



# Stanford in the Vale CE Primary School Relational Policy



At Stanford in the Vale Primary School, we aim for everybody to flourish in a loving community by ‘working together to achieve together’, with all achieving their individual potential to be the best they can be through the values of Love, Hope and Community.

We strive to create a productive learning environment that promotes and develops positive behaviour through our ‘Stanford Way’ behaviour curriculum and deals with negative behaviour effectively. We believe that it is important to maintain a holistic approach, and implement this throughout the school, in order to develop positive relationships between pupils and staff. We value support from parents and seek to work with them in partnership to establish and maintain good behaviour in school.

## Theory and Research

Our policy is based on the Relational Approach. Relationships are at the heart of all our work together in school. They determine the happiness and success of every child and adult. We know that the emotional climate in our school is vital. All children and staff need to feel a strong sense of human warmth as part of their daily life in school: to feel connected.

Happy children learn and get along well. It is our job to be vigilant in observing children and being proactive in supporting them to develop the skills of recognising and expressing their own emotions safely and without judgement. This will ensure confident, happy people who are in the best place to learn. Time invested in this pastoral support pays dividends.

## The Relational Approach



Targetted to the individual



**Relational Support:** How well does support needed for individual children by the team that supports them



**Restorative Conflict Resolution:** How does agreed response for de-escalation and regulation



**Individual Regulation:** How well does agreed plans for shared understanding, learning and change



## Developing Relationships

Relationships will be developed to ensure that all children feel safe, secure, connected, understood and cared for. It is an expectation and responsibility of all adults in the school community.

Positive relationships will result when a child:

- feels safe and secure
- when adults and children around them are predictable, reliable and trustworthy
- when everyone has open and friendly body language
- understands and can express their own emotions
- has clearly communicated structures and boundaries
- feels connected to others and has a sense of belonging
- feels staff are physically and emotionally available
- feels staff and peers like them and are interested in them
- feels accepted and understood
- feels cared for
- is soothed and comforted
- is supported to ensure that their difficulties do not block access to the curriculum and opportunities to develop these skills

How we develop positive relationships

- Teaching children to understand what constitutes a positive relationship:
  - apply expectations fairly and consistently and without judgement
  - display agreed expectations in the classroom based on our values – The Stanford Way, Visual timetable
  - in September we take time to explore and discuss the expectations for our school and how our values can help us. We use an accompanying code of conduct. All staff are particularly vigilant at this time to ensure children understand the expectations of our culture for the academic year
  - involve children in discussing aspects of positive relationships- e.g. valuing one another, acknowledgement, encouragement, listening, sharing ideas, acceptance, tolerance and compassion, then acknowledging children who display these qualities.
- Helping children understand their emotions:
  - listen to the children and feedback their thoughts
  - give them space as needed – reflection table or tent
  - be curious about their feelings, thoughts and behaviour. It is important that we understand the thoughts and feelings that are driving the behaviour so that we address these unmet needs.
  - accepting their feelings and experience without action, judgement, contradiction or persuasion.
  - expressing empathy - wonder aloud, validate, and show them you 'get it'. Respond empathically; imagine how it is for them, empathise and then express it
    - "I can see that this situation is very hard..."***
    - "That sounds as though you were really worried..."***
    - "When that happens I wonder if it is very frightening for you..."***
  - sooth and comfort them
  - help them understand emotions and how to manage them effectively – morning emotion jars and chats, PSHE – Jigsaw, ELSA, HSCLW and Inclusion Manager
- To promote children's self-esteem:
  - show we care for them by regularly checking in with simple smiles, eye contact, thumbs up etc.
  - take all opportunities to praise a child's work or actions, individually, as part of a class evaluation
  - ensure children understand good relationships feel good and are their own reward (intrinsic motivation)
  - ensure that children have work appropriate to their ability
  - ensure that support is available for a child who needs it
  - in organising activities, use a mixture of ability groupings
  - name on the recognition board, team points, headteacher award, believe and achieve winner, star of the week or a gold star sticker
- Encouraging interest and motivation:
  - welcome each child every morning



