections above. However, as part of the wider monitoring over time of incidents, a graduated response may be needed in order to make modifications to the provision we offer our children.

It is important that these modifications are proportional to the individual context and that when they are required, they are actioned as promptly as is practicable.

Responses include:

- Making changes to the peer group, staffing ratios or staffing personnel that are involved in supporting the child.
- Adjusting the timetable, learning approach or planned activities to further maximise chances of success
- Providing additional 1:1 or small group time to work on the skills needed to manage learning time effectively.
- Offering enhanced leadership oversight or more time with staff who know them best.
- Accessing additional / specialist advice with regard to understanding needs. For example, discussion and planning with an Educational Psychologist or other relevant professionals.
- Additional staff training to improve the quality of the support provided.
- Increased partnership working with parents / carers to increase the effectiveness and alignment of the chosen approaches.
- Increased multi-agency involvement to increase the support provided to the child and the adults around them. For example, support from children's social care, mental health professionals or the police.
- Outreach or education at home provided from staff to offer intervention and support in the community or home environment which may, in some cases, reduce the triggers that may be present within the school environment.
- Emergency Annual Review to allow for multi-professional review and planning.
- Fixed term exclusion to provide time to reflect and plan for a successful return where needs can be better met.
- Permanent exclusion as an absolute last resort where there is no practicable alternative.

Flexible Arrangements

When considering the use of individualised, creative, planned packages of support that may include time with off-site in order to prevent exclusion, decisions need to be made with consideration of the views of the child, family, and partner agencies. In these cases, it should be made clear what the purpose of these alternative arrangements is:

- What needs are being met that cannot be met in school?

- What outcomes are being worked towards and how is the provision meeting these needs?
- How will they positively reintegrate back into school?

It is vital that adults from school maintain their relationship with the child and that when the child returns, they will return to a setting which is able to meet their needs and that welcomes them back.

Exclusion

A fixed term exclusion is only to be used as a last resort and should be a proportionate response where there is no alternative. In the rare circumstances where a fixed term exclusion is considered, we always carefully consider the purpose of the exclusion and the impact that it will have on the child.

A fixed term exclusion should be a short-term measure with the aim of improving outcomes. It should enable further planning and assessment and provide an opportunity for reflection for both the child and staff involved. Relational approaches as those outlined in this policy should be used to guide and support a child's return to school.

We do not advocate the use of permanent exclusion. However, we also recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances where a child is not able to have their needs met in our school or where our school cannot guarantee the child's or other children's safety.

The decision to exclude a child, either temporarily or permanently is made by the Head Teacher and or SENCO. It will be for the Head Teacher and/or SENCO in liaison with the SLT to determine the length of the fixed- term exclusion (up to 45 days in any one year) on the basis of facts relating to the specific case. A second exclusion for a similar offence may well be for a longer term than the first. All exclusions are recorded in writing with copies of the letter being sent to all relevant parties, including the local authority, within 24 hours.

Further details regarding the use of exclusion can be found [here](#).

Termination of Placement/Contract

The termination of a placement will normally only be considered for serious breaches of school discipline and when all other strategies and sanctions have been exercised without success. Each situation will be assessed on its own circumstances; each child's individual reactions and needs will be considered. Where we have concerns about the behaviour, or risk of exclusion of a child we will consider that additional support may be required. This will involve assessing the suitability of our provision against a child's special educational needs. We will consider requesting an annual review or interim/emergency review.

Involvement of the CEO and Trustees

To ensure effective and timely support and governance, the school will escalate details about incidents that have occurred to the SLT (in the first instance). As a matter of course all level 4 & 5 incidents should be shared with the CEO and Trustees and where data analysis will highlight:

- Open Safeguarding cases
- Restrictive Physical Interventions
- Attendance
- Incidents/Accidents/Injuries
- Exclusions
- Part-time timetables

Depending on circumstances, the CEO and Trustees will become available as a source of support to ensure the effective management of the more complex incidents.

More generally, the nature and prevalence of incidents and the effectiveness of the school's relational approach will be reviewed as part of the school's quality assurance and governance procedures.

