

Relational Policy

Northgate Primary School



Approved by:	Northgate Governing Body
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Contents

PART ONE INTRODUCTION

- 1. CORE BELIEFS AND VALUES**
- 2. THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS**
- 3. THE IMPACT OF DISRUPTION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**
- 4. OUR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE**
- 5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENTIATION**
- 6. THE NEED FOR STATE DEPENDENT INTERVENTIONS**
- 7. THE FOUR KEY ELEMENTS FOR OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY:**
 - A. KNOW THE STORY**
 - B. INCREASE FELT SAFETY**
 - C. SOOTHE THE ALARM**
 - D. SEE THE CHILD**

SECTION TWO- EXPECTATIONS AND IMPACT

- 1. EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STAFF**
 - A. DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCES**
 - B. DIFFERENT TRAININGS AND UNDERSTANDINGS**
 - C. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF REGULATION**
 - D. THE NEED FOR CONNECTION**
 - E. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS OUR PUPILS**

- 2. EXPECTATIONS FOR PUPILS**
 - A. DIFFERENT STARTING POINTS**
 - B. DIFFERENT CAPACITIES, SENSITIVITIES AND VULNERABILITIES**
 - C. DIFFERENT STATES**
 - D. DIFFERENTIATION OF EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL TASKS AND EXPECTATIONS**
 - E. THE CHALLENGE FOR OUR PUPILS**
 - F. OUR RESPONSE TO OUR PUPILS**

- 3. HOW WE MEASURE EFFECTIVENESS**
 - A. RELATIONSHIP CIRCLES**
 - B. ME AND MY SCHOOL**
 - C. THE MOUNTAIN CLIMB**

- D. PUPIL SURVEYS**
- E. TEACHER SURVEYS**

SECTION 3

Part 1 – Introduction

Core beliefs and values

We are a school that whole-heartedly believes in a child-centred approach; therefore, it is imperative that children are at the core of everything we do. All of our staff are committed to following an approach which positively supports every child's development and effective learning.

In order to reflect our commitment to developing the whole child and in line with our legal duties under the Equalities Act, we expect all of our school community to demonstrate our core values.

Curiosity Ambition Resilience Empathy Respect

We value every child as an individual and we will nurture and show care for them. We will:

- Build positive connections unconditionally
- Understand behaviour is always due to something inside causing stress
- Show understanding, empathy and care in all we do
- Adapt our provision to the needs of individuals
- Share enjoyment in each other
- Create a sense of emotional safety

The power of relationship

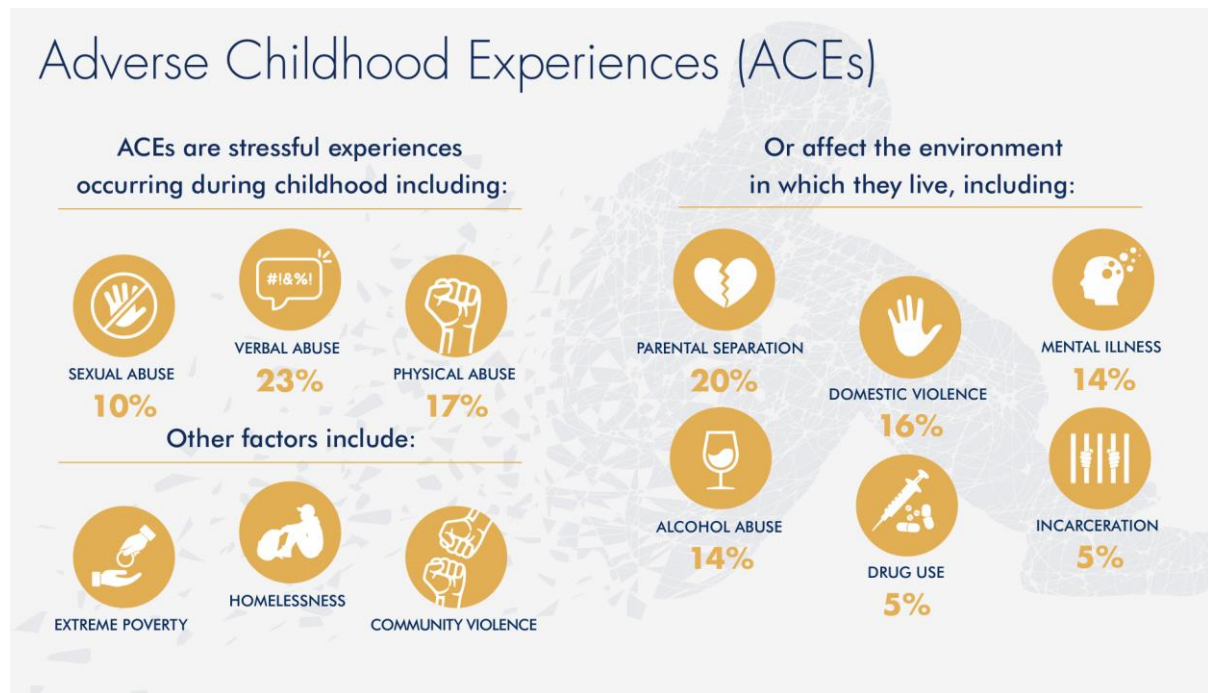
Every child is unique. Every child comes to school facing their own challenges. Through attuned and nurturing relationships, we can help all children to feel safe, secure, calm and happy to learn. We need to approach every relationship with compassion and build trust so we can provide an environment built on safety. When children feel safe they can learn to build positive relationships where they feel valued and connected to others.

