

# Trauma Informed Relationships and Behaviour Policy

St Patrick's Catholic Voluntary Academy



<b>Approved by:</b>	Headteacher	<b>Date:</b> October 2023
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**Rationale:**

St Patrick's mission that 'We, Children of St Patrick's, learn and play for a better tomorrow' is the driving force of this policy. We seek to fulfil this mission in numerous ways, but primarily through adopting a Trauma Informed Approach to create a caring and learning environment where Jesus Christ is visible in all that we do.

We are proud not only to be a Catholic School but to be a Trauma Informed School (TiS) with several Mental Health and Trauma Informed Practitioners.

The development of positive social, emotional and learning behaviours is at the heart of our Relationships and Behaviour Policy.

*"PACE stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. These principles help to promote the experience of safety in your interactions with young people. Children need to feel that you have connected with the emotional part of their brain before they can engage the thoughtful, articulate, problem solving areas." – Dan Hughes, Clinical Psychologist*

*"Education cannot be neutral. It is either positive or negative; either it enriches or it impoverishes; either it enables a person to grow or it lessens, even corrupts him. The mission of schools is to develop a sense of truth, of what is good and beautiful." – Pope Francis*

*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." —Nelson Mandela.*

**Aims:**

Through our mission we aim to provide a caring, calm and secure environment in which tolerance, understanding and respect for others, especially those of different faiths and ethnicities, is fostered. We aim to promote a positive culture and to encourage in all pupils a sense of responsibility to themselves, to our school and to the wider community. St Patrick's is a Family where we are all children of God, where we love each other. All our children are our children and will be treated with love, kindness and respect. This is achieved through governors, staff, pupils, parents/carers and working in partnership.

We aim to enable pupils to experience challenges, succeed in their learning and have a sense that learning can be fun and playful and relevant to their lives. To become independent and enthusiastic learners with a willingness to take risks.

Children will gain a sense of pride through social learning, play and positive experiences as part of the mission of our school. Who are able to manage and understand their emotions, to apply thinking between feeling and action and to increasingly show empathy and understanding to others is core to our work. Empathy is caught and not taught.

*"Education is not about knowing things or taking lessons but about being able to use three lingos: those of the head, the heart, and the hands... learning so that you can think about what you feel and do, can feel what you think and do, and can do what you feel and think. Unity within a person." – Pope Francis*

**Trauma Informed Schools (TiS):**

TiS is a dynamic, developmental approach to working with children that supports their emotional and social wellbeing. It is based on the latest research in neuroscience, attachment theory and child development, drawing on research into the role of creativity and play in developing emotional resilience.

Knowledge of social and emotional learning supports the school in planning experiences, activities and opportunities and reinforces our understanding that learning happens across the whole day, especially during break times where less structured interactions enable pupils to develop their social and emotional learning and apply skills that are vital for healthy development.

We recognise that it is important for adults to understand where a child is in terms of their mental and emotional health and this approach supports staff with how to differentiate their relationship with children in order to support their development. It also gives basic guidance so that some change can be made through understanding where the child is functioning from and practical activities, which facilitate the development of this relationship. As part of this, the school also has access to a comprehensive and flexible reporting tool (Tracker+) for tracking change over time, for both individuals and groups of pupils.

Learning to be skilful in relationships and ready for challenges requires experiencing, descriptive feedback, reflection, modelling and teaching from adults and peers. Addressing early emotional developmental needs builds resilience, decreases the risk of mental illness, prepares children to take their place within a community and equips them to be ready and willing to learn.

Life events can introduce episodes, which become interruptions to some children's development. The TiS programme supports adults in creating a differentiated provision in response to need with reparative strategies as part of systematic actions.

With a programme of continuous development, our mission is for all our staff to receive regular training and to use this insight to build healthy development, encourage pupils to increasingly self-regulate and embed strategies in social and emotional learning, playful attachment and positive behaviour choices, therefore underpinning academic progress.

