



The Forge Relationship Policy

The Forge relationship policy embodies our culture and ethos developed through a trauma informed approach where relationship is at the heart of every interaction and supports the whole Forge community to include our Staff, our Pupils, Parent(s)/Carers and all other agencies working for and with The Forge.

This policy will be reviewed every two years and is next due for renewal June 2021. Authors; (MS/CN)

Purpose

Our priority as a community is to ensure psychological and environmental safety first. It is the foundation on which everything else depends. The ability to learn without fear and the fear of being shamed in order to relate to others, engage in learning, in peace. Through a trauma informed approach our focus is not only the physical environment, but the relational environment and the very culture and ethos of our community.

It requires emotionally regulated and available adults who can provide essential calming and containing of our pupils, their parents/carers, other agencies or each other when they are overwhelmed by an event, a situation or their feelings. In some circumstances, this may mean that literal physical containment of each other to keep all safe.

In practical terms it means that we never place the pupils in our community with situations that they are unable to manage. It is vital that our response to their distress and often challenging behaviour is supportive and focusses on how best to support the brains frontal lobe functions to be able to relate to the world and each other in a healthier way, rather than employing punitive sanctions that are detrimental and inappropriate to the child's neurocognitive and neurochemical profile. If we are truly to protect our pupils and each other then our community approach needs to reflect a differentiated and developmentally appropriate response to behaviour. Recognising that behaviour is representative of unmet need, adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and/or particular neurocognitive or neurochemical profile.

“The ability to form meaningful relationships is fundamental to mental health and happiness. It's the quality of contact we have with other people that is arguably the most important determining factor in our quality of life. We can only truly develop ourselves through relationships with others” (TISUK 2019)

“Just one emotionally available adult in the school, community or home can make all the difference” (TISUK 2019)

Therefore our community is invested in supporting the very best relational health between:

- Parent(s)/carer and Child
- Pupil and pupil
- Pupil and school staff

- Parent/carer and school staff
- School staff
- School staff and other agencies
- Pupils, parent(s)/carer and other agencies

Our community adopts relational and educational practices which protect, relate, regulate and reflect as follows:

PROTECT:

- Our community aims to increase ‘safety cues’ in all aspects of the school day for our pupils and each other, for example purposely designed and timetabled duties that create opportunities for the emotionally available adults to be alongside our pupils across the school day. The culture of our community helps to support all staff to remain emotionally available to all parents/carers, pupils, each other and other agencies.
- Our community of staff are trained in nurturing attachments and a PACE approach. This means our pupils and all others are met with a warm emphatic, playful and curious team to enable them to move out of flight/fight or freeze and into relationship.
- We as a community ensure that interactions with pupils, their families/carers, other agencies and each other are socially engaging not socially defensive.
- There is a community commitment to cease punitive approaches such as the use of harsh voices, shouting, put-downs, criticisms and shame evoking behaviours (which are proven to be damaging psychologically and neurologically).
- All members of our community aim to interactively reflect and repair occasions when they themselves move into defensiveness.
- Our community adopts ways of being that deepen relationships and understanding of our pupils, their families/carers, other agencies and each other. Holding at the heart of our approach relationship as the key to personal, social and emotional development, (as well as academic achievement for our pupils).
- Our community pro-actively works to create reflective spaces and places across the school to enable our pupils and their families/carers to bring to those spaces, at their pace, worries or concerns about their lives, painful experiences, the opportunities to explore and correct their ‘wonky’ narratives and begin to make sense of their past and future life experiences.
- Across our community all pupils have daily access to at least one named emotionally available adult, know when and where to find that adult, and if the child does not wish to connect with the allocated adult, an alternative emotionally available adult is always there. This approach is available for everyone in our community including parents/carers, other agencies and the staff.
- Our community adjusts its expectations for our pupils their families and carers in accordance with their developmental capabilities and experience of traumatic stress. This sometimes involves removing vulnerable and traumatised pupils in a kind and non-judgemental way from situations they are not managing well. As a staffing team we are also able to do this for each other.
- Across our community the promotion of nurturing our staff in such a way that they feel truly valued and emotionally regulated is prioritised and in so doing supports both ourselves and

the wider Forge community to interact throughout the school day with positive social engagement rather than defensiveness.

RELATE:

- A whole community approach and commitment to enabling our pupils, families/carers, other agencies and staff to see themselves, their relationships and the world positively, rather than through the lens of threat, danger or self-blame.
- Our community provides everyone with repeated relational experiences (alongside emotionally available adults) to support everyone to move from 'blocked trust' (not feeling psychologically safe with anyone) to trust, and from self-help to 'help-seeking'.

REGULATE:

- Our community adopts ways of being that are specifically designed to bring down stress hormone levels from toxic to tolerable in each other, enabling everyone to feel calm, soothed and safe. This is to support the growth and development of everybody in all aspects of life. This will protect against stress induced physical and mental illness, now and in the future.
- As a community we use evidence based interventions that aim to repair psychological damage and brain damage caused by traumatic experiences, through emotionally regulating, playful and enriched interactions.
- In our community the emotional well-being of and regulating of staff is treated as a priority to prevent burn-out, stress –related absence, or leaving the profession through stress-related illness, secondary trauma and/or feeling blamed, shamed or under-valued.
- Our community provides a staff only space which is there to enable staff to take the space they need to reflect and rejuvenate which supports the release of natural anti-stress and pro-social neurochemicals (opioids and oxytocin).

REFLECT:

- The adults in our community feel confident to develop relationships with pupils, their families, other agencies and each other and to have the courageous conversations about their experiences so far.
- Our community promotes the exploration of conversations with our pupils that helps to make sense of their life, to develop a language for their emotions and a coherent narrative that makes sense of their experiences and how they feel. Supporting our pupils to understand their thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and reactions and in doing so enables them to identify and explore new options and strategies for ways forward with both their hopes and challenges.
- Our community of staff help our pupils and each other to move from 'behaving' their trauma to reflecting through emphatic conversation and appropriate psycho-education.

- Our community helps pupils, their families/carers and other agencies to form coherent narratives about what has happened to them, to stop negative self-referencing, re-victimisation of self or others and to build self-esteem.