

Streatley C of E (VC) School



Relational Behaviour Policy Framework

Document Control		
Date	Changes	Approval
01.05.25	V1 created (West Berkshire Virtual School)	NG

Contents

Context & Co-production	2
Aims	3
Meet “Sam” – Considering the experiences of the child	4
What is Relational Practice?	5
Vision, Values & Principles – what do we believe?	6
What does this look like in daily practice?	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are our expectations for behaviour?• How do we promote appropriate behaviour?• How do we engage young people in understanding and supporting good behaviour?• How do leaders support appropriate behaviour in our school?• What do we do when things go wrong?• How can we address any underlying issues?• How do we use consequences?• How do we use suspensions and exclusions?	

11

Appendices

- External support for children and young people we use
- Links to external resources & Guidance
- Examples of Scripted Language

Context & Co-production

This policy framework has been co-developed by West Berkshire Council, in partnership with 10 schools as a key part of our 'Attachment and Trauma-Informed Mental Health Project'. The project was funded by the Delivering Better Value (DBV) grant 2024-2025.

Co-production of this policy framework

This policy framework has been co-produced by a number of schools, WBC teams and external advisors, as shown below.

The West Berkshire teams who have contributed to the co-production of this policy are:

- The Virtual School
- Therapeutic Thinking Support Team
- Exclusions and Reintegration Team
- Education Welfare Service

The external providers, supporting this DBV project, who contributed to the co-production of this policy are:

- Tony Clifford (Anewarc)
- Flourish (formerly AC Education)

The West Berkshire Schools who took part in the co-production of this policy are:

- Lambourn Primary School
- Kintbury Primary School
- Streatley Primary School
- Curridge Primary School
- Woolhampton Primary School
- Robert Sandilands Primary School
- The Federation of St John's Infant & St Nicolas' Junior Schools
- Downsway Primary School
- Hungerford Primary School
- The Downs School
- Theale Green School

Aims

This document aims to provide a clear and consistent framework schools can use to support behaviour in a relational way - maintaining strong and safe relationships is at the heart of daily practice to ensure that children's belonging needs are met and therefore they are more 'school ready'.

This approach, as part of a system-wide approach to inclusion and belonging within our education community, has the longer-term aim of improving the attendance and engagement of our children and young people at school, especially in times of distress, uncertainty or change. It will provide support for those who need it most, and seeks to reduce instances of suspension and exclusion by helping children to become confident, capable and self-regulating.

This document aims to equip school staff with an understanding about the role relationships play in driving behaviour in schools, with strategies for school staff to use in order to support children when they display more complex behaviours.

This policy is designed to support and sit alongside other policies already existing within our school, to detail the contexts in which those policies are applied.

Meet Sam – considering the experiences of the child



“Sam” is any child attending our school, whose experiences and context on any given day may require a relational approach to supporting their behaviour.

All children are supported through relational approaches to behaviour because all children’s behaviour can be impacted by circumstances outside of their control. For example, any child may feel slightly less regulated arriving late at school after a heavily-disrupted morning at home and may therefore benefit from feeling welcomed and secure at school. This framework also recognises that any child, at times of transition or uncertainty, may need the support of safe relationships in order to navigate these changes in a safe way.

Relational approaches are not additional or different approaches used to support smaller cohorts of children. Instead, they are part of our ordinarily-available provision which supports all our children when they need it. This is what Sam is: any child, and all children, in their time of need, so that they are ready to learn when they are in school.

When any complex behaviours arise, the team will bring their focus back to Sam and what needs or feelings have underpinned the behaviour displayed. This is not to minimise or excuse behaviour, nor is it a reduction in our expectations, but it is instead a way to repair, rebuild and resolve any issues in which behaviour has affected others. Relational approaches help the adults support children to plan for a better future, by understanding how we can support any needs, and avoid recurring behaviours.

What is Relational Practice?

Teachers are much more knowledgeable now about the context of children's lives and behaviour is no longer looked at in isolation. One of the biggest achievements in Glasgow is that teachers don't see it as bad behaviour but as distressed behaviour. That all behaviour is communication is one of our big training focuses. Now they are seeing behaviour in a different light.'

Maureen McKenna, Glasgow Director of Education

Relational Practice provides a framework for creating and sustaining a school climate in which children are in their optimum state for learning. Relational practice builds from an understanding of attachment and trauma, recognising the primacy of relational safety in enabling human development, learning and well-being.

Relational Practice is not a "programme" or an "intervention" that can be externally implemented, but is instead a planned and deliberate development of a culture that exists in a school and is sustained from within. It is also best supported by an inclusive and welcoming education community within West Berkshire.

Being relational therefore needs to permeate every strategic policy a school has, as well as its daily operations, for the benefit of all members of the school community (ie, it is not something different or extra to support particular groups of children, through they may benefit more from a relational culture).

Relational practice starts from empathy and belonging; humans need to feel 'seen and heard' within secure relationships in order to feel safe, and in times of perceived danger (including transition or change) they are predisposed to seek attachments to another key person. This feeling of psychological and social safety precedes the ability of the brain to reason and to learn – children who feel safe and secure are more able to learn.

