Oak Tree Federation

Laughton Community Primary School and Firle Church England Primary School

Therapeutic Behaviour Policy

Our overarching aim across the Oaktree Federation is to create an inclusive school where children's behaviour is not managed but is changed so that they become citizens that contribute positively to the communities they live in. We adopt a therapeutic approach to understand the barriers children may have and empower them to take responsibility and find solutions with everyone's support. The Therapeutic Approach recognises the importance of equity: differentiated measures to provide equal opportunities for all. Some children may require a Therapeutic Plan to formalise strategies that differentiate from policy. Others may need a more flexible approach at times of anxiety and change or in specific circumstances.

The Oaktree Federation aims to ensure every member of the school community feels valued and respected, and that each person is treated fairly and well. We are a caring community, whose values are built on mutual trust and respect for all. Our staff, children, parents/carers and governors work together collaboratively, to support each other positively. Understanding other people's opinions, views and behaviours is essential and this mutual understanding of respect is developed, learned and taught through a Therapeutic approach, supported by both the PACE and VRF models (Appendix 5 – PACE, appendix 6- VRFS)

Our policy is underpinned by the principles of Therapeutic Thinking

1. **What is Therapeutic Thinking?**

An approach to behaviour that prioritises the prosocial experiences and feelings of everyone within the dynamic.

When we use a therapeutic approach;
➢ We analyse behaviour rather than moralise about it
➢ We look for the root causes from feelings and experiences rather than blanket behaviourist theory
➢ We model therapeutic practices with all children, adults in school and parents or visitors from outside
➢ Our language is chosen carefully from universal scripts to be outcome and resolution focused rather than emotive

The Therapeutic approach is firmly based on the theory that:
    Positive experiences create positive feelings.
    Positive feelings create positive behaviour.

2. **Behaviour Expectations**

Our Golden Rules and school values underpin our behaviour expectations which support and promote socially acceptable behaviour for all learners and adults within the school.

Planning and supporting children's behaviour creates a link between children's mental health and behaviour. (See DfE White Paper: Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools November 2018).

This policy is based on the rights, responsibilities and needs of individual and groups of pupils;
 ➢ We all have the right to feel safe
 ➢ We all have the right to work and learn
 ➢ We all have the right to be respected
 ➢ We all are responsible members of our school community

We have introduced 3 rules that all children and adults are to comply with and they are displayed in classrooms and around the school to refer to. These are:
Be Ready
Be respectful
Be safe

The safety of the children is paramount in all situations. A red emergency card is available in every class so additional adults can be notified if teachers need assistance.
If a child threatens, hurts or bullies another pupil or adult, the class teacher records the incident on My Concern and the issue is investigated and dealt with in line with the school policy. If a child repeatedly acts in a way that disrupts or upsets others, the school contacts the child's parents/carers and seeks an appointment in order to discuss the situation, with a view to improving the behaviour of the child.
The school does not tolerate bullying of any kind. If we discover that an act of bullying or intimidation has taken place, we act immediately to address the problem. While it is very difficult to eradicate bullying, we do everything in our power to ensure that all children attend school free from fear. Parents/carers will be informed if their child is involved in a bullying incident and concerns raised will be monitored through My Concern. (Please see Anti-Bullying Policy).
When children's behaviour is anti-social, and persistent and disruptive a member of SLT will be informed. Dangerous anti-social behaviour will need SLT support; the EHT/H of S must be called for immediately.

