



## Innov8 Workshops Relational Policy

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### 1. Introduction

The team at innov8 workshops believe that positive relationships are the foundation of developing learning, growth, well-being and social and emotional skills, which are essential for life and learning. This policy outlines how we promote a relational culture where students feel safe, respected and understood.

Our approach recognises that challenging behaviour is often related to unmet needs or being unable to communicate needs, and we aim to understand, respond and restore.

We aim to:

- Promote positive and trusting relationships between students, staff and stakeholders
- Respond compassionately and empathetically to dysregulation
- Support young people to develop emotional regulation, empathy and responsibility
- Ensure consistency in providing a relational approach to supporting behaviour

We believe that:



- Behaviour is a form of communication and not a personal attack
- Every student can thrive when they feel safe, secure, seen and heard
- Connection before correction
- Every interaction is an intervention

All staff have a commitment to:

- Build and repair relationships
- Listen without judgement
- Offer co-regulation
- Provide predictability and safety

## **2. Our Approach**

At innov8 Workshops we aim to build confidence, trust and belief in every student.

We create a safe and nurturing environment where students:

- Feel seen, heard and valued
- Are supported to express themselves appropriately
- Can learn from mistakes without fear from punishment
- Have opportunities to rebuild and repair relationships

We have a trauma-informed approach that aligns with the Theory of Self Determination, ensuring that we can meet students' individual needs.

At innov8 Workshops, we use various intervention methods which align with children and young people's individual needs.

PACE and the communication skills of the Vital Relational Functions (VRFs) to support children and young people. PACE is the acronym used by psychologist Dan Hughes to describe the optimal adult stance when working with children to reduce stress, enhance connection, promote safety and engender the learning of new social and emotional skills. PACE stands for:

- Playfulness – sensitive and appropriate playfulness helps the child feel safe and promotes positivity
- Acceptance – unconditionally accepting the child makes them feel safe, secure and loved
- Curiosity – genuine and non-judgemental interest in the child helps them become aware of their inner life
- Empathy – demonstrating compassion for the child and their feelings supports the child's sense of self-worth

The VRFs represent the key techniques that we consciously apply in relationship. The VRFs include:



- Attunement – matching the energy of the child with non-verbal, prosodic, energetic and behavioural communication
- Validation – acknowledging the validity of the child’s feelings and experiences
- Containment – predictability, routine and experiencing safety and security, both relationally and environmentally
- Regulation – transforms what was too much to bear alone into an experience that can be tolerated together.

### The Thrive Approach

Thrive is a specific way of working with all children that helps to develop their social and emotional wellbeing, enabling them to engage with life and learning. It supports them in becoming more self-assured, capable and adaptable. It can also address any troubling behaviours providing a firm foundation for academic attainment.

Positive relationships are at the heart of Thrive. We use these relationships, together with play and creative activities, to give children key experiences at each different stage of their development. Repetition of these activities supports their development, helping them to:

feel good about themselves and know that they matter

increase their sense of security and trust

increase their emotional well-being

improve their capacity to be creative and curious

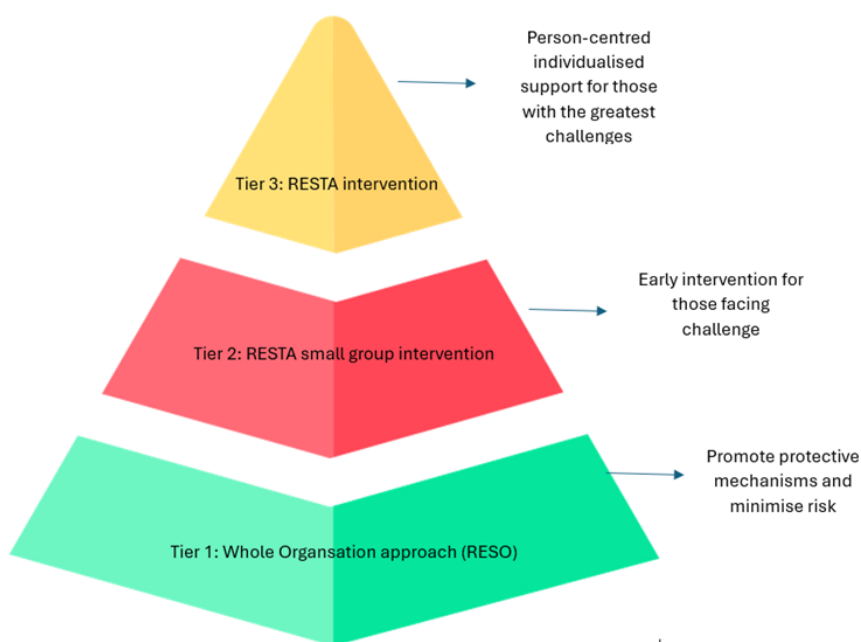
increase their self-esteem and confidence to learn