Our children need closeness, consistency and trust to be able to thrive and be successful.

The impact of disruption for children and young people

Developmental trauma describes the root cause of many behaviours we see in children. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), where a child has been exposed to negative experiences early on in their childhood, these contribute to the disruption of development and cause symptoms of developmental trauma.

Childhood adversity can create harmful levels of stress that impact healthy brain development. This can result in **long-term effects on learning, behaviour, and health.**



Increased Risks With ACEs in childhood

Compared to individuals with no ACEs, those with four or more ACEs were...



Our corporate responsibility towards recovery and resilience

All stakeholders have a responsibility and duty to help all children to show their vulnerabilities so they feel safe in our school. Feeling psychologically safe is vital for learning and wellbeing. All adults need to model: making mistakes, apologising, displaying emotions, having opinions and sharing how we regulate ourselves during difficult times.

The significance of difference

All children are individual and arrive in school having experienced many differences. Children are the products of early adaptive interactions between genetic and environmental influences. Social environmental risk factors like: poverty, child maltreatment, exposure to violence and other adverse experiences have a significant impact on how a child behaves. Understanding why a child behaves in a certain way and knowing their journey through life helps us to understand them.

The need for state dependent interventions

Children need to learn from all adults how to develop positive relationships based on warmth, care and trust. Key adults support children by attuning in with their emotional needs first. Children can then learn about themselves and develop the skills to regulate independently so they can have happy relationships.

The Four Key Elements for our journey together as a community:

Know the story

What is the child's life experience from conception to present?

How have these experiences impacted on how they cope and how they behave?

Know the story – let's be curious about the pupils in our care, the parents/carers and the staff we work alongside. What has been lived to date from pregnancy onwards? Are adverse childhood experiences in the mix? Is toxic stress present? Let's embody empathy, being gentle with our strength and being strong with our gentleness.

Increase felt safety

Identify key members of staff who can be safe adults for individuals

Give a child space and time to be and be quiet until they are ready to respond

Increase felt safety – let's use our body, face and voice to communicate safety to all those around us. This will mean taking care of our own nervous systems as we go, to enable us to do this authentically.

Soothe the alarm

Understand when a child feels: fear, panic, terror and overwhelm and support through time with a key adult

Key adults will support a child using PACE – playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy

Soothe the alarm – let's ensure we are regulated so that we can download calm into our pupils. Let's see ourselves as stress regulators, especially at key trigger times like transitions. Let's use our own body, face and voice to co-regulate a pupil. Let's also use the power of the breath, calm boxes /bags, the land, pets, reset spaces, sensory breaks and snacks at regular intervals throughout the day using the sequence of engagement

See the child

Use hand of options to wonder about how a child is feeling – I wonder if you ... and avoid questioning if a child is not ready

I can see that you are feeling ...

I would feel the same if

I am here to listen

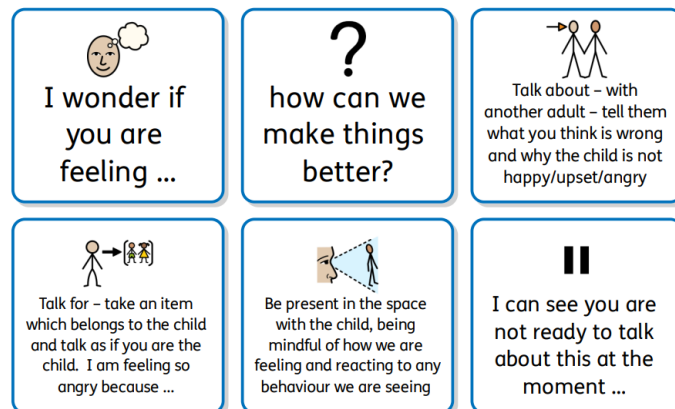
Use strategies such as:

Talk with

Talk about

Talk for

Language to use in situations



Our pupils have very different experiences to us. Let's press pause to communicate acceptance by considering the contexts that they find themselves in both at home and at school. Be curious together with them by wondering aloud in a kind, empathic way. Spend time connecting with pupils being attentive, attuned and responsive to them. Find ways to communicate and enjoy being with the children, just for who they are, not what they do.

Part 2 - Expectations and impact

Expectations for staff

Different backgrounds and experiences

As a school we understand that all children arrive from different settings and with a wealth of different experiences and that we ourselves have had different childhood and life experiences.

Even when children come from the same family there can be a significant difference in the experience an individual will have had. There can be a variation in personality, psychopathology and cognitive ability which comes from differences in their experiences of the same family environment. This could be different events they experienced and different ways of internalizing these events. There will be differences in the way siblings are treated and feel within a family situation. Other experiences can shape a child emotionally including: a family tragedy, neighbourhood violence, economic hardship and many other traumatic events.

Our own expectations as staff will be heavily based on our own childhood and life experiences and it is important to understand how these can affect us when dealing with individuals in our school setting.

Different trainings and understandings

As a staff we arrive at Northgate Primary School (NGPS) having experienced different work settings, policies, rules and routines and these may conflict with what we follow at NGPS. Staff will be supported to understand trauma responses and early brain development to be able to understand the approach the school has to developing positive relationships.

The significance of self-reflection

It is vital that staff give importance to self-reflection when supporting children through challenging situations to ensure all children are understood and supported in the best way. Reflecting on how we feel as staff in any situation enables us to understand how we can help and support a child. We as adults need to show kindness and be caring so children know we are always there for them.

