



Sacred Heart

Catholic Primary School



Restorative Approach



Attachment Aware Schools Award

Relational Policy

This policy was reviewed:	Summer 2025
This policy will be reviewed again:	Summer 2027
Governor Committee Responsibility:	BAPD
Statutory policy:	Yes
Source:	Governing Body

“Respect for each pupil and their learning needs is reflected in the experience offered at school.” – Our Catholic Schools, their identity and their purpose, the ‘Red Book’ third edition, Diocese of Westminster.

Context

This policy has been developed following the school’s successful achievement of the **Attachment Aware Schools Award**. It was through the process of achieving the award we identified the unique offer a Sacred Heart. As a school we have now embedded the use of the **Restorative Approach**, the **Zones of Regulation** and **Thrive®**, **along with the attachment principles**. We believe, that it is through these combined approaches that the school is in a strong position to support the wellbeing of each individual child. The school has dovetailed the **behaviour learning policy** into this policy so that this **Relational Policy** is the approach of the school in supporting children with their emotional well-being and self-regulation, so that they can understand and demonstrate expected behaviours in school and beyond in the wider community.

Introduction

Children come to school to learn, and those with a strong sense of wellbeing are more able to make the most of the opportunities available to them.

Our mission is to create a harmonious community where each individual is a valued member who may ~ Grow in Love ~ guided by the teaching of the Catholic Church.

At Sacred Heart we believe that every child needs to feel that they belong, that they matter and that they are valued for their unique qualities.

Policy Rationale ~ Intent

One of the core principles of the Thrive Approach and attachment theory is that the adult-child relationship is vital when developing the child/young person’s social and emotional skills essential for life and learning.

Humans are a social species and babies first learn about themselves through the eyes of their caregivers, in other words, the experience reflected back from the caregiver to the child initiates the child’s experience of who they are. Children naturally make sense of the world through their experiences.

When children experience safety in their relationships they open up to new learning; when they experience a threat to their safety they mobilise themselves for responding to danger and /or prepare to shut down if the conditions are overwhelming and they lack the resources to respond.

Through the principles of attachment and the Thrive® Approach at Sacred Heart, we teach that all children need to have the experience of an adult providing them with a secure base and calming them then they are physiologically dysregulated. We describe this as meeting the ‘Being’ needs by being a co-regulator.

We also teach that all children need to have experience having older wiser others (secure bases) to depart from to explore the world, while knowing they can retreat to this secure base in order to refuel, share experience and regulate in the face of danger or threat. We describe this as meeting ‘Doing’ needs by the co-adventurer.

Finally, we emphasise that all children need adults who ‘lend their brains’ to children to help them make sense of the complex and often incoherent information all around them. Adults help organise children’s experiences, develop their capacity to reflect and support them to make mental representations of themselves in relationship with others and the world by holding the child in mind and reflecting this back to the child. We describe this as meeting the ‘Thinking’ needs by being the co-creator of meaning.

Implementation

1. The Relate- Rupture- Repair Cycle ~ A Restorative Approach

Inevitably, there will be times when there is a break in the nurturing connection between the adult and child. For example, if the adult is tired, busy dealing with something else or is emotionally unavailable due to a major life event etc. While we might do our best to minimise these breaks in connection, when they do happen, they can be repaired, and learning can come from this experience.

Research scientist Suzanne Zeedyk shares with us that ‘*making up is more important than messing up.*’ Dr. Zeedyk refers to everyday scenarios where relationships between two people go through a rhythm of relating (in relationship), a rupture happening in the relationship and then making a necessary repair to the rupture in order to return to the relationship. The repair not only rewrites patterns of behaviour; it also establishes trust. This is known as the relate-rupture-repair cycle.

When we look at each element of relate, rupture and repair, we examine the specific skills we, as adults, can use to help support these interactions with the children we work with.

Relate

The ‘relate’ phase refers to the times in a relationship when we feel connected and attuned with one another, things are going well, and we are making efforts to maintain this positive and mutually beneficial relationship. In this phase, we are effectively building a bridge of connection between ourselves and the other person. Caregivers and their infants start building this bridge from before the baby is born and continue to build it after birth and throughout the child’s life.

In the relate phase of the cycle, the adult can monitor their own emotional state and can regulate themselves physiologically, relationally and cognitively to be optimally present and accessible for the child. The adult can connect with the child and can focus on their needs being met. The adult is present and can contain the child’s emotional experience for them. The connection between the two is reciprocal.

