Relationships Policy
(And Promoting Positive Behaviour)

Wessex Learning Trust
Relationships Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees in May 2024

Signature:
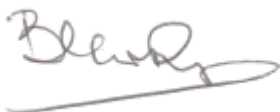Name: Mr Gavin Ball   Date: 28 September 2023
Position: Chief Executive

Signature:
Name: Mr Brian Kirkup   Date: 28 September 2023
Position: Chair of the Board

Part A: The Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The Trust's core values embodies our culture and ethos through our relationships being at the heart of every interaction.

1.2 We are committed to ensuring that all our interactions and relationships are as positive as they can be and are based on transparency and honesty to aid collaboration and outcomes for all involved.

1.3 Individual schools' policies must adhere to this Trust policy, with each school's procedures that involve 'learning', 'inclusion' or 'behaviour' adapting the same tone and ethos.

1.4 Part A of this policy outlines the core aspects of the Wessex approach whilst

1.5 Part B gives additional support information

1.6 Part C will include the individual schools' behaviour policy, which will be attached via their website

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

2.1 Create a Trust ethos where staff, learners and parents/carers are collaborative and engaging.

2.2 Ensure young people can develop personally and academically in a stimulating environment.

2.3 Promote learners and staff welfare, through positive professional relationships.

2.4 Encourage learners, staff and parents/carers to be active participants in their school and wider community.

2.5 Have clear and effective systems and structures in each school which promotes high expectations and drives aspirations.

2.6 Make clear to learners, parents/carers, and staff their respective responsibilities in relation to creating a collaborative learning environment.

2.7 Support learners and families who, for genuine reasons, may experience problems at school that affect their behaviour and/or attendance.

2.8 Support staff in adopting ways of developing positive relationships and an understanding of our learners.

3. Wessex Values

These values are to:

3.1 Deliver high quality education and care for *all* learners.

3.2 Deliver high quality personal development for *all* of our young people, rooted in our communities.

3.3 Value and develop <u>all</u> staff.

3.4 Develop a growth mind-set around distributive leadership and opportunity.

3.5 Drive hope, belief and aspiration for all stakeholders.

3.6 Deliver outstanding academic outcomes for all young people regardless of background or ability.

3.7 Develop self-confidence, self-esteem, resilience and a 'can-do' culture.

3.8 Drive participation opportunities for *all* young people, developing and celebrating their talents and skills.

3.9 Engage with business and community groups, providing aspiration, motivation and guidance for learners.

3.10 Develop great young people with polite manners, who care and respect others.

3.11 Develop our Christian values, ethos and distinctiveness in our Church schools.

4. Positive Professional Relationships

4.1 All learners must develop secure relationships which enable them to feel safe, secure and good about who they are.

4.2 Set and maintain clear professional boundaries, with empathy and expectation.

4.3 Relationships need to be at the heart of school life. For many learners the development of these relationships will need to be explicit, meaningful and very clearly perceived.

4.4 Learners who are showing signs of insecure attachments and a lack of well-being need a significant adult in school who can provide them with a secure relationship within which they feel a sense of safety, trust, belonging and being listened to.

4.5 Use appropriate and respectful language.

4.6 Learners must feel welcome in school, e.g., greeted on the door of the lesson and acknowledged in the corridors in positive regard (sense of safety).

4.7 Professional, positive, reciprocal relationships regulate learners' feelings and behaviour, develop their understanding of social situations and develop healthy and positive feelings about themselves.

4.8 The relational approach in this policy is a universal approach to teaching and learning which influences whole school ethos and systems.

4.9 Use relational skills to keep things calm, utilising co-regulation to manage strong emotions.

4.10 Use restorative and repairing conversations as part of daily interactions to support a harmonious environment, facilitating restorative encounters to resolve conflict and harm.

5. The Responsibilities of Learners

What learners can do to develop positive relationships:

5.1 Learners need to understand and follow the school rules, which are there to protect everybody and ensure that all young people get a great education. It is about making positive behaviour choices.

5.2 All learners are asked to take responsibility for their own actions and to develop an awareness of how such actions might impact on other individuals, as well as themselves. Learners should be regularly reminded of the Trust's ethos, rules and values and take personal ownership of this.

5.3 Young people should be ready to learn and understand classroom routines.

5.4 Learners need to be open and honest about concerns that they may have both within and outside school.

5.5 Learners need to be aware of their role in supporting their peers in and around the school and ensure that everyone feels safe and listened to.

5.6 Learners need to participate in school and community activities, develop their leadership and team skills and record their successes, developing their employability and enterprise skills.

5.7 Learners need to recognise the role of the adults in school in supporting them with their choices and to be reflective on their choices and the consequences.