Sometimes, due to our own personal experiences both past and present, we are unable to be emotionally available for a child. In these moments it is important that we 'check out' and get another adult to 'check in' with the child needing support. As adults it is important we recognise when we are unable to meet the immediate needs of a child and that this is vocalised, if we don't do this then it could be more damaging to the child in that moment and impact on the relationship we have with them.

The need for self-regulation

It is important for staff to be connected and regulated when supporting a child to manage a situation when they have moved from calm to alert, alarm, fear and terror.

In our school people change people. This will happen when staff are emotionally present, attuned with the child, connected to the situation and are calm. Children will pick up on an adult who is not readily available to manage a situation and therefore not able to give the child the emotional support they need. If an adult is not able to meet the needs of a child in the moment, then another adult can 'step in.' There is nothing wrong with not being emotionally available to a child in a given moment and it is important for staff to know this and to feel safe to ask another adult to support so they can step away.

All adults need time and space for themselves when situations become challenging.

The need for connection

We need to build positive connections with the children we work with and create enjoyment in the relationship. These connections need to be unconditional, no matter what happens we will always be there for them. We need to understand no matter what the behaviour is that a child presents, it is due to something inside, a way of communicating hurt, shame, upset, fear.

Behaviour is communication – we need to learn to unpick and understand what is being communicated and why.

Collectively, when we show empathy, when we care, when we understand a child and their needs, we can give the best support. Our support needs to be bespoke for each child. When they show us through their behaviour that things are too difficult or too hard, we need to become attuned to what they are communicating so we can help them.

Our responsibilities towards our pupils

As adults caring for the children at NGPS, it is our responsibility to guide a child. We are their circle of security. Children who have suffered childhood trauma and have ACEs find it hard to trust the adults who were there to look after them. It is our responsibility to show the children that we can be trusted as adults through building positive relationships. Children take control and show through their negative behaviours that they don't trust the adults or the world to keep them safe. They feel they have to be in control to survive. We need to create a safe space for them so they can begin to let the adults be in control to keep them safe. In turn they will feel safe.

We have a responsibility to look after ourselves and give time to our own self-care. It is important we talk about how we are feeling about the relationships we develop with a child so any difficulties can be explored.

Expectations for pupils

We need to meet the child emotionally not logically when they need support to regulate. How do we connect with them? How do we help them to feel we are open to their needs? How do we make them feel seen?

Children need to have the space so they can let the adults know how they feel. You may say: You are letting me know you are feeling ...

We need to match their emotions. If they are sad, talk to them slowly and if they are angry then match their intensity.

Different starting points

Is it all genetic or do environmental factors contribute to how a child responds and behaves? Do we come into the world already formed as people or is the world we live in what determines who we are and become?

Scientifically, it is most likely that the interplay between genes and environment is what makes us *us*. It is the intricate interaction between internal and external causes that mould us.

Different capacities, sensitivities and vulnerabilities

For children who have suffered from developmental trauma, the impact can be significant on brain development and physical development. If a child has lived through toxic stress then their neuroception will have been altered in a way that they will see threat EVERYWHERE, even when there isn't any threat. There is an inability to detect whether the environment they are in is safe or not. We need to know the unique story of individuals to understand their emotional capacity so they can be supported to feel safe.

There are five states which all of us can be in at any moment, calm, alert, alarm, fear and terror. Each state relates to a specific nervous system.

Different states

Children can give many cues which tell us how they are feeling.

Calm – The pupil is in the neocortex area of the brain and can think abstractly. They can consider the past, present and future and have a sense of extended time.

Alert – The pupil is in the sub cortex area of the brain and can think concretely. They can consider past, present and the immediate future and have a sense of hours and days.

Alarm – The pupils are in the limbic area of the brain and can consider the past but the present only in terms hours and minutes. They are emotional and their capacity for thought is reduced.

Fear – The pupil is in the mid area of the brain and can consider the past to an extent and the present only in terms of minutes and seconds. They are reactive and their capacity for thought is significantly reduced.

Terror – The pupil is in the brain stem and has lost access to their sense of where they are in time and space. They are reflexive and are no longer thinking.

Differentiation of emotional and social tasks and expectations

What are the roots affecting the shoots? We need to think about how we adapt the curriculum to meet the emotional needs of a child, considering their play, social development and emotional resilience.

We need to help reduce the different levels of stress for children in school, if they become more watchful, stubborn, defiant and aggressive (fight) or more avoidant, compliant or 'tuned out' (flight/freeze).

The challenge for our pupils

Our children need rich relational experiences, quality moments with real human connection with adults. Connection is so important to human needs and because children have been impacted by negative experiences with adults, it is important to build these positive connections with adults to help them learn to develop positive relationships now and in the future.

Our response to our pupils

We will use these strategies to support children when situations become overwhelming for them.

- I wonder if you are feeling ... (making suggestions about why a child may be struggling). It is important not to question children in these moments as this may cause the situation to escalate.
- Talk with – how can we make things better?
- Talk about – with another adult – tell them what you think is wrong and why the child is not happy/upset/angry
- Talk for – take an item which belongs to the child and talk as if you are the child. I am feeling so angry because ...
- Be present in the space with the child, being mindful of how we are feeling and reacting to any behaviour we are seeing
- I can see you are not ready to talk about this at the moment ...
- Stay present with the child, give them the space they need and stay quiet if needed but do not withdraw from them.

