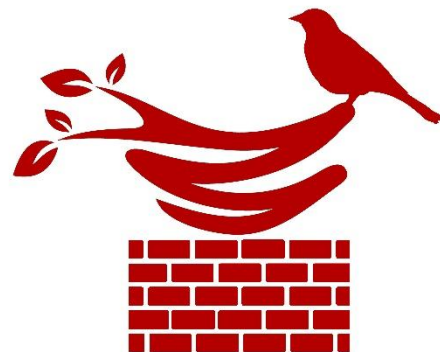


Juniper Hill School

Relational Policy



Kindness Enjoyment Achievement

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Our Core Beliefs

Section 1a: The Power of Relationship

The power of the positive relationships we build and nurture with our children is at the heart of our relational policy. 'Every relationship has the power to confirm or challenge all that's gone on before' (Bombér 2007). We acknowledge all of our children will have received different early childhood experiences depending on the love, care and nurture they will have received from their families. In order to settle to learn and to make the most of the opportunities we offer at Juniper, our children need the adults around them to show them unconditional positive regard and to invest in building positive, kind, caring, nurturing relationships.

Our Juniper Hill School motto and values are at the heart of the positive relationships we build, between adults, children and our wider Juniper Community.

Kindness

We treat our children with kindness. We know that our responses to their behaviour must be state and stage dependent, as well as capacity driven.

Enjoyment

We delight in our children. We enjoy working at Juniper. We are open, engaged and initiate interactions with our children to build connection. We use positive body language and kind respectful words. This helps our children to experience felt safety. We ensure they feel seen, heard and recognised and they feel we are interested in them.

Achievement

We want all of our children to experience success.

Respect

We are respectful towards our children and treat them well.

Community

Every member of the Juniper Team has a collective responsibility to build positive relationships. It is everyone's responsibility to care for, and nurture our children

Independence

We believe that children can't be independent until they first learn to be dependent. For some of our children they will have learnt this before starting school, for others, who may have lived **adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)**, they are often experts at controlling things and doing things for themselves in a survival state of pseudo-independence. We model asking for help and offering to do things for our children; this helps them to see adults can make decisions for them and take control. This is the start of building trust.

Curiosity

We know that behaviour is a communication, rather than being reactionary, we are curious about what a child's behaviour might be telling us, we don't judge. We wonder out loud and work with our children to figure out their thoughts, feelings, wishes, fears and insights. By being curious and accepting our children leads to a new understanding of their intentions and actions of themselves and others. We are curious about our children and how they learn best, how we can adapt and change our approach to enable them to succeed. We know that building a child's self-awareness can lead to improved self-control.

Courage

We have the courage to adapt our approaches to meet the needs of our children. We are open minded, we have the courage to take risks, to adapt our teaching as we learn new strategies and skills that will improve the quality of education for our children.

Creativity

We are creative in both our approaches to building positive relationships and planning our lessons so that all of our children can succeed.

Section 1b: The Impact of Disruption

Babies are born with a need for connection and safety. They are not only dependent on their primary caregivers to meet their basic needs of food, water, warmth and rest, (Maslow's 5 Levels of Human Need, Appendix 1) but in order to thrive, babies need love, belonging, safety and security; without this, their need for connection and safety are not met. The consequences of this can lead to toxic stress, fear and terror. The impact of a disrupted early childhood creates **adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)**. The impact of disruption can prevent a child from healthy regulation and trusting adults. It creates **trauma** and developmental vulnerabilities in our young people. Without the power of kind, understanding, positive relationships; disruption can shape the future lives of our traumatised children. We believe it is the responsibility of schools to intentionally create positive relationships where all children thrive, this helps **all** children especially those who enter school having had a difficult early childhood.

Section 1c: Our Corporate Responsibility towards Recovery and Resilience

Every member of the Juniper Team has a collective responsibility to build positive relationships. It is everyone's responsibility to care for, and nurture our children. Our children thrive when they are seen, heard and recognised. We expect the Juniper Team to be warm and open, to smile at our children, to use their names and greet them in the morning. It is important adults facilitate 'quality moments' during the day by pressing pause and being physically and emotionally present, attentive, attuned and responsive. We want our children to experience positive interactions with all members of the Juniper Team.

Section 1d: The Significance of Differentiation

At Juniper, we fully recognise that all of our children are different and unique. We value and celebrate differences and diversity. We use opportunities within the curriculum to teach the children that it's ok to be different. The Juniper Team know the importance of having a flexible approach to supporting our children, one size doesn't fit all! We not only differentiate and adapt the curriculum, but also the way we treat our children. We acknowledge all of our children have a very different starting point.

We communicate the message of celebrating differences in a number of ways:

-  The Juniper Team speak to each other respectfully and as equals, show appreciation for each other and value their strengths.
-  The Juniper Team are respectful towards all of the children in our care. They are mindful of their verbal and non-verbal communications; the team know that the children pick up on how we relate to them and their peers and will replicate how we communicate in their own direct interactions with each other.
-  The Juniper Team are respectful towards our families, they know the importance of partnership. The team are aware we are all going to have different perspectives, beliefs and values. When communicating and working with our families we must remain professional and not allow our own beliefs to interfere with creating a positive, professional working relationship.
-  The staff directly and indirectly communicate differences. We communicate and celebrate differences directly in assemblies, during PSHE lessons, Life Skills lessons and in other areas of the curriculum / school life. We indirectly communicate differences when we manage interactions between children, we celebrate what children can do and challenge negative comments we hear the children make about each other.

Section 1e: The Need for State Dependent Interventions

All functioning of the brain is state-dependent. Our state can change very quickly as it is impacted by felt safety or lack of it. Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory (2011) describes how visceral experiences affect the nervous system and our resulting behaviour. At any given moment we are constantly evaluating our environment to look for cues signalling danger and safety.

Dr Bruce Perry describes state as: calm, alert, alarm, fear or terror. He explains that children will think, learn, feel and behave differently when they are afraid compared to when they feel safe. At any given moment, the collective status of our body's systems and the mind's attention determines the state our children are in. Ideally, we want our children to stay in the alert and calm states for most of the day, this means they are well-regulated and in balance. In order for children to spend more time in their social engagement system (states of calm or alert) we must over compensate felt safety cues.

According to Dr Bruce Perry, when we are in a calm state, we are relaxed, we can let our minds wander and drift, we have access to the smartest part of our brain, the cortex. Alert is when we focus on an aspect of the external world, for example an experience. When we are well regulated, in balance, we are able to move into alert and calm states. We move in to 'alarm' state when we feel challenged, surprised or threatened. When this happens, we start to think in a more emotional way as the lower systems in our brain begin to dominate our functioning. We can end up arguing with others, we feel personally attacked and highly emotional; we often say or do things we later regret. If we are truly faced with threat, we will move to 'fear' and 'terror states' where our lower part of our brain will dominate our

functioning. We are unable to problem solve, we focus on in the moment survival.¹ There is the strong possibility children will move into 'terror states' if their alarm and fear states are not attended to. If they are in a terror state they can become 'unreachable' as they lose connection with themselves and others the lower down into their brains they go.

Our children do not deliberately choose their state, when children are feeling a fundamental fear of harm, they are very quick to become upset. As adults, we need to be aware of the state our children are in and use state dependent interventions. This will enable our children to thrive, enjoy school and make the most of the learning opportunities available to them.

Section 1f: The Four Key Elements of our journey together as a community

Know the story

We will see our children as unique individuals with their own story. We will invest in a relationship with their families to understand their story. When they join us in reception, or later in their school journey, we will ask what the child has lived through, from pregnancy onwards. We will take special note of any relational disruptions, ACEs and toxic stress. Children who have experienced relational disruptions can be developmentally stuck; meaning a child is continually in survival mode, they are stuck in their primitive brain and it's hard for information to get passed up to the higher parts of the brain where problem solving, processing and retaining new information reasoning, sharing and empathy occur.

Increase felt safety

Creating an environment of felt safety is fundamental to children achieving success at school. Feeling safe enables children to settle to learn. We are committed to achieving felt safety at Juniper in a number of ways:

Staff stability

We value every member of the Juniper Team. We recognise that each member of the Team contributes to the overall effectiveness of the school. We aim to support our Team's professional development; we understand the importance of receiving ongoing training and support in every role within the school. We value staff wellbeing and are committed to monitoring the teaching staff's workload. The school provides supervision for staff working in the Nest (SEMH Unit) individually and in groups, this provides a safe reflective space. Relational permanency and staff stability benefits all of our children.