Our TiS/Pastoral Centre is within our Oasis, this is our hub where children feel safe, secure and listened to, where pupils can meet with their emotionally available adults throughout the day.

*“The Bible states that any emotion (happiness, sorrow, worry) should be brought in prayer to God, as stated in Philippians 4:6-7, for bringing our concerns to God allows His peace and guidance to come to us”*

#### **Approaches to developing positive behaviours: -**

1. Consistent trauma-informed approach to behaviour management
2. Strong school leadership
3. Classroom management
4. Rewards and consequences
5. Behaviour strategies & the teaching of good behaviour
6. Staff development and support
7. Pupil support systems
8. Liaison with parents/carers and other agencies
9. Managing pupil transition
10. Organisation and facilities

Our 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.

We use the see-judge-act method of analysis—seeing social situations, judging them in light of Catholic Social Teaching principles and acting to promote justice and improve the situations of those served. To this end our school is committed to educational practices which Protect, Relate, Regulate and Reflect.

## Protect

*“And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” - Mark 10:13-14*

Increased 'safety cues' in all aspects of the school day; 'meet and greet protocol' at the Early Birds Club, playground, classroom door or for latecomers in reception and an open-door policy for informal discussions with parents/ carers. Staff trained in 'PACE' modes of interaction (Hughes 2015); being playful, accepting of children's feeling and reactions, curious not furious, warm emphatic responses (proven to shift children out of flight/fright/freeze positions). Staff ensure that interactions with children are socially engaging and not socially defensive, to decrease likelihood of children relating defensively (flight/fright/freeze). A whole school commitment to cease all use of harsh voices, shouting, put downs, criticism and shaming (proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically). Staff to be mindful of their Face, Body, Tone and what this is conveying to a child. Staff 'interactively repair' occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness. Regular 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 talk, if they wish, about painful life experiences, which are interfering with their ability to learn and their quality of life.

Vulnerable children have easy and daily access to at least one named, emotionally available adult, and know when and where to find that adult. If the child does not wish to connect with the allocated adult, an alternative adult is found. School staff adjust expectations around 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-judgmental way from situations they are not managing well e.g. children who are continually triggered into alarm states at the start of the day, in the class or on the playground, where then can access calmer, smaller areas with emotionally regulating adults e.g. The Pastoral Centre (Oasis), outside or any place where their toxic stress levels can be brought down to tolerable stress.

Provision of a clear, confidential and non-shaming system of self-referral for children's help/talk time. The nurturing of staff 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

*“Jesus clearly taught that He wants each of us to have the humility of children: “He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’” - Matthew 18:2–4.*

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. Vulnerable children 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'.

Staff trained in relational 'WINE' conversations. Where we Wonder, Imagine, Notice and show Empathy.

## Regulate

*“The process of play is about active inhibition of the neural circuit that promotes fight/flight behaviours. Play functions as a neural exercise that improves the efficiency of the neural circuit that can instantaneously down regulate fight/flight behaviours” – Dr Stephen Porges Polyvagal Theory*

Relational interventions specifically designed to bring down stress hormone levels (e.g. from toxic to tolerable) We have created a pastoral centre that exudes an OASIS of safety and calmness to minimise the toxic stress of the environment. This is free from intrusion and provides privacy. Where children feel they have our attention and where we can listen. Where we can undertake

playful activities such as sand trays, feelings cards, anger sheets, using the puppets/worry monsters etc. Utilising Panksepp's theory that the PLAY system is a huge hormonal force in the subcortical part of the brain: activating opioids and oxytocin which are anti-anxiety and anti-aggression chemicals. Research shows that emotionally available adults in school can modify the child/young person's RAGE, FEAR and PANIC/GRIEF systems and develop their CARE (attachment) SEEKING and PLAY system.