How we measure effectiveness:

- Circle of friends
- Sunshine Circles

- The Mountain Climb - use this to find out who the child sees as the people they can rely on to support them when things become challenging.
- Pupil surveys
- Teacher surveys
- SDQs
- Boxhall

Part 3 – Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP)

Using PACE as an attitude at all times

PACE needs to be an integral part of all we do to make sure we develop positive relationships with our most traumatised children.

A&E – acceptance and empathy.

What is PACE?

PACE offers an unconditional relationship expressed through playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy.

- PACE is not a behavioural strategy designed to change a pupil
- PACE is a habitual way of engaging with a pupil, not a technique to turn on and off
- PACE Introduces pupils to intersubjectivity
- PACE is maintained however the pupil responds
- Observing PACE in school:
 - Use of a more lilting, rhythmic voice
 - An open, warm, expressive face
 - Matching affect
 - A curiosity about a pupil's inner world
 - An acceptance of the pupil's experiencing of an event
 - A playfulness in how they relate to the pupil
 - Empathic responses
 - Validating the parents or carers





Dyadic Developmental Practice

DDP is a map for creating relational safety that is essential for new learning and healthy relationships.

DDP Principles:

- Increasing safety and security especially through intersubjectivity
- The use of PACE
- Co-regulating affect
- Co-regulating of narrative
- Using a story telling voice
- Using affective-reflective dialogue
- Using follow – lead – follow

- Talking with, about, for
- Attending to verbal and non-verbal communication
- Connecting with behavioural support
- Relational repair

The principles Team Pupil

The approach, developed and used by Louise Bomber, uses relational team support with in-school staff to create an **emotionally** and **physically safe, consistent,** and **predictable environment** for children and young people.

The framework focuses on the importance of **connection before correction**, placing value on the building of **trusting relationships** to ensure the children and young people have strong relational buffering, initially with adults until they have stronger internal controls

Differentiated support for relational trauma recovery

- Intensive support – engage in flexible support.
- Acceptance needs to come first.
- Accept feelings – e.g. I am sorry you don't feel cared for/ I am sorry you are feeling .../ This must feel so difficult for you
- Validate feelings. A child may say I wish I wasn't here/I'm an accident
- A child can be acknowledged by saying 'You are letting me know you are feeling alone. Rephrase from the emotion the child has shared.

When children don't reciprocate our connection with them

There are times when getting the right adult is needed, sometimes we have to accept that we are not able to connect with every child. Ask the child if they would like to talk to their safe adult, know who the safe adult is. CONNECTION before CORRECTION.

Research shows that we need a connection with a child before we can influence them in a positive way. It is a brain (and heart) thing, there can be a need to mend the relationship before the behaviour is corrected.

Connection creates a sense of safety and openness. Punishment, lecturing, nagging, scolding, blaming or shaming create fight, flight, or freeze.

Only those who have those connections with the pupil, the pupil can engage in the necessary work involved during relational repair. This is ensuring that there is consistency with how the pupil is supported when they are heightened. As it is known that increasing familiarity decreases stress, supporting the social engagement system to remain online.

We ensure there is always some quality connection between us first as this then paves the way to a meaningful, reflective dialogue because the pupil is then able to be fully present, in the social engagement system of their nervous system, the system that is most accessible to human contact.

When there are minor infractions

Minor infractions need to be managed using curiosity, wondering why they may have happened, listening and hearing each side of the story and the reasons behind. Using language such as we all do things that others may see as being wrong, but it is what we do next and how we learn from them that is important. This way we ensure boundaries and learning are being put into place to make individuals feel secure and safe.

In some circumstances there will be clear 'natural consequences' for actions that a pupil might have taken during their distress. Involving the child in decision making about how to 'mend' a situation and 'make it better' can support them to start making connections. As the key adult, support a child through an empathic response by saying 'Let's fix this together'. Use time in as opposed to time out so that connection remains at the time our pupils need us most.

When there are serious incidents

For any serious incidents, limit the amount of words used to communicate.

- Stop
- Enough
- No
- Call for SLT.
- Clear the area of other children and give the child space.
- Stay regulated in mind and body – if you can't you must swap in with familiar other, preferably a key adult for the child.

****Only ever use physical restraint to break up a fight, to stop a pupil moving in with a weapon, to stop a pupil who is throwing furniture close to others who may be injured or to prevent a pupil running onto a road****

Staff Self-regulation

When there is a situation where a child needs support to regulate it is important we prioritise in the moment. Are we regulated ourselves to give the right support to a child?

The adult needs to remain steady and trust the process. Results may not be seen for a while to help the child develop self-awareness to manage situations which happened in the future.

PACE needs to be embraced by all adults.

Find the feelings of the child and give words to their feelings. Chase the why? Why do they feel this way? Try to understand from their perspective. Think out loud for the child, puzzle over what has happened and model thinking for them. Co-regulate with a child by matching affect and showing you understand how they are feeling. Reflect back what is happening to a child so they know you are with them and understand.

Co-regulation not coercive regulation

A NEW LENS FOR DISCIPLINE

CO-REGULATION

- Awareness of the adult nervous system. What do I need right now? What are my anchors?
- Focus on the student's nervous system (what resources do they need currently?)
- Warm Demander: Soothing assertive tone
- Joining up with students. What is the cultural lens and how does that inform how I am seeing behaviors? (Touch points, environments, adults, repairing resources)
- Our goal: always help ourselves and our students to access the cortex so we can problem solve, discuss, explore, and provide feedback for emotional, social, and cognitive well-being.