Structure

All children benefit from structure and routine. Wherever possible we aim to stick to timetables and routines. When we have to make changes to our timetables, we prepare our children, we explain why and how something will be different and what to expect. We draw attention to what remains the same as opposed to all that will be different.

Safety Tours

We use safety tours to support our children who have experienced disruption or have high levels of anxiety. This gives them the opportunity to move around the school site, with a trusted adult and make a list of the ways we keep children safe at Juniper. The list may include:

-  Physical Safety, e.g. visitors' badges, signing in-book, first aid room, entry system at the front of the school, locked gates, fire evacuation poster in all rooms etc.

¹ Perry, B.D. and Winfrey, O. (2021) *What happened to you? Conversations on trauma, resilience, and healing*. Flatiron Books. P89

-  Physiological Safety, e.g. values posters with behaviour expectations, classroom rules etc.
-  Mental Safety, e.g. trained school staff.
-  Social Safety, e.g. children are supervised during lessons and breaks, senior staff wear whistles, anti-bullying policy, school motto of kindness is referenced often during the day.
-  Emotional Safety, e.g. ELSA support, Play Therapist, Information Shared on a need-to-know basis.²
-  Increasing felt safety cues, e.g. smiling.

Anchors of Safety

Some of our children benefit from creating 'Anchors of Safety' pictures. The children are asked to draw a picture / image that represents safety to them. The children carry their 'safety' picture around with them, when they feel 'wobbly' they can look at their picture and look at the image. The child's key adult will ask the child what they could see, smell, feel, hear and taste if they were in the centre of the picture. This helps regulate them and bring them back to a place of safety.

Safe Spaces

We know that some of our children benefit from safe spaces. We create safe spaces depending on each child's individual needs; some safe spaces will be in reading corners of the classroom, others in rooms within the school, e.g. Library, Nurture Room etc. A safe space provides a child with somewhere to 'down load' or process everything that's been happening. Classrooms are busy environments, some of our children can become overwhelmed and dysregulated. Depending on a child's needs, they will have timetabled slots they can use their chosen safe space or they will be directed to use it when a member of the Juniper Team feels it would be beneficial for them to do so. Our children can also ask their key adult / teacher if they need to use their safe space. Safe space rules are very simple; children are asked to respect the sensory toys / resources; to respect anyone else who is in the room / may be using the space and to leave the room / space as they find it.

Soothe the alarm

As babies and infants have not yet developed language to make sense of their experiences, all of their memories are therefore sensory memories. Babies and infants operate out of the bottom part of their developing brain; this is responsible for their basic functions and aims to keep them alive.

As the infant becomes a young child, their body stores their experiences / memories in their sensory system. Children who have experienced disruption in their early childhood can be developmentally stuck in 'fear mode', they are often hyper-vigilant to signs of dangers, this reduces their ability to filter out every day sensory experiences e.g. sights, sounds, smells. This results in a child's sensory system becoming overwhelmed, it can make them feel danger is imminent, when it isn't. As their experiences have been stored as sensory memories, our children can have flashbacks, they may behave in a way that is responding

²Bombèr, L.M. (2011) *What about me? Inclusive strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day*. P54 -55

to the feeling of immediate danger, that we are unable to see. Often, they are unable to verbalise what they are feeling, as their memory has no language attached to it. This isn't something they are able to control as it's their body's primitive reaction to the fear they are experiencing in the moment.

Our way of responding is to 'soothe the child's alarm', by being curious about their behaviour; wondering aloud to figure out with the child what their underlying experience could have been and to use sensory interventions to calm the child down.

Sensory activities can include:

-  **Proprioception (perception or awareness of the position of the body)** – activities that involve lifting, pushing or pulling heavy objects.
-  **Vestibular (sense of balance associated with the inner ear)** – activities that involved spinning or swinging e.g. dancing, cartwheels, playing on playground swings.
-  **Tactile (sense of touch)** – activities that involve massage, messy play activities such as playing in the sand or mud kitchen.
-  **Auditory (sense of hearing)** – listening to music or natural sounds, calming music can be played.
-  **Visual** – this involves removing visual clutter, considering where a child sits, use of colours for calming or stimulating attention.
-  **Olfactory (sense of smell)** – removing odours that may upset children, or using smell that support their comfort.
-  **Taste** – to stimulate a child who is withdrawn, e.g. using mints, sour sweets or strong-tasting food in a game.³

It is important to be aware that both young and old can be impacted significantly by lived experiences, not just babies and infants. It is likely that our alarm systems get shaken up if we experience trauma so we are then likely to need to use increased frequency of sensory breaks in order to soothe the alarm. During hyper arousal, we down regulate and hypo arousal we up regulate. We can also use smell to support sensory comfort.

See the child

We recognise every child in our care is unique and will have come to us with different experiences. We will communicate acceptance of their lived experiences, their feelings, their way of interpreting themselves, others and the contexts they find themselves in. We will treat them in a kind, empathetic way, without any judgement. We will use opportunities within our wider curriculum, such as Forest School lessons to find quality moments of connection with our children, where we will be intentionally physically and emotionally present, where we will enjoy being with them, just for who they are and not for what they are able to do or have achieved.

³Whitaker, D. (2022) *The Kindness Principle: Making relational behaviour management work in schools*. Independent thinking press. P76-78

Section 2a: Expectations for staff

-  We are committed to creating a diverse 'Juniper Team'. We know that children benefit from being supported by different adults of different ages from different cultures and backgrounds; and we recognise that each adult working in our school comes with different life experiences and has a range of different skills. The school acknowledges that we all have different starting points as staff too, with varying capacities in relation to our connection needs as human beings. Although we are committed to creating a diverse team, we have a set of core values and beliefs against our motto which we expect all members of our team to subscribe to. (Appendix 3).
-  We expect our staff to be committed to their own learning and training, to be open to trying different ways to support our children. We acknowledge we will all have different experiences and training; our aim is to provide training for all. We expect our staff to be understanding and wise with their words, to be gentle with their strength and strong with their gentleness. We will remember some of the children in our care, who have experienced developmental trauma, have a very fragile sense of self.⁴ Children with a fragile sense of self have usually experienced developmental trauma but there can be other reasons too.
-  To be self-reflective, to recognise we are always learning. To listen to each other and to be open to trying out new ways to support our children. Through self-awareness and reflection, our staff may develop an understanding of how their own experiences may impact on the way they manage challenging situations. We want our staff to remain calm and regulated, if this becomes challenging for a member of our team, we encourage our staff to support each other and swap adults. Self-reflection encourages and facilitates a pause to reflect on ourselves, each other and those in our care.
-  We know how important it is to remain regulated throughout the school day, to take regular quality breaks and look after ourselves. We expect staff to be kind to themselves and each other. We expect staff to support each other and remember everyone is doing the best they can and looking after ourselves is an essential part of supporting our children.
-  To always remember connection is at the heart of our relationships with our children. It will be during the most challenging times that our children need connection the most. Our children need to build trust and have the security of knowing that they are unconditionally accepted by us. Our children need to build safe relationships with every member of the Juniper Team but have the deepest relationship with their key adults.
-  To recognise the significant responsibility, we have towards our children. To believe each child at Juniper is important and is worthy of our time, energy and patience. We

⁴Bombèr, L.M. (2020) *Know me to teach me: Differentiated discipline for those recovering from adverse childhood experiences*. Worthing Publishing: London. P276

expect all of the Juniper Team to differentiate according to each child's needs. We use 'Team Pupil' model, everyone is clear about how they can be the best they can be in their particular role / responsibility so that we can all work well together.

Section 2b: Expectations for pupils

-  We know that all of our children have had different childhood experiences and will come to us with different starting points.
-  We know each of our children will present with different sensitivities, vulnerabilities and resiliencies we will see it as our responsibility to learn about our pupils and differentiate our care.
-  The Juniper Team have learnt that all functioning depends upon the state the children are in. Children can move very quickly from calm to fear or terror, when stressed or experiencing threat. When children feel under threat their cortical systems become less dominant, and more reactive parts of their brain begin to take over. Feeling in a state of fear or terror will look different for each of our children depending on their early experiences.
-  We know in order to support our pupils to feel safe at school and to settle to learn we need to differentiate emotional and social tasks and expectations. This means our children may need support when working in a group; during unstructured breaks or lunch times; they may struggle to be in assembly etc. It is important to get to know our children and to be flexible in the support we offer.
-  School can be very challenging for some of our pupils, By connecting cognitively and emotionally with our pupils we will learn what is a '**Big Ask**' for individual children and consider what we can put in place to reduce their anxiety levels, e.g. not participating in whole school assemblies, support with transition between lessons/activities, eating lunch in a quiet space, not being asked to talk in front of the class, sitting in a certain location in the classroom etc . Our children's pre-frontal cortex can become hijacked if stressed or triggered in some way.
-  We respond to our children with kindness and care. We encourage the Juniper Team to be physically and psychologically close to our children. This means we are actively present. We work hard to communicate acceptance and safety and provide structure, empathy and support. We know how important relationships are and how school can become a surrogate 'secure base' for our children.⁵

Section 2c: How we measure effectiveness

-  We will check our attendance data every half-term.