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- take an interest in every child and family. Notice things about them (a new coat, haircut or pencil case) and remember details about them including birthdays, interests, favourite sporting teams or pets.
  - let them know that you think about them even when they are not with you – football match at the weekend / show they were in.
  - provide well-planned and varied activities during each term, in which children are presented with opportunities to reinforce knowledge and understanding, solve new problems, engage in practical tasks and work creatively
  - organise special events during the year (e.g. class assemblies, trips, book weeks, sports days, etc.)
- Teaching children to understand the importance of respect for others:
    - ensure that staff and children in the school show respect for each other without judgement
    - create an atmosphere where children can talk to staff about their feelings, problems and concerns
    - use the curriculum to teach children about people with different lives to themselves especially in PSHE
  - Promoting a situation where children receive similar messages about appropriate relationships at home and at school:
    - inform parents of the school's Relational policy, expectations and support strategies
    - communicate with parents when a child shows significantly positive or inappropriate choices
    - ensure that we give honest information about relationships at parents evenings and on reports

### Responding and Calming

The art and skill of teaching lies in the use of everyday interactions which actively maintain relationships in the classroom and promote a calm, harmonious and supportive learning environment. Feedback has an important role in learning and development and it is important to support children to reflect on their behaviour in a way which will best support learning eg. 'You stayed really focused today even when it got tricky.' 'It was kind and thoughtful of you to let others go first.'

Skilled interactions can successfully resolve low level disruption. Every child will face challenges and at times experience strong emotions which block their access to learning and good social interaction. Catching these emotions and regulating the child so that these emotions do not become overwhelming is integral to keeping the child and classroom calm. Behaviour which impacts on the child, another child's, or our own safety should be managed as part of our relational plans. How we respond in a crisis should be clear, coordinated and communicated to ensure safety.

### Graduated approach:

1. **When we notice that a child is overstepping a boundary we give them a warm and curious look or a simple reminding/refocusing followed by a thank you which shows that you expect compliance.**
2. **If they do not respond, 30 second private intervention – get in, deliver the message and anchor the child's behaviour. 'I noticed you are...' 'It was the rule about.....that you broke.' 'You have chosen to....' 'Do you remember last week when you.....' 'That is who I need to see today.' 'Thank you for listening.'**
3. **If they continue to not respond speak to them privately 'You need to understand every choice has a consequence. If you choose .....this will happen. If you choose not .....this will happen. I'll leave you to make your decision.'**
4. **Enforce the consequence you discussed in stage 3. Any missed learning should be completed during breaktime or lunchtime or sent home to be completed. Repair time should follow this at breaktime or lunchtime, it should not interfere with teaching time. At this level work with the child to come to a solution together. Following some joint problem solving it will be helpful to remind the child of the Stanford Way (what they should be doing/what is expected).**
5. **If a child continues to overstep boundaries parents will be spoken to at the end of the day so that we can work together for the benefit of the child's education.**
6. **Occasionally there may be the need to remove the child from the classroom to ensure relationships are maintained. This will be for a short period of time. Repair conversations will take place and any work missed will be completed at breaktime, lunchtime or at home.**



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SEA is the acronym for responding to children to help them to remain calm, feel understood/listened to and refocused on what they should be doing.

S – Safety cues – think face, tone of voice, body language.

E – Empathy – be curious and understanding. Respond empathically.

A – Agreements – remind or re-set.

### Regulating emotions

Unhelpful, harmful or challenging behaviour is usually the result of strong emotions which have been triggered in the moment or which underpin adaptive behaviours. We need to be able to regulate them in the moment and provide them with experiences which will support the development of regulation. We need to recognise when children are becoming stressed and intervene at this stage whilst the child still has access to their social engagement system. There will often be signs that children are becoming stressed, for example, becoming fidgety, not listening, losing their sense of humour/playfulness, less expressive voice, not easily complying with direction.

When children experience strong emotions they need to be co-regulated to support them to calm. In order to be able to regulate, children need to integrate their physical sensations, emotions and thinking. Attuning and validating enables children to understand their feelings and emotions, to know they are accepted and valid and to connect them to an emotional vocabulary through which they can express and learn to think about those feelings and emotions. At times this will mean being able to bear their pain – being a container for it. Containment is also achieved through clear structures, boundaries and clear and understandable consequences, which are explained and understood.

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. Some children spend the majority of their time in a stressed state. We need to soothe them in order to calm their defence pathways. This will make it less likely that their defence pathway will trigger and also more likely that they will be able to self soothe when they are feeling stressed.

Once a child is dysregulated (mobilisation or immobilisation) their social engagement system has shut down and attempts at social interaction will be met with a defence response. It is therefore important that at this time social demand is reduced. The adult should remain present and provide the child with attunement and safety cues through their expression, movement, and tone. The adult should reduce language demand and should not ask questions or give lots of choices. Any direction given should be clear and not overly wordy. It is helpful to use routine as well as regulating and soothing activity at these times.