CHECK-IN! ARE YOU CO-REGULATING?



COERCIVE REGULATION

- No awareness of one's nervous system
- No awareness of the sensations & feelings that are rumbling beneath the behavior
- There is focus only on the student's behavior. The behaviors are indicators or signals.
- "Power over" mentality
- A felt lack of control by educator
- Unaware of the physiological need living beneath the behavior
- Goal: Stopping bad behavior. But, we are often back where we began an hour, day, or a week later.

Say: Why did that trigger a big response from you? Use these steps to support you when managing a situation.

- 1.** Notice what is happening (**eyes**): What might you notice to begin with?
- 2.** Check your own response (**heart**): Might you personally find this irritating or more difficult than other behaviours? Are you emotionally available to support the child?
- 3.** What is needed first? Sensory regulation? Emotional regulation? Can the pupil be helped to reflect? A simple A&E response will be helpful here too, 'this is hard for you'. (**hands outstretched**): Imagine the pupil is now becoming increasingly dysregulated in front of you, what do you think might be needed first?
- 4.** Tentative wondering about a pupil's internal experience. 'I wonder what's going on, how come, no wonder you.....' (**tap head**): have a go at being curious in front of the pupil.
- 5.** Explore thoughts, desires, urges, motives underneath behaviour. How do I show a pupil that I get it? Behaviour is communication. This is a deeper A & E response

(hands underneath): have a go at expressing further curiosity to show the pupil that you really want to understand.

6. Do I need to teach the behaviour in some way? Increase structure and supervision? Natural consequence? Problem solve? **(fingers to lips)**: what do you think might need to happen next, if anything?

7. Facilitate repair if necessary **(hold hands)** – what might a member of staff themselves need to apologise for?

Attunement

A - Adopt an anti-bias stance

Every child is unique. Every child is important and has the right to full time education. We challenge performative policies that lead to some children being considered inconvenient in some schools. Our policies, language and practices need to nurture all learners rather than discriminate against or punish some. By adopting an anti-bias stance, we commit to keeping inclusion and social justice at the heart of education.

B - Build relationships which make a difference

Every child needs to feel welcome and be known in their school community. We build trust with children through our actions. Relationships are not neutral. The classroom is not a battleground so let's stop talking about enforcing behaviour and discipline. By putting relationships first, we value each child in their own right and we create opportunities for learners to be both vulnerable and bold.

C - Create safe enabling environments

Every child can flourish when they feel safe, and every child can learn. We share the responsibility to create affirming, appreciative and enabling school environments. Practices which isolate or shame children or families have no place in education. By focusing on equity, being empathetic and practising co-regulation we create successful learning environments for all.

D - Deepen our understanding over time

Every child deserves teachers who keep learning. Understanding of trauma, vulnerability and attachment continues to evolve, and it is not legitimate to assume our practices should be static. We respect, learn from and contribute to the expertise

of fellow teachers and other professionals. By working collaboratively and with curiosity we co-create knowledge for practice to become highly effective inclusive teachers.

Self-reflection

Time to reflect with the child what has happened and may have caused it. The adult taking the lead in the conversation using wondering language to understand the emotions of what has happened. Comic strip conversations may also support children in this process. This is a descriptive process, it is not lecturing or describing it is supporting the child to understand the emotions they may have felt in the moment.

Regaining Balance

Connect with the child before teaching them about their behaviour. Discipline needs to come in a certain order. Connect before correct. This will protect the relationship and allow it to grow so the child feels safe and secure.

Relational repair

Regulation is an individual's ability to control and modulate the level of emotional arousal. This ability to regulate is influenced by the experience or lack of experience of emotional co-regulation. It is therefore the adults responsibility to support pupils with their big states, sensations and feelings. It is not the pupil's responsibility to teach themselves this.

Some key messages:

- Regulation needs to be experienced, before being taught.
- We can't provide co-regulation if we are not regulated ourselves.
- Co-regulation leads to self-regulation

You may say: 'I am so sorry if I didn't communicate clearly' or 'I do have you on my mind'.

This is a psychological term used to describe the process whereby one person in a relationship repairs a rupture that has occurred within the relationship. Staff members re-establish a positive emotional connection between themselves and a pupil (attunement) following a time when the relationship has been ruptured. The rupture can occur either because of the behaviour of the pupil OR the staff member. We are interconnected. Sometimes the educator might not have done anything 'wrong' for example simply giving attention to another pupil might rupture the relationship with an emotionally needy pupil but it's about demonstrating the importance of the relationship in the relational repair, in this instance.

Part 4 – DPD Examples

"We need to have a tricky conversation right now but I want you to know that I care about you, you are important to me; I am not going anywhere, and we will find a way to get through this together....."

Stealing

Why it might happen?

- Developmental age, not aware that they are doing it
- Not understanding the consequences
- When you feel safe then these things reduce
- The need to feel control/powerful
- Jealousy – especially in relation to children who appear to be more 'loved'

Ways you can respond:

Ask:

How come you needed to take ...?

Chase the why – when you know this you can be empathetic

Say:

I can see why you felt you needed to do that/take this

Ask:

What could we do instead?

Build the relationship back up with the child so they know you are there to support them and not to shame them.

A treasure box could be made together to keep special items in for the child.

Collecting

Why it might happen?