⁵ Gebbes, H. (2006) *Attachment in the Classroom: The links between children's early experience, emotional well-being and performance in school*. Worthing Publishing: London. P141

-  We will monitor how engaged our children are in the classroom. Are they confident joining in with their **Kagan** groups? Are they comfortable sharing their ideas with the class?
-  We will monitor how interested our children are in joining a Juniper Committee, e.g. School Council, JRSO's, Litter Pickers etc.
-  We will ask our children to complete a 'Relationship Circle' in Life Skills lessons (see Appendix 2)
-  We will talk to our children and young people, in an age and / or state appropriate way about their mental health and wellbeing.
-  We ask some of our children to complete a 'Me and My School' picture. This involves asking the children to draw a picture of 'Me and My School'. The picture provides us with rich information about the relationships they have formed and how safe they feel in the setting. Children who draw members of the Juniper Team and other children show they feel comfortable with the adults and have positive relationships; those who draw windows, doors and objects are sometimes demonstrating to us they aren't yet able to internalise those significant to them. We are able to repeat the activity overtime to measure the impact our interventions and support are having.
-  As a way of measuring who the significant adults are in some of our children's lives, we ask them to complete the 'Mountain Climb' picture. The picture shows a mountain climber climbing a mountain holding a rope, at the top of the mountain the rope is dangling. We ask the children to write at the top who would hold their rope. The children who have secure attachments will write Mum, Dad, adults in school etc. If children write the names of other children or objects, this suggests they need relational support, our role is to provide them with warm, rich, caring relationships full of emotional connection.
-  We will time how long it takes for our children to recover from every day, low-level stressors in school.
-  We will log how many times members of the Leadership Team have to deal with serious incidents.
-  We will measure children's achievements and learning progress in comparison with themselves, not their year group.
-  We will use a pupil survey, this can be adapted according to the age and needs of the child.
-  We will use a teacher questionnaire to find out how cared for a child feels, this will provide information on regulation and connection.

Section 3

Using PACE as an attitude at all times

PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) is a key element of **Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP)**. **PACE** is a way of being; a way of developing

relationships with our children. Our children need to feel safe in school, it isn't enough for children to be told they are safe.

Observing **PACE** in school involves:

Playfulness

Playfulness means being warm, open and engaged, using chat and humour to make learning fun. It's a way of being to facilitate rich, rewarding relationships. It involves smiling and using big gestures. We use playfulness to communicate our delight in being with the children.

Acceptance

This involves communicating our understanding of a child's experiences, feelings and beliefs. It doesn't mean it matches our own interpretation or meaning, but we are accepting our children have a different reality to the one we do or think they should do. This involves being open with our body language and using words such as, help me to understand, I see.

Curiosity

By being curious we help develop curiosity in our children. Our children grow and learn by being curious about themselves, others and the world around them. Curiosity leads to self-awareness: self-awareness leads to self-control. ⁶ We can show curiosity by showing we are interested, having an open posture and by using language, such as, I'm wondering, what if.

Empathy

It is so important to show true empathy to our children, to show we are interested in them and care about their struggles. Each will have their own unique journey of relational losses. Often the behaviour we see will be communicating their deep anguish and grief. As we get to know our children better it will be easier to experience empathy for them.

Dyadic Developmental Practice

Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) was designed originally for those who had experienced relational trauma but, in this policy, we are encouraging this as a way of being for ALL. DDP provides children with healthy, rich, relational experiences, modelled on healthy parent – child relationships. Our children who have experienced relational **trauma**, such as neglect, abuse and exposure to frightening environments without the protection of warm, caring adults are full of shame and terror. They have learnt adults can't be trusted, they can't meet their needs. DDP offers the children the opportunity for new relational experiences. DDP helps children to learn to feel safe in a relationship, safe to experience a range of emotions and to be vulnerable, to feel safe to know that there are adults they can be dependent on, who will look after them and meet their needs. Secure attachments awaken the exploratory system; safety, security and attachment are required for the skills of learning. Some members of the Juniper Team have received DDP Level 1 training. The school is committed to eventually providing DDP training for all of our teaching staff and learning support assistants.

⁶ Bombér, L. (2020) *Know Me to Teach Me: Differentiated discipline for those recovering from adverse childhood experiences*. Worth Publishing Ltd. P205

The principles Team Pupil

Some of our children need additional support, they need to know there are a group of adults in school who care about them, who want to help them and are on their side. A group of adults who will listen, nurture them, and will be available to help them. We call this group of people – **Team Pupil**. The children are given a picture of the people on their team and know they will check in with them and help them. The role of the Team is to understand their pupil, their journey so far, what might be a '**Big Ask**' for them. The Team will communicate with home and help the child to settle to learn, build a positive, caring relationship with them and help them to feel they belong and they are safe in school. The Team provide a sense of stability and security, a family structure in school. The **Team Pupil** helps provide a sense of predictability when life can be full of change. The team meet regularly and together. They focus in on stressors and calmers.

Differentiated support for relational trauma recovery

All schools need high expectations of behaviour; classrooms need to be calm, learning environments for children to learn and succeed. At Juniper we believe in differentiated discipline. We differentiate our discipline in the same way we differentiate our curriculum. We increase structure and supervision at times of difficulty. Our children are individuals, they come with different experiences, they need us to hold boundaries and use **consequences** in a strong, supportive, caring way. A one size fits all approach of zero tolerance won't work for our children. We hold boundaries as the grown-ups and use consequences as and when appropriate. We also engage in reparative work together with children to reduce shame and to restore relationships. The expectations we have of our children are informed by the developmental stage, capabilities, vulnerabilities and of their regulatory state at any given time.

When children don't reciprocate our connection with them

Sometimes children won't initially reciprocate our connection with them. They are afraid and fearful. They may have been let down by adults in the past and have learnt that adults can't be trusted and depended upon to meet their needs. They will deliberately 'push us' away, they are scared of us and don't want to be let down and hurt again. They have experienced intimacy betrayal and now present with '**blocked trust**'. It can take months or even years to learn to trust. We will therefore need to see a key role of ours as trust builders. We respond to their lack of reciprocation with **PACE**. We show empathy and understanding. We communicate our care for them, we invite them to join our games and activities and always remain consistent, open and warm. We wonder aloud for example, *I can see it's really hard for you to do up your shoelaces, can I help you? It's nice to let people who care about us help us*. In this example, we are teaching the child it's ok to be dependent on adults who care for us. Children learn to be dependent before they become independent. It can take months for a child to reciprocate our connection, we never give up. We communicate permanency to our children, we tell our children relationships matter. The children who resist us them most need us the most.

When there are minor infractions

There will be daily minor infractions with our children. Our regulation and connection needs to provide an environment which attends to their **regulation** and ability to connect. We will consider the demands we are placing on our children. For some of our children we will need to provide them with the very experiences they most fear, being understood and

emotionally connected. We will provide a level of structure and supervision that is appropriate for each child's stage of emotional development and deal with all minor infractions with **PACE**.

When there are serious incidents

When dealing with serious incidents we have to remember how thinking, feeling and behaviour are connected. When we understand the motivation for the behaviours, the reasons why a child has behaved in a certain way, we are in a better position to know what is the best fit for this particular child and situation. Serious incidences will be dealt with care and empathy; **consequences** will be given that are agreed and discussed with a member of the leadership team, the family and the child. We reduce stress and shame in order to have tricky conversations and use reparative opportunities to restore all that is broken together.

Staff Self-regulation

As adults we need to bring our own regulated selves to the classroom. We need to remain warm, open and to create feelings of felt-safety for our children. We need to remain regulated, grounded and connected with ourselves, we are the steady anchors for our children. We need to find our own ways to regulate ourselves, this will include, sleeping well, eating regular healthy meals, taking regular exercise and using breathing techniques, mindfulness or meditation, whatever we have found works for us. We have to develop our self-awareness, learn what triggers us and to have the confidence to swap with other adults on the Juniper Team if we feel we need support. We need to catch ourselves and know how we behave when we are feeling overwhelmed, and learn how we can get ourselves back, e.g. do we need a sensory break, time out to carry out a breathing exercise etc. We have to work closely with each other to help regulate our own behaviour, this will support our children. We all have the ability to download calm if we are mindfully present, attentive, attuned and connected. As adults, we reflect on our own practice in a reflective space to be the best we can for our children.