**Managing Crisis: Having clear plans to ensure safety and support.**

If a child is behaving in a way which means that they or others are not safe then making the situation safe is the primary need. Children who experience such crises need to have relational plans in place to keep them safe which should be agreed with all adults who care for the child as well as the child themselves. Having plans can help to support the adults to make the situation safe in the moment and what needs to happen following the incident.

If a situation has arisen unexpectedly then adults have a duty of care to make the situation safe. Once a situation has arisen involving a particular child or situation then there is a foreseeable risk and schools must then have specific relational plans in place for that child or situation.

The plan needs to show an understanding of the child's needs, particularly with reference to their needs relating to regulation. Consideration should be given to how best to ensure that the child feels safe in terms of not just what to do but how the adults need to be in their interaction with the child. Plans should also include what will happen following an incident and these will include support for the child and the adults involved.

Physical intervention should be a last resort but should be used if to not do so would result in harm. Staff will have team teach training in the use of de-escalation and physical intervention if there is a foreseeable risk of behaviour which is harmful to the child or others.



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### Repairing and Restoring

Applying a restorative framework following conflict or when incidents have taken place is far more successful in promoting understanding and learning, than a punitive approach. The approach supports children to develop greater understanding, empathy and responsibility.

We follow a restorative framework for working with behaviours which are not acceptable which involves working with the child to consider the following:

***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 the harm can be repaired?***

This framework is embedded in everyday interactions and classroom practice, from making time to talk and through the PSHE curriculum.

Following incidents where harm has been caused, time needs to be spent sharing understanding and coming to an outcome which helps to repair relationships. This involves an encounter between those involved where a restorative exploration is used. There are a variety of structures for this type of restorative work including; restorative mediation, problem solving circles and restorative conferencing.

Following the use of a restorative exploration adults will reflect on;

***What was the behaviour communicating?***

***How are the unmet needs being addressed?***

***What skills does the child need to develop?***

***What additional learning opportunities are in place to enable this?***

***What suggestions do the children have to support the repairing of the relationship?***

When it is felt that an encounter between those harmed and those who have harmed is not deemed to be beneficial it can be helpful to use the restorative exploration with the child who has harmed individually. This needs careful support and judgement from the adult as they need to ensure the child feels safe and secure and does not experience shame. Children who have experienced trauma may find it hard to connect with their own feelings and think about the feelings of others. A helpful way forward will be to focus on supporting the child to repair the relationship, including restorative action.

Following some incidents there will however need to be a response from the school in order to ensure that everyone is kept safe. If a child is violent on the playground on a Monday, it is unlikely they will be back out on the playground on the Tuesday. This is not as a punishment, but as an acknowledgement that we could well be setting them up to fail if they are back out tomorrow without any developmental input, and also that other children would not be safe. We need to take a relational approach to this, to ensure that the child understands that this is not rejection. We would advocate 'time in' rather than time out and so this is not an exclusion. The work that takes place with the child on the Tuesday lunchtime will seek to support them to be able to go back onto the playground not punish them. As with all good teaching, personalisation will be really helpful in enabling children to learn. This applies to social and emotional development as much as academic understanding. In order to be fair we need to be responsive to need, this means not treating everyone as though they are the same. Equality does not mean everyone getting the same, it means everyone getting their needs met. Responses to incidents will therefore need to be specific to the needs of the children involved.

If a child is persistently disrupting the learning of others then we need to consider whether we are getting it right. The child's behaviour is telling us something about their underlying needs and we will benefit from working on these underlying needs. This should be our priority when deciding on any provision / intervention. Exclusion is rarely helpful in meeting the child's needs.

Throughout the repairing and restoring process it is vital to include the parent's perspective. Parents will be able to give you an insight into the child's development, their experiences and what may be happening at the current time. We need to work with parents to ensure that they receive support and help if needed.



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Early Help can provide support for issues from parenting, employment and school attendance to emotional well-being or anti-social behaviour. Early Help is the initial response offered by all services in contact with children, young people and families.

When children have significant needs or if the child is struggling to make progress despite several repairing and restoring cycles then external professionals should be consulted to support with the process. In particular Educational Psychologists, SEMH Advisory teachers, Communication and Interaction Advisory teachers, Speech and Language Therapists, and Professionals from CAMHS will be able to help with assessment, planning intervention and review.

Staff will benefit from ongoing supervision and training.

A good restorative listener and communicator is someone who:

- Believes and shows that the speaker 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, invites them to tell their story and acknowledges their right to a different 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.

### **Links with other policies**

This relational policy is linked to the following policies:

- Anti-Bullying policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Positive Handling policy

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Next Review: September 2026