



Education My Life Matters Relational (Behaviour) policy

‘We change other people’s behaviour by changing our own’

Approved by:	Independent Executive Board	Date: September 2024
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Last reviewed on:	July 2024
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Next review due by:	September 2025
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1. Introduction

At Education My Life Matters (EMLM) building respectful relationships and positive learning experiences for our learners is at the heart of everything we do. We have adopted a 'relational approach' because it is a value-based approach, and relationships are at the heart of our school life. It focuses on the understanding of our relationships with our learners, based on insight and understanding of their individual needs. This underpins the support, which is given to them, in order for them to regulate their feelings and communicate their words in a positive manner so they can be ready to participate with their learning.

We consider what might be behind the behaviour; why the learner is behaving in this way. There will always be a reason, the behaviour is a symptom of something that we need to identify, understand and correctly support. We keep our word and if, for some reason, we are unable to honour a commitment to a learner, we communicate clearly and honestly why this has happened.

At EMLM we understand that being 'fair' is not about everyone getting the same (equality), but about everyone getting what they need (equity) and that every behaviour our learners demonstrate is a form of communication. Each learner at EMLM has individual and unique needs. However, some of our learners require more support than others. A whole-school relational approach means that our learners and staff develop positive relationships with each other, at all times.

'Learning doesn't happen without relationships' R. Alber.

2. Aims and objectives

- To promote positive relationships, active engagement and wellbeing for our learners;
- To provide all stakeholders guidance on how to be supportive of our learners in managing and regulating their feelings and emotions, whilst communicating how they feel in a safe way so that they can learn;
- To provide a holistic, whole-person, inclusive model for our understanding of behavioural needs;
- To underpin our beliefs with evidence-based practice and current research;
- Develop and maintain a positive, safe and secure environment where effective learning happens and all learners can develop socially, emotionally and academically, with mutual respect between all members of our school community;
- Maintain a culture of high expectations for positive behaviour whilst encouraging independence, resilience and self-regulation.

This relational approach to behaviour management recognises that:

- All behaviour is a form of communication
- concerning behaviour is a signal for support
- understanding our emotions is a key aspect of managing behaviour
- learners can learn to self-regulate their own emotions and behaviour with the support of skilled adults
- learners need high expectations, clear rules and boundaries to feel safe

We aim to meet our aims and objectives by developing quality relationships with our learners through the theory and research based on the **Relate, Regulate, Reason and Repair model (Appendix 1)**.

We will incorporate a holistic, whole-person approach to ensure we are reflecting and planning for the needs of all our learners, some with complex layer needs. We will continue to focus and remind ourselves that behaviours which challenge always happen for a reason and may, in that moment, be the only way a child can communicate. Children who display, or are at risk of displaying behaviours, which challenge may need support which involves both positive support, strategies, and interventions.

3. Our provision

At EMLM, we continuously encourage all staff to reflect on what may be the underlying issues that drive or trigger behaviours for each of our learners. We have daily briefing sessions before and after the school day - where we ask all staff members to think about ways of responding to behaviour that challenge in a non-judgmental and supportive way. During these sessions, we also discuss and praise the success of staff as well as ensuring practice which does not work is not used by other staff members.

Staff members are readily available when a learner is demonstrating challenging behaviour. In this heightened moment, they are encouraged to listen and hear the learners 'voice' especially during times of dysregulation or distress, when it is often difficult for our learners to make use of other communication methods.

We personalise learning to ensure that we meet each learner at his/her individual point of development in order that optimal learning takes place. We actively teach our children strategies to manage their behaviour in order for them to manage their feelings and communicate their words in a positive manner. Alongside this, as and where necessary, we seek support from wider professional networks to problem-solve and develop our understanding of behaviour that challenges and also to ensure a personalised approach has been undertaken.

4. Relational approach (appendix 2)

Relationships are crucial. Each adult is a significant adult for our learners in fostering a successful relationship. We actively build trust and rapport – which has to be earned, not a given. We have high expectations for all our learners and when we demonstrate our belief in them, it supports them to succeed. We build relationships with our learner by:

- Communicating clearly and calmly
- Being prepared, punctual and attentive
- Being predictable, reliable and trustworthy
- Containing our own emotions
- Demonstrating emotionally intelligent reactions/behaviours at all times
- Observing and anticipating that things may be picked up as threat or danger
- Making time to listen to our learners and one another
- Ensuring our learning environment is well organized
- Providing structure and boundaries
- Finding ways to show kindness -weekly postcards are sent home to celebrate positive actions witnessed at school by all staff, no matter how small
- Investing in relationships so we can support our learners in every aspect
- Apologising if we make a mistake -we model this for our learners and this will support us to build trust and respect
- Seeking help if we are finding it difficult to manage our feelings about a learner

At EMLM we are always respectful to learners; we do not talk about them over their heads or in front of other children. We consider the quality of our relationships with parents and carers as being vital. It is important to reflect and plan with parents to ensure consistency in approaches between home and school. We support one another in managing our own emotions and understand that regulating our own emotions is hard work.

