

Relational Policy and Practice: Emerging Evidence and Implementation



Somerset
Council

A Relational Approach

Development of Relational Policy and Practice has some or all of the following features:

- Outline the schools vision, core values and commitment to inclusion
- An understanding of the power of **preventative and Proactive relational** approaches to supporting positive behaviour through the ongoing day to day interactions between staff and students.
- A commitment to CPD for all staff in relational approaches, which increases knowledge of the impact of attachment disruption, trauma, ACEs on behavioural and emotional development (As recommended by NICE, 2015). A consideration of how this learning will be implemented, regularly reviewed and embedded **consistently** between all staff.
- High expectations, clear boundaries, predictable routines and consequences that support the student to learn and develop
- Consideration that certain sanctions can exacerbate challenges and don't have desired impact.
- Consideration of effective reparation following conflict and how to best use restorative approaches to repair relationships and move forward.
- A graduated response that recognises that for those where behaviour is persistently challenging, assessment of individual circumstances to understand the drivers influencing behaviour and what it's communicating is essential in tailoring the support, e.g. use of [Somerset PSP](#)
- Consider links with SEND, safeguarding, mental health policies and pastoral systems

Relationships & academic achievement

There is a strong evidence base that teacher-pupil relationships are key to good pupil behaviour and that these relationships can affect pupil effort and academic attainment (EEF, 2019).

John Hattie's (2009) Research:

- Positive teacher-student relationships involve value, respect, listening, empathy, care, positive regard.
- Effect size = 0.72 for achievement - 229 separate studies, 370,000 people in 2,439 schools. ranked 11th of 138 factors (Hattie).
- The evidence indicates increased engagement, respect, better behaviour and sense of belonging are all associated with strong relationships.
- Tendency for teachers to underestimate the impact of relationships on attainment and attribute to other factors (parents, senior leaders and students made more accurate predictions)

Timpson Project Findings

Enablers	Inhibitors
Whole school approach – non-teaching staff	Lack of visible senior leader support
Regular reinforcement through staff meetings and follow-up sessions	Single one-off training session
Consistent adoption of attachment/trauma-aware vocabulary and concepts	Stubbornness or scepticism from some staff
Integrated with physical, procedural and policy changes within school	Difficulties for teachers engaging after their own traumatic experiences
Process of trust-building with adults in the school	External pressures on school and overlap with other initiatives
Cascading knowledge to pupils – e.g. PSHE	No training of new staff

Improving Behaviour in Schools:

Education Endowment Foundation

Strand 1: Know and understand your pupil's and their influences: this will inform effective responses to misbehaviour. Every pupil should have a supportive relationship.

Strand 5: Use targeted approaches: Universal behaviour systems are unlikely to meet the needs of all your students, for pupils with more challenging behaviour, the approach should be adapted to individual needs and teachers should be trained in specific strategies

Relational principles?

- Physical environment that supports wellbeing and self-regulation
- Emotionally available adults & Staff wellbeing
- Priorities are **Knowing** and **Valuing** all children, demonstrating **Understanding & Care**
- Meaningful Consequences, high support & high challenge
- Opportunities for restoration and repair
- Partnerships with family and child valued



Local Approach

As part of Trauma informed Somerset

- Level 2 Training (whole-school)
- Level 3 training programme (targeted, centrally run) inc. emotion coaching, restorative practice, supporting the traumatised child, developing a relational approach to behaviour policy and practice, trauma-informed sensory processing.
- Relational policy and practice networks
- Relational policy and practice pathfinder programme

Contact educationalpsychology@somerset.gov.uk for more information