3. Types of Behaviour

 ● **Pro-social behaviour** is behaviour that is positive, helpful and intended to promote social acceptance; behaviour characterised by a concern for the rights, feelings and welfare of others and behaviour that benefits other people and society. Examples of the pro-social feelings we aim to promote in our dynamic are safe, liked, involved, supported, motivated, included and understood.
 ● **Unsocial behaviour** is quiet non-compliance behaviour that does not negatively affect other pupils' learning. Extroverts often communicate their negative feelings with high levels of interaction. Introverts communicate their feelings through quiet non-compliance. Many unsocial behaviours could be a sign of someone needing help, attention or that they are bored or impatient. No unsocial behaviour should need SLT support unless it is persistent and disruptive and therefore becomes anti-social.
 ● **Anti-social behaviour** is behaviour that causes harm to an individual, a community or the environment; behaviour that is likely to cause injury, harassment, alarm or distress and behaviour that violates the rights of others. Examples of anti-social feelings we aim to protect our dynamic from are the sense of being ashamed, humiliated, isolated, lonely, powerless and scared. The policy will promote purposeful responses to behaviour, which include opportunities for learning and rehearsing how to behave pro-socially.

Antisocial Behaviours	Dangerous Antisocial Behaviours
Aggressive shouting/calling out disruptively	Leaving the school building
Continued interruptions	Leaving the premises
Swearing	Spitting (directly at another)
Answering back, mimicking	Pushing aggressively
Name calling	Scratching
Lying	Pinching
Refusal to carry out an adult's request	Hair pulling
Distracting and/or disrupting others' learning	Hitting
by shouting, banging, making noises	Kicking
Throwing small equipment	Fighting
Leaving the classroom without permission	Biting
Damage to property/pushing over furniture	Punching
Stealing	Throwing furniture
	Physical or verbal bullying (see Bullying Policy for definition)

It is important not to group unsocial behaviour with anti-social behaviour. The child who can find no reason to join in or complete a directed task is often showing considerable restraint in not allowing how they feel to result in behaviours that are anti-social.

It is often staff responding to unsocial behaviour that drives the behaviour to become anti-social. Please be aware, all of these behaviours could be a sign of needing help or attention and pupils may be in a very heightened, anxious state – possibly due to factors outside of school – please be aware and sympathetic of this and that their behaviour may be a cry for help.

4. Rewards and Consequences

The behaviour system below is a whole school approach for the majority of children however, we also utilise bespoke individualised behaviour structures and systems for pupils if required. All children are expected to follow the Golden Rules and these are displayed visually in all areas of the school. The Federation is proactive in ensuring that pupils are clear about the Golden Rules and the expectations of behaviour in school. The children have ownership over the rules and understand that they are there for them, to keep them safe and achieve their full potential.

Rewards:

The reward for exceptional work is intrinsic in the child's pride in themselves and what they achieve. However, there are times when children show remarkable effort and this is reflected in the work that they produce. In these instances, it is important that this is recognised and celebrated. For some children, public praise has an adverse effect and they do not enjoy it. The schools will be mindful of children's feelings regarding public praise.

The class teacher discusses the Golden Rules with each class. In this way, every child in the school knows the standard of expected, pro-social behaviour that we expect in our school. If there are incidents of anti-social behaviour, the class teacher discusses these with the whole class during 'circle time'. Teachers will also address behaviour issues as part of their planned teaching in Life Skills and staff will also address specific issues in assembly.

We praise and reward children for pro-social behaviour in a variety of ways:
- Specific and directed verbal praise.
- As a collaborative reward, teachers give groups or classes Class Points (marbles). A full marble jar equates to a class reward.
- At Laughton pupils are awarded Pupil Points to reward individual achievements linked to the school values and Golden Rules. These are recorded using the class system, and a badge and certificate are awarded in assembly for every 100 collected. The names of pupils achieving these awards are also included in the school newsletter.

- At Firle pupils are awarded House Points to reward individual achievements linked to the school values and Golden Rules. These are recorded using the class system and the house that achieves the most each term is rewarded with a non-uniform day.
- Headteacher's Awards - These are shared in Celebration Assembly and are linked to one of the school's values. At Laughton these are Collaboration, Curiosity, Resilience, Discipline, and Imagination. Children are given a certificate and sticker during the assembly. The names are recorded with a group photo in the book on display in the school foyer. At Firle these are also shared at Celebration Assembly and linked to the school's values - Working Together, Aspiration, Kindness, Respect, Forgiveness and Perseverance. Their names are recorded in the newsletter and what they got their award for.
  Headteacher's awards recognise children who have gone above and beyond expectations in school.
- Attendance Draw - once a term. All children with 100% attendance for the term are given a certificate and their names are put in a draw for a £5 voucher given in celebration assembly.
- Uniform Draw - once a term. Children who are in the correct uniform on the day are entered into a draw and the winner receives a £5 voucher in assembly.
- The Federation acknowledges all the efforts and achievements of children, both in and out of school and these may be celebrated in class or assembly.