We teach and explain to both staff and our learners on how we feel and respond to our feelings through our behaviour is linked to underlying and unconscious physiological and emotional processes which in turn are a product of our brain development. In order to support our learners, we must understand how to meet the underlying developmental needs not just manage the symptoms. This means providing them with relationships that can make a difference. We know and understand that:

- If children are to engage socially and with learning we need to provide them with an environment within which they can feel safe. Children gain their sense of safety from the adults around them.
- When children feel safe we will need to provide them with opportunities to stimulate and reinforce the neurological pathways which support social engagement.

- We need to soothe children and provide them with experiences which calm their defense pathways.

Heading for the reasoning part of the brain cannot work if a child is dysregulated and disconnected from others (Dr Bruce Perry).

5. Regulate, Repair and Reason

Regulate in practice

All staff member will support our learners to regulate their feelings with skilled relational approaches:

- Attunement – demonstrating an understanding of how they are feeling by matching their emotional energy
- Accepting and validating – demonstrating that their feelings are real and justified
- Containment of feelings – demonstrating you can catch their feelings and help make them a survivable experience
- Soothing and calming – demonstrating emotional regulation by repeatedly soothing and calming

Reason in practice

All staff will help the learners create a narrative/timeline in manageable steps with frequent recapping.

- What did you hear?
- What did you see?
- What did you sense? Adults pay attention to the learner's perspective, acknowledging their thoughts, feeling, viewpoint. Staff can then articulate other possible motives/intentions using 'What if...?'

Repair in practice

Using the restorative justice method following conflict or incidents where harm has been caused, allows the learner to consider:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking?
- How are you feeling?
- Who else has been affected by this?
- What do you need, and what needs to happen now, so that the harm can be repaired?

In order to repair harm, there needs to be a restorative encounter between those involved. Time needs to be spent sharing understanding and coming to an outcome which helps to repair relationships. See 'Restorative Conversations' and 'How to say sorry' – See Appendix 6 The restorative framework is embedded in everyday interactions and classroom practice, from making time to talk, PSHE Jigsaw curriculum, regular circle times and school council meetings.

6. Rewards and Sanctions

Rewards:

At EMLM we understand that all our learners need to develop a sense of doing something good for the sake of feeling good about it themselves. To support with this adults will:

- give specific verbal praise to learners who demonstrate our values
- inform families/carers by sending postcards and/or calling them to share the success of their children
- inform external agencies/stakeholders when learners demonstrate our values
- learners are given Achievement certificates, and this is displayed on board in the learning environment
- mention and promote Achievement certificates and postcards home on monthly newsletter

Sanctions

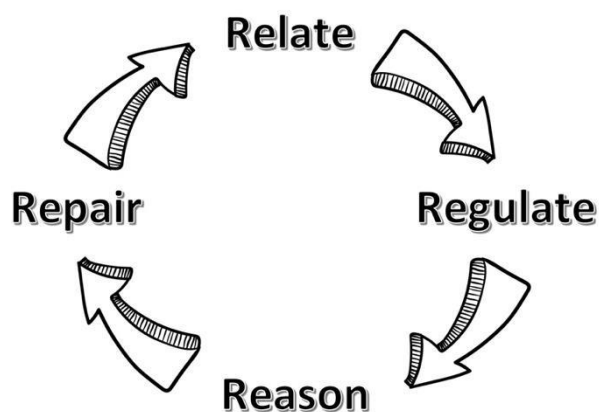
At EMLM we ensure certain behaviours should be made explicit, without the need to enforce 'sanctions' that can embarrass and shame learners from their peers, school community and can lead to potentially more negative behaviours. We recognize that sometimes our learners will not be able to regulate their behaviour and will need understanding and care to help them to modify their behaviours (**Appendix 4**). We consistently follow these beliefs:

- We avoid using sanction that involve taking away a previously earned privilege or any intervention time;
- We always avoid speech which could lead to shaming or humiliation of the learner. We understand that such approaches can escalate situations/incidents;
- We believe in logical and related sanctions that teach, not punish
- We recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach to consequences is not appropriate for our learners. We consider developmental age and any additional or specific needs of the child when deciding appropriate natural consequences. We use a plan, do and review approach to ensure learners will not be given consequences that impede their future learning. We deal with incidents in a non-judgmental way;
- We support our learners to take responsibility for their actions and to repair the relationship with those involved or affected;
- All staff follow the restorative scripted conversations (**Appendix 3**) to help support the learners to modify their behaviour in future

The need to intervene with the use of force/positive handling is so rare that should it be necessary or is likely to be required, it should be reasonable, proportional and only be undertaken on a planned basis.