5.8 Learners need to take pride in their school community.

5.9 Learners need to take responsibility to report and challenge poor behaviours from other learners.

5.10 Learners need to use appropriate methods to communicate any issues that need to be resolved. These could include tutor/teacher time, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Head of House, or student / pupil council.

5.11 Learners need to take responsibility to identify their own mental health needs and wellbeing by using the existing support in place and escalating any issues when needed.

6. The Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

The responsibilities of parents/carers are to:

6.1 Promote a positive approach to school by ensuring that learners attend on a regular basis, on time and only have time off in exceptional circumstances.

6.2 Be aware of the schools' expectations around behaviour and wellbeing of the learners and staff in the school.

6.3 Share relevant medical information with the school to ensure that learners can access education and be fully supported.

6.4 Work in partnership with the school to have an understanding of the issues on all sides of a discussion in order to achieve the best for the young person.

7. The Responsibilities of Staff

The responsibilities of staff are to:

7.1 Be clear about the school's Code of Conduct, which should be presented in a positive, can-do fashion and re-iterate regularly.

7.2 Have a clear and consistent behaviour system, that young people understand, that isn't punitive but supports learners to be good citizens in and out of classrooms, with clear parameters.

7.3 Allow learners to repair their behaviours, 're-enter' and use small step rewards in the classroom.

7.4 Have clear and consistently applied classroom routines, across the whole school.

7.5 Teach 'good learning behaviours'.

7.6 Place value on good citizenship with each other in their school community and why consequences are applied.

7.7 Operate a school culture where learners and young people feel included, listened to, respected, safe and secure. Value and celebrate learners' achievements and contributions.

7.8 Develop a positive relationship between staff and learners.

7.9 Promote a sense of school belonging which encourages learners to actively participate in their own development.

7.10 Support learners to develop their confidence to experiment and succeed in an environment where they are not restricted by the fear of failure.

7.11 Assist and develop learners' resilience and ambition, and help them become reflective learners, as well as being there for support and guidance.

7.12 Be aware of every learners' individual needs, whether academic or social/emotional and provide the necessary support to ensure that learners are supported in overcoming their barriers to success.

7.13 Offer a positive, stimulating, and challenging learning environment that motivates learners to achieve their full potential.

7.14 Have consistent praise and reward systems in place that are effectively used and recorded for every young person. Review using learner voice.

7.15 Use the House System and Employability Strategy to promote the belonging and participation of all learners in the school.

7.16 Develop a good working relationship with parents/carers of all the learners and record all contact made and outcomes.

8. Classroom Management Expectations

8.1 There should be good behaviour through communication of high expectations, clear policies and an ethos which fosters discipline and mutual respect between staff and learners in classrooms.

8.2 Expectations and routines are explicitly taught to learners to ensure consistency of approach, by each classroom teacher.

8.3 There is a clear seating plan, which is adhered to.

8.4 Class charts software is used effectively as a class management and learning tool (identification of SEND, PP, ability etc).

8.5 Expectations are clearly displayed in every classroom and around the school in communal spaces. Staff reinforce these displays by drawing attention to them daily as part of their classroom management.

8.6 The curriculum is planned and sequenced effectively so that all learners are able to engage, understand and make progress, including learners with special educational needs and disabilities.

8.7 Learning Objectives are set each lesson so that learners know where the lesson is 'going'.

8.8 Teachers plan effectively for the progression of learners in the classes they have. Formative assessment data is used to incrementally progress each learner to the next level. Learners understand where they are and know how to get to that next stage. Teaching is adaptive to the different needs of the learners in the classroom.

8.9 Work is scaffolded for learners who find the work more difficult whilst teachers plan to stretch and challenge learners who can progress further.

8.10 Class activities add progress value and learners respect that the activity is to add value (progress).

8.11 The contexts used in classrooms to deliver the curriculum are suitable for all genders, ages and abilities and allow the learner to engage with the learning. The contexts may thus be differentiated to allow for effective engagement.

8.12 Teaching Assistants and Learning Support Assistants are effectively deployed and developed to add progress value.

8.13 Lessons have pace, variety and challenge.

8.14 Teachers reward positive learning behaviours, through voice, live marking, positive phone calls/letters home and effective use of the school reward system.

8.15 Incidents of violence are dealt with. Physical and verbal aggression and bullying are unacceptable and is challenged and managed.

8.16 All reported incidents of bullying whether they are observed by staff or reported by a learner or parent/carer is dealt with.

8.17 Parents/carers are informed if their child has been physically aggressive towards other learners or staff, or if they have been the perpetrator or victim of bullying behaviour.

