



**Thorpe Acre Junior School**



**Thorpe Acre Infant School**

# **Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) Policy A Relationship-Based Approach to Inclusion**

Approved by : Headteacher  
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Next review due by : March 2029

Learning, Working and Succeeding Together  
Reaching High, Learning and Growing Together

## **Safeguarding Statement**

At Thorpe Acre Junior School and Thorpe Acre Infant School, we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to, deliver services at Thorpe Acre Junior School and Thorpe Acre Infant School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

## **GDPR Statement**

Data will be processed to be in line with our requirements and protections set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act as amended by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

## **Equality Impact Statement**

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

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## **1. Introduction**

Although behaviourist approaches can work for the majority of children, they are not successful with all. Our school recognises that some children will have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) – traumatic life experiences that occur before the age of 18 that may have an impact on their social, emotional and mental health needs in school.

## **2. Aims/Purpose of this Policy Guidance**

This policy aims to develop a more consistent approach to children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

## **3. Our Approach**

Our whole school approach starts with our ethos. We:

- Encourage children to develop and maintain high standards of behaviour and achievement;
- Develop articulate, literate and numerate pupils;
- Are responsive to national and local education priorities which meet the needs of our children and their families;
- Help pupils and staff to achieve their potential as individuals and as members of society;
- Foster positive, confident, independent and resourceful learners;
- Encourage self-responsibility, self-confidence and self-respect;
- Value children and adults as individuals and as members of diverse cultural, racial and religious groups all with different abilities, knowledge and skills;
- Acknowledge parents/carers as the prime educators of their children and work with them to improve the educational opportunities available.

We strongly believe that responding to the SEMH needs of children is not the responsibility of a few staff in school; rather it is everyone's responsibility and recognise that:

- Being "fair" is not about everyone getting the same (equality) but about everyone getting what they need (equity).
- Behaviour is a form of communication of an emotional need.
- Adults must take a non-judgemental, curious and empathetic attitude towards behaviour. We encourage all adults in school to respond in a way that focuses on the feelings and emotions that might drive certain behaviour, rather than the behaviour itself. Children with behavioural difficulties need to be regarded as vulnerable.
- Relationships are key. This requires a school ethos that promotes strong relationships between staff, children and their parent/carers. It also relies on creating a positive school culture and climate that fosters connection, inclusion, respect and value for all members of the school community.
- Clear boundaries and expectations around behaviour must be maintained. In order to help children feel safe, we recognise their educational environment needs to be high in both nurture and structure. Children need predictable routines, expectations and responses to behaviour. These must be in place and modelled appropriately by adults, within the context of a safe and caring school

environment. Natural rewards and consequences that can follow certain behaviours are made explicit, with the need to enforce “sanctions”.

- Not all behaviours are a matter of “choice” and not all factors linked to the behaviour of children are within their control. Therefore the language of choice (eg “good choice/bad choice”) is not always helpful.
- Behaviour must always be viewed systemically and within the context of important relationships (i.e. a relational communication pattern rather than an internal problem).
- Encouraging parental engagement and involvement is absolutely crucial when addressing and planning support for children’s SEMH needs.

#### **4. What difference can a Trauma-Informed Approach make?**

It is hoped that by following a Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) approach, staff will feel empowered to respond in a way that is empathetic but with clear boundaries, firm but kind.

We encourage staff to consider what empathy means in practice, and to not confuse empathy with sympathy.

We acknowledge we must look beyond the challenging behaviours displayed by children and question what emotions might be driving these behaviours. Only when children feel a sense of being heard, understood and cared about, can they begin to express their emotions in a more acceptable way.

We advocate an Authoritative versus Authoritarian approach where adults are in control versus controlling.

#### **5. A graduated approach**

It is important that indicators of SEMH are clearly recognised, to ensure that it is not just pupils who are displaying observable and active/acting out behaviours (eg those who are non-compliant, show mood swings, verbal and physical aggression, those who abscond, who lack empathy or personal boundaries) that are identified. Pupils who display more passive behaviours (eg those who present as withdrawn, isolated, disengaged and/or distracted, who avoid risks, who appear very anxious, who refuse to accept praise, are reluctant to speak) can sometimes go unnoticed because their behaviour can feel less challenging to manage.

At Thorpe Acre Junior School and Thorpe Acre Infant School, we recognise it is also important to avoid viewing or labelling pupils whose behaviour is externalised, as less vulnerable than those who internalise their emotional distress.

Early intervention is imperative for addressing both active and passive behaviours, to ensure that low level features/difficulties can be addressed early.

It is essential for staff to be aware of the tendency to make judgements around behaviour (eg mad/bad) and to see all behaviour as an indicator of emotions to

which we must respond in an empathetic and caring manner. This can be particularly hard to do when children act in a way that hurts or frightens others.

We realise that pupils who are identified as particularly vulnerable will need specific approaches tailored to their individual needs and experiences, strengths and difficulties. These will be planned in conjunction with parents/carers and relevant partners, and shared sensitively, as deemed appropriate.

At Thorpe Acre Junior School and Thorpe Acre Infant School, pupils identified as vulnerable require the following approach by adults. The adult must follow PACE:

**PLAYFULNESS** is about creating an atmosphere of lightness and interest when you communicate. An open, ready, calm, relaxed and engaged attitude.

**ACCEPTANCE** is about actively communicating to the child that you accept the wishes, feelings, thoughts, urges, motives and perceptions that are underneath the outward behaviour. Unconditionally accepting a child makes the feel secure, safe and loved.

**CURIOSITY** is wondering about the meaning behind the behaviour for the child. Curiosity lets the child know that the adults understand. Without judgement, children become aware of their inner life.

**EMPATHY** is the adult demonstrating that he or she knows how difficult an experience is for the child. The adult is telling the child that he or she will not have to deal with the distress alone. Empathy gives a sense of compassion for the child and their feelings.

In addition, adults will:

- Approach situations with empathy
- Clarify their role in the management of the situation
- Establish themselves as a safe individual
- Create an environment of mutual respect
- Give the pupil opportunities to make acceptable choices
- Talk about safety and what steps you will take to ensure the safety of the pupil
- Slow yourself down, speak slower, use a lower pitch and avoid excessive body movements
- Offer self-soothing exercises such as mindfulness
- Use positive language with pupils
- Use movement breaks and create humour
- Talk calmly about the situation and talk about how the behaviour needs to change, not the pupil
- Provide examples of how to move forward – this could be with ELSA support.