Being relational in approach is our school's way of building, rebuilding and maintaining relationships, even in the face of conflict or complex incidents. It recognises that there are a wide range of interventions that [our school] uses to support the needs within our school, however it also understands that each of these interventions, if it ignores safety and belonging, may not be successful (or risk creating a secondary issue to be addressed).

The roots of relational practice may sit within the justice system, however where it has been embedded widely and well within schools and education systems (such as in Scotland), there has been a highly positive impact on behaviour-driven data such as suspension and exclusions: children and young people who feel like they belong, want to maintain that feeling and behave in pro-social ways in order to do so. With the right support in place, underpinned by a relational approach which drives this belonging, children have been increasingly able to maintain their school placements. This is what we are striving for at Streatley CofE Primary School.

Vision, values & principles: what do we believe?

In delivering this policy, we aim to ensure the statements below remain true at all times, for all people within our school.

- Our school will be a safe, happy place, where everyone belongs.
- All members of our school community will be valued, welcomed, heard and cared-for, in a community built on respect and kindness.
- Our parents, carers and community will share in our vision, which places individual children – their experiences, their strengths and their difficulties - at the centre of all we do.
- We support children to meet our high standards by understanding what influences behaviour, teaching children about our expectations, and providing equitable support for children to meet our behavioural expectations, as we would in our core curriculum.
- We see behaviour as a communication of need, which needs to be understood to be supported. We see behaviour as rooted in relationships and psychological safety, therefore our response to behaviour needs to be from those same roots.
- To promote good behaviour, we teach what we expect to see, and recognise and praise when we see it.
- When things go wrong and we make mistakes, we remain calm and provide a safe space for our community to reflect, listen, learn, and find a solution.
- In dealing with behaviour, we promote natural, educational and restorative consequences, which help our children to repair, rebuild, grow, improve, and sustain their relationships in school. Our consequences provide resolution, not retribution.
- When behaviour is hard to understand and manage, we start from understanding the human need for attachment, belonging and safety. We recognise how unmet needs and trauma can affect all humans and aim to be 'curious not furious' (as coined by Alison Rendle).
- Sometimes, behaviour may be unacceptable, but children are more than their behaviour and deserve acceptance.

What does this look like in daily practice?

What are our expectations for behaviour?

In our school, everyone has the right to *belonging*, to *safety*, and to *learning*. All members of our school community should show respect to each other, ensuring they demonstrate kindness in their interactions to make others feel valued, and show curiosity when faced with the unexpected.

We set high expectations for behaviour, but recognise that this also needs to be paired with high support for those who need it, in order for all children to meet our expectations. We also recognise that, without a culture that promotes belonging for our whole community, other interventions to support behaviour may be limited in their effectiveness.

How do we promote appropriate behaviour?

We ensure a consistent expectation for behaviour across all adults within our school, which includes a consistent understanding of the relational approaches children need. We promote strong relationships between members of our community, which are foundations on which we can build curiosity, understanding and restoration when things go wrong. Our adults are skilled in identifying the needs that drive the behaviours we may see in school, and also the reasonable adjustments we can make to support these needs (and therefore improve behaviour).

Throughout their school careers, we support children's personal development by ensuring we equip them with a toolkit to manage their emotions and engage with the world around them.

Our adults notice the positive behaviours we see from children and praise them using precise language. We ensure our environment is calm and supports optimal brain states for learning, without being over-stimulating. We ensure a consistency of language from all adults so that all our children know what to expect when they approach an adult for support.

We also recognise that, like much of the academic curriculum, our curriculum for behaviour needs to be taught regularly, if we want children to meet our expectations. This means we constantly model the behaviours we expect to see, use precise praise when we see it, and seek to learn from inappropriate behaviours, instead of placing shame on children who make mistakes. We also recognise that, as is true across the whole curriculum, children will join our school at different relational and behavioural starting points, and therefore we need to make adjustments to allow them to reach our expectations, as we would in any academic lesson.

How do we engage young people in understanding and supporting good behaviour?

Our approach to behaviour starts with relationships – with our children and with each other. When children feel like they belong as part of a school community, they are more likely to act in pro-social ways, and benefit from the security of knowing any mistakes they make will be supported, not criticised or rejected. We have clear expectations around behaviour which are shared regularly with our school community, and we teach behaviour, self-regulation and safe relationships as part of

our curriculum for personal development. We use precise praise when we notice examples of positive behaviour, so that all children are made aware of how our expectations have been met.

How do leaders support appropriate behaviour in our school?

Our school leaders set the tone for behaviour in our school and they model kindness, curiosity and respect at all times. When praising positive behaviour, they are precise in their praise and model this approach to all our staff. When there are challenges to be addressed, their starting point is one of curiosity and striving to find safe resolutions to any issues. Our school leaders ensure that our staff are trained to deliver on their relational ethos, with clear frameworks to support and empower the day-to-day implementation of relational and restorative support. They also ensure that a relational ethos is woven into wider policies than just this one, so that belonging is at the heart of our school's policies and is the 'lived and breathed' experience for all members of our community. Our leaders keep this policy, their staff training and guidance, and the experiences of our community, under constant review to ensure our relational approaches continue to meet the needs of our community.