Consequences

All children are supported in their learning in the way that suits them best – this includes how to manage their behaviour if they are feeling negative or dysregulated.
The Oaktree Federation employs a range of sanctions in order to support learners in demonstrating expected behaviours. These sanctions include:
- educational consequences such as an intervention that supports executive functions skills
- restorative consequences
- reflection time
- protective consequences such as time in a new environment within the school

The majority of our learners are able to work within this framework however some of our learners who have additional and specific needs require individualised plans to ensure their needs are met. These plans will detail the learners' individual non-negotiables and the assigned sanction, used to support when addressing the behaviour.
Group sanctions will not be used, unless the adult can be sure all members of the group have not followed our Behaviour Expectations.

a/ Pre-emptive phase: (Appendix 1)

This is an ongoing assessment on each individual child in the class and where they are with their learning behaviours and regulation. All staff will take a curious approach when analysing behaviours and what they may be communicating. When Quality First Teaching ("QFT") is happening in a classroom it will ensure many needs are met and behaviour adjusted in the moment. QFT means high quality inclusive teaching for all pupils in a class. QFT includes differentiated learning, strategies to support SEN pupils' learning in class, on-going formative assessment to review each child's progress and maintain the highest possible expectations for all pupils in the class.
- We use classroom management techniques to help pupils follow the Golden Rules. The school also employs sanctions to ensure a safe and positive learning environment. We employ each sanction appropriately to each individual situation.

b/ Consequences

Consequences are given clearly and consistently across the school and provide a clear framework for all. The sanctions have been set up to support learners in maintaining our expected behaviours.

- The use of the 'Consequence Ladder' (See Appendix 3). This is a staged set of sanctions that will be followed in the event that a pupil is struggling to maintain the expected level of behaviour, including responding to the pre-emptive phase.
    ★ Each pupil starts afresh at the beginning of each session – first session, after break and after lunch. A total of 3 sessions.
    ★ A pupil may jump steps on the 'Consequence Ladder' for a more serious breach of the Core Values/ Behaviours.
    ★ If an incident happens at the end of the day, it will be addressed the next morning.

The afore mentioned rewards, behaviour expectations and sanctions will be enough for the majority of children. However, should it be necessary, the following sanctions will be applied.

c/ Internal Exclusions

If a pupil fails to engage in learning in their reflection discussion or has committed a serious offence in school, the senior leadership team may choose to impose an internal exclusion. This would be a half-day or an agreed time away from their class and playtimes and with minimal adult interaction. The pupil would carry out their learning during this time and be given a break time at a different time to the other pupils. The parents/carers would be informed by phone call or a letter home. The incident would be logged on our monitored 'My Concern' system to assess the provision and support in place for the child.

d/ Exclusion

East Sussex threshold for suspension or exclusion: See East Sussex Exclusion Policy page 8.
'There has been a series of anti-social behaviour incidents that breach policy and when allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil and others in the school.'

If a child's behaviour is deemed to be dangerous to themselves or others in the school community (with intent), under Education & Health and Safety grounds, a suspension or exclusion may be used as a protective intervention in order for the school to assess, review and plan for the child's safe return to the school. A suspension or exclusion is a legal document whereby a parent/carer is asked to remove their child from the school. This is an extreme measure, and one that is avoided wherever possible. Should this action be required, consideration will be given to the needs of the child and liaison between external agencies, parents, SLT and Governors will take place to ensure a successful reintegration into school. The suspension or exclusion document will detail that something will be different and have changed for the child on their return. Please see the SEND policy and East Sussex Exclusion Guidance for more information.
Below are some examples of behaviour that may result in suspension or exclusion. This is not an exhaustive list and there can be other behaviours linked to the threshold for suspension or exclusion.

