LDST Relationships Policy

Date: Spring 2025

Our Trust Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Let peace, friendship and love grow in our schools.
Send the Holy Spirit to give
excellence to our learning,
love to our actions and
joy to our worship.
Guide us to help others,
so that we may all
Learn, Love and Achieve, Together with Jesus.

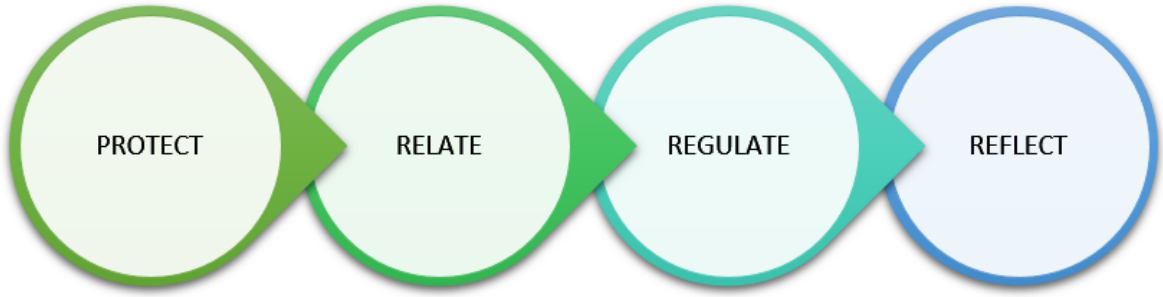
Amen

A LDST Relational Approach

Our Trust 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 Leads
School staff and external agencies

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



PROTECT: In PROTECT our focus is not only on the physical environment, but the relational environment and the very culture and ethos of the setting.

- Increased 'safety cues' in all aspects of the school day, e.g. meet and greet at the school entrance.
- School staff trained in 'PACE' modes of interaction (Hughes 2015) (see Appendix 1): being warm, empathic, playful and curious (proven to shift children out of flight/flight/ freeze positions).
- School staff to ensure that interactions with children are socially engaging not socially defensive, in order to decrease chances of children relating defensively (fight/flight/freeze).
- A whole school commitment to cease using harsh voices, shouting, put-downs, criticisms, shaming (proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically). School staff will 'interactively repair' the occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness.
- The implementation of pedagogic interventions that help staff to get to know children better on an individual basis e.g. "I wish my teacher knew" (what matters to them, who matters to them, their dreams, hopes). This is key to enabling children to feel safe enough to want to talk, if they so wish, about

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

School has a responsibility to ensure there is a system in place for vulnerable children to have access to emotionally available adults when incidents arise.
School staff will adjust expectations around vulnerable children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This will include removing vulnerable and traumatised children in a kind and non-judgmental way from situations they are not managing well. Our Trauma-Informed approach focuses on understanding trauma's impact, supporting affected children, and creating inclusive, safe environments e.g. Little Lunchtime Club, Zones of Regulation in each classroom to foster self-regulation, problem-solving, and emotional control, Nurture Base, calm corners and quiet spaces throughout the school and access to Emotionally Available Adults.
There will be a clear, confidential and non-shaming system of self-referral for help/talk time e.g. NSPCC and well-being posters around school, Guardians PLT, Little Lunchtime Club, Nurture Base, "I wish my teacher knew…" jars in every classroom, calm areas with resources to self-help in all classrooms (Zones of Regulation).
School staff will be nurturing so that all children feel truly valued and emotionally regulated enough to be able to interact throughout the school day with social engagement rather than defensiveness.

RELATE: The ability to form meaningful relationships. It's the quality of contact we have with other people that is arguably the most important determining factor in our quality of life.

Key staff trained in emotional coaching and in relating to children in terms of the four key relational needs for secure attachment (see Appendix 2): affect attunement, empathy, soothing and containment. Regular opportunities for staff to observe TIS practices/interventions, trained TISUK Practitioners provide regular CPD to develop all staff including sharing best practise and resources, access to wider agencies such as Seedlings, Parenting Nurture Coffee mornings, WINE stem lanyards to ensure staff are responsive using PACE, PSHE Curriculum carefully mapped out, Daily 'Meet and Greet' and personalised TIS interventions e.g Sand Tray, Attachment Cantered Play Activities, Big Empathy Drawings.

A whole school commitment to enabling children to see themselves, their relationships and the world more positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger or self-blame.

Relational opportunities for vulnerable children with emotionally available adults at school to enable them to make the shift from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from self-help to 'help seeking',

Regulate: Having an emotionally available adult. High ACE scores (adverse childhood experiences) without the buffering of an emotionally available adult is likely to damage children's minds, brains and bodies because of toxic stress.

The implementation of interventions designed to bring down stress hormone levels (e.g. from toxic to tolerable) in 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 e.g. talking interventions with trained TISUK Practitioners, regulatory tools e.g. newspaper, cushions and transitional objects, now and next boards, Zones of Regulation, whole class sensory circuits, SEMH activities, strategies delivered via PSHE curriculum, personalised TIS interventions, Nurture Base and access to quiet spaces. Evidence-based nurturing and regulatory interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic life experiences, through emotionally regulating and playful, enriched adult-child interactions.

The emotional well-being and regulating of staff is treated as high priority in order to prevent burn-out, stress-related absence or leaving the profession, through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued, blamed or shamed. Designated staff-only spaces, which support the release of natural anti- stress, pro-social neurochemicals (opioids and oxytocin). e.g. collaborative team opportunities creating a sense of belonging to the school by making staff recognition and praise a part of our school's culture e.g. LDST awards, coaching sessions, staff, days in lieu for staff who lead an after school club over 6 hours, supported to work at home for PPA, twilight INSET days to allow for extended holidays, CPD calendar to allow time to collaborate with planning, sharing resources and best practice.

