

LDST Relationships Policy

Date: September 2025

Our Trust Prayer

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

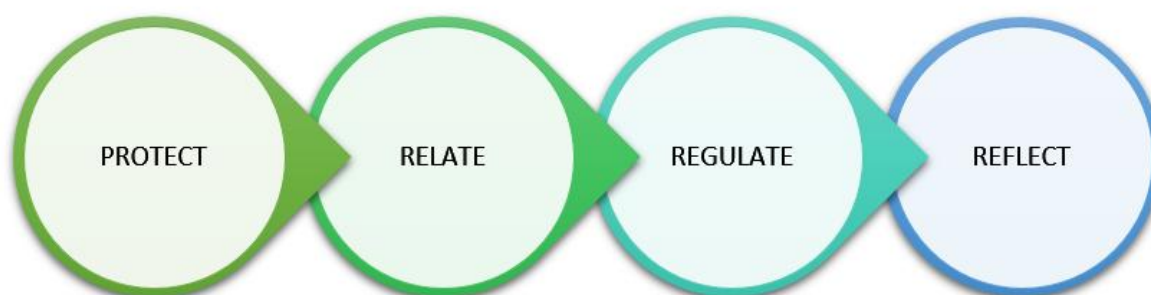
Amen

A LDST Relational Approach

Our Trust is invested in supporting the very best possible relational health between:

Parent and child
 Child and child
 Child and school staff
 Parent and school staff
 School staff
 School staff and Senior Leads
 School staff and external agencies

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



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

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

School has a responsibility to ensure there is a system in place for vulnerable children to have access to emotionally available adults when incidents arise. School staff will adjust expectations around vulnerable children to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This will include removing vulnerable and traumatised children in a kind and non-judgmental way from situations they are not managing well. During unstructured times of the day, vulnerable children will have access to a nurture group which is separate from the main playground and is calmer and accessed in small groups. Additionally, vulnerable children will partake in regular sensory breaks throughout the day. Furthermore, there will be a clear, confidential and a non-shaming system of self-referral for help. Each classroom will have a calm corner and a self-regulation station that is equipped with resources. All classrooms will adopt the 'I wish my teacher knew' approach and NSPCC posters are visible around school in a central location. Finally, all staff at St Helen's CE Primary school will be nurturing so that all children feel truly valued and emotionally regulated enough to be able to interact throughout the school day with social engagement rather than defensiveness.

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

All current staff have received trained in emotional coaching and in relating to children in terms of the four key relational needs for secure attachment (see Appendix 2): affect attunement, empathy, soothing and containment and further CPD will be offered. In addition to this one member of staff is trained as a TISUK Practitioner and another member of staff is a trained ELSA who continues to receive training from the local authority.

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

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

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

The implementation of interventions designed to bring down stress hormone levels (e.g. from toxic to tolerable) in vulnerable children, enabling them to feel calm, soothed and safe. This is to support learning, quality of life and protect against stress-induced physical and mental illness, now and in later life. All classrooms have an accessible calm corner as well as a fully equipped self-regulation station. In addition to this, whole class sensory circuits take place daily and if necessary children have access to sensory breaks

and the sensory room throughout the day. Furthermore, all children access strategies that are delivered through the PSHE curriculum – HeartSmart.

Evidence-based nurturing and regulatory interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic life experiences, through emotionally regulating and playful, enriched adult-child interactions.

The emotional well-being and regulating of staff is treated as high priority in order to prevent burn-out, stress-related absence or leaving the profession, through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling undervalued, blamed or shamed. Designated staff-only spaces, which support the release of natural anti-stress, pro-social neurochemicals (opioids and oxytocin). All staff have access to a recently modernised staffroom which is inviting and calming. Staff wellbeing days occur at least annually and INSET days are twilighted to allow for extended holidays.

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

All staff are educated in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking lots of questions/giving lectures). All current staff have received TISUK CPD and one member of staff has completed the TISUK Diploma which has allowed all staff recognise the impact of positive relationships.

There is planned training to develop skills and implement resources to support parents and staff have meaningful empathic conversations with vulnerable children who want to talk about their lives in order to empower children to better manage their home situations and life in general. Within the context of an established and trusted relationship with a member of staff ('working alliance'), children are to be provided with the means to symbolise painful life experiences through images rather than solely everyday words, should they wish to do so, as a key part of 'working through' and memory re-consolidation. To this end, there is the provision of different modes of expression for children e.g. art/ play/drama/music/sand-play/emotion worksheets).

The PSHE (personal, social, and health education) curriculum is well-informed by current research (psychology and neuroscience) on mental health, mental ill-health (full range of specific conditions) relationship health: family, parenting, intimate relationships and tools for how to do life well. The curriculum content to enable children to make informed choices about how they relate to others and how they choose to treat their brains, bodies and minds now and in the future. Other resources include: the spirituality policy and ELSA resources

All staff are trained to help children move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences through empathic conversation in order to address negative self-referencing and help them to develop coherent narratives about their lives. All of this is underpinned by a behaviour policy that is based on positive framing and resolution which includes restorative conversations and WINE sentence stems.

Appendix 1

PACE: Strategies to support children who have experienced trauma

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



PLAY

P

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



ACCEPTANCE

A

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



CURIOSITY

C

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



EMPATHY

E

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

Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect Model

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

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

PROTECT

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

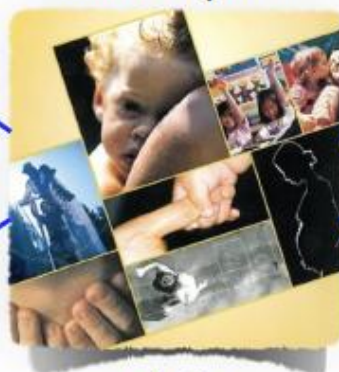
RELATE

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

SEEKING

Relationship heals

ATTACHMENT



PLAY

REGULATE

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

- Brains
- Mind
- Ability to learn

REFLECT

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

