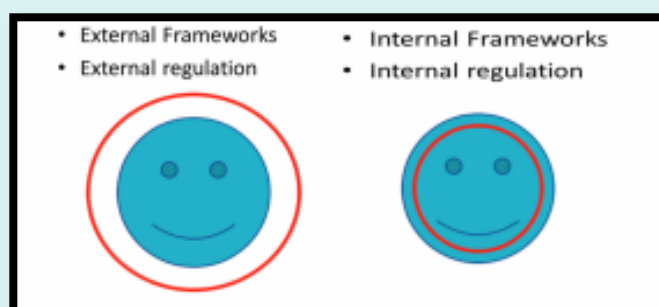# Relationship Based Behaviour Policies

Overview description

Relationships with staff and peers are vital for all children's development, wellbeing and learning in school or college. It is through trusting relationships that children learn to feel safe, feel as though they belong, understand themselves, others and the world around them. Supportive relationships are equally important for staff's wellbeing (which, in turn, has a positive impact on their teaching and how able they feel to support students).

All schools have a duty to have a behaviour policy which outlines the practices that contribute to improving pupil's behaviour (DfE, 2016). Relationship based behaviour policies also aim to improve behaviour, but through the use of different approaches, for example, supporting the inclusion and wellbeing of all students and avoiding the use of practices which punish or exclude children (the latter of which are associated with negative life outcomes). Relational, regulatory and restorative approaches are more effective in supporting the development of internal control and regulation (see diagram), which, in turn, is reflected in more appropriate behaviour.

Source: Emotion Coaching

Not all behaviours are a matter of choice and therefore external controls cannot be effective in changing the behaviour. Using relationship based approaches does not mean that children and young people aren't disciplined (which means 'to teach'). It does not mean that boundaries and rules aren't upheld, it is the way in which we view, understand and respond that is different. There are 3 main components to a relational approach, which could be used a framework for writing a relationship based behaviour policy (see diagram below):

1. **Developing Relationships** – supporting inclusion, setting and maintaining boundaries with empathy *(a way of connecting)*
2. **Responding and Calming** – using relational skills to keep things calm (through co-regulation) and developing plans to manage times of crisis *(a way of soothing)*
3. **Repairing and Restoring** – using restorative conversations to resolve conflict with the aim of supporting change *(a way of reflecting and reconnecting)*

Source: Babcock and Devon's Guidance on the Relational Approach (page 12)

Key Messages

- The rationale for these approaches is grounded in psychological theory and research.
- Relationships are central to our sense of belonging, emotional wellbeing and success in educational settings. This includes: staff-pupil, pupil-pupil, staff-staff, staff-parent/carer, child-parent/carer relationships.
- These approaches work for all students. They are *essential* for students who have social-emotional needs, have lived through and are recovering from adverse childhood experiences and/or are looked after. Sanctions often remove the very thing that children need in order to develop i.e. relationships.
- Relational approaches teach children and young people to express their emotions in a more appropriate manner (which is reflected in their behaviour).
- Relational approaches prioritise staff wellbeing and recognise that when adults feel supported, they are more able to support students.
- Relational approaches must be in place across the educational setting to be effective (e.g. training and ongoing support for *all* staff with the approaches prioritised and advocated by the senior leadership team).

In practice, this translates to:

- Recognising that being 'fair' is not about everyone getting the same (equality) but about everyone getting what they need (equity).
- Recognising all behaviour as communication (a sign of an unmet need, difficulty coping or lack of knowledge), which leads to solutions about how to help.
- Regular and proactive communication between school and home. Differentiating expectations and responses – staff being 'stress regulators' and afterwards, when calm, disciplining in a way that makes sense to the student so they *learn* from the teaching.
- Key adults/Team pupil – adults chosen to work closely with particular students.
- Small actions make such a big difference – smile and greeting students at the door.
- Support to manage small and big transitions during the day.
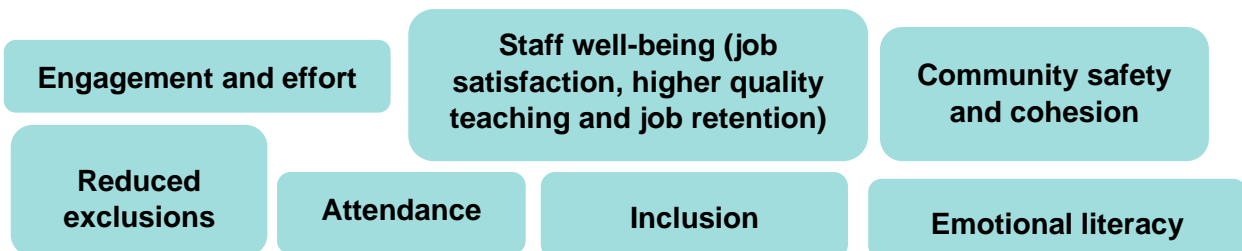- Policy effectiveness measured by wellbeing (see Louise Bomber's book).

Top Tips!

For Early Years

- Utilise children's key person to spend time shadowing and joining in with children in play to get to know their unique strengths, needs and interests.
- Work closely with parents/carers asking them how they support/calm/engage their child at home.

- Create opportunities to be silly and play together alongside consistent and appropriate boundaries.
- Set boundaries with empathy and an understanding of children's developmental stage. Avoid using behaviour management techniques that may shame the child.
- Within your day, incorporate time to share, hear and take interest in children's experiences, news and stories.

Evidence-base

Research has shown that investing in, and building, positive relationships (which are embedded through a relational policy and practice) leads to positive outcomes around:

Engagement and effort	Staff well-being (job satisfaction, higher quality teaching and job retention)	Community safety and cohesion
Reduced exclusions	Attendance	Inclusion	Emotional literacy

All of which lead to better behaviour!

Useful Resources and Links

Babcock and Devon's (2020) Guidance for Developing Relational Practice and Policy which includes an example of a relational policy in Appendix 1 - https://www.devon.gov.uk/support-schools-settings/document/guidance-for-developing-relational-practice-and-policy/

Developing an Attachment Aware Behaviour Regulation Policy: Guidance for Brighton and Hove Schools (2018) which includes an example of a relational policy - Behaviour Regulation Policy Guidance - Sep 18_1.pdf (brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Know Me to Teach Me: Differentiated Discipline for those recovering from adverse childhood experiences (Bomber, 2020) which includes an example relationship policy

Education Endowment Foundation Guidance Report on Improving Behaviour in Schools - https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/behaviour

https://education.gov.scot/media/ycofs2fq/national-relationships-policy-guidance-for-schools.pdf

https://cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/6381/6388/44573151759.pdf