

## Relational / Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Approaches in Education – The Case for Change (5 minute guide)



### Impact of early adversity and relevance to education

- Disrupted neurodevelopment
  - Difficulties with cognition and learning
  - Social and relational difficulties
  - Impact on sensory processing
  - Difficulties in emotional and behavioural regulation
- Impacts on behaviour, well-being and skills to cope within academic environments.



### Outcomes in later life:

- Poorer educational outcomes
- Increased risk of exclusion from education
- Increased risk of criminal behaviours, being known to offending services, imprisonment
- Increased health-risk behaviours
- Increased mental health needs
- Increased risk of suicide
- Increased physical health needs
- Reduced life expectancy

### Behaviour management and mental health

- Sanction-based approaches negatively impact mental health
- Impact on students' sense of identity, hope and capacity to relate to others
- Increases students' feelings of loneliness, not being listened to and not being understood or valued
- For student's with experiences of early adversity, increases risk of re-traumatisation, sense of rejection and worthlessness
- Exclusion from school community contributes to shame, resentment, frustration and sense of powerlessness
- Children and Young People Mental Health Coalition report (2023): 80% of CYP (and 95% of parents) think suspension is harmful; 73% think detention is harmful; 79% think being put on report is harmful
- No robust studies that sanction based approach and policies are effective for student outcomes (EEF, 2019)

### Why change?

- Schools have a key role in mitigating impact of adversity and supporting positive outcomes for all children, especially those with vulnerabilities
- Difficulties rooted in early relationships and attachment will need relational repair and restoration
- Evidence base for impact of relational / AATI approaches supported by NICE, Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)

### Principles of a relational approach

- Humans are wired to connection and relationships enable individuals to thrive and flourish
- Young people need nurture, and empathetic relationships alongside containment and structure in order to feel safe.
- Behaviour is communicative of individual needs. A curious approach to understanding behaviour is essential.

What's wrong with you and how do I stop you challenging me?

Shift from deficit, blame approach to position of relational curiosity

What's happened / still happening to you and how can I help you to feel safe?

<b>Model to manage / support behaviour</b>	<b>Behaviourist / consequence based</b>	<b>Relational</b>
<b>Means of managing behaviour</b>	Consequences	Relationship
<b>Boundaries are to</b>	Make standards clear	Try to meet everyone's needs
<b>Rules should be</b>	Clearly communicated	Developed together and adapted when needed
<b>Behaviour is something to</b>	Manage	Listen to
<b>Consequences are</b>	Ways to shape behaviour	A last resort, only used within a process of rupture and repair
<b>'Inappropriate' behaviour is</b>	Learned, not necessarily voluntary	A sign of an unmet need, difficulty coping
<b>The causes of difficulties are</b>	Learned poor responses, lack of appropriate reinforcement	Mostly in the environment, flet relationships or developmentally appropriate
<b>Solutions lie in</b>	Adjusting consequences	Understanding what the behaviour tells us about the student and their needs
<b>Children who don't manage should be</b>	Given intervention. If that doesn't work, consider exclusion	Understood and included
<b>Effectiveness of the approach is seen through</b>	Behavioural compliance and change	Well-being

(Table adapted from @JamesEdPsych,2018)

You make it easy for children to behave by saying welcome to our school, we look forward to teaching you, we care about you, we care about your success as well as you and part of our main job here is to help you be brilliant and succeed and learn things and be better at things.

Tom Bennett (2023)

It's ultimately relationships that make behaviour

Prof. Peter Fonagy (2023)

The magic is in the relationship and the connections

Dr Karen Treisman (2018)

### Impact of shifting school culture towards a relational / AATI approach

- Benefits all CYP regardless of their level of vulnerability
- Benefits teachers by reducing stress levels and burnout
- Increases teacher's feelings of confidence in working with vulnerable CYP
- Improves communication between staff and students
- Creates an emotionally safe and positive school climate for staff and students
- Evidence of impact on sense of safety, belonging and well-being
- Positive impact on engagement, learning, attainment and attendance
- One positive adult relationship reduces risk of exclusion
- Reduces need for exclusions and sanctions

### What will help this shift?

- Commitment from staff, especially senior leadership
- Familiarisation with principles, concepts and practices of a relational approach – See 'Relate to Educate: Understanding and embedding relational approaches in school' (guidance created by Wakefield EPS)
- Develop staff knowledge through training i.e sessions on Developmental Trauma and Emotion Coaching from Wakefield EPS. Reflect on how to embed this.
- Evaluate current practice and knowledge within the setting – consider using a tool such 'Relate to Educate: A whole setting framework for development' (Wakefield EPS). Identify areas for development and next steps
- Create a plan to review current policies, in particular the Behaviour Policy to embed relational, attachment-aware and trauma-informed practices
- Continually review commitment and practice to enable further moves forward

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For more information on embedding relational approaches in an educational setting, please see '**Relate to Educate: Understanding and embedding relational approaches in school**' (Wakefield EPS) or talk to your school EP.