Rupture

The ‘rupture’ phase refers to those times in a relationship where there is a misunderstanding or misattunement, in other words, when we don’t get it right for the other person and we feel like the relationship experiences a setback. At this point the bridge of connection might feel weakened or more vulnerable. Although we might think of ruptures as being problematic and therefore to be avoided where possible, in fact, they are an inevitable part of any relationship. They become a crucial component in the relationship when the rupture is subsequently repaired because this helps to build the child’s resilience.

Ongoing attunement between the emotionally available adult and the child will inevitably move through different phases, being at times fully synchronised and all-encompassing and at other times disconnected and misattuned.

When rupture happens, it is likely that we will see the child's behaviour change. The child no longer feels the presence of the adults as supportive or alongside them, and their nervous system quickly reacts to the withdrawal of these cues of safety with survival response of flight, fight or freeze.

If an adult is able to stay regulated themselves, they will be able to notice subtle changes communicated by the child, stay attuned to the child and repair the rupture effectively with compassion. Conversely, if they are triggered and become dysregulated, they won't be able to attune to the child and this could also trigger them into further dysregulation. It is therefore important for adults to be aware of the triggers and possible reactions and have access to ways they can stay regulated in challenging circumstances. It is important that ruptures in the relationship are noticed so they can be repaired. If the adult is unable to or does not notice the rupture then it can't be repaired. This is a lost opportunity to build the child's capacity for relationship regulation.

Repair

The 'repair' phase of the cycle involves correcting the misunderstanding or misattunement of the rupture by trying to share understanding of intentions, feelings, thoughts and actions in order to come back into the relationship. The repair part of the cycle is an essential component of healthy growth, boosting our resilience and helping us to cope with challenges by giving us greater trust that difficulties can be resolved.

The emotionally available adult becomes aware that there is a misattunement between him/herself and the child. The adult is able to deal with their own reaction, in that moment, to stay regulated and is then able to reach out to the children and repair the rupture in their relationship. The adult may do this by apologising and reaffirming the attuning and validating stance, and by demonstrating acceptance, curiosity and empathy to the child.

In this situation the adult has the capacity to stay steady and regulated in the presence of the dysregulated child. By repairing the relationship, the child's arousal state can settle and the relationship can continue in an attuned way. The adult must always repair the relationship, not the child.

Using the Restorative Approach in school helps build and repair relationships when things have gone wrong between peers. The Restorative Approach teaches an understanding of others and helps children resolve conflict, build trust and prevent harm. Using this approach can help prevent future problems between peers and help solve them swiftly when they do happen. It also enables children to express themselves and develop empathy.

At Sacred Heart, when supporting children with difficult situations and when there has been a break down in a relationship, we use these 5 questions.

1. **What happened?**
2. **What were you thinking and feeling?**
3. **Who has been affected and how?**
4. **What do you need to feel better?**
5. **What needs to happen now and what can you do to make that happen?**

These are also used for the reflection sheets (see Appendix 3 and 4)

2. PACE and the Vital Relational Functions ~ Attachment

To support the rhythm of this rupture repair cycle at Sacred Heart, we use the stance of PACE and the communication skills of the Vital Relational Functions (VRFs). These strategies are the root of developing strong attachments.

PACE is the acronym used by Dan Hughes to describe the optimal adult stance when working with children to reduce stress, enhance connection, promote safety and engender the learning of new social and emotional skills.

Playfulness: sensitive and appropriate playfulness helps the child feel safe and promotes positivity.

Acceptance: unconditionally accepting the child makes them feel safe, secure and loved.

Curiosity: genuine and non-judgmental interest in the child helps them become aware of their inner life

Empathy: demonstrating compassion for the child and their feelings supports the child's sense of worth.

The VRFs represent the key techniques that we consciously apply in relationship:

Attunement: matching the energy of the child with non-verbal, prosodic, energetic behavioural communication

Validation: acknowledging the validity of the feelings the child is experiencing.

Containment: predictability, routine and experiencing safety and security both relationally and environmentally.

Regulation: transforms what was too much to bear alone into an experience that can be tolerated together.

Being Attachment Aware focuses on the central principles of empathy, connection, attunement, trust and co-regulation. (See Appendix 1 for Top Tips)

The Nurture-Structure Highway ~ Zones of Regulation

Both nurture and control (structure) are crucial to the healthy development of the child, supporting the child to be themselves whilst being able to fit in socially with others. However, where nurture and control are taken to the extremes, they can have a negative effect.

Parent educators Jean Illsley Clarke and Connie Dawson (Illsley Clarke and Dawson 1998) created the model of the Nurture-Structure Highway to help adults maintain an appropriate balance. In this model both nurture and structure are continuous (the road). It is important to stay on the road of reasonable levels and not swerve off into the ditches or hard shoulder of extremes.