9. Wessex Graduated Behaviour Stages

9.1 Schools will follow the Wessex Behaviour Stages and Standard Operating Procedures.

9.2 Schools will follow the standard letters to parents/carers at each stage.

9.3 Schools will follow the Behaviour Review processes, with the graduated response at each stage.

9.4 For some learners, their additional needs may be met through more specialist provision, such as nurture units or 'behaviour units' which allow the young person to make progress in a setting that helps regulate their behaviour with the curriculum being more agile to meet their needs.

10. Pastoral Curriculum, Employability and Learner Participation

10.1 Every Wessex school must have its own 'pastoral curriculum', which is a curriculum that is over and above the 'academic' curriculum. This curriculum should be agile to meet the needs of young people around current issues, relationships, community responsibility, and wider developmental issues that help build a personal and collective understanding, promoting school and community cohesion. Learner voice must be regular to ascertain the design and scheduling of this wider curriculum.

10.2 Learner participation must drive a sense of pride, belonging and self-esteem. Schools are asked to make time for House activities and include all learners in a range of opportunities that develops them in their particular area of interest, talent and that builds positive relationships with each other and their school.

10.3 Tutor slots in school should not be over-crowded with 'things'. This time should be used to build a class cohesion to build relationships with the tutor, with fellow learners and with others in their House or year group. A sense of belonging is critical for our young people.

10.4 The Employability Agenda must drive self-motivation and aspiration.

10.5 Where young people are experiencing relationship difficulties with their school, their community and / or their home, it is expected that a Wessex school will seek these opportunities to build relationships, build attachments and develop a sense of esteem for that young person.

11. Rewards Culture

11.1 There must be a celebration of the success of all learners in a variety of ways. Focusing on success and positive outcomes is essential in developing a positive culture and ethos.

11.2 A school reward and merit system must be in place, respected by the young people with kudos with parents/carers.

11.3 The school reward system must be 'tracked and analysed' by the Senior Leadership Team to ensure consistency, effectiveness and 'coverage'.

11.4 Schools are to hold termly (3 times a year) celebration events for Houses / Year Groups / School.

11.5 There must be House points/certificates/stickers awarded for specific positive behaviours, contribution to the class, House, Year, school and community.

11.6 Reward systems must reward personal development, good citizenship, good academic progress, sustained good academic outcomes, leadership, teamwork and link to the Employability Strategy.

11.7 There must be Attendance awards.

11.8 There must be verbal praise and 'live' feedback in class.

11.9 There must be opportunities during the day for a fresh start for some young people.

12. Feedback and Praise

12.1 Praise and feedback must have an important role in the Wessex classroom. Feedback must be timely and specific. Learners must reflect on their behaviour in a way which will best support their learning. Encouragement, positive feedback and genuine personal praise are important features of feedback.

12.2 Specific feedback will include "You stayed really focused today even when it got tricky" rather than 'You were great today". This leads to greater understanding of exactly what they should be doing.

12.3 Progress feedback must be specific and as 'close to the event as possible' and signpost young people to the next stage of their learning. Live classroom feedback is advocated.

12.4   With older learners classroom feedback, where possible, needs to be forensic and relate to exam mark schemes and assessment criteria, with a clear understanding how with 'do-able small steps' the next level can be achieved. The Progress Ladders will help with this (Year 7 to Year 11).

12.5   Homework must be pertinent to what is being taught, add progress value and allow the learner some scope to engage and enjoy the topic. Homework should be marked and returned timely otherwise young people will not see the benefit of working hard on it.

13.   Staff Development

13.1   The induction of new staff must include an introduction to this Relationships Policy.

13.2   Staff briefings, staff meetings and notifications must reinforce this policy regularly.

13.3   Senior Leadership must lead a school culture that is positive, with a can-do mentality, promoting effective rewards for young people and rewards the positive efforts of staff.

13.4   Continual staff development must be effective in reinforcing up-to-date techniques for adaptive teaching and live marking.

13.5   Continual staff development must be effective in reinforcing effective curriculum design and sequencing.

13.6   Continual staff development must be effective in reinforcing understanding current effective contextual curriculum design that will appeal to young people of today.

13.7   Regular and on-going training must be provided to ensure all staff are skilled and are able to manage different types of behaviour, in a consistent and professional manner.

13.8   Staff are expected to complete and stay up-to-date with:

o   Using de-escalation techniques and working as a team when managing challenging behaviours.

o   Applying an understanding of the legal implications of positively handling.

o   Using the Behaviour Stages and Standard Operating Procedure.

o   Understanding the documentation for recording and reporting of incidents.

Part B: Support Information:

1. Consistent Trauma-Informed approach to behaviour management

There are four areas to look at when developing relationships with our Learners in the Wessex Learning Trust, *Protection, Connection, Understanding and Care* all of which are connected to our Trust ethos of **Hope.**

1.1 Protection

1.1.1 All learners within the Wessex Learning Trust need to feel safe and secure. Our learners' need for safety overrides everything and without a sense of safety and security learners cannot explore, play, learn or interact effectively with others. Our learners who do not feel safe are recognised to be hyper vigilant and have difficulty regulating their emotions, which can lead to defensive behaviours which can be difficult to manage.

