



### VISION AND INTENT

At Hill West, the vast majority of children behave impeccably. This is because their early pre natal and post natal experiences have prepared them well to succeed in school. For those children whose early life experiences, or indeed diagnosis of additional needs, have not equipped them to manage their strong sensations or emotions, it is incumbent upon us to support them systematically through excellent relationships to learn strategies to reduce their anxieties and manage their feelings and emotions. Over time, it is our intention to equip all children with the skills they will need for success in later life.

We do this through:

- Allocation of a key worker where necessary
- Embedding vital relational functions (VRFs)
- Using Thrive to support early identification of developmental needs
- Targeted social and emotional developmental intervention strategies
- Embodying PACE
- Clearly articulated, appropriate and proportionate responses

Children and adults who are able to regulate themselves physiologically have what is called a large 'window of tolerance'. This means they are able to tolerate both high and low levels of arousal without dysregulating (tripping into a survival 'flight', 'fight' or 'freeze' response).

Our core purpose is to support all children to increase their window of tolerance and thus their capacity to regulate themselves physiologically. This takes time and many repetitions.

### Behaviour as a way of communicating

At Hill West, we know and understand that all behaviours are a form of communication and usually signal that a child has become dysregulated or has an unmet need. We are wholly committed to teaching appropriate behaviours in the same way as we approach other curriculum areas, for example Reading. We understand that this teaching needs to be progressive and accumulative, and revisited many times. This is especially true when a child's early experiences may not have equipped them with a stress-regulation system that enables them to settle, to feel safe, to concentrate, to be curious or to be willing to work alongside their peers in collaborative ways.

### Motivation and Celebration

At Hill West, we know that the vast majority of our children behave impeccably because they are able to self-regulate. This means that they are usually able to control their behaviour, emotions, and thoughts in the pursuit of long-term goals. Our aim is to help all of our children to do this.

We know that it is important to develop children's intrinsic motivation, so that they are able to do something for the sake of personal satisfaction and the primary motivator is internal (i.e. they don't expect to get anything in return). This is opposed to extrinsic motivation, where pupils choose behaviours not because they enjoy them or find them satisfying, but in order to get something in return or avoid an adverse outcome. Studies have shown that "External incentives are weak reinforcers in the short run, and negative reinforcers in the long run." (Benabou & Tirole, 2003).

That said we do utilise a limited number of extrinsic rewards to celebrate and recognise positive behaviour through ensuring that children are always praised and congratulated.

#### Star Cards

Children will receive stamps on their star cards in KS1 and their achievement will always be celebrated. Star cards are numbered 1-18 and children work through them consecutively from Reception to the end of Year 2 (1-6 in Reception; 7-12 in Year 1; 13-18 in Year 2).

#### Praise Points

On entry to KS2 the children will be given a praise book in which to collect their Praise Points. This book will be used throughout their time in KS2 and points will be collected cumulatively.

#### Certificates

Certificates are awarded to children in celebrations assembly one every week (two children per class). A certificate is awarded to one child in each Key Stage per week in celebration assembly for exemplary behaviour.

### Meeting Basic Needs

We understand that building and maintaining healthy, loving and nurturing relationships with children is imperative. We also know (Berne, E. 1970) we can meet basic human needs through:

**Recognition:** eye contact, smiles, comments, encouragement, attention, being noticed and valued

**Contact:** non-intrusive touch (see safe touch policy)

**Stimulation:** sensory stimulation: auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, tactile, olfactory, taste

**Structure:** predictable routines, order, followed through plans, recognition of special events and anniversaries

**Incident:** novelty, drama, excitement; fresh new experiences; challenges and risks

**Sexual:** acceptance of sexual and physical being including recognition of states of arousal and physical needs

**Spiritual:** deep connection, wonder at life; desire to share special moments with others

### 500 Repetitions

Our capacity to learn new habits and skills is possible because of the neural plasticity of the brain. Children who struggle to manage their behaviours need specific and repeated relational experiences which lead to the building of new neuronal pathways, which takes time, effort and repetition. Our staff know and appreciate that it takes about 500 or more repetitions to learn something new.



