
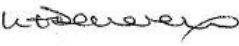




# Nerrols Primary School and Nursery

## Relationships Policy

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Lead reviewer	Headteacher
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Signed (Headteacher)	
Signed (Chair of Governors)	



## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect
3. The Behaviour Curriculum
4. Roles and Responsibilities
5. Theory and Underlying Principles



## Introduction

We want the children of Nerrols Primary School and Nursery to be happy, kind, thoughtful, resilient and successful individuals who can relate to others, make responsible decisions and build healthy, positive relationships with those around them. We want our children to have emotionally rich lives, to have a positive sense of self and to be members of society who treat others with kindness, patience and understanding.

Therefore, at Nerrols Primary School and Nursery, we work hard to develop children's ability to understand their emotions and those of others. We strongly believe in the power of relationships, and that all interactions are the opportunity for a positive intervention. We believe that all children need to feel safe and emotionally supported in school for any chance of academic success. We support children to regulate their emotions and to be resilient when things are difficult. At Nerrols, adults are attuned to children's needs and respond sensitively so that our children thrive socially, emotionally, physically and academically.

Our approach to relationships is based on the teachings of Trauma Informed Schools UK (TISUK). It is underpinned by the educational practices of 'Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect'.

## Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect

**Protect** - Our priority with any child in school is to ensure safety first. It is the foundation on which everything else depends. Our focus is not only on the physical environment but also on the relational environment and the culture and ethos of our school. We reduce the stress for the child by creating a warm and calm environment that is consistent, accepting and optimises social engagement. We do not place children in situations that they cannot manage and focus on creating both physical and psychological safety. We do this through:

- **PACE** (Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathy)
- Regular whole-school training to ensure that all adults have a comprehensive understanding of whole-school awareness of Trauma Informed Practices
- Ensuring that there are emotionally available adults in school and that children know who they are and where to find them
- There is a non-shaming response to behaviour in school. Raised or hostile voices are not tolerated and any conversations with individuals about behaviour, where possible, will take place in private, away from the gaze of other children. And will adopt the **WINE** model to support and scaffold conversations (Wondering, Imagining, Noticing and Empathy)
- Adults are consistent and adjust their expectations to meet children's needs on an individual basis. They ensure that their interactions are socially engaging.

**Relate** - We agree that the ability to form meaningful relationships is fundamental to mental health and happiness. It is the quality of contact we have with other people that is arguably the most important factor in our quality of life. We know that relationships are important for developing the frontal lobes of the brain, which are vital to developing key skills such as emotional regulation and intelligence, planning, problem solving and learning.

- The school will prioritise and promote the importance of kindness and respect across our school community
- All adults know about the key relational skills and use these when supporting all children, such as affected attunement, active listening and empathy



- Children experience, daily positive relational experiences with emotionally available adults
- Children and adults are helped to express their emotions and are not shamed or undermined when acknowledging their anxieties
- Adults have daily opportunities to engage with each other in a supportive, psychologically safe environment

**Regulate** - We recognise that experiencing frequent stressful events, if left unsupported by an emotionally available adult, can lead to toxic stress, resulting in damage to the mind, brain, and body. We know that one of the most powerful ways to do this is to talk. Therefore, we place great emphasis on supporting our school community, through our daily interactions, our curriculum and targeted interventions, and how we support each other during times of challenge. We do this by:

- Having a policy for 'time in' with an emotionally available adult to regulate, reflect and reengage
- Staff will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to confidently support coregulation and de-escalation
- We will ensure that interactions within our school community are emotionally regulating, playful and enriched
- Resources are available and accessible to support regulation
- Individual plans for self-regulation are in place where needed
- Teaching children strategies to support them in self-regulation
- Encouraging open communication with children, especially when guiding them in their behaviour, fostering a supportive environment for growth and understanding.

**Reflect** - It is important when supporting a child's emotional and mental health to have conversations and reflect on 'big' or difficult feelings. We need to support them to understand their thoughts and develop language around feelings, body sensations and reactions, to help them identify new options and strategies. Reflection helps children to make sense and if necessary, find ways to repair ruptures in relationships. Such reflection takes place only once the child is calm and regulated, with a trusted and emotionally available adult who can offer non-judgemental support. We recognise this as being 'connection before correction' (Dan Hughes 2017).