Even learners with a range of complex needs can be supported to repair; this will look different for each learner. We do not make any assumptions about what our learners feel, as we understand that unresolved issues can become habitual, make our learners feel anxious, which in turn escalate behaviour.

Appendix 1:



Relate	In order to be successful at school all children need to develop relationships which enable them to feel safe, secure and good about who they are. In order for this to happen, relationships need to be at the heart of school life. We aim to promote positive relationships, active engagement and wellbeing for all our learners. Protection, connection, understanding and care are the cornerstones of the relationship and should be part of all interactions at all times at a whole school, classroom and individual level.
Regulate	Every child will face challenges and at times experience strong emotions which block their access to learning and good social interaction. Early identification ensures that staff are observant and aware of these emotions, are skilled in regulating the child so that these emotions do not become overwhelming is integral to keeping the child and classroom calm. When children experience strong emotions they may need to be co-regulated to support them to calm. Children will need repeated experiences of being co-regulated in order to be able to self-regulate.
Reason	Once a child is in a state of calm or alert, i.e. regulated, we can then engage the thinking part of their brain and reflection and learning can take place. Within a context of safety, security and stability, pupils' brains can engage with and strengthen the following tasks: logic; cause and effect; predicting; organising; mental flexibility; working memory
Repair	Repairing relationships is a vital learning experience. Using a restorative framework can ensure that pupils do not carry guilt, shame or rejection and can teach them that they are worthy and deserving of lasting relationships. It supports children to develop greater understanding, empathy and responsibility.

Appendix 2: Relational approach in practice -to be used by all members of staff

<p>Adults will PROTECT by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being predictable, reliable and trustworthy • Containing their own emotions • Providing structure and boundaries • Anticipating that things may be picked up as threat or danger
<p>Adults will CONNECT by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being physically and emotionally available • Attuning to the child's tone and mood • Being responsive, expressive and interactive • Being playful in their interactions • Showing interest • Promoting pupil voice
<p>Adults will show UNDERSTANDING by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being curious about a pupil's feelings, thoughts and behaviour • Accepting their feelings and emotions • Thinking for them • Expressing empathy • Helping pupils to process
<p>Adults will show CARE by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being loving and compassionate • Holding them in mind • Using transitional objects • Soothing and comforting

Appendix 3: Restorative Scripted conversations

Positive Reminder (Relate)	Positive caution (Relate and Regulate)
<p>You need to...</p> <p>I need to see you...</p> <p>I expect...</p> <p>I know you will...</p> <p>Thank you for...</p> <p>We will...</p>	<p>I noticed you are...</p> <p>It was the rule about... that you broke</p> <p>You have chosen to...</p> <p>Do you remember when you....</p> <p>That is who I need to see today.</p> <p>Thank you for listening.</p>
Environment Change (Regulate/Reason)	Time to Think Together (Reason)
<p>I would like you to (move to this seat) because I know you will focus better here</p> <p>or step outside with me to reflect on your choices because you will be successful after reflecting on your choice</p> <p>I would like you to go and see ... who is in the office area, because you have a good relationship with them...</p>	<p><i>- age-appropriate reflection sheet and recognize their feelings and show empathy</i></p> <p>What happened?</p> <p>How did it make you feel?</p> <p>How do you feel now?</p> <p>What have you thought since?</p> <p>Who has been affected?</p> <p>How can you start to make things better?</p>
Repair	
<p>I'm sorry for...</p> <p>I understand it's a problem because...</p> <p> In the future I will...</p> <p>Please will you forgive me</p>	