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. The emotional well-being and regulating of staff are treated as a priority to prevent burnt out, stress-related absence, or leaving the profession through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued, blamed or shamed. We have a strong Pastoral Team who are trained in carrying out these interventions without the burden falling on the teaching and teaching assistants who simply do not have the time in class to deal with dysregulated children. All members of the Pastoral Team will become qualified Mental Health and Trauma Informed Practitioners, with 3 already in place.

Children who have adults around them who cannot regulate themselves will have never learned regulation techniques.

### **Reflect**

Toxic stress from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can change brain development and affect how the body responds to stress. The ACEs study showed a direct link between adverse child experiences, and poor mental and physical health decades later. Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with a member of staff (EAAs), children are given the means and opportunity to symbolise painful life experiences through images as well as words, as a key part of 'working through' these experiences and memory re-consolidation. This includes the provision of different modes of expression, e.g. art/play/drama/ music/sand/emotion worksheets/emotion cards, help me understand, empathy drawings empathetic conversation, addressing children's negative self-referencing and helping them develop positive, coherent narratives about their lives. Helping children move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences.

By establishing a 'friendly' relationship with parents from the moment they arrive the EAAs will be able to understand the child's life story and be aware of the ACEs not only affecting the child but the parents also. This is done via various informal events, coffee mornings etc and will make difficult conversations easier to have. This helps foster strong responsive relationships between parents, staff and children that can go some way to reduce the effects of toxic stress and ACEs.

Staff training and development in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking a series of questions/ giving lectures). Provision of skills and resources to support parents and staff in meaningful empathetic (WINE) 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.

PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and psycho-education as preventative input, informed by current research psychological and neuroscience) on mental health, mental ill-health (full range of specific conditions), relationships (including parenting) emotions, social media and tools for how to 'do life well'. Curricular content enables children to make informed choices about how they relate to others, how they live their lives, and how they treat their brains, bodies and minds.

### **Safe Touch**

Children need to learn who they are and how they fit into the world. The quality of the child's relationships with significant adults is key to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing.

## Safe touch

*“The gift of the Spirit is communicated through the laying on of hands and anointing with sacred chrism.” – Pope Francis*

Research clearly shows access to safe touch is a means of calming, soothing and containing distress for a vulnerable child. It is essential that children learn the difference between safe and unsafe touch. Safe touch is when brief, gentle contact is made on open or clothed parts of the body: hands, arms, shoulders, head and hair. The background of the child will always be considered. Safe touch used to calm, soothe or regulate a child's emotions is a needed developmental experience. In recognition of this, all staff may consider using safe touch as one of the means available to them for:

- Calming a distressed child
- Containing an angry child
- Affirming or encouraging an anxious child or a child with low self-esteem

Other means of calming, soothing and containing children's strong emotions include:

- Slowing one's pace
- Lowering the voice
- Breathing more deeply
- Initially matching the pitch and volume of the child's emotional display and then regulating it down by talking slowly, firmly and quietly in an unhurried and unflustered way
- Providing clear predictable consistently held boundaries

## Early Birds Club (breakfast club)

We provide an Early Birds Clubs where children can come before school starts so they can relax, play, eat, exercise and socialise, all without the rush of getting to school. Thus, reducing the stress of the morning routine for families and children. Our Early Birds Club helps improve behaviour and attendance.

We also provide free breakfast to all children when they arrive. Eating breakfast helps a child's attention span, concentration and memory—all important for learning in school.

## Free meals for all

*“A small boy gave Jesus 5 small barley loaves and 2 small fish and Jesus fed 5,000 men; not including women and children and there were 12 baskets of left-over pieces. Jesus is Mighty to Save and Strong to provide. No matter how meagre your resources are, God will provide.”*

We provide free meals for all children irrespective of their parent's financial situation. No child should be too hungry to learn. Children's behaviour and learning outcomes suffer when they regularly experience hunger and that nearly every aspect of physical and mental function is hurt as well. Food insecurity affects concentration, memory, mood, and motor skills, all of which a child needs to be able to be successful in school.