• Dangerous behaviour resulting in destruction of classroom/school property with intent - requiring evacuation of pupils and/or replacement of school property.
• Running off and hiding on school site - required significant staff time & potentially police involvement.
• Absconding from the school site.
• Significant disruption of learning.
• Significant hurting of other children or staff with intent.

There are 3 types of exclusion: 1) an internal exclusion; 2) a fixed term exclusion; 3) permanent exclusion.

- **Internal Exclusion** - special arrangements for the student to be given an individual programme of work to be completed in isolation, and to be separated from their peers at lunch and playtimes. This will be supervised by an allocated member of staff and be recorded on child's records. Parents informed.

- **External Exclusion, fixed period** - Return to school will be via a reintegration interview with a member of SLT. An appropriate contract will be agreed and signed by all parties. Work will be provided whilst the student is excluded.
- **Permanent Exclusion** - recommended by Executive Headteacher and ratified by a formal meeting of a board of governors.

- Only the Executive Headteacher (or the Head of School) has the power to exclude a pupil from school. The Executive Headteacher may exclude a pupil for one or more fixed periods, for up to 45 days in any one school year. The Executive Headteacher may also exclude a pupil permanently. It is also possible for the Executive Headteacher to convert fixed-term exclusion into a permanent exclusion, if the circumstances warrant this.
- If the Executive Headteacher excludes a pupil, s/he informs the parents immediately, giving reasons for the exclusion. At the same time, the headteacher makes it clear to the parents that they can, if they wish, appeal against the decision to the governing body. The school informs the parents how to make any such appeal.
- The governing body itself cannot either exclude a pupil or extend the exclusion period made by the headteacher.
- The governing body has a discipline committee that meets as required, which is made up of between three and five members. This committee considers any exclusion appeals on behalf of the governors.
- When an appeals panel meets to consider exclusion, they consider the circumstances in which the pupil was excluded, consider any representation by parents and the LEA, and consider whether the pupil should be reinstated.
- If the governors' appeals panel decides that a pupil should be reinstated, the Executive Headteacher must comply with this ruling.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Everyone is responsible for:

• Being positive role models.
• Ensuring they are fully aware of the therapeutic behaviour approach that is expected in the Schools.
• Creating a calm and well-ordered environment for teaching and learning and promoting pride in it.
• Establishing and maintaining high expectations at all times and praising when expectations (however small) are reached or exceeded.
• Creating an atmosphere whereby pupils and adults are treated as individuals whose rights, values, beliefs and cultures are respected.
• Ensuring they strive to develop positive working relationships with all members of the school community by demonstrating mutual respect and tolerance.
• Recognising bullying and unkindness when they occur and taking the necessary steps immediately to deal with unacceptable conduct in a constructive manner (see Anti-Bullying Policy).
• Consistently promoting pro-social behaviour: "treat others as we would like to be treated".
• Facilitating learning about relationships and behaviour.

What do we expect from Governors and the Senior Leadership Team?
● Monitoring and Evaluating the impact of the Policy.

What do we expect from the Executive Headteacher and Head of Schools?
• A positive school ethos by establishing a happy, safe, secure and well-maintained school environment.
• Ensuring that no pupil will be discriminated against race, religion, culture or other individual need and ensuring the safety of all.
• Regular and clear communication with parents about the role they are expected to play in the development of their child's behaviour at school.
• Effective monitoring and review of therapeutic behaviours throughout the school.
• Recording and monitoring incidents of a serious nature, taking steps to ensure that they do not reoccur.

• Regular training on a whole school basis and for individuals both as part of the school's induction process and as part of an individual's training needs.