## Whole School Approach to Supporting Pupil Behaviour

### Building Supportive Reciprocal Relationships

At Hill West, we know that there are important ways to be in a relationship with a child that contribute positively to the development of a significant relationship, and to the development for the child of a healthy sense of self. These are known as Vital Relational Functions (VRFs) and are comprised of: Attunement, Validation, Containment, Soothing/Regulating. In addition, all staff understand the principles of PACE; Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (Dan Hughes). PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the child feel safe. PACE is an approach of four personal qualities which allow adults to support a child to develop their own self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience. Over time and with practise, children can gain strong tools to better understand and regulate their emotions.

#### Attunement

All staff working in school are alert to how a child is feeling, demonstrating attunement to their emotional state and articulating this through: facial expressions, body language, gesture and noises such as 'aah', 'ooh', 'oh', 'mmm', 'eek'. Staff demonstrate they understand the intensity, pitch, pace, volume, expansiveness or special experience of the child's emotional state.

#### Validation

At Hill West all staff are alert to the child's experience. They validate their perspective / experience / feeling, for example: 'whoah that noise was loud, it made me scared!' 'It is really hard when someone you get on with leaves; it is sad to see them go'. Staff understand that this needs to happen before we can move to help the child regulate. Staff know to avoid reassuring, persuading otherwise or contradicting.

#### Containment

Staff are alert to how a child is feeling, and demonstrate containment by showing that they can catch and understand the pitch / intensity / quality of their feeling or mood and can bear it. Staff make their deep distress, raging anger, or painful sorrow a survivable experience. This shared experience builds trust for the child in the adults around them and in the adults in the wider world.

#### Soothing and Regulation

Being alert to how children feel, soothe and calm a child's distress. We know that pupils will need to repeatedly experience being calmed before they can do it for themselves. At all times staff model regulation by managing their own emotional states and remaining calm, in charge, and positive.

#### PACE

**Playfulness** – an open, ready, calm, relaxed and engaged attitude. When children laugh and giggle, or believe they're participating in a game, they become less defensive and more reflective. Play can diffuse a difficult or tense situation and turn an instruction or command into a fun activity.

**Acceptance** – unconditionally accepting a child makes them feel secure, safe and loved. This involves actively communicating to the child that we accept their wishes, feelings thoughts, urges, motives and perceptions that are underneath the outward behaviour. It is about accepting without judgement or evaluation the child's inner life.

**Curiosity** – without judgement, children can become curious and more aware of their inner life. Curiosity involves a quiet, accepting tone that conveys a simple desire to understand the child. For example, 'I was wondering if that made you feel scared'

**Empathy** – a sense of compassion for the child and the child's feelings. Ensuring the child knows that we understand that their behaviour is a way of communicating with us that they feel dysregulated and for them to know that at times everyone dysregulates.

#### Shining a light on behaviour

At Hill West we know it is not enough to be kind and nurturing; we need to help the child to calm themselves down independently. We know that distraction, denial, reassurance or ignoring will not work, and although we may succeed in temporarily stopping the symptom, we will not be addressing the underlying cause of the behaviour that is shaping the child's stress-regulation system.

We know we need to help children to recognise and begin to understand their own behaviour by constant and sensitive use of: Attunement, Validation, Containment and Regulation (VRFs). Through a progressive approach, we want to: help them make the links between emotion, sensation and behaviour, to lend our thinking brain to help them name, sequence and make links between cause and effect, actions and consequences, to move a child that is dysregulated back to a position where they can access their thinking brain and over time, to reduce the number and intensity of learners' dysregulations. Dangerous or socially unacceptable behaviour needs to be stopped; the situation must be made safe for the child, the other children and for the adults involved.

Although the emphasis at Hill West is on developing supportive, reciprocal relationship, children do need to know when their behaviour is socially unacceptable and / or puts them or others at risk. We are committed to helping them develop an understanding of cause and effect, so for example – this action leads to this consequence and have developed appropriate and proportionate responses that all staff are aware of.

## Whole School Approach to Supporting Pupil Behaviour

On occasions we recognise that everyone is susceptible to dysregulating as a consequence of their strong feelings and emotions and this manifests itself in distressed behaviour that is not in the best interests of that child or others. When behaviour is distressed, it is imperative that we help children to calm and reduce their anxiety. When they are calm we can explore the relationship between cause and effect. Sitting alongside our behaviour rationale is this flowchart which is aimed to support staff to help children improve their social and emotional development and well-being.