1.1.2 Our learners and adults in the Trust get their sense of safety primarily from others and their communities around them. Our learners will need to experience relationships with adults in school who are able to make them feel safe. Some learners will need significant relationships with one adult, or a small group of adults who become a safe base for the learner in school.

1.1.3 Learners need to feel that they can trust and depend on adults. Some learners and young people have not experienced being dependent on others and, until they experience dependency, they will not be able to be independent.

1.1.4 In order to provide protection for learners, our schools and the people in them need to be the source of safety through the relationships we provide. This involves being consistent, predictable, reliable and trustworthy as well as providing structure, routines, boundaries and containment.

1.1.5 *Ways to show protection include:*

- **Being predictable, reliable and trustworthy.** Telling a learner that you are those things will not be enough. They need to be shown that you are by what you do. If things change and you are not able to do what you have said, make sure that you explain why that this has happened, acknowledge and validate the difficult emotions that this may have evoked and put in place an alternative plan.

- **Providing safety cues.** Being aware of the cues you are giving is very important, particularly through your facial expression and frequency and modulation of your voice. Interact using a sing song / story telling voice with no trace of crossness. Consider other safety cues such as movements which could make them feel safe. Take care to ensure open and friendly body language.

- **Containing their emotions.** Let them know that you have 'got it'. Let them know that you can bear their emotions and hold on to them so that they do not escalate. Don't deflect into your own emotional responses. It can be useful to help them to organise their thinking and emotions by listening and then feeding their thoughts back to them in bite-size, manageable chunks.

- **Providing structure and boundaries.** These need to match the learners' needs and be communicated to them in a way that they understand, and which is meaningful to them. Visuals and timers can be helpful in establishing structure and boundaries.

- **Anticipating things that may be picked up as threat or danger.** Unfamiliar sounds in the environment, unfamiliar people, or situations, change in routine, unfamiliar physical contact or sudden movement can all trigger feelings of fear. Sometimes just a lack of safety cues can trigger a defensive response. Managing transitions, both large and small will be particularly important, even transitions such as moving from activity to activity within the classroom may need to be supported.

- A whole school commitment **to cease all use of harsh voices**, shouting, put downs, criticism and shaming (proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically).

- Staff **'interactively repair'** occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness. 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 talk, if they wish, about painful life experiences, which are interfering with their ability to learn and their quality of life.

- Vulnerable young people have easy and daily access to at least **one named, emotionally available adult**, and know when and where to find that adult. If the child does not wish to connect with the allocated adult, an alternative adult is found.

- School staff **adjust expectations around vulnerable learners** to correspond with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This includes removing vulnerable and traumatised learners in a kind and non-judgmental way from situations they are not managing well (e.g. young people who are continually triggered into alarm states in the 'playground' can access calmer, smaller areas with emotionally regulating adults).

- Provision of a **clear, confidential and non-shaming system of self-referral** for young people's help/talk time. The nurturing by staff in such a way that young people feel truly valued and emotionally-regulated is critical. This will support them to interact throughout the school day with positive social engagement rather than defensiveness.

1.2 Connection

1.2.1 The Trust recognises that our learners need to *connect and to socially engage*. Learners who do not easily connect can become isolated. This can be because their interaction, speech and language skills are delayed or because they emotionally withdraw or react defensively to social approaches. Being and feeling connected is a right for all learners. Connection can be considered on several levels. Learners need to feel connected to the adults in school. Some learners will need to feel connected to a significant adult or small group of adults. Learners also need to feel connected to their peers, their class and school as a whole, the place and the curriculum. Developing a sense of connection and belonging is vital in terms of the development of social skills and understanding, a positive sense of self and agency.

1.2.2 In order to connect with adults, learners need to experience attunement (meeting the learner where they are emotionally, using attuning tones, facial expressions and body language, helping the learner know that you get-it), mutuality (doing things together, alongside, experiencing another person with them so they feel they are not alone) and reciprocity (responding to and influencing each other).

1.2.3 The Trust promotes and asks schools to use the *House System* and *Learner Participation* to aid connection for our learners. Areas of connection could include choirs, music groups, joint art projects, positions of responsibility, sports activities, drama activities, regular check ins, circle time, school councils, class activities etc can support group connection and can all forge connections between adults and young people and can facilitate connection between peers. Whole class or whole school activities like singing together can be built into everyday routine and can be very powerful in terms of developing a sense of connection, belonging and wellbeing.