Attunement

Attunement describes how we need to 'tune' into our children, to read and then respond to the non-verbal messages they are giving us at any one time. Our bodies give away so much. If we are attuned to our children we respond with the appropriate tone of voice, facial expression, body language and verbal language that helps regulate our children. *Being attuned is the foundation for empathy*⁷. When we attune with our children we are communicating they are safe, we care about them and want to be with them. When our children feel safe they are able to learn, to learn how to read and write, about the world around them and about how to behave. Attunement is fundamental to our children's success. It can be difficult to attune to another person, it starts with giving them our full attention and being curious, noticing their movements and wondering what they might be feeling and thinking beyond their spoken word.

^{7 7} Bombér, L. (2020) *Know Me to Teach Me: Differentiated discipline for those recovering from adverse childhood experiences*. Worth Publishing Ltd. P130

Self-reflection

Helping our children to reflect on what has caused them to become upset is an important part of developing their self-awareness. Self-awareness leads to self-control, which is what we are ultimately aiming for. How we support our children to reflect will depend upon their age, for example, our older children are developmentally able to reflect on their behaviour but will need help regulating first. Our younger children will need a member of the Juniper Team to help them with the self-reflection process.

When helping our children to reflect, we wonder aloud, e.g. *'Mmm, I wonder what could have happened to make you so upset... Maybe something with your friends at break time? Perhaps they didn't like playing the game you wanted them to?'* We use **PACE** and start from the child's experience and make sense of this before helping them to consider the viewpoint of anyone else involved.

Regaining Balance

Self-reflection enables us to regain balance in our relationships with our children. This process can't be rushed, our children need to feel listened to and understood. It's important we don't move quickly into talking about the consequences of what happened, as this increases our children's shame and they can potentially once again become dysregulated. By staying with the child's experience for longer it builds connection between the adult and pupil while providing further regulatory support. It's crucial we respond in this way, instead of our children moving into shame they are now able to experience guilt and remorse.

Consequences to make amends can now be worked out and agreed between them instead of educator-imposed sanctions which increase **toxic shame** and prevent a sustained change in behaviour. We can download calm through our mirror neurons, it is so important we are regulated in order to co-regulate.

Members of the Juniper Team will also reflect on the incident and discuss if the child needs more supervision, or perhaps support managing during break time and discuss if additional provision or interventions need to be put in place.

Relational repair

The importance of relational repair cannot be underestimated; saying sorry and holding our children in difficult moments is a rewarding and empowering feeling. It means our children don't carry guilt, shame or fear from a previous day, they come to school each day ready to be warmly greeted and the challenges of the previous day are in the past. Relational repair is led and initiated by adults and happens with a child, relational withdrawal compromises a child's attachment security which damages their sense of felt safety. Louise Bombèr, in her book *Know Me To Teach Me* (2020) p252, details the six principles for repair.

-  Keep possible stressors low
-  Keep shame possibilities low
-  Remain warm, open and engaged
-  Consider who else should be involved but keep the number as limited as possible: increasing the number of adults involved will increase shame

-  Be actively involved yourself, so that anything completed is in partnership
-  Always repair 1:1 or 2:1 ... you together with the child or young person, and when the time is right, with the individual who got offended or hurt

Louise Bombèr, (2020) suggests different ways to repair relationships, including, using visuals, such as sorry cards, random acts of kindness and paying back time.

Every time we repair a relationship we are teaching our children there is an exit strategy, we can put things right when we have made a mistake, there is a message of hope.

Section 4

When the going gets tough - Some key considerations

-  Those who need our care the most are those who will ask for it in the most uncaring of ways.
-  There is much fear behind many behaviours we find the most challenging.
-  If our pupils could do better they would.
-  Let's not ask our pupils questions about their behaviour that we already know the answers to, for example, 'Did you take that pen?' when you know they did!
-  Let's always communicate our intention to understand.
-  Flexi support is a must.
-  No consequence needs to be immediate unless it's a life or death issue.

When the going gets tough: CONNECTION before CORRECTION

It is important to flag that we do not rush our interactions when the going gets tough. We have to slow down to get there quicker! In fact, we are aware that the more we slow things down the more likely there will be an educative opportunity for all involved in the relationship at times of difficulty, including the teacher. Regulated, reflective practice is held in high regard in our school/schools/authority.

It is also important to note that only those most familiar to a pupil, for example someone from **TEAM PUPIL** engage in the necessary work involved during relational repair. If something has happened with other members of staff around then they simply refer on to **Team Pupil** as it is known that increasing familiarity decreases stress, supporting the social engagement system to remain online.

We also want to ensure that a consistent approach is taken, using what is known about the current stressors and calmers for the pupil.

We continue to follow the sequence of engagement whether that is in the teaching of curriculum or in the teaching of behaviour – regulate, relate, reason and repair.

Following this sequence means that we will not always have our tricky conversations immediately but only when we believe we ourselves and the pupil are regulated and after connecting, explicitly to the pupil first.

We ensure there is always some quality connection between us first as this then paves the way to a meaningful, reflective dialogue because the pupil is then able to be fully present, in the social engagement system of their nervous system, the system that is most accessible to human contact.

The tricky conversation: ENGAGE not ENRAGE

As we are aware that pupils who have experienced ACEs will have higher levels of both stress and shame in the mix we are mindful of these sensitivities.

We use starter phrases such as:

'We need to have a tricky conversation right now but remember, I care about you. I am not going anywhere. And we will find a way to work this out together.'

The golden nugget: NAME it to TAME it

Whenever possible, as reflective educators, we join up the dots between the past and the present, the possible triggers and the current context where the difficulties have arisen. We believe it is important that the pupils know that we know what their struggles might be and why.

We believe behaviour is communication and that distressed behaviour is often an expression of an unmet need or a mix up of the past and present as many of our pupils can fall down time holes very easily, due to the overwhelm of all that they have lived.

Whenever possible we name feelings that may well be around for example: confusion, fear, uncertainty, frustration, anxiety etc. We are very well aware that the pupils themselves will not necessarily know what they are feeling or have the language to describe what is going on and so we wonder aloud on their behalf using feelings language.

We try to reduce our words and embrace emotion whenever possible.

Reparation: Building Bridges

We believe it is really important that we, the staff apologise first for anything we might have done or not done that could well have precipitated the difficulties. For example, 'I'm so sorry that I didn't put enough supervision in for you at a time you needed this most'. We are well aware that as adults we lead by example in the area of apology.

If a dynamic is escalating we also use surrender arms and physically step back too as this can pave the way to reparation, by reducing the threat that the pupil might be experiencing in the moment. We might also gently add with an empathic tone of voice, 'whoa I'm unsure where you have gone right now but I'm on your side. I'm for you not against you'.

If any reparation is needed by the pupil we ensure we do not leave them to do this alone but we do whatever is deemed necessary together, to decrease both stress and shame. Again, we want to do all we can to decrease stress and shame so that our pupils can remain engaged in a state where there is the possibility of learning.

We tend to use random acts of kindness as our first response to reparation, wherever possible.

Next steps : Holding onto hope

Dependent on what has happened it might be necessary to increase structure and supervision of the pupil's activities for a specified period of time, as it might be that they are not strong enough yet to manage certain contexts or scenarios. If we do this, we are quick to communicate to the pupil that we will only be doing this for a period of time as we trust that they will get stronger at whatever it is that is tricky, in time. We believe it is important to communicate our hope and faith in them as this contributes to self-worth

We do all we can to give them opportunities to succeed in our setting. We are aware that if they don't manage a lot of the time that this will only exacerbate their already low opinions of themselves and this can increase distressed behaviours. In our school we are keen to ensure that every pupil leaves us clothed in dignity and strength. We see it as our responsibility to reflect back to pupils an accurate sense of their value and worth.

In some circumstances there will be clear natural consequences for actions that a pupil might have taken during their distress. We do not protect them from these natural consequences as these will support them to start making connections. For example, if they have used all their money on sweets before school and they can't now buy a snack at break time then that is the way it is. We do however support them through empathic responses, for example, 'I'm so sorry that you can't now buy a snack as you used up all your money...'. We realise how important it is that our pupils learn to link cause and affect but we also are aware that for some of our pupils executive function is severely compromised due to all they have lived so it might take a little longer for these pupils to make these connections.