This Nurture-Structure Highway model provides a way of helping adults consider the best possible support for the child (staying on the road) and how to avoid veering off into the extremes. It is through the Zones of Regulation that we can further support children recognising when they are on or off the highway. The Zones can be compared to traffic signs. When given a green light or in the Green Zone, we are "good to go". A yellow sign means be aware or take caution, which applies to the Yellow Zone. A red light or stop sign means stop, and when one is in the Red Zone this often is the case. We could consider the Red Zone having fallen into the ditch, the Yellow Zone where we are nearly veering off the highway or travelling too fast. Conversely, we could be in the Blue Zone where we are travelling too slowly and this is having an impact on those around us. However, the Green Zone is when we are confidently moving in the middle of the highway at a sensible speed and we are feeling calm and happy we are 'good to go'.

It is helpful in making the distinction between negotiable and non-negotiable rules (of the highway) and is particularly useful when discussing boundaries and rules. Coming to agreement about non-negotiable rules can contribute positively to children's safety and will support consistency for all staff in the school.

Rules in School:

Class rules are drawn up at the beginning of each year with the children in each class reflecting the age and stage of pupils in the class and our school ethos and values. They also ensure the health

and safety and well-being of all children and the school community as a whole. They are based on our school values:

Achievement Care Consideration Generosity Love Patience Prayer Respect Tolerance

The school expected behaviours (School Rules):

The children will:

- ✓ take **care** of and pride in their work, their school and the environment
- ✓ support and encourage each other with **love** and **patience**
- ✓ treat others with **respect** and **consideration**
- ✓ take **responsibility** for their own actions
- ✓ do their best to **achieve** their potential and to allow others to learn
- ✓ help everyone enjoy their time at school include others in all school activities demonstrating **tolerance** and **generosity** of spirit
- ✓ **pray** with reverence
- ✓ wear the correct uniform, wearing no jewellery other than a watch and/or small stud earrings
- ✓ tie back long hair.

3. Managing behaviour relationally

The best form of behaviour intervention acknowledges and enhances the positive. At Sacred Heart we strive to demonstrate a relational approach to supporting social and emotional development and behaviour based on the following principles.

1. We understand that behaviour communicates unmet needs and we can separate the child from their behaviour.
2. We understand that each developmental stage has a range of typical behaviours which provide opportunities for adults to role-model and explicitly teach appropriate behaviours.
3. We provide containment, predictability and routine to build a sense of safety in the emotional and physical environment.
4. We encourage children/young people to become accountable for their actions and the impact they may have on themselves and others, promoting a solution-focused approach to change future behaviours.
5. We keep in mind that we are the adults and the children/young people in our settings are still growing, learning and developing.
6. We seek to restore relationships and change behaviours rather than punish the actions a child may have taken. Although this does not exclude the use of consequences/sanctions, we seek the most appropriate way of supporting children/young people to develop robust stress regulation systems and therefore their skills of self-control, empathy and emotional management.

4. Supporting behaviour relationally

All staff will:

- take time to recognise and record positive behaviours and attitudes and reward success by catching children doing the right thing and enhancing this
- engage in establishing the non-negotiable and negotiable rules at the start of the academic year and revisit these regularly
- focus on the values, rights and responsibilities of the school when establishing these boundaries in conversation with children
- remind children that their actions impact on others and that they have a responsibility safeguard the rights of others
- seek both a resolution and learning when dealing with incidents

- consider how our actions and words help and give children and young people time and space to resolve the situation
- keep in mind that children benefit from a clear structure (containment) within which to learn
- use sanctions only as a form of appropriate, proportionate and positive intervention
- keep in mind that any sanction used is to resolve rather than escalate a situation whilst preserving dignity of all involved
- keep in mind that sanctions must be applied compassionately and in a fair and consistent way

5.1 Positive Rewards

The staff at Sacred Heart encourage and promote positive behaviour in the classroom. To promote intrinsic motivation, rewards will also be given for the process of learning (behaviours for learning) rather than the output of an activity (which may promote extrinsic motivation). Each class system ties into the whole school system to ensure consistency throughout the school. School rewards include:

- Verbal praise
- Non-verbal praise, e.g. thumbs up, wink.
- Use of stickers
- Positive comments in books
- Exhibiting work in class, along corridors
- Whole class rewards for meeting targets e.g. marbles
- House points KS2
- Smiley face (KS2)
- Up the beanstalk (KS1)
- Star of the Week
- Wow Postcards
- Sent to another teacher/class to celebrate learning/behaviour
- Sent to the Headteacher to celebrate learning/behaviour

5.2 Consequences

Children are regularly reminded of school rules. They are applied fairly and consistently whilst considering individual circumstances, including the child's age and any learning difficulty or disability or attachment needs.