What do we expect from staff? (See appendix 1)
• Using positive therapeutic behaviour techniques to encourage socially responsible behaviour.
• Pro-actively seeking ways to avoid difficult and dangerous behaviours arising through priming children about expectations and pre-empting, where possible, when situations may arise.
• Recognising and valuing the needs of individual pupils according to social and academic ability to enable them to achieve their full potential.
• Ensuring that children behave in a way that is safe for themselves and others by taking action to prevent accidents and difficult/dangerous behaviours before they occur (e.g. stopping a 'silly' game from continuing) both in the classroom and playground.
• Enabling pupils to take an increasing responsibility for their own learning and conduct.
• Implementing behaviour guidelines using the school systems for rewards and consequences - taking consistent and firm action to prevent one pupil from taking away another pupil's right to learn or feel safe.
• Ensuring there is effective supervision of all pupils at all times (i.e. 'walking' the playground and ensuring pupils are not left anywhere without supervision).
• Providing opportunities for pupils to share their beliefs of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and creating a class charter/code of conduct which will permeate to whole school practice in the shape of "Rights and Responsibilities" (this needs to be reinforced each half term or whenever appropriate)
• Liaising with parents about matters which affect their child's happiness, progress and behaviour by keeping the parents well informed and attending meetings when requested.
• Planning a programme of Religious Education and Life Skills to promote prosocial behaviour and how to deal with difficult and dangerous behaviours.
• Ensuring that new pupils understand the procedures and guidelines that are in place.
• Recording serious incidents electronically on Arbor or My Concern, where a child's behaviour is deemed to have a serious effect on themselves and others.

What do we expect from parents/ carers?
• Accepting, contributing and supporting the school's codes of behaviour and therapeutic approach for staff and pupils.
• Accepting responsibility for the conduct of their children and offering encouragement or sanctions when appropriate.
• Liaising about matters which affect their child's happiness, progress and behaviour by keeping the school well informed about situations at home that could affect their child's behaviour in school and attending meetings when requested.

What do we expect from pupils?
• Following the Golden rules and guidelines and having high expectations of themselves in adopting the school values.
• Becoming increasingly responsible for the school environment and for their own learning and behaviour.
• Taking responsibility for their own actions and knowing the consequences they will have.
• Showing respect for each other and for each other's property and resources as well as for school property.
• Taking pride in their learning, actions and appearance.
• Valuing each other's opinions.

7   Screening and Searching

Legal provisions enable school staff to confiscate, retain or dispose of a pupil's property as a punishment and protects them from liability for damage to, or loss of, any confiscated items. Whilst it is unlikely that children will bring inappropriate items into school, confiscation of property may be necessary. In the event of any property being confiscated, the Headteacher or a member of the Leadership should be informed immediately. The

property should be given to the Headteacher who will make contact with parents and invite them into school, to reclaim the item.

Teachers have the power to search without consent for weapons, knives, alcohol, cigarettes, illegal drugs and stolen items (the Government intends to add to this list). If a search is to be conducted, teachers should refer to the Headteacher who will follow procedures in the DfE publication, 'Screening, Searching and Confiscation - guidance for school leaders, staff and governing bodies'. Parents will always be informed if their child has been searched. In the event of weapons or knives being confiscated these will always be handed over to the police.

8   Power to Use Reasonable Force

The legal provisions on school discipline also provide members of staff with the power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property, and to maintain good order and discipline in the classroom. Staff should make themselves familiar with DfE guidance 'Use of Reasonable Force - advice for school leaders, staff and governing bodies' as well as the school's Policy for the Use of Reasonable Force.

As a Federation, we strongly advise that staff resist using restraint and endeavour to keep the situation calm. De-escalation strategies and scripts are used by staff to support children who are dysregulated.

Reasonable force may only be used in extreme circumstances and an Authority incident form filled in immediately after reporting the incident. Written eyewitness accounts will be collated to verify the incident afterwards.

Staff follow the draft guidance set out in Section 550A of the Education Act (1996) and subsequent guidance for the use of reasonable force to control or positively handle pupils. (See Local Authority Guidance).