DDP (Dyadic Developmental Practice) Examples

Stealing

We use **consequences** at Juniper to 'teach' children that stealing isn't allowed.

Our children might steal for a number of reasons:

-  an impulsive desire to own something;
-  out of jealousy to have something another child has and they do not;
-  they want to fit in;
-  to create distance in a relationship, if they are afraid of getting too close and the sense of dependence they are feeling is too frightening or
-  a child may steal food, drinks or money simply because they don't have enough.

We have to be curious about the underlying reasons and motivations for stealing, applying a consequence without understanding why can stop the stealing but cause the child to communicate their reason for stealing in a different way.

It is important to mention that we will only use **consequences** after we have calmed a child. Discipline means learning, learning can only occur if the child is calm and regulated. For the chance of a consequence to be understood and implemented, the child's arousal system has to be calm. Consequences will firstly involve repairing the relationship with the adult / child that has had their property stolen and secondly introducing a consequence such as:

-  completing tasks in the classroom instead of having a break time;
-  helping to look after the school environment;
-  missing out on a class activity;
-  increased supervision etc.

The language and phrases we use with the children are key to the success of any consequence we introduce. It's so important we try not to trigger **toxic shame**. We have to

recognise and name what the child is feeling and how they are struggling and explain how we suggest the damaged relationship is repaired and the consequence of stealing.

The most important thing is to communicate first that we understand why they felt they needed to do whatever they did – the A in PACE. We can then determine what next needs to happen. When we miss out this first action they can escalate in their distressed behaviours.

Stealing is an emotive action. If a child steals, it can feel like a betrayal, our amygdala will kick our circuitry into self-protection, we may personalise the behaviour. This makes it very difficult for us to maintain connection, which is what the child needs, when we will want to disconnect. In this situation, a member of the Juniper Team may need support of another member of the team to co-regulate.

Collecting

Children collect objects for many different reasons. Phillips et al. (2020), are able to provide two possible reasons why from talking to the children they work with. They state, collecting is a way of owning something, a way of having something of their very own that can be kept with them. A second reason could be the desire to keep something someone has given them, this gives them a way to remember the relationship and the feeling or experience the object reminds them of. Collecting not only provides memories and comfort but can also fulfil the child's need for control. We need to accept our children may collect objects and meet this with empathy, an understanding of their past experiences and curiosity about how we can support them. We need to wonder aloud and help them.

Swearing

Swearing is often seen by adults as insulting and disrespectful. It can be very difficult to remain calm and respond from a regulated place when you feel a child is challenging your authority or being rude. Children will often swear as a symptom of being upset. For our children that have experienced disruption swearing is often a big part of their lives. They will swear to test a relationship or to shock. They are not always conscious of the language they are using. It's often preferable for them to have an adult respond to their language choices rather than address a mistake they may have made or to try to attempt to explain what might be worrying them. It's our responsibility as supportive adults to remain regulated, to try to support the child until they are calm and we are able to reason and repair the relationship. When repairing the relationship, we may use language such as, *You were really cross earlier and got really mad with us. Do you have any idea what happened to make you so cross? I'm worried your friends won't want to spend time with you this afternoon, they will have remembered the mean things you said. That will be hard for you. Would you like some help to think about how you are going to say sorry to them and to help them trust you again?*

The child will be reminded of our school value of respect and kindness. Swearing at other people is our school isn't respectful or kind and we would discuss with the child how we are there for them and want to help them.

Aggression

Some of our children who have experienced disruption can very quickly become aggressive if they feel threatened and scared. If a child is aggressive, fear is often at the root. We must link up here with lack of 'felt-safety'. Our role is to 'chase the fear'. By knowing our children

well, we can become attuned to any rising upset and quickly intervene, offering proximity and co-regulatory strategies. Again, we use PACE, first acceptance and empathy, followed by curiosity. Sometimes children can quickly move to anger, potentially becoming verbally and physically aggressive because their circuitry has primed them to do so. They aren't 'choosing' to be aggressive, if they could do better they would. Often once they have calmed down they experience shame at the way they have behaved.

Our primary concern when our children become aggressive is to make sure all of the other children are safe, we would carry out a dynamic risk assessment and move the other children if necessary. We may remove furniture and toys depending on the behaviours the child is displaying. Once the child is regulated again, we would communicate our conditional acceptance, we want our children to know we are there for them and care about them regardless of their behaviour. We will wonder aloud to work out what might have caused their outburst, such as, *I wonder if you got upset because I was giving attention to XXX, it's normal to feel jealous when people we like working with work with other people. Rather than getting upset we can use our words to tell people how we are feeling, perhaps you could have said, can you help me too please.*

It's important the children understand there are **consequences**, this comes last, when both the child and adult are calm. The child will be asked to repair the relationship, this may involve cleaning up any mess or repairing anything that is damaged. Our last resort would be to send a child home, this is not exclusion but an opportunity for a child to reset. We may be very worried if they stayed in school they would get into more trouble. When the child returned to us the following day we would spend time reconnecting and discussing the events of the previous day. We would make changes such as increasing support, introducing learning breaks, distractions, mindfulness sessions etc in order to limit aggressive outbursts.

Bragging, exaggerating and lying

Some children struggle to foster reciprocity in relationships. They often have a deep sense of self-hatred and are unable to show themselves any self-compassion. Their feelings of being unlikeable means they make up stories to make others find them attractive. Correcting our children or calling them out and asking them to stop doesn't change their behaviour. Having empathy and naming what we think their behaviour might be telling us often works better, such as, *I see that you always want to tell your friends you have more of everything than they do. I wonder if you worry they won't like you just the way you are? This must be tricky for you?*

We value honesty at Juniper and regularly remind our children of the importance of telling the truth. Our children who have experienced disruption use lying as a way of avoiding trouble, as their underlying emotional response is likely shame. **Toxic shame** is a feeling of self-loathing and worthlessness. Lying to avoid **toxic shame** is a protective behaviour. The Juniper Team know that lying is an adaptive strategy for ensuring safety. Lying, blocks us from feeling pain and prevents us from feeling emotions such as guilt or empathy. Being able to feel guilt and empathy enables us to understand the impact of our behaviour on others and helps us to behave in ways that are kinder and more considerate.

We never try to ask a question we already know the answer too. This can set children up for another lie. We are clear about what we know, e.g. *I saw you take the pencil crayons*

and put them in your pocket. I understand how much you love colouring but we need our pencil crayons in school. If the child denies it, a response would be, I think your brain wishes you hadn't taken them now as you don't want to get into trouble. I'd like you to put the crayons back while I tidy up. I'll check they have been returned when I put the crayon tray away. Thank you

Running away

There will be occasions when our children may feel so overwhelmed their sympathetic arousal system is telling them they need to create distance for safety. This is very difficult and distressing for the Juniper Team as we have a duty of care to protect the children and keep them safe. It's important the school site is kept secure at all times, this will enable us to find our children quickly. Once we have found them, we will sit quietly somewhere in their proximity and wait until they are showing visible signs of calming. We will wonder aloud, trying to work out why they might have run away. It's so important we remain regulated. If we are worried about imminent harm, we would make the decision to close the distance even if their behaviour escalates. We will wait until their arousal system calms down before having the conversation with them about why they ran away and what the possible reason might be. We will need to increase the child's feelings of felt safety so they no longer feel it necessary to run away. Sometimes our children might run away because they want to check we still care about them, they are developmentally immature and are simply operating from their emotional limbic brain. In these situations, we wonder aloud about how they might worry about not being special, we respond playfully and tell our children we would come and find them if they hid up a tree or in a bush. We want to communicate to our children unconditional love and care. We use SOS bags and sensory toys to help our children regulate, to help their arousal system to calm.

Need for control

Some of our children will have a strong need to control the environment, their interactions and others emotions. This is born out of fear, our children believe that if they have ultimate control life will be more predictable for them. They haven't yet developed trust in adults, they have yet to learn the adults around them will make decisions that are helpful and have their best interests at heart. Allowing adults to take control can be very frightening for some children. We have to encourage dependence before independence, for our children to experience the warmth and sense of care having someone do something creates. We communicate aloud our intentions, such as, *I've noticed how hard it is for you to pull off your wellies, let me take care of you. It must be so tiring always wanting to be in charge. People who care about us, like to do things for us. I care about you, I enjoy helping you.*

We use situations like this to help some of our children reflect their early experiences when adults may have taken control and were aggressive and harsh or were absent or preoccupied. We help the children to learn their controlling behaviour enabled them to survive but they don't need that strategy anymore. By repeating this time and time again we are communicating to our children they are safe and we are there to help them. By showing the children their response isn't wrong it will help them start to reconstruct their shame narrative.