What do we do when things go wrong?

Our school holds high expectations for the behaviour of our community, however when things go wrong, we listen to each other without judgement or blame. This helps us to reflect on what went wrong and to find a solution. We do this in a timely way to ensure that everyone impacted is seen and heard, and to ensure that all impacted relationships can be restored. We approach any incidents with curiosity about what need the behaviour in question is seeking to communicate and what actions we can collectively take to avoid recurring issues. In order to support these reflections, we give time and space to children, when it is safe and appropriate, so they can self-regulate before we support them to reflect on what has happened.

How can we address any underlying issues?

Where patterns of inappropriate behaviour emerge, we take a holistic approach to understanding the underlying causes of these behaviours.

As a school, we believe that all behaviour is a communication of need, and therefore our role is to identify and support the needs that drive any inappropriate behaviour. We will do this fairly and equitably, in conversation with young people, their parents/carers and other people in their life where this is appropriate.

We ensure our staff are trained to identify needs within their class and our leaders will support them in creating and maintaining an action plan where this is required. In instances where, despite our best efforts, we feel unable to identify or support the needs that drive inappropriate behaviours, we will seek external support and guidance.

How do we use consequences?

At Streatley CofE Primary School, our use of consequences is purposeful; they will provide an opportunity to reflect upon mistakes and inappropriate behaviour, and repair the relationships impacted by them. Consequences should provide an opportunity for children to learn from their mistakes and grow into better people as a result.

Logical steps will be followed to support self-regulation and adults will model emotional language where necessary to support this process. Our consequences are natural consequences – those designed to directly repair relationships or resources, or as a protective action. Consequences are not used as ‘punishment’, to make an example of children, or in a way that seeks retribution.

Our staff are trained and supported to use these consequences in a way that is proportionally fair and relevant to the child and their wider context. Our staff may use a range of consequences in response to inappropriate behaviour. These include:

- A restorative conversation with children to resolve any conflicts
- The chance for children to catch up and complete missed work
- Protective consequences such as an adjusted breaktime offering, where we need to ensure the safety of others on site

How do we use suspensions and exclusions?

In a relational approach to supporting behaviour, suspensions and exclusions remain a necessary part of a headteacher’s toolkit as a last-resort, when our usual approaches are unsuccessful in supporting behaviour.

Suspension provides an opportunity for respite and to allow us to reflect upon the support currently in place for a child and how effective it is. It also gives us the opportunity to plan any changes in support that may stop incidents from recurring and to promote a successful reintegration to our school community following suspension.

If there is a pattern of suspension, we will always seek support and advice to understand wider needs and issues and address them. We are not satisfied to see persistent disruptive behaviour as having no cause or revealing no need.

If a child is suspended we will always work with the parent/carer to avoid them becoming overwhelmed, ensure the child’s safety and seek to work together on solutions in and out of school

When a child returns to school following a period of suspension, we hold a restorative reintegration conversation with them and/or their parent/carer. This serves two purposes: To ensure everyone around the child understands the causes and impact of an incident, and to ensure the child retains their sense of belonging within our school (and recognises, therefore, that any support in place is also in support of their belonging).

Permanent Exclusion also still exists within a relational school, as a final action a headteacher can take when faced with an incident of high severity that it means that it is no longer safe or appropriate for the child to be in that school. In this instance we will always work with agencies to safeguard the child and seek alternative education solutions.

Appendix i: External Support for Children and Young People

If ever the implementation of this policy proves ineffective in supporting a child's complex behaviour, there are a range of services within West Berkshire Council we may call upon for additional guidance and support. Many of these services contributed to the co-production of this policy framework.

Service	Contact details
Autism Advisory Service (via Learning Support Service)	learningsupportteam@westberks.gov.uk
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)	https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health-services-camhs/
Education Welfare Service	ewss@westberks.gov.uk
Education Psychology (Social Inclusion Admin)	
Emotional Health Academy (EHA)	Emotional.health.triage@westberks.gov.uk
Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA)	ebsa@westberks.gov.uk
Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS)	emtas@westberks.gov.uk
Exclusions and Reintegration Service	Exclusionsandreintegration@westberks.gov.uk
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Assessment team	senteam@westberks.gov.uk
Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST)	Therapeutic.SupportTeam@westberks.gov.uk
Virtual School (VS)	virtualschool@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix ii: Links to external resources and guidance

Author / Organisation	Link
Attachment Research Community	ARC terminology doc AW.pdf
Education Scotland	Relational Approaches
Sec Ed	Relational practice: Improving behaviour and school culture vulnerable children pupils safety safeguarding
Beacon House	Behavioural to Relational Responses at School
Rees Centre (University of Oxford)	Relational practice - aati-reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk
Meadows Psychology Service	Implementing the PACE Approach in School - Meadows