1.2.4 The Wessex Learning Trust expects our schools to adapt to and be:

- **Physically and emotionally available.** Give them your time and attention.

- **Attune to the learner by mirroring their tone and mood.** Seeing themselves reflected in you lets them know that you 'get it' and enables them to 'see' how they feel.

- **Be responsive, expressive and interactive.** Encourage expressive interaction using facial expressions, voice modulation and movement.

- **Playful in your interactions.** Encourage shared anticipation, activity and response. Learners enjoy the security of repetition and being able to anticipate events. Get learners involved in the House System and engaged in Employability activities that develop their leadership and teamwork skills.

- **Show learners you like them and are interested in them.** Do things together. Explore, make things and learn about things together.

- **Support wider connection.** Provide opportunities for connection with peers and the school community. Doing and experiencing together develops opportunities for contribution and responsibility. This develops skills needed for positive relationships such as valuing one another, acknowledgement, encouragement, listening, sharing ideas, acceptance, tolerance and compassion.

1.3 Understanding

1.3.1 This means being **curious** about the learner and trying to understand what is happening for them and what their behaviour might be telling us about what they need.

1.3.2 Learners who have had interruptions in their relationships or who have experienced trauma tend to have difficulty understanding and processing their **emotions** in order to regulate themselves.

1.3.3 In order to learn to self-regulate learners need to experience being **co-regulated** by an adult. Repeated experiences of co-regulation will support the learner to be able to regulate themselves.

1.3.4 All learners benefit from being shown **understanding** and our everyday interactions with learners need to show acceptance, curiosity and empathy. We need to use our understanding of situations to maintain calm and support students to remain regulated when things get tricky.

Schools show understanding by:

- **Being curious about feelings, thoughts and behaviour.** It is important that we understand the thoughts and feelings that are driving the behaviour so that we address these unmet needs.

- **Accepting feelings and experience.** Accept without action, judgement, contradiction, or persuasion. Resist the urge to minimise their feelings, distract or cheer them up.

- **Thinking for others – try to work it out.** Big behaviours are caused by big feelings, but learners are not always aware of the feelings they are experiencing. Thinking from their perspective will help.

- **Express Empathy.** Wonder aloud, validate, and show them you 'get it'. Respond empathically; imagine how it is for them, empathise and then express it.

- **Help to process feelings.** Model and provide an emotional vocabulary for them to describe how they feel. Be creative in your approach. Allow them to make up their own words, use metaphors, stories, pictures, models, real life examples etc to enable the learner to express, understand and process their feelings.

1.4 Care

Learners need to experience a relationship within which they feel special. Experiencing adults being professionally interested, caring and showing that they like them, and are there for them, enables them to feel good about who they are, worthy of attention and able to form relationships.

- **Be compassionate.** Let them know that you (professionally) like them. Think about how your facial expression, body language and tone of voice reflects this. Regularly checking in with simple smiles, eye contact, thumbs up etc. can make the learner feel they are cared for.

- **Hold them in mind.** Let them know that you (professionally) think about them. Finding regular opportunities to let them know they were in your thoughts is important in enabling the learner to understand that relationships can be secure.

- **Using transitional objects.** This can help them know that you are thinking about them. This can be as simple as lending them a 'special' pen that they need to bring back to you at the end of the day.

- **Show them that you care.** Notice things about them (a new coat, haircut or pencil case) and remember details about them including birthdays, interests, favourite sporting teams or bands.

1.5 Additional Trauma-Related Theory

1.5.1 Relate

A whole-school commitment to enabling children to see themselves, their relationships and the world positively, rather than through a lens of threat, danger or self-blame. Vulnerable learners provided with repeated relational opportunities (with emotionally available adults) make the shift from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from self-help to 'help seeking'.

1.5.2 Regulate

Relational interventions specifically 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. These are evidence-based interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic life experiences, through emotionally regulating, playful, enriched adult-child interactions.

1.5.3 Reflect

Staff training and development in the art of good listening, dialogue, empathy and understanding (instead of asking a series of questions/ giving lectures) will pay dividends. This is about the provision of skills and resources to support parents and staff in meaning empathetic conversations with vulnerable children who want to talk about their lives. This is 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), learners are given the means and opportunity to symbolise painful life experiences through images as well as words, as a key part of 'working through' these experiences and memory re-consolidation. This includes the provision of different modes of expression, e.g. art/play/drama/ music/sand/emotion worksheets/emotion cards. Staff development and training to help children move from 'behaving' their trauma/painful life experiences, to reflecting on those experiences will help. Staff learn to do this through empathetic conversation, addressing children's negative self-referencing and helping them develop positive, coherent narratives about their lives.