However, this can be very challenging, increasing a child's sense of trust is hard. Our children will push back and reject our care, authority and support. We have to be aware of what our children are doing and be mindful of being controlled. If we find this happening, we respond using PACE. We laugh and say things such as, *oh no, you tricked me, you got me*

doing what you wanted to do not what we need to do now. You are so clever, I'll have to try harder at not being tricked! Come on let's get back to what we need to be doing now.

Receiving feedback

Receiving corrective feedback and praise can be very hard for children. Some of our children haven't yet learned to regulate their shame around making mistakes. They have a very fragile sense of self-worth, any frustration they experience with their learning dysregulates them. The Juniper Team recognise they have to play the 'long game'. When some of our children first start with us we will avoid conversations until they have developed a greater sense of safety. When we start giving feedback we will initially start by offering a suggestion, e.g. *can I show you a really cool way of solving this number problem?* If the child says no, we wait and gently keep trying, all of the time accepting and showing empathy.

Receiving praise can be really difficult for some of our children, they don't trust adults and being told they have done a good job is so far removed from what they believe about themselves that it feels the adult is telling lies. We have to start with small steps but warn them we are going to tell them they have done something well, e.g. *Are you ready for this? I'm really excited to share with you how beautiful your art work is, the colours you have used are so bright and bold.* We can leave our children sticky notes with smiley faces or brief compliments if they find verbal praise overwhelming. As we build trust with our children and they start to feel a sense of safety and learn that we care about them unconditionally, receiving feedback and praise should feel more comfortable.

Making mistakes

Making mistakes is normal, if we aren't making mistakes we aren't progressing with our learning. This is very difficult for our children who have experienced disruption to understand. Many of them have learnt that making a mistake could put them in danger. At Juniper we communicate to all of our children that making mistakes is normal. In our Life Skills curriculum we teach a unit of learning on Self-Compassion and learn it is normal to make mistakes. We read books that celebrate the importance of being kind to ourselves and how our mistakes can help us with our learning. When our children make mistakes, we remain regulated and communicate this, such as, *I noticed when you dropped the box of crayons on the floor and broke some of them, you were very quiet. Did you think I was going to shout and get really angry and blame you or someone else? It doesn't matter, we all drop things. We all make mistakes. We can still use the crayons.*

It's important we teach the children that some mistakes can be serious and cause other people harm. If this happens we discuss with the child their intentions, whether it was due to emotional arousal or a lack of judgement. In these situations, we support the child make amends and repair the relationship.

Safety matters

It is important our children feel safe at school. Children have to feel safe, it isn't enough just to be told they are safe, reassurance does not translate into feelings of felt safety. We start a child's journey to self-safety by staying physically close to them and attuned to their state and needs, at any given time, as much as possible. This is why we operate a staggered start in reception. Our reception children join us in three smaller groups over a period of a month. This enables the Reception Team to create meaningful connections with each child and for them to develop trusting relationships and experience emotional safety in their new

learning environment. For some of our children we complete an individual development plan (Appendix 4).

Our perception of safety can be a child's perception of danger. Therefore, we are careful about inviting visitors into school without warning the children first and discussing who they are and why they are visiting. It's important our children learn who might be safe in our wider community, who should be avoided and how to ask for help, e.g. police and community nursing team. We work with our children and recognise some of them may be triggered by certain professionals, and it may be difficult for them to participate in the session.

Sabotaging

Children who have experienced disruption can find new feelings of safety and trust with adults overwhelming. These new feelings can be very frightening and there can be a fierce impetus to return to what is familiar. As Phillips, Melim and Hughes (2020) write, *"Our lessons from interpersonal neurobiology also remind us that being close without fear requires a nervous system that is flexible and adaptive. Trauma impairs the child's ability to adapt and change."* Our children's biggest fear is being rejected. If they sabotage their relationships, they are in control. It is better to reject before being rejected. The Juniper Team's response would be to wonder aloud in an attempt to organise their experiences and to reinforce our unconditional nurture and care.

Loyalty issues

As our children who have experienced disruption develop feelings of felt safety and learn to trust our Juniper Team, it can be really challenging for them to understand why some adults in their lives haven't kept them safe or have interacted with them in ways that make them feel uncomfortable. When our children start to share this with us, we respond with empathy. We try to help our children to organise their own thinking and feelings and also what their early care givers might have been thinking and feeling too. This helps co-create a different narrative than the one where the child feels **toxic shame** and blames them self and sees it as their fault their early needs weren't met.

For our children who aren't living with their birth parents, they can struggle with their increasing attachment to their primary carers as they develop strong senses of felt safety. We aren't able to change their feelings but by using PACE we are able to communicate we understand their struggles, we are there to support them and they are not alone.

Separating environments

Our children who have experienced disruption could potentially find they are growing up in different environments. If this is the case, we must work to make the different environments clear to the child so they can be more aware of what behaviours are needed in each setting. If our children develop awareness, they can choose adaptive strategies to match to different environments, in the hope they are less likely to become hijacked by their nervous system. This is very challenging and our children will need an enormous amount of help and support to be able to achieve this.

Food matters

Our children who have experienced disruption often have an unhealthy relationship with food, they may have been denied food, or it could have been used as a punishment. They may initially struggle to adapt to the regular school routine around food. Children in the Nest (our SEMH unit) have fresh fruit, water and milk available to eat and drink at any time. Our children and adults in the Nest eat together. We talk about food with the children and what we enjoy eating. We use meals as a time to connect and enjoy each other's company. We cook with our children in the Nest, we make each other cakes to celebrate birthdays and special occasions. However, we are mindful some of our children will struggle with birthdays and special occasions, they may not always evoke the special memories they do for our children who haven't experienced disruption. We want our children to learn to be aware of what their bodies need and to develop a healthy relationship with food.

Travel matters

The journey to and from school can be difficult for some of our children. They may not have an adult who can co-regulate their increasing arousal. They may find the experience stressful and overload their sensory systems. We build in connection time for our children at the start of the day, this will look different for each of our children. For some of our children it will be the opportunity to say hello and have a quick chat as they enter the classroom and hang up their belongings. For other children, they may need a sensory activity, or time to run around and play for 5 minutes before coming into the classroom and settling to learn, especially if they arrive at school deregulated, primed for fight or flight reactions.

If our children travel to school in a taxi, we will work with the taxi driver and or mentor to help them to understand the challenges our children face and how best they can support them. We will explain to the local authority how important it is for our children have the same adults bringing them to school and taking them home.

Family matters

For our children who have experienced disruption it is highly likely they haven't benefited from a positive consistent relationship with both of their birth parents. This is very challenging for them. Many of our children long for relationships with both of their parents regardless of the disruption they might have experienced and the hurt their birth parents might have caused them. Our children often blame themselves, telling themselves they did something wrong, they are no good or unlovable.

It is important our children learn the truth about their lives, if we don't talk about it we are communicating to them that their life is so bad that even adults don't want to talk about it. We are inadvertently causing more shame. When talking about the children's lives we are very sensitive to the amount of detail we share. We do this as part of our work with the child's family and with any external agencies involved in their care.

We are sensitive to the events we celebrate and the curriculum tasks we ask of the children e.g. Father's Day and Mother's Day. We still celebrate events but consider how it might impact our children and what we can do to support them.

We use opportunities within our PSHE and Life Skills curriculum to discuss with all of our children their feelings about their families and people who care for them and what they like and don't like their parents saying and their worries. All of our children benefit from open

discussions about child / parent conflict and to learn different strategies they could use to communicate emotions and build respectful relationships.

Section 5

Vulnerability Vs shame

Our children who have experienced a disrupted early childhood have a fragmented and disorganised sense of self. Their early relationships lacked safety, unconditional love and the intersubjective conversations and stories needed for the integration of a sense of self. Their verbal and nonverbal conversations created feelings of shame and terror. Shame is highly damaging, it restricts the nature of self as it emerges during the course of development. Shame is toxic, in a state of shame a child will feel wrong, bad, stupid, unlovable and worthless. When an event creates a reaction of intense shame, the event is frozen in a child's mind. The child will seek to avoid the same event again as it might elicit a similar reaction of shame. The feeling of shame is something a child will want to avoid at all costs. If relationships with close adults have created feelings of shame a child will want to avoid them, as they feel they are flawed, unlovable, bad and deserving of the harsh behaviours they have experienced. It is our role to expose, express and respond to their shame with care and empathy. To create secure attachments and new meanings to their experiences with adults.

