

Relational Policy

2023-24



The Bridge London
Hungerford School

Pride
Passion
Partnership
Professionalism
Positivity

Rationale

All human beings have the right to feel safe, welcomed and valued. At Hungerford, we want every member of our community to feel a sense of belonging. To this end, we ask our staff to create an atmosphere where all children and adults feel valued.

Our ethos is rooted in a positive, preventative approach – valuing relationships, mutual respect, participation and reward – and is an absolute and categorical rejection of anything that could be construed as punishment. We use Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support as a school wide system.

Our approach is based on a belief that each pupil is capable of learning through a process of mutual exchange. It is therefore paramount that any behaviour that challenges us as a school or community should be viewed as a communication and as staff, we should explore the meaning of this behaviour and any unmet needs.

We believe that our pupils can develop a strong sense of self-worth, a belief in their own abilities and therefore confidence in themselves which will enable them to become happy, motivated learners. We believe that investing time into developing and improving relationships leads to improvement in engagement, inclusion, achievement and attainment and therefore we invest heavily into developing nurturing relationships with children. We expect our staff to get to know each child as an individual and to consider the child's behaviour as form of communication. We expect our staff to be positive with children and to develop a culture of mutual respect within their classrooms.

Values and beliefs

Our school ethos is Trauma Informed and based around inclusive and compassionate principles and is beneficial to all children regardless of need. We understand that behaviour is often a form of communication and an expression of underlying need and that it is often not possible to address the behaviour without addressing the need.

At Hungerford, we acknowledge the importance of consistency for children whilst also understanding that being consistent and fair is not about everyone getting the same provision but instead everyone getting the provision that they need.

We understand that relational and regulatory approaches and approaches which are restorative are more effective in developing children's internal control. We understand that not all behaviours are a choice and that punitive approaches and exclusion can be traumatic for children; furthermore, this can lead to further embedding of the behaviours which were already causing concern.

Developing a relational approach

"I have come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanised or de-humanised."

Haim Ginott, Teacher and Child. (1972)

There are three distinct strands used in developing relational practice with pupils:

1. Developing relationships

This includes:

- **Building relationships** through developing a culture of trust, nurture and playfulness.
- **Supporting Inclusion** - Facilitating access to learning, ensuring social inclusion and developing individual skills. This means that we will do what is needed to ensure that we meet the needs of the children.
- **Setting Boundaries** - Reaching agreements and building a shared understanding of expectations. Establishing clear processes for resolving difficulties

2 Responding and calming

- **Keeping Calm:** We use everyday interactions to maintain relationships and agreements and promote a calm and supportive learning environment.
- **Regulating Emotions:** We use key relational skills to regulate strong emotions and calm behaviour.
- **Managing Crisis:** We have clear plans to ensure safety and support.
- *The most useful tool for a dysregulated child (or adult) is a regulated adult.*

Repairing & Restoring

- **Resolving Conflict:** We use every day restorative interactions to resolve minor conflict and disagreements and create a shared understanding.
- **Repairing Harm:** We use restorative encounters to discuss the breaking of agreements, the impact (consequences) on others and to restore relationships.
- **Supporting Change:** We then consider what additional support/action is needed?

Trauma Informed Practice

At Hungerford, we have taken part in the Islington Trauma Informed Practice training and work hard to be a trauma informed school. A trauma informed school is a safe and respectful environment that enables students to build caring relationships with adults and peers, self-regulate their emotions and behaviours, and succeed academically, all while supporting their physical health and well-being. Trauma informed practice means considering a child's experiences when relating to them in school.

The staff that work at Hungerford School do so because they like and value the children in our community and understand the effect that their positive interactions have on the children in their care. As a trauma informed school, Hungerford is no place for a zero tolerance approach. We understand that children need to be able to make mistakes and have the opportunity to learn from them and we try to make the learning experience as non-threatening as possible.

Looking after each other

We recognise that working in a trauma informed way, although rewarding, can at times be stressful and overwhelming for school staff. Therefore, as a school team, it's essential that we also apply the trauma informed approach to our interactions with each other and are mindful of our own and our colleagues' wellbeing.

Building a relational community

In order to build a truly trauma informed, relational school, we need to develop good links with the children's wider community. However, working with parents and families may also require a relational, trauma informed approach. Traditional means of working with families may encounter trauma related challenges that can impact on the family's relationship with school

Trauma related challenges to community building:

- **Lack of trust** Families may not want to socialise within the school community so may not turn up to traditional events or may come only for food.
- **Lack of stability, reliability or consistency** Families may not perceive that school can effect change so are not interested in community building.
- **Inability to envision the future** Families are often overwhelmed by the challenges in their lives and so struggle to envision the benefit of becoming part of the school community.
- **Disempowerment and lack of sense of community ownership** Families may have had challenges in their own schooling and do not feel that they belong or are of any benefit to the school community.
- Families may face stresses in their lives that make it difficult to focus beyond their immediate needs.

Principles of relational community building

1 Do No Harm

At Hungerford we are aware that families may have past or current trauma and we try to behave towards families in a way which will not remind them of previous trauma. This may mean being particularly welcoming of families who may have felt unwelcome in other communities. It may also mean being supportive of parents whose children need additional support as opposed to “telling off” parents due to their child’s behaviour. In addition, we try not to put additional stress on families by contacting them for every instance of behaviour from their child.

Whenever we can, we try to support the child from our own resources; for example if a child does not have the correct equipment, we will work around the issue rather than contacting the parent to bring it in, as we are aware that there may be many reasons why this may be difficult for the family.