Beyond academic achievement, hunger can hurt a child's ability to build and strengthen their social-emotional skills. When children are hungry, they typically have less energy and the ability to focus. Feeling tired and distracted impacts a child's social interactions and behaviour.

When children are hungry, they have an increased possibility for behavioural issues like hyperactivity, aggression or anxiety. Their moods can change. When they are feeling that physical hunger, it impacts their emotional and their mental well-being, causing them to act out in different ways

## Classroom Management

*“Classroom management is not about having the right rules, it's about having the right relationships.”*

Classroom management and teaching methods have an important influence on children's behaviour. The classroom environment gives clear messages to the children about the extent to which they and their efforts are valued. Relationships between teacher and children, strategies for encouraging good behaviour, arrangement of furniture, access to resources and classroom displays all have a

bearing on the way children behave. Classrooms should be organised to develop independence and personal initiative. Furniture should be arranged to provide an environment conducive to on-task behaviour. Materials and resources should be arranged to aid accessibility and reduce uncertainty and disruption. Displays should help develop self-esteem through demonstrating the value of every individual's contribution, and overall the classroom should provide a welcoming environment. Teaching methods should encourage enthusiasm and active participation for all. Lessons should aim to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding that will enable the children to work and play in cooperation with others. Praise should be used sincerely to encourage good behaviour as well as good work. Criticism should always be constructive and a private matter between teacher and child.

### **Classroom Practice**

At the beginning of each academic year, class teachers (in consultation with the children) will establish the classroom rules and expectations.

#### **Our School Rules 23/24**

- Respect ourselves and each other
- Hands, feet and other objects to ourselves
- Respect the world around us
- Follow instructions first time
- Stop at the hand signal
- Work quietly, stay on task

In our school we use the “Class Dojo” system to recognise and reward good behaviour choices.

### **Classroom Rules and Procedures**

*“Teaching is a holy vocation, for teachers are entrusted with the formation of young minds and hearts. Rules and procedures are designed to make clear to the children how they can achieve acceptable standards of behaviour.”*

Rules and procedures:

- are kept to a necessary minimum;
- are positively stated, telling the children what to do rather than what not to do;
- actively encourage everyone involved to take part in their development;
- have a clear rationale, made explicit to all;
- are consistently applied and enforced;
- promote the idea that every member of the school has responsibilities towards the whole.

The revisiting of our expectations and agreements regularly is vital for them to remain important and relevant.

All adults work in partnership to model, reinforce and support our expectations. TiS snapshots are used to inform our understanding of social and emotional learning in a way that is developmentally and age appropriate.

Adults act as co-regulators, develop pupil's insight and language of sensations and emotions, building understanding of self within a community based on inclusion and tolerance.

Social times, such as play at breaktime and lunchtimes, are an important part of our school provision with the following aims and should not be withheld as a punishment for behaviour:

- To develop social skills;
- To have the opportunity to interact, build tolerance and inclusion;
- For the enjoyment of positive play;
- To be healthy – to have fresh air, exercise and the opportunity to relax

- For the opportunity to explore and play with adults and peers in a less structured, positive environment

Our positive approaches to behaviour involve us 'noticing' good choices, being explicit in descriptive praise and providing reward as reinforcement.

### Rewards

Our emphasis is on rewards to reinforce good behaviour, rather than on failures. We believe that rewards have a motivational role, helping children to see that good behaviour is valued. The commonest reward is praise, informal and formal, public and private, to individuals and groups. It is earned by the maintenance of good standards as well as by particularly noteworthy achievements. This is as true for adults as for children. Rates of praise for behaviour should be as high as for work. To praise, promote and reward positive behaviour, we use a range of rewards including;

- Verbal feedback / praise
- Non-verbal feedback e.g. *thumbs up gesture, smile, pat on shoulder*
- Dojo Points
- Star of the week
- Headteacher award
- Stickers
- Golden Table
- Hot chocolate Friday
- Messages to parents
- Recognition in Newsletter
- Additional playtime
- Share good choices with other adults for positive reinforcement
- Time in with Pastoral Team

Within our positive approaches we recognise that there may be times when a pupil might make a negative choice and a consequence must follow. This might be a deliberate choice, or an overwhelming impulse which results in an impact on others.