- Overwhelming need to feel loved/important
- The need to feel in control/powerful

Ways you can respond:

If a child is collecting items, gently wonder with them about whether they need all of the things they have. Ask if they would like help to put some of the things back.

Swearing

Why it might happen?

- The need to feel in control/powerful
- Fear response – used when scares
- Shame – avoidance of shame and deflection
- Re-creating a familiar environment – the language may be very familiar to the child

- Swearing activates the right brain –triggers adults (it is important the adult feels regulated to support a child when they are swearing)

Ways you can respond:

PACE response:

Playfulness – if they respond try being playful

Accept - what led to the behaviour

Curiosity – what is this about? what are they angry/distressed about?

Empathy – it is not fun for you being so upset

Remember, it is not fun for the child to be in a state of rage.

Say:

You are letting me know you are really angry.

I notice you like to swear a lot. What is that about?

To repair

Say:

You got really mad earlier and said some unkind things. Do you want some help to make it better?

Aggression

Why it might happen?

- Blocked trust – a child may be unable to trust the responses of adults due to previous adverse experiences
- Desire to break forming attachment (teacher, support worker or trusted adult)
- Fear of not being seen or remembered – to remind the adult/teacher that they are there
- The need to be in control.
- Feeling out of their comfort zone – especially if demands are placed on them or they feel uncomfortable about doing something
- Sensory issues – if a child is overloaded with sensory information particularly during transitions and change in the learning environment
- Shame – may be caused my harsh discipline
- Cognitive expectations being too demanding resulting in child feeling a failure
- Lack of empathy

Ways you can respond:

Match the energy of the child/matching effect

Show you that you understand the child's emotions

Say:

I can see....

I can feel that you....

I am sorry if I upset you.....(if appropriate)

To repair:

Once regulated

Say:

I wonder what led to you feeling upset?

How can we fix this together?

To prevent in the future:

Modify the learning environment

Lower academic expectations

Bragging, exaggerating & lying

Why it might happen?

- Protecting against not knowing something
- Pretending you are good at a lot of things
- Fear of invisibility and not being noticed – a way of increasing visibility and perceived stature
- Need to control the immediate environment and opinion of others to allow them to feel safe
- Lack of cause and effect thinking

Ways you can respond:

Say:

I can see you want to be one up on your friend.....

I wonder if you worry that you won't fit in.....

Adults to explore the hidden reasons for the child to do this

Use playfulness (if appropriate)

Build trust with child over time

Don't ask questions if you know what actually happened. E.g. I saw you take xxx or I wonder why you took xxx

Use natural consequences. For example, if a child took a piece of fruit, a consequence could be that they won't have the snack with everyone else at snack time but will eat in their own space.

Running away

Why it might happen?

- Flight to feel safe
- Need to reset
- Fear of invisibility and not being noticed – a way of increasing visibility and perceived stature

- Testing the boundaries – they need to know you can keep them safe both emotionally and physically
- Sensory issues – especially crowded, loud places
- Environment switch could be potentially over stimulating
- To feel in control
- Shame – about something they have or someone else has said or done to them
- Fear of change/transitions

Ways you can respond:

Say:

Get playful – turn it into a game of chase (if appropriate)

Enjoy a connecting time together – playing a game, colouring, etc

SOS bags

Using safe spaces

Need for control

Why it might happen?

- Fear of adults, especially if there is a potential negative outcome (different adult is put in charge)
- Unable to manage transitions
- Recreating a familiar environment especially if a child has previously been responsible for others
- Compulsion to break or prevent forming an attachment
- Blocked trust – child is unable to rely on an adult to be in charge

Ways you can respond:

Understand a child may show controlling behaviours due to a fear-based response. The child may feel they have to keep themselves safe as they cannot rely on others to do so.

Tell the child they are safe and that the adult is the setting lead

Give the child a choice of two options so they feel they have some control.

Be consistent with the boundaries that have been set. E.g. If the adult always pushes the lunch trolley and the child always opens the door, be consistent to ensure the adult stays in charge of the trolley

Learn not to show doubt or hesitation as this can make children feel unsafe

Be calm and confident when agreeing routines, expectations and boundaries

Say:

I can really see your bossy part today.....

I wonder if you were worried that.....

Receiving feedback

Why it might happen?

- Fear of failure or criticism
- Feels like a threat to our safety
- Sensitive to finding out about own imperfections
- Associate feedback with the critical comments they received in their younger years

Ways you can respond:

Create a positive way to frame the feedback – offer 2 positive comments for every developmental point

Say:

I like how well you listened to the advice I gave you

Making mistakes**Why it might happen?**

- Shame of getting something wrong, feel embarrassed
- Negative sense of self
- Picking up on mistakes of others to bolster their own sense of self

Ways you can respond:

Ensure all expectations, tasks and activities are matched to the child's developmental stage, that they are achievable or that adults are available to support the child if needed.

Provide opportunities for children to show kindness to other children and adults

Distraction can be used as a strategy

Safety matters**Why it might happen?**

- The need to feel physically and emotionally safe in the environment
- Feeling that voice is not heard or not listened to
- Not able to be vulnerable
- Feeling unsafe with adults in care
- Feeling threatened by environment

Ways you can respond:

- Seeing adults being vulnerable, making mistakes, apologising, displaying emotions, having opinions or doing our own deep breathing
- Having a relationship with a safe adult
- Providing a safe space in school

- A welcome from a safe adult each morning
- Predictable routines and flexibility in approach to their emotional state

Sabotaging

Why it might happen?