We have to be cognisant of the challenges our children have faced, they will always be part of who they are. Our children will constantly be at risk of doubting they are worthy and deserving of adult's unconditional love and care. They are vulnerable to experiencing shame again, this can cause them to think that lasting change is hopeless. We have to respond with PACE, support our children through challenging times to help them resume their progress and development.

When our children engage in positive, social relationships, where unconditional comfort is available and accessible they discover the safety of vulnerability. They can experience the joy and fun of being in a caring relationship, without being scared. They can experience the safety of warmth, structure and boundaries when they feel scared and vulnerable and learn that vulnerability isn't something they have to avoid.

Defences possible

Children who have experienced secure loving relationships will have learnt that adults can be trusted and will meet their needs; they have a level of confidence in the adults looking after them.

Our children who have experienced developmental **trauma** look at the world differently. Their experiences have taught them adults will hurt, neglect or abuse them. They are over-sensitive to the signs of danger and will very quickly feel threatened. Their nervous system has been hard wired to predict danger. The challenge for our children is predicting danger becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. They look at the actions of others in line with their earlier experiences and the beliefs they have developed. Adults cannot be trusted and will not look after them or meet their needs becomes part of their narrative and how they view the world, this has the potential of creating **blocked trust**.

This is exceptionally difficult for us to challenge and change but in order for our children to recover we have to remember a child's response to every situation is embedded in their

lack of felt safety; their difficulties with trusting adults to meet their needs in a loving, caring way and their own story that is laced with fear and shame which has led to their fragmented sense of self.

Developmental vulnerabilities and sensitivities

Our children who have experienced **trauma** are often developmentally younger than their age. Without being fully aware, they want what they missed out on in their early years. Once we start to build a trusting relationship with them they will take us to what they need and show us their developmental vulnerabilities. They will communicate their developmental needs with us. They will want to play games such as hide and seek, peek a boo, they will want to play with games and toys that are often enjoyed by younger children. We need to allow our children to do this, to show them the joy that comes from being able to relax and experience fun in a relationship. The Juniper Team know every interaction can be an intervention. By playing with the children and supporting their vulnerabilities they will remember how we made them feel and we will start to leave a heart print in their developmental journey.

We also need to be mindful of our children's sensitivities, they may have strong reactions to sounds, smells, textures and noises. These may evoke feelings of anger, sadness or shame. As we get to know our children and observe them we will be curious and learn their sensitivities and respond with PACE.

Remaining open and engaged

The Juniper Team have received **trauma** informed training. They know the difficulties some of our children have in trusting and entering relationships. They try very hard to recognise the behaviour challenges our children face are rooted in high levels of **toxic shame** and our children would behave well if they could. Our staff try very hard to remain open and engaged, so they can support our children emotionally in order for them to maximise their ability to engage with their learning. Our staff are aware from their training they need to notice when they become defensive, a child's defensive response will pull an adult's own defensive response in turn. The only way to break this is through self-awareness, recognising when a defensive response is being triggered. Being open and engaged helps us to respond and adapt flexibly, it enables us to notice and make sense of what our children are doing. It stops us from trying to 'fix' our children but enables us to understand our children's experiences and communicate our understanding. Our children do not understand their internal experiences, they aren't able to manage their big thoughts and feelings. As Golding, Phillips and Bombèr (2021) write a child's behaviour is a reflection of how good they are at noticing and regulating their own internal experiences and turning to others for support with this. They will only successfully learn how to achieve this if they are supported by adults who are able to remain open and engaged.

The significance of integration

Our children who have experienced a disrupted early childhood often have a fragmented and disorganised sense of self. As a result of a lack of opportunities and relational neglect they haven't experienced the safety and intersubjective conversations and stories needed for the integration of a sense of self. Their early stories involve shame of self and mistrust of others, therefore shutting down their early interest in learning about themselves and the world around them. Unlike our children who have secure attachments and have

experienced unconditional love and a circle of security; their early stories involve pride, comfort, joy, exploration and discovery.

Our role as trusted adults is to show we are interested in who our children are. We are interested in what our children think feel, and want and they are important to us; we care for them unconditionally. As our children start to feel safe, they will discover qualities that reflect their emerging sense of self, that they are fun, interesting, and enjoyable and that adults around them delight in being with them. This will help our children develop a sense of self that is whole and integrative, reflecting that they are loved and cared for.

Parts language and pictures

Using parts language and pictures is a strategy we use with some of our children. We learn who we are through the eyes of another. We are all complicated individuals with many different contrasting parts. For our children who need parts work, we carry out weekly sessions for 30 minutes with each child. We write their different parts on large pieces of paper, we go slowly with our children always making sure we talk about 2 positive parts they would like to grow, to each 1 part they would like to shrink, examples include, kind, generous, patient, supportive, thoughtful, caring versus unkind, impatient, cross, impulsive. Humans are evidence seeking creatures, we need to use evidence when we work with our children and wonder aloud, for example, I know you have a helpful part, I saw that yesterday when you helped me hand out the PE equipment during our lesson. I wonder how you could grow your helpful part? Perhaps you would like to take responsibility for a role in the classroom? I saw your cross part this morning when you got angry with one of our class for not explaining your groups answer correctly to the class. I wonder how you could have behaved differently? When we need to have a tricky conversation, it is important we hold onto the contradictory part which is usually part of them too. For example, you are showing me your impatient part right now, but I know you have a patient part too, I saw it when... If we help our children name their different parts it takes down their fear; fear fuels their shame response. We will use this intervention for between 2 – 3 years with some of our children, depending on their level of need.

Section 6

Celebrating relationships examples from the Juniper Team

Working with the children in the Nest (SEMH Unit) I am aware that every interaction I have with our children is pivotal. It is an opportunity to communicate safety, consistency and genuine care. Our children carry experiences of mistrust and rejection and through calm responses, predictability and connection before correction they can begin to repair those relational wounds. The progress is small, but it is there. Where I was once ignored and disregarded as a new adult. I now delight to be requested to work with individuals or a quiet sidle up on the sofa so they can sit with me for lunch. I even find myself practising my football skills so their passions can be seen as mine too.

Mrs Cara Duhan (Assistant Headteacher for Teaching and Learning)

I enjoy working with xxx. She has come a long way in the 2 years I have been working with her. It is so rewarding to see her participate in all aspects of school. To see how she has grown in both her friendships with her peers and adults and her progress academically. Everyone needs a trusted adult and a cheerleader. I am proud to be hers.
Mrs Marie Deane (LSA)

I feel our connection deepening each day, built on trust and the understanding that XXX knows they'll be listened to without being judged. He knows I've got XXX's corner, always. I admire XXX— XXX strengths, honesty, and even the way XXX finds me funny at the moments we both need it most. I'm learning to recognise the small signs that XXX needs help, and I make sure to respond gently and quietly, without making a fuss, so XXX feels supported rather than singled out. Through this, our relationship keeps growing in a way that feels safe, respectful, and genuine. I also deeply admire XXX's creativity—XXX is a wonderful artist, and it's been really special to see how the encouragement and support from XXX's classmates recognises XXX talent and helps build XXX confidence.
Mrs Ashling Smith (Year 6 Teacher)

As one of two ELSAs (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants) at Juniper, it is a pleasure and a privilege to work with a range of children. Each brings their own experiences (from bereavement and trauma to anxiety, friendship issues, or changes within families.) ELSA sessions provide a safe and enjoyable space for them to talk and explore their feelings without judgement. As a child, to hear your own voice and emotions being listened to and acknowledged can be the key to developing a positive self-image. At Juniper we all work together so that each child can feel accepted for who they are and celebrate their own achievements. Our aim is to give them the reassurance and the skills they need to regulate their own emotions and the courage to ask for help when they need it. I have been working with XXX. Though now in a loving home, the 'ghosts' of early trauma made it hard for them to admit to difficult emotions such as fear and anger. Everything was 'fine.' In our sessions, we have used stories and games and imaginative play to normalise these scary feelings. There is a lot of laughter and silly faces and importantly, the reassurance that whatever they are feeling, they are a wonderful person and cared for by all of us. We all have strong emotions, but, like clouds in the sky, they change and move on. Underneath that sky, we are still us, doing the very best we can. At the end of our session, we read a story together. They lean into my arm. 'You are safe' I say.
Mrs Sarah Doonican (ELSA LSA)

I work in partnership with our Wellbeing Ambassadors to ensure that pupil voice is at the heart of our approach and central to the promotion of wellbeing across the school. We meet regularly to discuss current wellbeing priorities, identify areas for development, and share ideas about how we can further support our school community. The ambassadors play an active role in shaping initiatives by bringing forward the views and suggestions of their peers. Together, we collaboratively plan and select incentives and activities aimed at promoting positive wellbeing, ensuring that our approach empowers pupils to take an active role in shaping a supportive, inclusive and caring school environment where everyone feels heard and valued.
Mrs Sarah Hunt – Wellbeing Lead

Section 7

Case study example 1 - Child B

Child B has been with us since reception. B experienced significant disruption in their early childhood, including neglect, witnessing domestic violence and an early childhood lacking in warmth, love and care. They are no longer living with their birth parents.