We can do this by:

- Staff are trained in the art of active listening with a particular focus on empathy and acceptance
- Children have opportunities to work with trusted adults to make sense of experiences through creative, therapeutic approaches.
- Behaviour is understood to be a form of communication and adults respond to behaviour by asking not what did you do but what has happened to you?
- Restorative conversations take place when children are ready and able to think about what has happened and are supported to repair
- PSHE is informed by current research and teaches children about mental health, emotions, relationships and how to live life well

Nerrols Primary School and Nursery, are committed to continually moving forward and implementing new interventions and systems of support, alongside developing research. This is to ensure we continue to support the relational and emotional health of all our children, to enable them to grow into emotionally healthy adults.



## **The Behaviour Curriculum**

At Nerrols, behaviour is an integral part of the curriculum. In addition to our everyday interactions, we consciously and explicitly teach behavioural and relationship skills.

We utilise curriculum opportunities such as PSHE and play as powerful contexts for children to develop their understanding of themselves and others and to develop the skills needed for self-regulation.

Please see Nerrols Primary School and Nursery's PSHE policy, for further information.

### **Zones of Regulation**

Adults at Nerrols Primary School and Nursery are trained in Zones of Regulation. Throughout our everyday interactions, we actively support children to name their emotions, recognise how they are feeling, develop the ability to articulate reasons, and support them to develop a personal 'toolkit' to manage this and consider possible solutions, using a range of strategies to regulate their emotions.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Every adult in our school community is required to conduct themselves in keeping with this policy. It is the responsibility of all adults in the school to model the behaviours described and ensure that they are supporting the promotion of positive behaviour. New staff, visitors and volunteers will be expected to read the policy, and training will be given to enable them to understand the principles upon which the practice is based.

We work hard to ensure that all adults in our school are emotionally available. Our staff are supported with the following guidance.

### **Emotionally Availability at Nerrols Primary School and Nursery**

To be a 'secure base' for children during the school day to enable them to feel safe enough to feel curious and open to learning. To listen to children with empathy and talk with them in a calm, consistent and curious manner to build up a 'trusting' relationship and truly connect with them so they feel like they belong and are valued. To work alongside the child to support them to notice and develop different ways of thinking and/or behaving. To never lose sight that all behaviours are a communication of an emotion.

Main duties:

- Increase exposure to the 'protective factors' for children
- Take an empathic approach so children feel listened to and understood and become distress averse
- Activate the pro-social systems (CARE, SEEKING AND PLAY) to address an unhealthy imbalance of the systems
- Practice the principles of PACE in all in all interactions and relationships
- Offer support and guidance to help pupils make positive choices.
- Listen to pupils and help them resolve a range of issues that are creating barriers to their learning
- Reduce the presence of the stress hormone cortisol in the child's system

Key skills:

- Affective Attunement- Meeting the child's emotional intensity (positive or negative) on an energetic level, to connect with the child in their pain or their joy
- Empathy- Recognition of how the child is experiencing the event, even if it's very different to how you are experiencing it. Don't try and persuade the child out of having the feeling they are having



- Containment- Being able to stay thinking and feeling about a child's intense feelings without deflecting
- Active listening- Requires the listener to really focus, imagine and hold in mind what the child/young person is saying and then respond empathically. Active listening means precisely that; active listening, rather than just passively hearing!
- Reflective – The more self-aware we are, the better role models we can be. The more secure, integrated and reflective we can be emotionally the better we can lead our children to do the same!

### **Theory and Underlying Principles**

The evidence-based research that underpins our approach to relationships is based on the Trauma Informed School's three key models:

- Model One - The Ace Study and Protective Factors
- Model Two - The neuroscience of mental health and Pansekeep's emotional systems
- Model Three - Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect

Further information on these models can be found at:

[Trauma Informed Schools UK](#)

[Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) Research: Implications for practitioners - UK Trauma Council](#)