

# RELATIONSHIPS

**RELATIONSHIPS** are key, as they always have been. How do we reconnect, and (re-)build inclusive, responsive relationship at all levels in school?

Why are relationships important now?

The impact of national isolation has increased our awareness of the importance of relationships. A priority, as schools reopen, will be rebuilding relationships and repairing relationships where there has been harm.

Relationships between staff and children, and between children, will be the vehicle for effective communication in classrooms, corridors and communities. However, we must **recognise** that all the relationships on which schools depend will have been impacted. For example, children will return with varying degrees of anxiety as peer dynamics re-emerge, relationships with adults in school re-establish, and **recognition** of the level of progress relative to others emerges.

Some staff will return with new insights into the needs of the children they are teaching, and many staff will be negotiating different expectations from home or in their school role. These, alongside ongoing uncertainties as guidance on social distancing develop, will all impact the social and emotional capacity within the school system. An intentional focus on relationships will be essential for increasing a sense of being **safe** and accepted.

Effective leadership that prioritises building, maintaining and repairing relationships has always been the foundation for creating a whole school ethos of care. This must be a priority as schools move through the phases of react, RESTORE and reset for the future.

## **How can we build, maintain and repair relationships at this time?**

With the Senior Leadership team and with the staff group:

- How have relationships changed?
  - Have some groups found improved ways of building relationships? Eg. Staff responsible for a group of children through the pandemic? Links to community?

- How have relationships been harmed?
  - Who has been isolated or excluded from communication/social media groups?
  - Have children experienced online bullying? How have we responded so far?
  - Which adults/children will be most vulnerable when we return?
- What will be the key relationships for an effective and speedy re-integration of the children and staff?
  - Will some children/staff need specific additional relationships? Will some capacity need to be re-deployed to focus on specific groups? How will those groups be identified?
  - How will systems for behaviour management respond to increased levels of emotional distress as routines and expectations are re-established?
  - How will space for children be created to rebuild relationships, mindful of social distancing both within and outside of school? How will the curriculum give re-building relationships priority?
- What strategies will support repairing relationships?
  - How can restorative approaches be used to address harm?
  - How could peer-mediators (where present) be prepared to support?

With children:

- Which relationships have you missed whilst being away from school?
- How have your relationships changed? With friends, parent/carer, with staff?
- Who is the person in school you would speak to if you are finding things difficult?