2. Responding and Calming: Building/supporting/boundaries/support plans

2.1 De escalation

2.1.1 The Wessex Learning Trust understands that it is normal for learners of all ages to be playful, challenge authority and to test boundaries. Our relationships, and the relational skills we utilise should be our first port of call at these times. Skilled interactions can successfully resolve low level disruption without the need to escalate. Every *learner* will face challenges and at times experience strong emotions which block their access to learning and good social interaction. Catching these emotions *and **regulating the learner*** so that these emotions do not become overwhelming is integral to keeping the learner and classroom calm.

2.1.2 Behaviour which impacts on the learner, other learners, or adult **safety** should be managed as part of our IEP/ILP processes. How we respond in a crisis should be clear, coordinated and communicated to ensure safety.

2.1.3 When we notice that a learner is **overstepping a boundary**, we need to first ensure that we continue to present with a warm, friendly, and open manner. This can be difficult if we ourselves are irritated or frustrated. If we approach the learner with cold or cross tones we run the risk of pushing them into higher levels of stress which will trigger their defence response.

2.1.3 The Trust asks all adults in schools to avoid the use of **threatening tones** of voice, facial expressions and body language which convey relationships of power and control. Learners who have sensitive defence pathways or who have experienced trauma will be triggered to respond defensively, or experience re-traumatisation if they perceive threat, disapproval, or rejection. Some learners will find it very difficult to have a teacher standing over them whilst waiting for them to comply.

2.1.4 It is helpful to be **curious about what is beneath behaviour** rather than assuming motives. Most learners will have good reason for behaving as they do, and we need to help them with this. Asking with genuine curiosity about what is happening will make the learner feel listened to. It will also help you to work out what is going on and what is needed to get them back on track. Naming the feelings helps to let the learner know that you get it, you've thought about it, and you care. Often, a learner knowing that someone has listened to and accepted what they feel, and think can be enough. The learner has no further need to express themselves through their behaviour because they have been heard.

2.1.5 **SEA** is a helpful acronym for adults to have in mind for responding to young people to help them to remain calm, feel understood/listened to and refocused on what they should be doing:

S – Safety cues – think face, tone of voice, body language.
E – Empathy – be curious and understanding. Respond empathically.
A – Agreements – remind or re-set.

2.1.6 When a child is **dysregulated** (mobilisation or immobilisation) their social engagement system has shut down and attempts at social interaction will be met with a defence response. The Trust asks schools to **reduce social and verbal interaction** at this point with the learner (dependant on the individual's needs) and remain present and distanced if needed. If appropriate to the individual learner the adult could continue to provide the learner with attunement and safety cues through their expression, movement, and tone.

The adult should reduce language demand and should not ask questions or give lots of choices. Any direction given should be clear and not overly wordy. It is helpful to use routine as well as regulating and soothing activity at these times.

Depending on the stage of dysregulation, various co-regulation strategies could be used. Any adult needing to use physical restraint or reasonable force on a learner must be Team Teach trained and hold an in-date certificate.

3. Physical restraint/reasonable force

- Must be a last resort.
- Reasonable force can be used to prevent learners from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder.
- In a school, force is used for two main purposes – to control pupils or to restrain them.
- The decision on whether or not to physically intervene is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and should always depend on the individual circumstances. For detailed information on this are please use this link DfE advice template (publishing.service.gov.uk).

Power to search learners without consent can be used if conducting a search for the following prohibited items:

- Knives and weapons, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items, tobacco & cigarette papers, fireworks, pornographic images.
- Any article that has been or is likely to be used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage to property
- Force **cannot** be used to search for items banned under the school rules if not classed as a prohibited item.

4. Repairing and Restoring

4.1 Approaches in the classroom

The Wessex Learning Trust believes that good 'quality first' teaching is vital to support learners to manage their behaviour and working with learners who have a high level of need is the responsibility of all adults in school. Adults have a range of approaches to draw on in order to manage needs in the classroom. A teacher who is skilled in using these approaches and supported by wider systems in the school is more likely to be able to manage the needs of the vast majority of learners without the need to resort to suspension.

4.2 Low Level Disruption

Being able to manage low level disruption through relational approaches and good quality inclusive teaching will lead to a calm and supportive environment where all learners are able to learn. The Wessex Learning Trust asks schools to manage low level disruption in the classroom by using some/all the approaches below:

- *Be a source of safety and security.* Be mindful of projecting a sense of safety through your voice, tone, facial expressions and body language. Be a source of security by providing regular, reliable and predictable attention for those most in need.

- *Know your Learners.* Make sure that you are aware of any additional learning and language needs, relational, social and emotional needs and any potential triggers for stress of the learners you teach. Make an effort to get to know your Learners beyond how they are in the classroom. Find out what they are interested in, what their qualities and strengths are and when they are at their best. Let them know that you are interested in them by listening to them, giving them attention and letting them know that you hold them in mind. Provide opportunities for connection within the classroom.