Appendix 3 - Practical Strategies / Top Tips

- Some situations that we support can provoke feelings of anxiety or stress within ourselves. As adults, we set the tone. If we feel as if our own emotions and feelings are building to a point where we are unable to effectively offer the support that a child needs in that moment. Equally, a child may have a preference to be supported by someone different. It is important that we, without ego, recognise this and make arrangements to swap with someone else.
- There are occasions when responding to a situation where you will need additional support. It is often helpful to have support and guidance from a colleague with more experience or who has a deeper relationship with the child.
- In managing some situations, through the adults wanting to support and help each other, you can reach the situation where you have 'too many cooks.' It is important to have clarity about who is leading and who is there to support and to not have more adults involved than are required. The person taking the lead could, in a conversational manner, let other adults know what is needed from them... which could be asking them to leave.
- It's okay not to get things right every time. On occasions, your well-intended efforts to support an individual may not have the desired effect. You may misread a situation or mistune. This is okay. It is important to demonstrate humility and model that when things go wrong, you sometimes need to try again.
- Removing the audience can have a massive impact on the success of supporting an individual when they are distressed or dysregulated. Being around others whilst you are not in control can bring about feelings of shame, embarrassment, and anxiety. Providing

privacy, dignity and a sense of safety is critically important. The 'audience' could be considered as other young people or the number of adults who are present.

- It can be tempting to feel like you could only be effective if you are doing something. It is important to remember that sometimes what you don't do is just as important. Providing space and time for messages and communication to be absorbed and understood often requires periods of purposeful inaction; sometimes less is more.
- When supporting a child, it is often helpful to start by reviewing whether their basic needs are met. Often early signs of distress and dysregulation can be rooted in unmet needs in areas such as tiredness and fatigue, pain, feelings of hunger or thirst, feeling too hot / too cold or experiencing sensory overload. If through your relationship and knowledge of them, you are able to adjust the environment by opening a window, providing a drink or snack, turning down the volume on a device or intervening in any other way to meet their sensory needs, it can be very impactful.
- Communication is key. Whenever anxiety is high and a child is in a distressed state, their ability to socially communicate will be reduced in comparison to what is typical for them and will often misinterpret social cues. We should not expect them to be able to engage or process our communication intentions. Visual or written prompts, in line with their communication needs may help.
- It is important to allow children to communicate. Whilst it is important to reassure them that you are actively listening and engaged with them, care should be taken not to interrupt their flow. It is often unhelpful to interrupt or to 'argue back' when they are expressing their feelings. Even when you might feel you want to correct or reframe some of the comments through attunement and regulation, it is important to choose the moment for this carefully.
- It can be helpful to refer back to our school expectations when supporting a child who is becoming distressed or dysregulated. It helps them to feel a sense of containment by reminding them that there is a structure and there are boundaries. It should be remembered that all of our relational responses to young people should relate back to our expectations. Many other schools choose to 'challenge' young people on a substantial number of fronts, including on matters around what they wear, how they style their hair, how they sit in lessons etc. Our expectations are few in number and are very simple and clear; care should be taken not to deviate or create 'new rules' in the moment, in an unpredictable way.
- Distraction and humour can be useful in the moment, but we must remember that our intention is always to help our children to learn the skills to regulate and process their thoughts and feelings. Distraction or humour might help in the short term that can lead to thoughts and feelings remaining unprocessed.
- When responding to an incident, the primary behaviour can be followed by secondary behaviours. To understand the function of the behaviour, it is useful to revisit the primary behaviour. For example, if a child leaves a classroom and then progresses to pace around the school causing damage, it is most helpful to understand why they left the classroom first, before addressing the others subsequent behaviours.
- Whilst there might be occasions when we need to become louder to attune to young people, this should not be confused with shouting. Many of our young people will have had previous negative experiences of shouting and there are likely to be associations with significant life events that are likely to have been negative. Shouting is likely to threaten the

relationship and bring an end to the trust and safety that is present between the child and the adult.

- Where the staff member is reaching their own window of tolerance, they should call upon a colleague to support and enable them to take time to decompress and then return to support the child.

Appendix 4 - “Repair and Restore” Framework

This framework acts as a prompt for staff to enable the child to learn about themselves and others after an incident has occurred. It is helpful to communicate explicit safety cues and have the PACE principles at the forefront of your mind at any stage of this process.