We try not to put additional financial pressure on families. We do not run expensive trips or events and whenever we can we try to run food banks to make life easier. We do not fine for absence but rather try to support families in order to bring their children into school.

We understand that we are there to support our families whenever possible to enable them to support our children.

Acceptance

At Hungerford, we meet our families where they are, accept the realities of their situation and set expectations accordingly.

Community Empowerment

At Hungerford, we are beginning to develop ways of helping our parents to feel more empowered. This may be through supporting with ESOL classes or providing opportunities for them to volunteer in school or supporting them with hearing their children read.

Reflective Process

At Hungerford, we recognise that in part our community is highly mobile and we continually reflect on our practice in order to better meet the needs of the school community.

Individual Strategies

- We express understanding and acceptance of individual experiences and circumstances, even if they pose challenges to or complicate community-building activities.
- We have multiple intentional interactions with individuals and families to engage them in a community-building process, and work hard to ensure that these interactions are genuine and focused on building relationships and trust.
- We meet families where they are, eliminate barriers to participation, and make activities open, inclusive, accessible, and unthreatening.
- We try to provide opportunities for joy, physical activity, and fun.

Interpersonal Strategies

- Create environments that are welcoming, safe, and accepting so that all members of the community can have positive experiences.
- Provide opportunities for families to share personal feelings and experience in a supportive, non-judgmental context.
- Model healthy and respectful behaviours to help establish expectations for community interactions.
- Help families learn conflict-management skills where necessary and build a stronger sense of mutual accountability and interdependence toward one another.

Community Strategies

- Create visible and accessible opportunities for participation that allow families to be involved in decision-making and to experience the tangible benefits or results of positive community change.
- Ensure that communication is frequent, consistent, and dependable to build awareness of community-building opportunities and outcomes.
- Create opportunities for relationship-building among families from different cultural communities.

Systems Strategies

- Ensure that community-building work reflects the needs, concerns, priorities, and perspectives of families, and elevate parent voices throughout the process.
- We try to communicate honestly and transparently, and invite community feedback even if it's critical.
- We try to build opportunities and support for outside organisations to engage with families.

Policy Owner and Contact Details

Jo Stephens, Headteacher

For further information on the Policy, please contact via email jo.stephens@thebridgetrust.academy or phone 020 7619 1000

Next Review Date: September 2024

Appendix 1

Hungerford Behaviour Policy

At Hungerford, we apply trauma informed and relational practice to our approach to managing children's behaviour.

Hungerford School Values

At Hungerford we have three all encompassing school Values

1. Be safe
2. Be respectful
3. Be responsible

All adults and children in the school are expected to know the school values and uphold them at all times.

If children do not know how to keep to the school values, it is the job of the adult to teach and support them, just as they would in any other area of the curriculum.

A proactive response is a *response* to a behaviour that promotes learning in a positive way; categorically rejecting negative reinforcement, fear and punishment.

- It supports children to understand and fulfil their needs and focus on finding alternative ways, where necessary, to communicate.
- Responding proactively = responding to try and prevent the behaviour happening again with meaning and positive intention

At Hungerford we use the 3 R's when using proactive responses:

- **Related** - the response is clearly connected to the pupil's behaviour and its function. Relies on staff knowing the child well and that the function of the same behaviour may be different for each child, or even for the same child at different times.
- **Respectful** - responses need to be given with empathy –by being respectful in tone of voice and body language.
- **Reasonable** – if boundaries are put in place, they must be fair and appropriate for that child's level of understanding.

Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support

At Hungerford, as with all the schools in the trust, we use PBIS to help us take a proactive response to managing children's behaviour.

Whole School PBIS Implementation

At Hungerford, we have a whole school approach to PBIS. We have an implementation team who meet regularly and liaise with staff as to which areas of behaviour we need to improve – for example transitions around the building, behaviour at lunchtime. Baseline data is collected and shared with the children in assembly. The children then concentrate on fixing that behaviour over a certain period of time. Data is again collected and any improvements are shared with the children and celebrated.

In addition, we have a PBS focus specific to a whole-school assembly. For example, leaving quietly or sitting respectfully. The children decide on a reward – a fun activity that the whole school can take part in – and then earn tokens for their behaviour. The reward is earned only once each class has the correct number of tokens.

There is a weekly PBIS whole staff briefing and the school receives termly input on PBS from Joke Kamstra (Windesheim University, Amsterdam)

Class Based PBIS Implementation

Each class teacher is able to use their own skills and creativity in deciding on how to implement PBIS in their own classroom as long as they follow the PBIS philosophy. Any visual display regarding behaviour must only show positives. There should be no visual reminders of negative behaviour and rewards can only be earned, not taken away.

Exclusion/ Inclusion

Although we retain the right to exclude a child in extreme circumstances, as a school, we do not believe that exclusion is in the best interests of the child. We believe that children's behaviour is a form of communication and that it is our job as a school to work creatively with the child, parents and other agencies in order to teach them more appropriate ways of communicating need.

Recording behaviour

Any behaviours of concern are recorded on Bromcom on the day that they happened. The adult who witnessed the behaviour is responsible for recording.

Reporting behaviour

Any behaviours of concern should be reported to the child's class teacher in the first instance. Should the behaviour be concerning enough to warrant a phone call home, the class team should first discuss this with a member of the School Leadership Team. Communication with parents should be managed very carefully. The parent should leave the conversation feeling that we will work with them as part of a team in supporting their child.