learn to recognise and regulate their feelings

learn to think before behaving in a certain way ...and much more.

### RESTA

RESTA is a whole organisation approach to building resilience in students using the latest research from relational and trauma aware practice and underpinned by psychological theory. Using a three-tier approach we support learners to build their educational resilience and in doing so improve educational outcomes.



### 3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of Provision will:

- Embed a whole organisation relational approach
- Ensure staff are trained in trauma informed and restorative practices
- Lead on implementation of support plans alongside the Student Outcomes Manager
- Use data to track student engagement and wellbeing

Staff are expected to:

- Build trusting and respectful relationships with every student
- Use co-regulation strategies
- Never shame students or be punitive with them
- Support students to repair relationships
- Create safe learning environments
- Model behaviours that promote understanding, inclusivity and mutual respect

Referrers should:

- Work in partnership with us to support children's emotional development
- Share relevant background information to support mutual understanding
- Engage collaboratively in the young person's best interest
- Support our relational, approach



#### **4. Student aims**

We understand that students are still developing their emotional regulation and communication skills. We offer patience and guidance alongside the opportunity to learn and repair.

Students are encouraged to:

- Treat others with kindness and respect
- Express how they feel or what they need
- Take responsibility for their behaviour and be open to reparative approaches
- Respect shared learning spaces
- Respect differences and show tolerance of others
- Have the confidence to speak up
- Develop their stress regulation system
- Verbalise their feeling and emotions

#### **5. Partnership with parents and carers**

At innov8 Workshops, we encourage relational involvement with parents and carers. We believe in building strong and positive relationships with parents/carers to create a foundation of trust. We believe that this provides better outcomes for young people. This collaboration helps to build strong communication and relationships and involves parents/carers in the young person's progress and journey with us.

#### **6. Prohibited items**

##### **Immediate safety actions:**

If staff suspect that a student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or in possession of substances or paraphernalia, we will:

- Prioritise safety and wellbeing: remove the student from public or group settings to a calm, supervised space.
- A trained safeguarding lead must be informed immediately.
- Seek medical advice if there are any concerns about physical safety (e.g., via first aiders, 999, or NHS helpline).
- Do not search personal belongings without following DfE guidance on “searching, screening and confiscation.” A member of SLT and another adult should be present.



## **Relationship and Need Based Response**

Following any incident:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will coordinate a Restorative Support Meeting, bringing together the student, a trusted adult, and (where appropriate) parents or carers.
- The purpose is to explore why the substance use occurred by identifying triggers, peer influences, or unmet emotional needs.
- A Wellbeing and Safety Plan will be updated to include protective factors, trusted adults, and targeted support.

Where relevant, referrals may be made to substance misuse services or other external agencies.

## **Legal and Safeguarding Duties**

- Possession or supply of illegal substances will be treated as a safeguarding and criminal matter, and the DSL/DDSL will make decisions in consultation with the Head of Provision and Police, guided by DfE (2022) and local safeguarding board protocols.
- Decisions to involve police will always consider the age, vulnerability, and intent of the young person, and seek to avoid criminalisation where possible, in line with restorative principles.

## **Restorative Follow-Up**

- A relational reintegration meeting, focusing on trust repair and safety, not blame.
- The student will be encouraged to engage in learning and reflection around risk, health, and coping strategies

## **Sticking to principles of relational practice:**

- Staff will make sure the response is guided by a commitment to safety, relational trust and restorative support by always viewing substance misuse as a potential indicator of unmet needs rather than a behaviour issue
- Our response will first be guided by ensuring the safety of students and staff, and this remains paramount in balancing care with accountability.