Haywood Grove School
Proud to be Special - Proud to be Different

A Relationship Policy for all Staff at Haywood Grove School

Haywood Grove School is invested in supporting the very best possible relational health between:

- Parent and Child
- Child and Child
- Child and School Staff
- Parent and School Staff
- School Staff
- School Staff and Senior Leaders
- School Staff and External Agencies

To this end Haywood Grove is committed to educational practices which **Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect.**

Protect

- ✔ We increase 'safety cues' in all aspects of the school day, by, for example, meeting and greeting at the school entrance.
- ✔ We aim to be warm, empathic, playful and curious to support children to shift out of fight, flight, freeze positions.
- ✔ We ensure that interactions with children are socially engaging and not socially defensive, to decrease likelihood of children relating defensively (fight/flight/freeze).
- ✔ We have a whole school commitment never to use harsh voices, shouting, put-downs, criticisms and shaming (proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically) in all and any form of communication that could impact adversely on any of the relationships above.
- ✔ We 'interactively repair' occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness. This means that in practice we apologise to children, to each other and to parents when we get it wrong.
- ✔ We employ pedagogic interventions that help staff to get to know children better on an individual basis (what matters to them, who matters to them, their dreams, hopes). Emotionally available adults enable children to feel safe enough to talk, if they wish,

about painful life experiences, which are interfering with their ability to learn and their quality of life.

- ✔ We ensure that all our vulnerable children have easy and daily access to preferred emotionally-available adults.
- ✔ We adjust our expectations around all our vulnerable children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This includes removing vulnerable and traumatised children in a kind and non-judgemental way from situations they are not managing well and providing an alternative space with an emotionally regulating adult.
- ✔ We aim to ensure that staff are nurtured in such a way that they feel truly valued and emotionally-regulated and in so doing to support them to interact throughout the school day with positive social engagement rather than defensiveness.

Relate

- ✔ We have a whole-school commitment to enabling children to see themselves, their relationships and the world positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger or self-blame.
- ✔ We ensure that our vulnerable children are provided with repeated relational opportunities (with emotionally-available adults) to make the shift from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from 'self-help to help seeking'.

Regulate

- ✔ We aim to provide relational interventions specifically designed to bring down stress hormone levels (from toxic to tolerable) in all our vulnerable children, enabling them to feel calm, soothed and safe. This is to support learning, quality of life and protect against stress-induced physical and mental illness, now and in later life.
- ✔ We aim to provide evidence-based interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic life experiences, through emotionally-regulating, playful, enriched adult-child interactions.
- ✔ We aim to make the emotional well-being and regulating of staff a priority to prevent burn-out, stress-related absence, or leaving the profession through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued, blamed or shamed.

- ✔ We provide designated staff-only spaces, which are specifically designed to support the release of natural anti-stress, pro-social neurochemicals (opioids and oxytocin). Time is allocated for staff to use these spaces.

Reflect

- ✔ We aim to provide staff development and training in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking a series of questions/giving lectures). Children don't want to be fixed, they want to be heard.
- ✔ We aim to provide the skills and resources to support parents and staff in meaningful empathic conversations with vulnerable children who want to talk about their lives. This is to empower children to better manage their home situations and life in general.
- ✔ Within the context of established and trusted relationships with members of staff (working alliances) we aim to provide children with the means and opportunity to symbolise painful life experiences and memory re-consolidation.
- ✔ We aim to provide PSHE (Personal, Social, Health Education) and psycho-education as preventative input, informed by current research (psychology and neuroscience) on mental health, mental ill-health (full range of specific conditions), relationships (including parenting) emotions, social media and tools for how to make informed choices about how they relate to their brains, bodies and minds.
- ✔ We aim to provide staff development and training to help children move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences. Staff learn to do this through empathic conversation, addressing children's negative self-referencing and helping them develop positive, coherent narratives about their lives.
- ✔ We live by a Behaviour and Relationships Policy based not on punishment, sanctions and isolation, but one that models enquiry, reflection, resolution and interactive repair (e.g restorative conversations).