The more the process feels like a collaborative conversation and curious exploration that the child is able to reflect and contribute to, the more they will be able to learn from the experience.

What happened?

Allow the child to tell their story, listening with genuine curiosity and without judgement by:

- Mirroring – facial expression, body language, tone of voice, attuning to mood.
- Accepting and validating the child’s experience and feelings.
- Reflecting back what you hear in manageable chunks and with a structure which aids understanding.
- Soothing. Using soothing (not cross) tones.

What were you thinking and how were you feeling?

Some children will find it hard to answer these questions and will need support to help them to integrate their feelings, emotions and thinking through:

- Listening and responding empathically, wondering aloud
- Starting where the child is at developmentally. Explore physical sensations and name possible emotions.
- Letting the child know that you ‘get it’ (big behaviour usually means big feelings) by accepting their feelings and letting them know that they are valid.

Who else has been affected by this?

Explore what effect this might have had on other people. If appropriate, use activities to help the child to see things from other people’s perspectives: upon your own experience or experiences you’ve heard about from others.

- Stories and role play can support empathy
- Wonder aloud to aid understanding
- Pictures and photographs, drawings and cartoons can help the child see other perspectives

What do you need, and what needs to happen now so that the harm can be repaired?

To reinforce the collaborative nature of the process it can be helpful to ask: “how can we put right?” or “what have we learnt from this experience?”

This is about repairing in its widest sense. Apologies and restorative actions can be a part of this and can help children to move on, but they are not the goal and are not always appropriate at that time. What does the child need in order to move forward?

- Short term intervention to help to keep them safe, particularly in managing specific situations / transitions that they may find tricky

- Support, mediation and a structure to enable the repairing of relationships
- Reassurance that school provides a structure in which they can feel safe, and that everyone is working to try to ensure that the same thing won't happen again.

Appendix 5 - Screening and Searching of Children

Although rarely required, the school has provision for responding to risks that may require the screening and searching of children. In order to keep all children or young people safe we will as schools sometimes be put in the position of having to conduct a search on a child or young person. In these situations, we will ensure that at all times we are upholding the dignity of the child or young person involved and are communicating closely with parents / carers. We will have exhausted all other strategies and will only be instigating this line of action to ensure the safety of the child or young person or the safety of others.

The [Education Act 1996](#) covers schools' right to search, and staff must follow guidance from the Department for Education to ensure that their searches comply with the law.

The following guidelines have been taken from [Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools July 2022](#)

It is a criminal offence to bring a knife or other weapon to school and the DES announced in October 2006 that a school has power, without any new legislation, to require children/young people to undergo screening, when the school does not have reasonable grounds for suspicion. Legislation enabling searches on suspicion came into force in May 2007.

The main ways to keep knives out of schools continue to be educating young people in better behaviour and in the dangers of illegally carrying a knife, but in addition, school staff (two staff at all times) are permitted to search a child, with consent, as part of their authority to discipline. [Nottinghamshire Knives and Weapons Guidance 2022](#) produced in conjunction with the Nottinghamshire Knife Crime Strategy provides further details on how to manage such an incident.

Searching without consent – what the law says:

Only the Headteacher, or a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher, can carry out a search. The Headteacher can authorise a minimum of two members of staff to search for specific items that are outlined in the Relational Approach Policy as prohibited items can be searched for. The list of prohibited items are:

- knives and weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be used: to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to, or damage to property of; any person (including the child)
- tobacco and cigarette papers

- fireworks
- pornographic images

Under common law, school staff have the right to search a child for any item if the child agrees. The member of staff should ensure the child understands the reason for the search and how it will be conducted so that their agreement is informed.

When exercising these rights, the school will take into account the child's age and individual needs.

We need to be mindful of the reasons that may lead to a child or young person to refuse a search:

- are in possession of a prohibited item
- do not understand the instruction
- are unaware of what a search may involve; or have had a previous distressing experience of being searched.

It is essential in these situations that we refer to our relational approach and deescalate a situation, support the child or young person to feel safe and understand the need for a search to take place. Staff should follow procedures in recording and reporting to the Headteacher/DSL for recording on CPOMs

When can I search?