Teachers should always attempt to deal with a situation through other strategies before using any positive handling strategies. Staff should also use the strategies outlined in the guidance when dealing with an incident. This may only be used in the following situations:

        · Where action is necessary in self-defence or because there is an imminent risk of injury.

        · Where there is a developing risk of injury, or significant damage to property.

        · Where a pupil is behaving in a way that is compromising good order and discipline.

9   Monitoring

- The Executive Headteacher and Head of School monitors the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis. They also report to the governing body on the effectiveness of the policy and, if necessary, makes recommendations for further improvements.

- The Executive Headteacher keeps a record of any pupil who is excluded for a fixed-term, or who is permanently excluded.

- It is the responsibility of the governing body to monitor the rate of fixed term and permanent exclusions, and to ensure that the school policy is administered fairly and consistently.

11   Review

The governing body reviews this policy every year. The governors may, however, review the policy earlier than this, if the government introduces new regulations, or if the governing body receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

APPENDIX 1 - Pre-emptive stage for managing behaviour

It is important that all adults recognise that they play a key role in teaching and reinforcing appropriate social and learning behaviours which support children to meet the behaviour expectations in school and so follow the Golden Rules. Children need to feel that the adult has dealt with them fairly and given appropriate opportunities to do the right thing. Using the least intrusive methods of positive redirection (delivered factually not emotionally) will help to ensure that children are encouraged to meet the behaviour expectations. The following strategies should be evident and embedded in everyday practice around school:
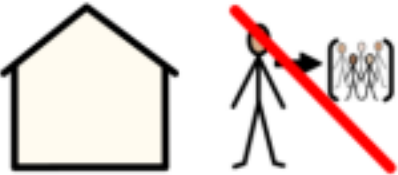
● Teach/use clear classroom routines: seating plans, lining up, coming into class. These need to be regularly practised and rehearsed so that they are habitual.

● Build the relationship: listen without giving advice/opinions, show you understand how a child feels "I can see you are cross...." reject the behaviour, not the child.

● Build children's self-confidence: find out what they are good at, give them responsibilities, have them keep records of new things they learn and can do, photocopy good pieces of work for them to take home.

● Remind pupils of behaviour expectations rather than telling them off:
"Remember, we use kind words in our school". Model expectations at all times.

● Expectations reminder. Staff could ask a question 'What is our expectation for...............?'

● Display behaviour expectations visually and use as a non-verbal prompt.

● Acknowledge when children are demonstrating expected and prosocial behaviours and use specific recognition such as: "I like the way you put your hand up to answer the question".

● Use specific proximity recognition: Acknowledge a pupil for following expectations to direct another pupil, without drawing attention to negative behaviour.

● Behavioural direction and "take up time" Use child's name to initiate attention, focus on behaviour required rather that what is going wrong, finish with thanks, keep direction brief: "Jake, turn round, thanks"

● Use "First...........then.............." Keeps focus on the desired outcome whilst allowing pupils to see the next steps.

● Reduce your use of language and speak slowly and calmly: consider tone/pitch/pace of voice, remain relaxed but vigilant, use confident body language.

● Chunk tasks (verbally and visually): "Write the date and the first sentence - I'll come back to check in with you in 5 minutes".

● Build in regular brain/learning/movement breaks.

● Provide prompt cards: with ideas for "five things you could do if you are stuck"," five things you could do if you need to calm down".

● Identify agreed calm-down areas/safe space: if a child becomes wound up/anxious, encourage and allow him/her to remove self to an agreed place.

Be honest and reflective about your own behaviour and practice; support and feedback sensitively to each other on a regular basis. Build this into the way you work.

