

# **LDST Relationships Policy**

Date: March 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.

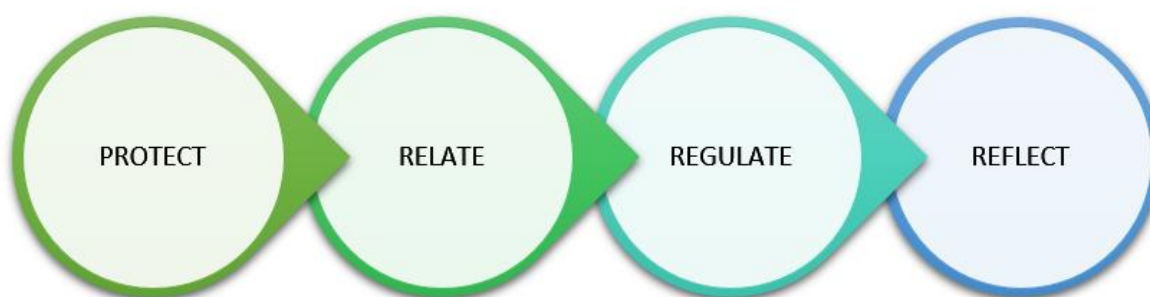
Amen

## 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, 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. This might include a walk to the staffroom for a healthy snack if hunger may be the cause, time in our nurture nest with a squeeze of a cuddly toy, time in our dark tent to offer quiet time to reflect, a staggered start with a 'buffer' in the nurture nest, use of transitional objects to support, sending the child on an errand to give a change of space and face.

There will be a clear, confidential and non-shaming system of self-referral for help/talk time. NSPCC posters with the contact number are displayed around school in each of the children's toilets, Happiness Heroes promote the use of myHappyMind strategies and can support peers, calm corners in each classroom as well as the nurture nest, zones of regulation displays to support with self-help and regulation and a post-box for our school ELSA where children can self-refer.

School staff 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.**

Key staff 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.

The Headteacher has completed Senior Leader Mental Health Training, led by Thrive, which included the PACE approach which was shared with staff. The school ELSA has received training from Educational Psychologists and receives regular supervision to ensure strategies are current. Staff have completed an attachment and trauma informed project with 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. Children receive a session on the Zones of Regulation each half term and these are displayed in each classroom. Whole class sensory circuits take place either in class or using the trim trail on the front playground. myHappyMind strategies are used throughout the day when needed e.g. happy breathing and meditation and children are taught about the importance of looking after their mental health. 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 support the release of natural anti-stress and pro-social neurochemicals (opioids and oxytocin). The staffroom is now a social space with a separate PPA work zone in another room. Staff appreciate the space to relax away from busy classrooms and the radio often sparks conversation and can lift moods. Staff are supported to work from home for their PPA. INSET days are used as twilights to support staff with extended holidays. Occupational Health is offered as a preventative measure to support staff when needed. LDST awards recognise staff as well as regular 'thank you' gifts in the staffroom especially at pinch points in the year e.g. end of terms, parents' evenings, sports day, performance evenings.

**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). The Senior Leadership Team have received coaching training which supports in empowering the team when faced with challenges. As well as the annual trust survey, the team have 1:1s to check on workload and wellbeing when needed.

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 is structured 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. In addition to our KAPOW PSHE curriculum, children have sessions on Zones of Regulation, myHappymind, No Outsiders and Picture News.

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 (e.g. restorative conversations, 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.



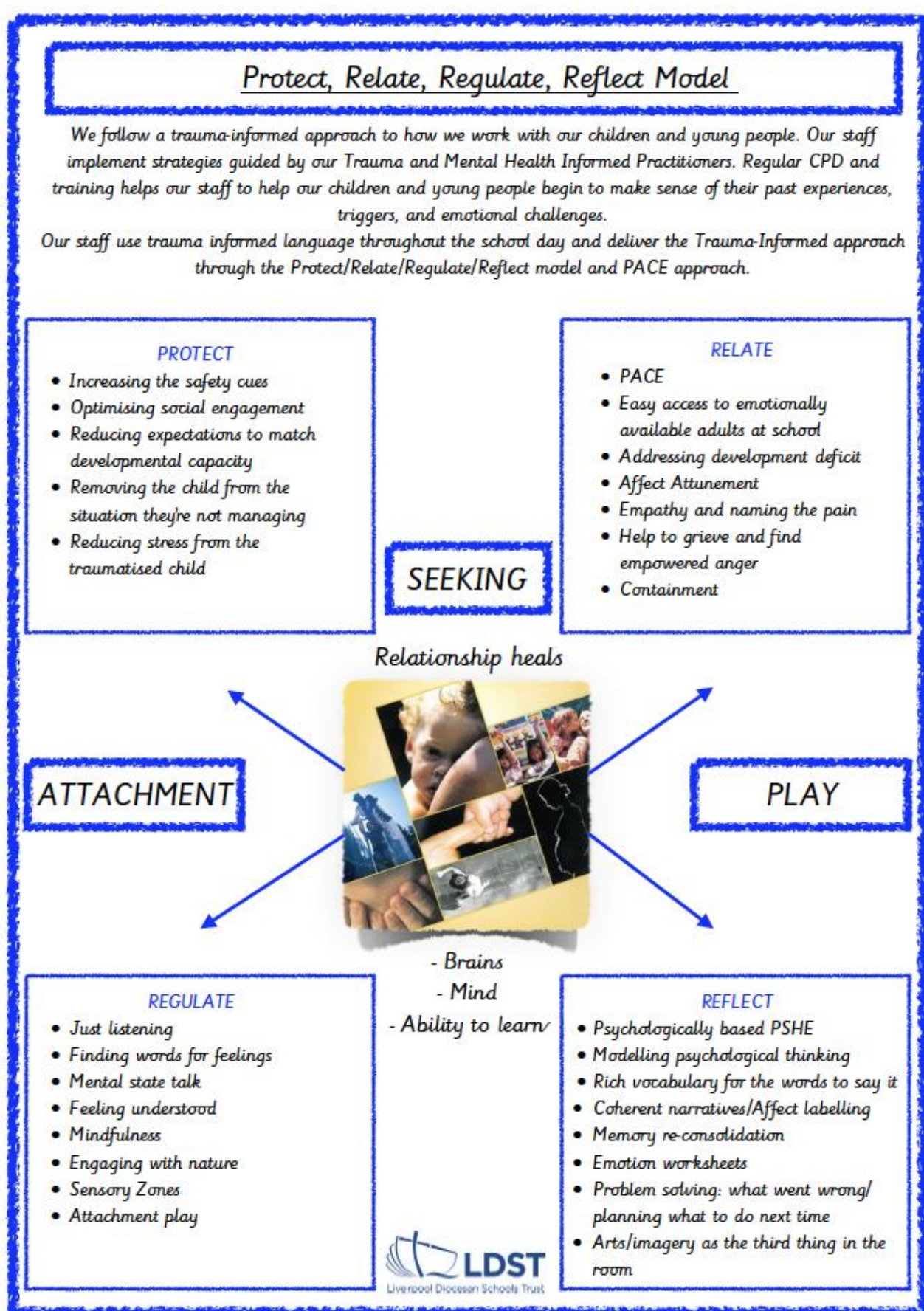
EMPATHY

**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.



## Appendix 2





### Review Schedule

Policy Author	
Policy Approver	
Current Policy Version	
Policy Effective From	March 2025
Policy Review Date	

### Revision Schedule

Version	Revisions	By whom