- *Manage transitions*. For many learners transitions are a source of stress. Greet learners at the door, use routine and structure to manage the start and end of lessons and any transitions within the lessons. Provide additional attention for those most in need at times of transition.

- *Manage change*. Change can be a stress trigger for many learners. Pre-warn of change or novelty, such as a cover teacher taking the lesson or a special activity which involves a change in routine. Support

learners to be prepared and to be able to anticipate the change by the use of practical organisational strategies and for example visual timetables or social stories.

- ***Make language accessible.*** Not being able to understand what is expected is a major contributor to anxiety and stress in the classroom. Simplify and re-phrase language, supplement with visuals and show learners what to do as well as telling them. Be very clear when giving guidance and instruction and always check understanding.

- ***Make learning accessible***. Provide differentiated, alternative and personalised learning to meet specific need so that all Learners can be involved in learning. In particular support learners' literacy needs. Support access to reading materials which are beyond their literacy level and when writing is a challenge, support learners to record their learning though alternative methods. Some learners will require a high level of structure, learning broken down in short tasks, learning/sensory breaks and adult attention to re-focus. Be mindful of the balance between support and challenge.

- ***Manage peer relationships and support social inclusion***. Consider how learners are grouped in terms of where they sit and who they work with. Teach learners how to learn together and provide opportunities for learners to connect and learn how to work effectively with each other. Support learners who may be vulnerable to social exclusion to connect with others. For those learners who experience communication and interaction difficulties, facilitate interaction and repair breakdowns in communication. At times some learners will benefit from being in an environment where there is a low social demand.

- ***Manage the environment***. Sensory sensitivities can trigger physical dysregulation for many learners, particularly those who have experienced trauma or have a diagnosis of ASC. Where possible manage distractions, noise and crowding so as not to overwhelm the young person. Provide a space with low sensory demand and opportunities and resources for sensory calming. Consider learners' seating position to ensure they are in a position which means that they are able to focus their attention without distraction. Have a safe place to store belongings.

- ***Make clear agreements, provide feedback which is effective and give clear guidance and instruction***. Learners need to have a clear understanding of agreements and expectations and these need to be communicated and regularly referred to and reviewed. Learners also need to know what these mean in terms of what they need to do. This needs to be taught, modelled and supported. Learners will benefit from feedback which is clear about what they are doing well and what they need to do next and from opportunities for self-monitoring. An individual report or class report card may be helpful for some learners and classes.

- ***Recognise when learners are becoming stressed and regulate them***. When learners become anxious or stressed know how the adults respond can make the difference between the stress escalating further or calming down. Use regulating responses to deal with low level anxiety or disruption (SEA – providing safety, empathy and making agreements) and have plans in place to recognise and respond to more increasing levels of dysregulation or disruption.

- ***Repair and restore relationships.*** Use restorative discussions, meetings and explorations in order to support understanding of needs, understanding of consequences and to ensure that following harm and conflict relationships are repaired. Ensure that learning takes place following conflict and make changes to support need.

- ***Involve parents.*** Establish relationships with parents with clear lines of communication. Feedback positives and let them know when there are difficulties. Listen to parents, involve them in supporting their child and offer them support when needed.

5. Supporting Systems and Processes

The Wessex Learning Trust promotes the use of various systems and processes across schools to aid this Relationship Policy. *Support for the teacher may include:*

- Training, coaching and mentoring to develop knowledge and skills.
- Supervision to support work with individual Learners or classes.
- Observation followed by discussion including feedback and guidance.
- Opportunities to share good practice with others.
- Support within the classroom to regulate the child or to take the class whilst the teacher regulates the child.
- Provision for the child to leave the class for a short period of time in order to calm down or work with another teacher for a period of time before returning.
- Facilitation of restorative meetings between the teacher and child or between learners.
- Access to partner agencies who may be able to advise on the needs of the child, provision required and who could offer coaching and supervision.
- Support in meeting and communicating with parents.

6. Responding to Incidences

6.1 The Wessex Learning Trust has a graduated response to behaviour and incidences. The Graduated Response Standard Operating Procedure should be read in conjunction with this subject.

6.2 Different learners will have different needs and will be at different stages of their development. As with all good teaching, personalisation will be helpful in enabling learners to learn. This applies to social and emotional development as much as academic understanding. In order to be fair we need to be responsive to need, this means not treating everyone as though they are the same. ***Equality does not mean everyone getting the same, it means everyone getting their needs met***. Responses to incidents will therefore need to be specific to learner needs.