APPENDIX 2:

<u>Oaktree Federation Consequences Ladder</u>

Internal Exclusion

Time to reflect

Identified space to reflect with an adult completing the reflection prompts. This will be at the start of playtime/lunchtime/free time activity

stop   start   repair

Circuit breaker

Get to Green- regulation time

Verbal Warning
Non verbal warning- visual/look

APPENDIX 4:

Reflection Prompt		
Name:		Date:
Stop	Start	Reparation

APPENDIX 5: PACE

Playfulness

The purpose of playfulness is to enjoy being together in an unconditional way. This gives the message that the relationship is stronger than things that go wrong. Using a playful and light-hearted tone, as if you were telling a story, shows your interest and curiosity. Playfulness reduces the shame a child might feel when something has gone wrong; difficult messages or serious conversations can be easier to have if the tone is light.

It does not mean you do not take the emotions or the incident seriously. It is also helpful to maintain a playful tone if you need to deliver a short reminder about behaviour in the classroom.

Acceptance

Unconditional acceptance is fundamental to a child's sense of safety because it shows that you have connected with their feelings without judgement, and without seeking to reassure their feelings away. This can be hard to do as it means you and the child sitting with some strong emotions, together. This is painful and uncomfortable, but also very powerful. If a child expresses distressing emotions about themselves or others (e.g. "nobody loves me", "I'm stupid", "I'm bad", "you hate me") it is hard not to challenge them as being wrong, but it is really important to accept those feelings and acknowledge them using curiosity and empathy.

Accepting the child or young person's feelings and emotions does not mean accepting unwanted behaviour and it does not mean agreeing with the child's viewpoint, but for true acceptance to take place, it is important that the child also knows you can see them beyond their behaviour. When a child is very challenging, on a daily basis, this can be hard to do. Try to build in times with colleagues in which you can reflect on the child beyond their behaviour as well as expressing your own feelings about the challenges.

Curiosity

It's important to be curious about the child's thoughts, feelings, wishes and intentions: they may still be learning that other people can think about them in this way or that they can be held in mind by an adult without judgement and accusation at all. Curiosity is also important for discipline to be effective: connect with the emotion before you engage in discussion. Showing the child that you are interested in what is going on for them and willing to do something about it is a very powerful experience. Don't feel afraid to share your curiosity with the child by wondering, not telling them. Try to avoid asking "Why?". Instead you might ask: "Is it ok if I share my idea of what is going on for you? I might be wrong but these are my ideas." or "What do you think was going on?", "What do you think that was about?" or "I wonder what…?" Try to be curious in a quiet, accepting tone that conveys a simple desire to understand the child: this is not the same as agreeing with their perception of the event, but shows your interest in understanding it and accepting the feelings that were involved.

Empathy

When you show empathy you are showing the child that their feelings are important to you, and that you are alongside them in their difficulty. You are showing that you can cope with the hard times with them and you are trying hard to understand how it feels. Understanding and expressing your own feelings about the child's experience can often be more effective than reassurance. For example, if a child says "You don't care", you can respond by saying "That must be really hard for you. I feel sad that you experience me as not caring"
Acceptance and empathy are your Emotional A&E. They are at the heart of the child starting to feel safe at school, which reduces conflict, stress and withdrawal.

Appendix 6: The Vital Relational Functions (VRFs)

In all interactions with pupils, staff endeavour to use the VRFs outlined in the Thrive Approach. These are drawn from the teachings and findings of leading commentators on emotional, psychological and child development (Sunderland, Kohut, Stern). These skills provide a relational basis for a child's emotional, social and neurological development. They are:

• Attunement – demonstrating an understanding of how they are feeling by "catching and matching" their emotional state.
• Validation – demonstrating that their feelings are real and justified.
• Containment – Offering their feelings back to them, named and in small pieces.
• Soothing – Soothing and calming their distress repeatedly.
• Regulation – Communicating the capacity to regulate emotional states by modelling how to do it.

The provision of emotional containment by the adult who is working closely and regularly with the child, is a significant contributing factor to the child's developing capacity to contain and regulate his/her own emotions. The relationship between a child and a significant adult can be an under-recognised and under-used resource so, by using Thrive, this relationship is enhanced. It can help a child get ready to learn and enhance their learning, build positive relationships between a child and their peers and it can improve attainment.

Signed:
Date: 04.03.2024
        07.07.2025