If you have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a child is in possession of a prohibited item. Also note:

- The law also says what must be done with prohibited items which are seized following a search.
- The requirement that the searcher be the same sex as the child and that a witness is present will continue to apply in nearly all searches. Where it is practicable to summon a staff member of the same sex as the child and a witness then the staff member wishing to conduct a search must do so.

Authorising members of staff

- Head Teachers should decide who to authorise to use these powers. There is no requirement to provide authorisation in writing.
- Staff can refuse to undertake a search.

Not sure if the point below is needed?

- Staff can be authorised to search for some items but not others; for example, a member of staff could be authorised to search for stolen property, but not for weapons or knives.

Establishing grounds for a search

Staff can only undertake a search without consent if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a child may have in his or her possession a prohibited item. The teacher must decide in each

particular case what constitutes reasonable grounds for suspicion. For example, they may have heard other children talking about the item or they might notice a child behaving in a way that causes them to be suspicious.

In the exceptional circumstances when it is necessary to conduct a search of a child of the opposite sex or in the absence of a witness, the member of staff conducting the search should bear in mind that a child's expectation of privacy increases as they get older.

*The powers **is powers the right word?** allow school staff to search regardless of whether the child is found after the search to have that item. This includes circumstances where staff suspect a child of having items such as illegal drugs or stolen property which are later found not to be illegal or stolen.

Searches for items banned by the school rules

- An item banned by the school rules may only be searched for under these powers if it has been identified in the school rules as an item that can be searched for.
- The school rules must be determined and published by the Head Teacher in accordance with the School Relational Policy
- Under section 89 and the School Behaviour (Determination and Publicising of Measures in Academies) Regulations 2012 the Head Teacher must publicise the school Relational Policy, in writing, to staff, parents and child at least once a year.

Location of a search

- Searches without consent can only be carried out on the school premises or, if elsewhere, where the member of staff has lawful control or charge of the child, for example on school trips in England or in training settings.
- The powers only apply in England.

Record keeping

It is essential that clear and accurate records are kept following any search. All such incidents should follow our procedures and are recorded on CPOMs on the same day as the incident or if not possible within **24 hours** of the incident taking place.

Schools are encouraged to include in the record of each search:

- the date, time, and location of the search
- which child was searched
- who conducted the search, and any other adults or child present
- what was being searched for
- the reason for searching
- what items, if any, were found; and what follow-up action was taken as a consequence of the search

Informing parents

We believe that the best educational experiences come for children or young people when we work openly and transparently with parents and carers. Schools should reinforce the whole school approach by building and maintaining positive relationships with parents. Parents should always be informed of any search for a prohibited item...and the outcome of the search as soon as is practicable.

“A member of staff should inform the parents of what, if anything, has been confiscated and the resulting action the school has taken, including any sanctions applied.”

Appendix 6 - Research Based Practice

A Place To Call Our Own is committed to research-based practice and as such, lists its references below to facilitate further reading, as appropriate.

References/further reading

Bombèr, L.M. (2007) Inside I'm hurting: practical strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in schools. London: Worth.

Bombèr, L.M. and Hughes, D.A. (2013) Settling to learn, settling troubled learners to learn: why relationships matter in school. London: Worth.

Bomber, L.M. (2016) Attachment Aware School Series: Box Set of 5 Pocket Books. London: Worth.

Bowlby, J. (2008) A secure base: parent-child attachment and healthy human development. New York: Basic Books.

Hughes, D.A. (2006) Building the bonds of attachment: awakening love in deeply troubled children. New York: Jason Aronson.

Redfern, S and Cooper, A (2016) Reflective Parenting – A guide to understanding what is going on in your child's mind.

Rogers Bill, (2015) Classroom Behaviour: A Practical Guide to Effective Teaching, Behaviour Management and Colleague Support, Fourth Edition. Sage Publishing.

Weblinks

[Anna Freud - Trauma](#)

[Beacon House - Trauma and Attachment Resources](#)

[Relational Practice](#)

[Restorative Practice](#)

[Signs of Childhood Trauma](#)

Record of Changes
Relational Support Policy

DATE	AUTHOR	DETAILS OF CHANGE
Autumn Term 2024	M. Ledsham (Head Teacher)	V1 creation of new policy relevant to APTCCO practice and incorporating all relevant statutory guidance.