- Low self-worth and shame – a child does not feel they are good enough to receive praise, rewards or special celebrations due to trauma experiences
- Praise for their efforts can make them feel uncomfortable
- Lack of trust in adults and other children – surprises and treats may be difficult to cope with. The child may fear the unknown or not trust the adult so think they must be lying
- Feelings of jealousy or hatred towards an adult or child
- The need to try and predict the environment – the child tries to keep everything the same
- Emotional age – the child may be responding as a younger child would
- Dissociation – the child may be unaware of damaging the item

Ways you can respond:

Prepare the child in advance of any rewards or celebrations whilst keeping it low key.

Pre plan activities and communicate with parents about any issues that may arise
Make sure praise is realistic and not gushing. Muted or non-public praise is more likely to be accepted by the child

Say:

I wonder if you did.... because you do not feel you deserve praise, or you do not feel it was very good

I wonder if you upset our learning because you did not feel you could sit/listen/complete the learning

You must be feeling really sad that you broke.... you won't be able to use.... for some time

Loyalty issues

Why it might happen?

- Clingy and fearful of new situations
- Easily frightened
- Can act aggressively or impulsively due to fear

Ways you can respond:

Show you still care about the child and that you are there for them

Notice how they are responding and reflect back to them, so they know you understand

Separating environments

Why it might happen?

- Child may show challenging behaviours during times of separation
- May become more anxious and appear more irritable as they are unsure about what is going to happen to them

Ways you can respond:

Reduce academic demands if the child is unsettled

Be readily available for them to share any worries they may have – use wondering language to help them make sense of how they are feeling

Food matters

Why it might happen?

- Sensory issues – the child may not be able to sense when they are hungry or when they are full. Some children get tiredness confused with hunger
- Elevated cortisol levels leading for a need of high sugar intake to regulate
- The need to feel in control especially where there are previous issues of neglect and a child needs to control their access to food
- Seeking food for comfort regulation
- Unable to eat in a crowded place to avoid smell and sound sensory overload
- Emotional age – they may be seeking nurture especially in relation to baby food or milk and they may suck on food

Ways you can respond:

Provide regular drinks and snacks to manage cortisol levels to regulate emotions

Communicate with parents to find what works well for a child

Offer a quiet space for a child to eat alone

Offer breakfast at the start of the day

Keep a food diary for children who are reluctant to eat

Growing food with children and cooking with them

Say:

I wonder if you are thirsty because you have been doing so much running around

I wonder if you might get tummy ache if you eat all of those

I think child A is a bit sad as he was looking forward to that piece of cake. Do you think we should find them something else to eat?

Travel matters

Why it might happen?

- Fear of change
- Emotional age
- Transitions which involve change

- Fear of adults
- Fear response

Ways you can respond:

Be mindful of triggers, ensure that the child is prepared for unexpected changes ensure there are advance warnings if there are any planned
 Child is greeted by a familiar adult daily; they have a settling task that is familiar to them. Ensure there is a check in to discuss any worries.
 Prepare for potential changes, let parents know.

Family matters

Why it might happen?

- No one knows what happens inside the family home, apart from the family
- Becoming angry and aggressive for no apparent reason
- Becoming withdrawn and quiet in the setting
- Having disrupted sleep, this can impact on the child's ability to be alert and engage in activities
- Losing appetite or beginning or increasing hoarding and overeating
- Need to control to feel safe

Ways you can respond:

Listen to the child and use PACE to support
 Be aware of your own body language and emotional reactions
 Maintain communication with the family, find out what the child needs
 Be sensitive to the child especially if there has been a change of circumstance
 See the behaviours displayed as the child communicating that they need support from a trusted adult

Part 5

Vulnerability Vs shame

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is a fear of disconnection. To make a deep connection, you must be willing to be seen, really seen – and that can be scary. What if others don't like the 'real' you? What if you don't like the real you? Feeling that you won't be worthy of connection or that you are not good enough.

To be vulnerable you need a deep sense of worthiness and a strong sense of love and belonging. Those who have a strong sense of themselves believe they are worthy of love and belonging.

To be vulnerable everyone needs:

Courage – derived from the Latin 'cor' - meaning heart. Having the courage to be imperfect

Compassion - to be kind to yourselves first

Connection - as a result of authenticity. To let go of who you 'should be' and to be happy with who you are.

Vulnerability is the core of shame and fear. Feeling that I am enough. Those who are vulnerable are kinder and gentler to the people around them and to themselves.

Shame

Children who have adverse childhood experiences view themselves according to how others treat them, so they are likely to have a negative view of themselves and live in a fearful state. For some children, having this negative view of themselves is 'normal', it is comfortable for them. Having someone notice the things they have done positively can be 'uncomfortable' for them to deal with. They may control situations to feel safe and this can be seen as disruptive behaviour. This can be challenging as the child wants to create disconnect, they want you to see and hear them but their default is to get a negative response.

When children feel ashamed of their actions, they all too easily can feel ashamed of who they are. When a child carries shame, they are at a dramatically higher risk of mistreating others. If they're being mistreated themselves, they are likely to be unable to access help.

What does shame look like:

- Shamed children tend to have lower self-esteem and negative self-talk.
- Shame can manifest in aggression.
- Shamed children can lack the confidence to hold boundaries.
- Developing a false persona, hence appearing overly confident to hide feeling inferior.
- Being overly competitive and struggling to cope with not winning.
- A lack of motivation to succeed.
- Anxiety-based shyness (different from being naturally introverted). This inhibits children from engaging in a range of activities and projects.
- Loss of motivation to cooperate and engage with their parent's requests and guidance.
- Lack of consideration towards others.