The consequences for not following the school rules include:

- Non-verbal warning – look /waiting
- Verbal warning
- Down the beanstalk (KS1)
- Reflection face (KS2)
- Reflection sheet (with Class Teacher or TA)
- 15 minutes in another classroom
- Reflection with Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

Unexpected/negative behaviour is dealt with by using the tools of Thrive, through the VRFs, the Zones of Regulation colours to support recognition of emotions and a Restorative Approach. The process and identification of appropriate consequences are designed to support the children to be accountable for their actions and to develop skills to change their behaviour rather than to punish actions taken by a child. When an incident occurs, we understand that this will cause a rupture in the relationships and we seek to repair this rupture. This can be described as a child being

'dysregulated' or demonstrating 'distressed behaviour' rather than 'challenging behaviour' because we understand the behaviour is communicating a level of need within the child. Where it is identified that the unexpected behaviour warrants a formal reflection period then, children complete a reflection sheet (see Appendix 3 and 4) using the restorative approach. This provides them with the opportunity for reflection, discussion and for reparation.

5. Partnership with parents and carers

We work as a team to support the children in our school as they grow and develop socially and emotionally. We actively promote a partnership with parents and carers and we are fortunate to have such a supportive parent/carer community.

Parents/Carers will:

- work in partnership with the school so the children receive consistent messages about how to behave at home and school
- support the school rules
- support children's learning and cooperate with the school as set out in the home school agreement
- support reasonable sanctions where needed
- be able to approach staff if they have any concerns about their child
- sign the Relational Approach Agreement

6. Supporting staff

All new staff will require training in:

1. PACE stance when working with children - Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy
2. The Vital Relational Functions (VRFs) -attunement, validation, containment and regulation
3. The Zones of Regulation
4. The Restorative Approach
5. Attachment principles

Dealing with a child demonstrating distressing behaviour can be upsetting. It is okay to feel upset and feel hurt. We advise staff if they are feeling that they are getting upset or hurt, when dealing with an incident, that they withdraw and seek support. It is important for all staff involved in a difficult incident feel supported.

7. Governors

The governing body has the responsibility of setting down these general guidelines on standards of discipline and behaviour, and of reviewing their effectiveness. The governors support the headteacher in implementing the policy. Governors will be directly involved by the headteacher where there is serious concern about a child's behaviour and, in particular, where there is a possibility of exclusion, fixed term or permanent.

8. Links to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- a) Anti-bullying Policy
- b) Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- c) Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Policy
- d) Inclusion Policy

e) Exclusion Policy

9. Monitoring and Evaluating Impact

In line with current practice, monitoring and evaluation of this policy will take place across the school through:

- Thrive profile outcomes
- classroom observations
- behaviour logs
- learning walks
- drop ins

providing feedback for the above activities and involves the

- head
- deputy
- class teachers
- School Improvement Adviser
- Governors

Star of the Week trophies and certificates and behaviour reflection sessions/sheets, marble treats and postcards home are monitored termly by the school representative and shared with the BAPD governing committee. Evaluation provides opportunities to reflect, consolidate and improve.

This policy is brought to the attention of staff, pupils and parents annually.

10. Review

This policy was originally developed in 2021-2022 and is reviewed in line with the linked policies annually.

A copy of the policy is available on the school website.

Appendix 1

Top Ten Tips

AfC Virtual School
'Together we can achieve!'

10 top tips for being the best attachment figure in the classroom!

You are a very important person.

You can help children and young people:

- who feel unloved, feel loved
- who feel forgotten, feel remembered
- who feel insignificant, feel that they matter

1. **Remember their name, use it a lot.**
2. **Notice their absence and acknowledge they were missed.**
"We missed you yesterday."
3. **Remember the little things and hold them in mind.**
"I remember you like xxx, so I thought..."
4. **Notice their preferred use of eye contact.**
What is too much or too little?
5. **How can you establish a strong relationship?**
Make time and keep your promises.
6. **Attend to them in lessons.**
Give small amounts of attention frequently.
7. **Be mindful of tricky times...** Christmas, weekends, holidays, specific curriculum topics.
8. **Think carefully about references to family and home.**
What might make a young person feel uncomfortable?
Eg, making a mother's day card saying 'I'm going to call your parents', a sentence that starts 'When you get home....'.
9. **Choose a seating plan that helps the young person feel safe**
Eg, close to the teacher, near the door, with your back to the wall?
10. **Prepare young people for change.**
Help make the unexpected, expected.