### Initial Responses

*"The task of the Teacher is not simply to impart information or to provide training in skills.... It is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full – in short it is about imparting wisdom." – Pope Benedict*

It is recognised that good behaviour needs to be modelled and taught. We embed the PACE (Play, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) approach originated by Hughes in order to support a child's social engagement system. The development of positive pupil/staff relationships along with effective teaching which recognises individual needs encourages children to behave in appropriate and less challenging ways.

All students are given a chance to do the right thing before any application of the sanctions within the behaviour policy.

We believe that the importance of 'relationship' within the school community should not be underestimated and therefore we endeavour to develop and maintain an emotionally enriched environment for our students. With children spending 50% of their waking hours in school, the teacher/learner relationship is key. By contributing to a safe, structured, open-hearted and stimulating sequence of interactions the adult can engage the child or young person's brain capacity for emotionally connecting, thinking, memory functions of retention and retrieval, problem solving and meaning-making.

We use a range of strategies to interrupt poor behaviour choices including;

- Time in another part of the classroom or other classroom
- Time out of class with Teaching Assistants



- Change of environment
- Availability of an emotionally available adult
- Regulation opportunities with a known adult supporting
- Learning Mentor or Pastoral Support Assistant intervention
- Use of a calming strategy
- Use of time away
- Use of the Pastoral Centre (Oasis)

In order to model appropriate behaviour in the playground, teaching and support staff play games and encourage the children to play appropriately with their peers. Staff will supervise children during lunch and breaks at all times. The EAAs will be on hand to check up on vulnerable children. This establishes strong relationships between pupils and staff, providing secure attachments and key adult figures.

Staff will use physical restraint of a pupil if their behaviour is placing themselves or others safety at risk and will do so only as a very last resort. Staff will be trained in restraint by an approved provider. A log of training will be kept and maintained to ensure training is current. Significant physical interventions will be recorded and information passed on to all parties as soon as possible after the event.

Where a need has been identified the school may also put steps in place to support a pupil who is at risk of not being able to manage their choices appropriately.

There are some situations that will provoke a more severe response from school: If a child deliberately commits any of the following, they may be given an immediate Fixed Term or Permanent Exclusion at the Head Teacher's discretion following a full investigation:

- Physical assault against a student
- Physical assault against an adult
- Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against a student
- Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult
- Bullying
- Racist abuse
- Damage
- Sexual misconduct
- Theft
- Serious breach of the behaviour policy
- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Bringing illegal items/substances to school

Fixed Term Exclusions may be either Internal where they will attend school but learn away from their class or an External Exclusion, which requires the student to undertake their learning off site. In the case of an external exclusion, this will be registered with the local authority.

Following an external exclusion, the students and parents will be called to a 'return to school' meeting and a behaviour support plan will be initiated where appropriate. Parents are always informed by standard letter if a Fixed Term Exclusion has been given

When a child is displaying inappropriate behaviours, we recognise that each situation will be absolutely unique to the child and therefore the response needed will be unique also. The situation and the factors involved will be considered carefully and responses will be made usually following a professional discussion between some/all of the following people; *Headteacher, Pastoral Lead, SENDCo, Learning Mentor, Pastoral Support Assistants, Class Teacher, Teaching Assistant*. At every stage we will also maintain close communication with parents and carers.

Throughout all our responses to behaviour, we recognise that our partnership with parents and carers plays a vital role in ensuring good outcomes for pupils. We will work, wherever possible, in agreement and consult fully on actions and next steps.

*“Thinking of a child as behaving badly disposes you to think of punishment. Thinking of a child as struggling to handle something difficult encourages you to help them through their distress.” - The Gottman Institute*

A behaviour review will take place at least **annually** to scrutinise the effectiveness of the school's approaches.