Reflect: Reflecting is about having conversations with a child/adult that support their emotional and mental health.

All staff are educated in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking lots of questions/giving lectures). e.g. TISUK CPD, trained TISUK Practitioners provide regular CPD to develop all staff including sharing best practise and resources. Personalised TIS interventions provides 'self-reflect' opportunities for children e.g emotion cards, Sand Tray, talking interventions using positive mental state talk and PACE, WINE sentence stems, "I wish my teacher knew…" jars , PSHE Curriculum carefully mapped (emotions, well-being and friendships).

There is planned training to develop skills and implement resources to support parents and staff have meaningful empathic conversations with vulnerable children who want to talk about their lives in order to empower children to better manage their home situations and life in general. Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with a member of staff ('working alliance'), children are to be provided with the means to symbolise painful life experiences through images rather than solely

everyday words, should they wish to do so, as a key part of 'working through' and memory re-consolidation. To this end, there is the provision of different modes of expression for children e.g. art/ play/drama/music/sand-play/emotion worksheets).

The PSHE (personal, social, and health education) curriculum is well-informed by current research (psychology and neuroscience) on mental health, mental ill-health (full range of specific conditions) relationship health: family, parenting, intimate relationships and tools for how to do life well (See PSHE LTP).

All staff are trained to help children move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences through empathic conversation in order to address negative self- referencing and help them to develop coherent narratives about their lives

All of this is underpinned by a behaviour policy that is based on positive framing and resolution (e.g. restorative conversations, WINE sentence stems).

Appendix 1

PACE: Strategies to support children who have experienced trauma

The aim of PACE is to support adults with building safe, trusting and meaningful relationships with children and young people who have experienced trauma. The approach focuses on building trusting relationships, emotional connections, containment of emotions and a sense of security. PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the child feel safe. It is done by communicating the four elements of PACE together flexibly, not as a step by step process. Using PACE helps adults to slow down their reactions, stay calm and tune into what the child is experiencing in the moment. It supports us to gain a better understanding of what the child is feeling. In tricky moments it allows us to stay emotionally regulated and guide the child through their heightened emotions, thoughts and behaviours. In turn, PACE helps children and young people to feel more connected to and understood by important adults in their life and ultimately, to slow down their own responses.



PLAY

P

A playful, warm and spontaneous way of interacting with the child to support them to feel safe with you and to promote trust. When children are connected with in this way, they are freer to open up, reflect, laugh, play and share their true feelings with you. Use a warm light tone of voice is key (storytelling voice).



ACCEPTANCE

A

Acceptance communicates that that the child's inner life is safe with you; that you are interested in it and will not judge or evaluate it. Acceptance is at the core of the child's sense of safety. Accepting the child's intentions does not imply accepting behaviour, which may be hurtful or harmful to another person or to self. Through acceptance, it's hoped that the child learns that while the behaviour may be criticised and limited, this is not the same as criticising the child's self. The child then becomes more confident that conflict and discipline focuses on the behaviour, not the relationship with adults nor their self-worth.



CURIOSITY

C

Curiosity is about seeking to understand why a child may feel the way they do and what is driving them to feel that way. The focus is on getting to the core of who the child is, including how they think, what they might be thinking, and what feelings might be going on for them beneath the behaviours that we see. Taking a curious and caring approach can be a valuable way to assist a child in navigating their experiences and emotions. By exploring their feelings together, you can help them make sense of their inner world. By asking questions and taking in the responses, you will develop a deeper understanding of the child.



EMPATHY

E

Being empathic means the adult actively showing the child that their inner life is important to the adult and that they want to support the child during their hard times. The adult is demonstrating that they know how difficult that experience is for the child. The adult is telling the child that they will not have to deal with the distress alone. The adult is also communicating strength, love and commitment, with confidence that sharing the child's distress will not be too much for them. Together they will get through it.

Appendix 2

Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect Model

We follow a trauma-informed approach to how we work with our children and young people. Our staff implement strategies guided by our Trauma and Mental Health Informed Practitioners. Regular CPD and training helps our staff to help our children and young people begin to make sense of their past experiences, triggers, and emotional challenges.

Our staff use trauma informed language throughout the school day and deliver the Trauma-Informed approach through the Protect/Relate/Regulate/Reflect model and PACE approach.

PROTECT

- Increasing the safety cues
- Optimising social engagement
- Reducing expectations to match developmental capacity
- Removing the child from the situation they're not managing
- Reducing stress from the traumatised child

RELATE

- PACE
- Easy access to emotionally available adults at school
- Addressing development deficit
- Affect Attunement
- Empathy and naming the pain
- Help to grieve and find empowered anger
- Containment

SEEKING

Relationship heals



ATTACHMENT

PLAY

- Brains
- Mind
- Ability to learn

REGULATE

- Just listening
- Finding words for feelings
- Mental state talk
- Feeling understood
- Mindfulness
- Engaging with nature
- Sensory Zones
- Attachment play

REFLECT

- Psychologically based PSHE
- Modelling psychological thinking
- Rich vocabulary for the words to say it
- Coherent narratives/Affect labelling
- Memory re-consolidation
- Emotion worksheets
- Problem solving: what went wrong/ planning what to do next time
- Arts/imagery as the third thing in the room

LDST
Liverpool Diocesan Schools Trust

Review Schedule

Policy Author	Trust Inclusion and Assessment Lead and Trust Behaviour Hub Lead
Policy Approver	Board of Directors
Current Policy Version	1.0
Policy Effective From	March 2025
Policy Review Date	March 2027

Revision Schedule

Version	Revisions	By whom
1.0	Creation of policy	TIAL & TBHL