Shame can cause a child to have a conflicted relationship with themselves. As well as difficulties in their relationships with parents, siblings, teachers, friends and relatives.

Toxic Shame

A child may slip into toxic shame when they are working on something, whether this is an activity or building a relationship. If a choice is made and something goes wrong, the child is likely to blame themselves and feel shame and they are not good enough.

Defences possible

Children may respond to feelings of shame by instigating a seething, hostile type of anger described as humiliated fury. This is an essentially defensive response to the powerlessness and defectiveness felt when experiencing shame.

Shame also involves concern of how a child feels they appear to others, resulting in blame toward the others with anger. Protecting the self by shifting blame and becoming angry towards others allows the shamed individual to gain some sense of control and relief from the experience of shame.

Children who are used to having to take control do this as they don't trust adults. In a school environment, it takes time to trust the adults who care for them.

When a pupil experiences physical or psychological threat, they instinctively move to defend themselves through a range of fight and flight behaviours. If these options are not available to them, they will move into shut down responses (dissociation) as a means of survival. These defensive reactions are governed by the nervous system, which can be sensitised to react more quickly in those whose earliest experiences have been frightening.

Developmental vulnerabilities and sensitivities

Developmental vulnerability is the likelihood that a child will experience a difficult start to school and ongoing educational challenges, which could negatively impact their long-term health. It's the result of a combination of biological and social factors that can make children more susceptible to certain risks during their development. Some factors that can contribute to developmental vulnerability include poverty or financial struggles, disabilities or medical issues, family mental health or drug or alcohol issues, living in the care system, and a history of abuse. The type and degree of vulnerability can change over time as these factors change and evolve.

Remaining open and engaged

It is our role to treat children kindly and respectfully so that they foster feelings of self-respect. When children feel heard and respected by their parents or teacher, the

adult has a huge amount of influence. We need to think about how we communicate with a child so they feel seen and heard.

We can do this by:

- Greeting the child every day with a smile
- Remembering details about what they like or what they have been doing
- Matching their emotions and being attuned with their emotions
- Showing you understand how they are feeling - 'You are showing me you are...'
- Letting them know you are there for them

It is important to not share how they are making you feel, children will think they have to look after you.

Don't say:

'I am upset that you are feeling....' or 'You are making me sad'.

The significance of integration

As adults we have a key role to play in enhancing the protective factors around a child. This includes supporting their social competencies, their relationships with peers and adults, and their access to new opportunities to grow and develop. It can be challenging and takes patience and time.

We need to develop rich relational interventions to help a child feel safe. We can do this by:

- Enjoying spending time with them
- Being unconditionally positive in your regard for them
- Communicating their worth
- Being flexible with strategies used to support them – PACE
- PRESSING PAUSE – take the time needed

Parts language & pictures

Helping children to identify the parts of themselves that they are happy with can help when managing a situation where shame has caused a child to feel negative about themselves.

Drawing around a child or using a 'blob' picture can enable a child to see that they are made up of many different parts. Identify the parts the child likes about themselves and the parts they want to shrink.

Build the parts up two to one, with two positive parts to one tricky part. Talk about the parts the child would like to shrink and the parts to strengthen and grow.

When you see a part of a child being shown, use the language:

I saw you ... and link to evidence. 'I saw you being kind to X when you helped them when they had fallen over.'

Once pupils know what makes them who they are they can choose which parts they share and which parts to keep private.

Part 6 - Celebrating relationships

At Northgate primary school we celebrate our children and adult relationships. We delight in children's presence, value and enjoy being around them. We take time to build unconditional mutual regard. We take time to enjoy and celebrate their personalities and who they are. We feel that this is the foundations of children being able to learn.

Taking time to play a game 1:1 with a child, celebrating them, "R loves to play games, he doesn't like to lose!"

Playing card games, "L comes to life when we play together, he is so fast"

Having a protected 5 minutes a day with someone to do what they want, "That time we spend is so valuable, we get to talk about all sorts of things."

Outdoor learning provision, "C is a different child, he helps and is engaged in what we are doing. I see his eyes light up in the enjoyment he is getting"

Part 7 - Case studies

L- joined in Year 3, he had a traumatic start in life and needed a fresh start. At first, he would pace, abscond from the school and have meltdowns. Team L was quickly put into place, discussions with mum about his interests were had to understand his life experiences. L spent time 1:1 with a team of adults. He had nurture and gardening; the curriculum was stripped back to building up relationships between him and adults. As relationships were built and L trusted his team pupil adults, he integrated into class, he would begin to ask questions and be an active learner. When he found things a bit tricky then he would go to his safe space, all staff were made aware to give him space. By the end of his time with us he had strategies that he used to support him to regulate in different situations.

H shows disorganised attachment behaviours, H needed validation from an adult no matter how she got it. Quickly a team around H was made, this led to consistency and boundaries being put into place. H now is aware of how to manage her emotions, who she can seek out when she needs someone for safety or if she has a worry. She is now accessing learning and can socialise safely with her peers.

This is a newly developed policy which has been written by Amanda Harrison (Headteacher) and Rebecca Risby-Tester (SENDCo). In developing the policy, the 7-day Relational Policy training, delivered by Louise Bomber @Touchbase was attended and this supported the understanding of theory and practice so NGPS can be an attachment aware and trauma responsive setting.