6.3 If a child is persistently disrupting the learning of others, then we need to consider whether we are getting it right. The learners' behaviour is telling us something about their underlying needs and we will benefit from working on these underlying needs. This should be our priority when deciding on any provision / intervention. Suspension is rarely helpful in meeting the learners needs.

7. Suspensions/Exclusions

7.1 The Wessex Learning Trust feel that fixed term suspension should only be used as a ***last resort***. The cost of suspension in terms of well-being, attainment and later offending behaviour is well documented. There is also the recognition that the negative impact of suspensions is cumulative. Learners and young people can often become involved in a negative cycle of suspension/exclusion and non-attendance which are very likely to have a devastating effect on relationships and belonging and significantly impact on later life chances.

7.2 A fixed term suspension should be a ***proportionate response*** where there is no alternative, and it is important that the views of the child or young person and those of their parent or carer are considered. All schools should use the Standard Operating Procedure for suspensions and the template paperwork around this. Schools should carefully consider the purpose of the suspension and the impact on the child or young person should be taken into consideration, including the long-term impact on life chances.

7.3 Where suspension is used it should be a **short-term measure** with the aim of improving outcomes. It should enable further planning and assessment and provide an opportunity for reflection for both the child or young person and staff involved. Relationship-based approaches, such as solution focused or restorative approaches, should be used to guide and support a child or young person's return to school. The suspension should be for the shortest time possible, and a reintegration meeting should always be completed and recorded.

7.4 All schools have a **duty of care** to all learners and young people attending school in respect of the health, safety, well-being and welfare of the learners and young people in their care. Risk, positive handling plans, and health and safety assessment processes should be applied to situations where unpredictable, challenging and distressed behaviour can arise to determine any potential concerns arising from the child or young person's behaviour and should identify any steps deemed necessary to support the child or young person in preventing harm to themselves or others.

7.5 The Trust do not advocate the use of **permanent exclusion.** However, we also recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances where a young person is not able to have their needs met in their current school or where the school cannot guarantee the learners or other learners' safety. There may be exceptional circumstances, where a child has been supported through the graduated response involving high levels of intervention, partner agencies, family support and where restorative work has been done to develop understanding and change behaviour, yet the school feels that they cannot continue to effectively meet the needs of the child.

8. Working together – Parents/Carers/Learners

8.1 **Respected and Valued:** The Wessex Learning Trust believe that all learners and young people should feel respected and valued within the school community and regarded as an equal part of it. They need to have ongoing opportunities for a purposeful dialogue with trusted adults, which influences all aspects of their school day. This should be embedded within a whole school approach across the schools within the trust, involving all staff and pupils and not simply be a one- off activity.

8.2 **Curiosity and Empathy**: Time and care should be taken in listening to learners with *curiosity and empathy*. From an emotional perspective, the opportunity to be supported to engage in meaningful self-expression can help the child to process their emotions as well as supporting the early identification of needs.

8.3 **Assess-Plan-Do-Review process:**

8.3.1 Wessex Learning Trust schools use the *assess-plan-do-review process*, and this is needed and used to listen to the views of the child at all stages. Feelings of empowerment, mastery and control have been found to be protective in stressful and challenging situations, increasing resilience. Learners should be enabled to describe what is difficult for them, what is going well, establish a realistic and achievable vision of the future, identify small steps forward and be involved in planning for support.

8.3.2 Throughout the assess-plan-do-review process it will be vital to include the parent's perspective. Parents will be able to give you an insight into the learner's development, their experiences and what may be happening at the current time. Parents are the expert on their child and their knowledge, views and concerns will lead to greater understanding of unmet needs as well as supporting future planning. Parents will also be able to provide valuable support at the implementation stage.

8.3.3 Parents/carers need to be given time to tell theirs and their child's story. The knowledge, experience and views of the parent/carer should be respected and valued. We need to be aware that some parents/carers will not have had positive experiences of school, and some may have negative feelings towards school themselves.

8.3.4 Encourage parents/carers to be a part of their learners' life at school and work to develop trusting relationships. We need to be warm, welcoming, and open in our relationships with parents/carers. The school's universal approach to building relationships will be important in developing an ethos where parents feel that they can contribute safely. There should be very clear open channels of communication between parents/carers and the school.

8.4   Vulnerable Learner Identification: Parents are requested to:
- Keep the school informed of any significant medical issues which are likely to affect attendance or progress.
- To give consent to the school for them to liaise with the family G.P. or medical services.

Other documents to read in relation to this policy

This policy should be read in conjunction other policies within the Trust, including:
- Attendance Policy.
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy.
- Graduated Response document.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.
- E-safety and Acceptable Use Agreement.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy.
- Physical Intervention Policy.
- Equality, Diversity and Cohesion Policy.
- Teaching and Learning Policy.