Appendix 4: Understanding Behaviours

Decoding and responding to behaviours

Behaviour the learner might present	What might be behind the behaviour	What might help
Fidgeting, turning around, poor concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I need to be hyper vigilant, to scan the room for danger, I dare not relax: I need to keep myself safe. -I need to move constantly to focus: I can't concentrate unless I am moving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seat the learner in a position where they have their back to a wall and can see the room, especially the door. -Let them use a fiddle toy and/or a wobble cushion so that their sensory needs are met. -Don't expect them to sit still for lengthy periods-be flexible. -Provide short motivational breaks involving walking in courtyard, taking short walk with LM outside during the school day
Talking all the time, shouting out, dominating discussions, asking trivial questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I feel safer doing all the talking; I need to feel in control. -If I keep talking you won't forget I am here and I will know I am still here. -I don't know how to communicate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provide opportunities for them to talk preferably when helping the teacher with a job. - Acknowledge them and let them know when they will be able to speak. -Keep checking in with them in non-verbal ways.
Gets angry/disruptive/upset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Structure and routine make me feel safer: all this running around, noise and chaos makes me very stressed and I go into fight/flight mode. -I want to participate but it's too much and I don't understand the rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Offer 1:1 support -Provide a safe space or calm area where they can go with a trusted adult to regulate.
Ignoring instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -I've got too much going on just keeping myself safe to focus on what you are saying. -I try to listen and understand but can only take in one thing at a time as there is too much going on in my head 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the learner sits near the teacher or the LM with them to calm anxiety. - Deliver instructions one at a time in very simple language and check for understanding afterwards. -Use visual prompt cards for routine instructions. -Give either/or choices.

<p>Hostile when frustrated, having difficulty with work or if asked to do something in front of others.</p>	<p>-I know I won't be able to do this and then you'll find out how useless I am. -Everyone will know I am bad.</p>	<p>-Don't force the issue, acknowledge their anxiety: "I know this is hard", "let's see if we can work this out together": let them know you are alongside them. - Notice out loud positive behaviours: "you were very kind towhen he was angry just now.</p>
<p>Trying to create chaos and mayhem</p>	<p>-It feels chaotic inside so It feels safer if it's like that outside too.</p>	<p>-Reduce anxiety about what is happening by using visual timetables and planners and minimising change. -Focus on reducing anxiety (and their chaos inside) rather than controlling the behaviour. -Create a calm box for the learner to use when they start to escalate -a game which they find calming etc.</p>
<p>Hits out or causes a disturbance when queuing</p>	<p>-I feel really stressed out and trapped with all these people around me: I have to escape to safety.</p>	<p>-Develop strategies to minimise the need to queue</p>
<p>Withdrawn in class, unable to make friends</p>	<p>-I have to rely on myself and no-one else. I respond to frightening situations by fleeing or freezing up.</p>	<p>-Have a meet and greet with a trusted adult every day. -Provide a mentor/buddy for the child to facilitate them getting used to talking and playing with others. -Include them in small group work on social skills</p>
<p>Bullies other vulnerable children, is aggressive to friends</p>	<p>-I have to be the strongest and feel in control to keep safe. -If people don't do what I want I feel scared. I am so anxious my brain feels like it is going to explode and I hit out.</p>	<p>-Wonder out loud about what might be behind the challenging behaviour and respond with empathy e.g. "I'm wondering if you are feeling upset because ... didn't choose you to sit next to him at lunchtime: that must be really hard" -If consequences are needed ensure they swiftly follow and that there is an opportunity for reparation</p>

Loses or destroys property	<p>-I have lost so much in my life that I have no sense of value or anything.</p> <p>-I don't deserve nice things.</p> <p>-I get so full of anger I take it out on things.</p>	<p>-Provide an outlet for the anger safely such as a punch bag and watch out for triggers: "I'm wondering if you're starting to feel angry: let's let it out in a safe way on the punch bag/cushion"</p> <p>- Build on self -esteem: focussed praise, create opportunities for success</p>
Gets very disruptive at special times such as Birthdays, Mother's Day	<p>-Sometimes these occasions make me remember my past too much and I know I should be happy but it makes me sad too.</p> <p>-I think about my birth family and the things I have lost.</p>	<p>-Plan for these events and discuss potential triggers with parents.</p> <p>-Provide additional support an ensure a quiet, safe space is available.</p> <p>- Provide a narrative for the learner if they are struggling: "I'm wondering if you're finding today hard as you are thinking about your birth mum".</p>
Gets very unsettled at end of term or any change etc.	<p>-This all feels too unpredictable: I don't know what to expect and that makes me feel scared.</p>	<p>-Plan carefully for change: ensure the learner is involved and supported in these changes and has plenty of time to process them.</p> <p>- Write a social story (Social Stories), talk them through what is going to happen and how they might feel.</p> <p>Increase 1:1 if possible.</p> <p>-Work with external agencies/families to have a plan in case they are unable to cope</p>