 **achieving
for children**

Appendix 2

Reflection sheets

For all minor unexpected behaviours children will be given the opportunity to talk through the unexpected behaviours observed and are given time to think about their actions and words. They will be given a chance to reflect. Should the unexpected behaviour continue, the child would then be put on the 'reflection face' (KS2) or moved down the beanstalk (KS1) and asked to reflect on their behaviour to help them to recognise where things are going wrong. Should the unexpected behaviour not change and the child receives two further opportunities on the same day to reflect then the child will be asked to spend time with an adult to reflect more formally and complete a behaviour reflection sheet. (See Appendix 3 and 4) This would usually take place during morning or afternoon playtime. This is then signed by a member of the Senior Leadership team and a copy is kept of the reflection in the classroom. A copy of the reflection sheet is also shared with parents. An opportunity for reparation will always be provided. Parents are expected to discuss any issues shared on the reflection sheets with the child and support him/her in making reparation and/or altering his/her behaviour.

If the pattern continues, parents will be asked to meet with the class teacher and/or the Inclusion Lead or Headteacher. Consideration will be given as to how to support the pupil in improving their behaviour, for example by the use of a behaviour journal, implementation of a Behaviour Modification Plan.

If a child is being disruptive, they may be moved to a different place in the class, or if they are disrupting the learning of others to a significant extent, they may be asked to go to a different classroom for a short time. Children are given the opportunity to start afresh each day and either moved back to the middle of the beanstalk in the cases where they had been moved down at KS1, or removed from the 'reflection face' at KS2.

Where the unexpected behaviour is thought to be so serious as to have placed the child or other children at risk of immediate harm, where the level of disruption is such that it has prevented other children from carrying out an activity, or where the child has been extremely disrespectful to an adult a pupil will spend reflection time with a member of Senior Leadership Team; this will be for at least 3 sessions e.g. 3 breaktimes. The child will be given the opportunity to consider the consequences of his/her action and look at ways of preventing a recurrence. A record will be made of the incident and shared with parents. Parents are expected to discuss the issue with the child and support them in making reparation and/or altering their behaviour.

Consideration will be given as to whether the child would benefit from the support of outside agencies such as the Behaviour Support Team or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and a referral will be made as appropriate. Any Behaviour Modification Plan implemented will be reviewed half termly.

In the event that a child's behaviour is deemed to put others or themselves at risk, the school may disqualify the child from any proposed outing or trip or internally exclude the child. In the event that this level of intervention is required, parents will be invited to meet the headteacher to discuss the child's needs. A school governor may be present.

In exceptional circumstances, the headteacher will consider the use of a fixed-term exclusion. Examples include

- physical assault against an adult

- persistent disruptive behaviour
- physical assault against a pupil

Where this occurs, the Local Authority will be notified and the school will hold a reintegration meeting with the child and his/her parents as the child comes back into school. The purpose of the meeting is to support the child so that further exclusions are not necessary. The school will provide work for the child up until the fifth day of any exclusion. (See Exclusion Policy).

The school will consider permanent exclusion only as a last resort. Permanent exclusion will only be considered for serious breaches of this policy when all other options have been exhausted.

The school may confiscate items such as mobile phones and sharp objects. Mobile phones will be returned to the child/carer at the end of the school day. Sharp and dangerous objects, such as penknives, will be returned to the child's parent/carer only.

Appendix 3 Behaviour Reflection KS2

Name:	
Date:	Year:
What did you do? _____ _____ _____	
What were you thinking and feeling? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	Who has been affected by this? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
What can you do to make things better? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	What should you do in future? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Adult Signature: _____ Pupil Signature: _____

Appendix 4













Behaviour Reflection



Name: _____

Date: _____ Year: _____

Draw what happened:

I feel...	Sad 	angry 	upset 	happy 
because...				
I made other children feel... when I...	sad 	angry 	upset 	happy 
I made grown ups feel... when I ...	sad 	angry 	upset 	happy 
To make things right I need to...				
In future I will...				

Adult Signature: _____ Pupil Signature: _____

Appendix 5

Sacred Heart Primary School

Relational Approach Agreement

I/we* _____, parent(s)/carer(s)*

of _____ in Year _____

of _____ in Year _____

of _____ in Year _____

have read and understood the school's current Relational Approach Policy, and am/are* happy to give it our full support as parents/carers.

Signed _____ Parent(s)/Carer(s)*

_____ Parent(s)/Carer(s)*

*Please delete as appropriate.

Any comments? Please write below or separately if you prefer.
Thank you.