When B joined Juniper our priority was to build positive caring relationships with the reception team, to become attuned to B's needs and to help B feel safe in the school environment. This involved things such as, letting B sit on the carpet at the back in the corner. B is hypervigilant, sitting at the front or in the middle-caused B to become distressed. B didn't come into assembly until B was settled and ready. Activities were planned around B's interests. B was supported by the same adults and we avoided using supply teachers in B's class.

As time has passed B will now sit at the side during assembly or will sit on a trusted adults lap. We allow B to have a transitional object in school. B will bring in a soft toy and keep it with them during the day. We know how important physical contact is for B, B often asks for a hug from the class teacher. There is a '**Team Pupil**' around B. A member of the team has received training on 'know me to teach me' from Louise Bombér. The **Team Pupil** discuss B often to talk about B's learning and B's emotional state. We discuss questions, such as, what would be a '**Big Ask**' for B? What support does B need for any school trips / visits we have planned? What support does B need to manage at the end of term disco? Has B met their speech and language therapy targets? Etc.

We are constantly differentiating for B, depending on the state B presents and what we know about B. B has weekly Play Therapy, we know that B finds it difficult to transition to phonics after Play Therapy. We allow B to spend time playing with a trusted adult after therapy. We play the games B asks to play. B loves playing hide and seek, B loves hiding and delights in being found. B is asking for what B didn't have in B's early childhood.

We work hard to make B feel safe at school and to create a sense of permanency. We are developing our ability to use **PACE** with B. During a lesson observation B told me, 'It's nice in here'. I believe this is B's way of communicating a sense of felt safety. The Juniper Team care deeply about B and want B to thrive in our school.

Glossary

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): This is used to describe physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect and family dysfunction that children can experience during childhood. ACEs are long-lasting, affecting people into adulthood.

Attunement: An emotional connection between two people in which one person mirrors or matches the external mood of another.

Big Ask: Tasks or activities a child could find very challenging. By being aware of what our children will find challenging we are able to provide support, increase supervision or make changes.

Blocked Care: In a healthy parent-child relationship, caregiving in the adult matches with care-seeking in the child. A state of blocked care can result when the child is unable to engage in a reciprocal relationship with the parents. School staff can also move into blocked care when supporting children who struggle with reciprocal relationships.

Blocked Trust: Children who have experienced a disrupted childhood or developmental trauma will have learnt that adults can't be trusted to meet their needs. They will be on high alert, prepared for danger, they won't believe adults have good intentions and will care about them.

Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy: This was originally developed by Dan Hughes as a therapeutic intervention for families who were fostering or had adopted children who had experienced significant developmental trauma. The model is based on a therapist facilitating the child's relationship with their parents through the development and maintenance of an affective-reflective dialogue which explores all aspects of the child's life. The therapist and family co-create a new narrative, in this way the child heals past traumas and achieves feelings of felt safety within their current relationships. The conversations and interactions are based on **PACE**. Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy has a broader application at Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) this provides a set of principles that can be used inside and outside the home by parents and other professionals to help young children who have experienced developmental trauma develop rich, caring relationships and heal past traumas.

Kagan groups: The children work in groups of 4. A group is made up of a high, high middle, lower middle and lower achieving student. Kagan structures are used to promote cooperation and engagement in the classroom.

Consequences: A piece of behaviour is followed by a consequence. The consequences used will influence what a child does in the future. We want our children to recognise the mistake they have made with their behaviour, see the learning and make a different choice next time. If we support our children to understand how their behaviour impacted on others we hope this will lead to feelings of remorse and a desire to make amends.

PACE: Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy. PACE is used within DDP to facilitate emotional connection and develop unconditional relationships.

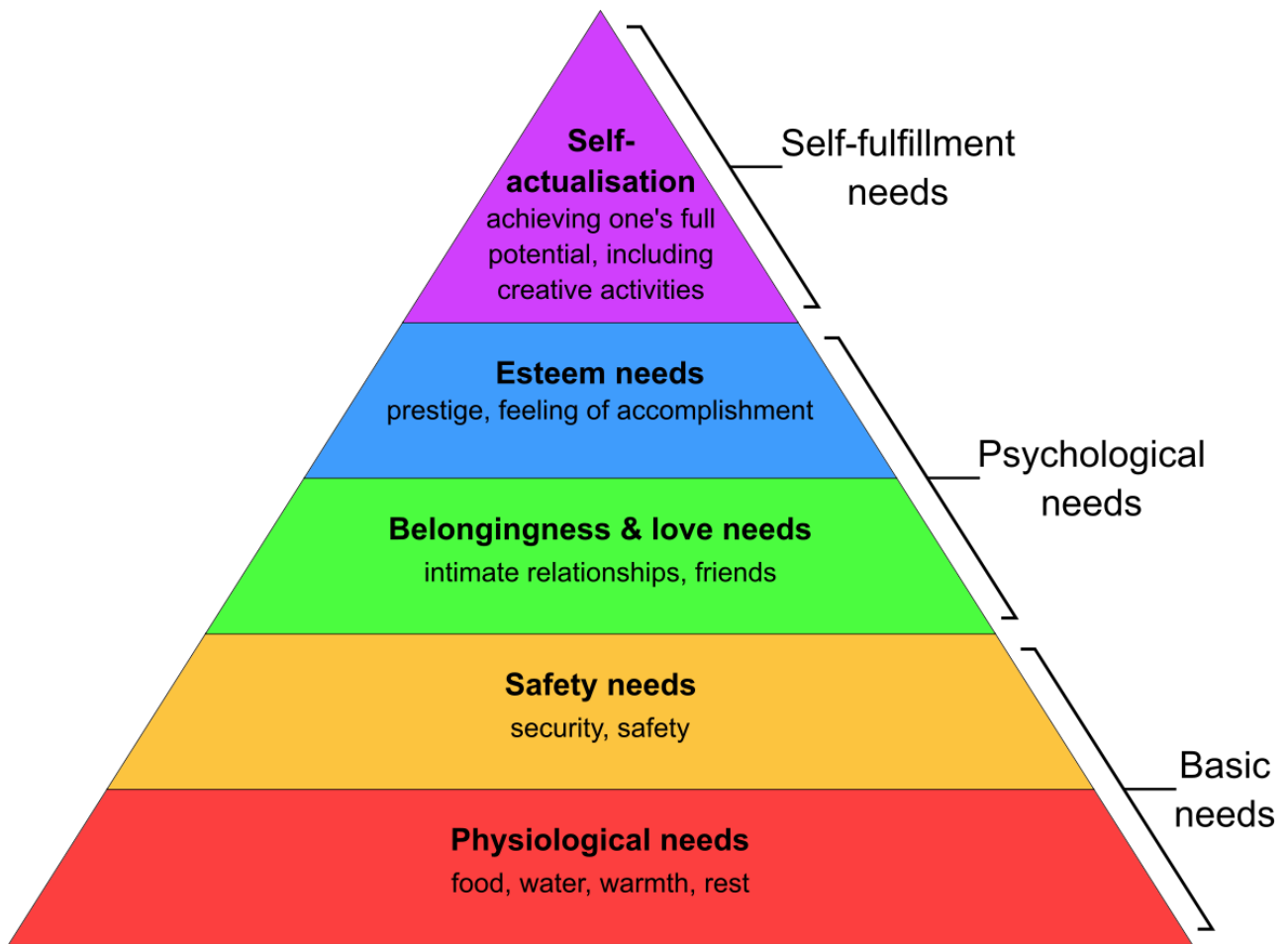
Regulation: A person's ability to control and manage their level of emotional arousal. Children need adults around them to manage their emotional arousal. When children become dysregulated if they are unable to manage their emotional arousal the experience can be overwhelming. They can very quickly move into alarm, fear or terror.

Team Pupil: A small group of trained people in the school who have been brought together to provide additional support for a child. The staff know the child well and support each other to meet the child's needs.

Toxic Shame: A consequence of a deeply-rooted belief that you are unworthy. Toxic shame usually emerges as a consequence of childhood trauma.

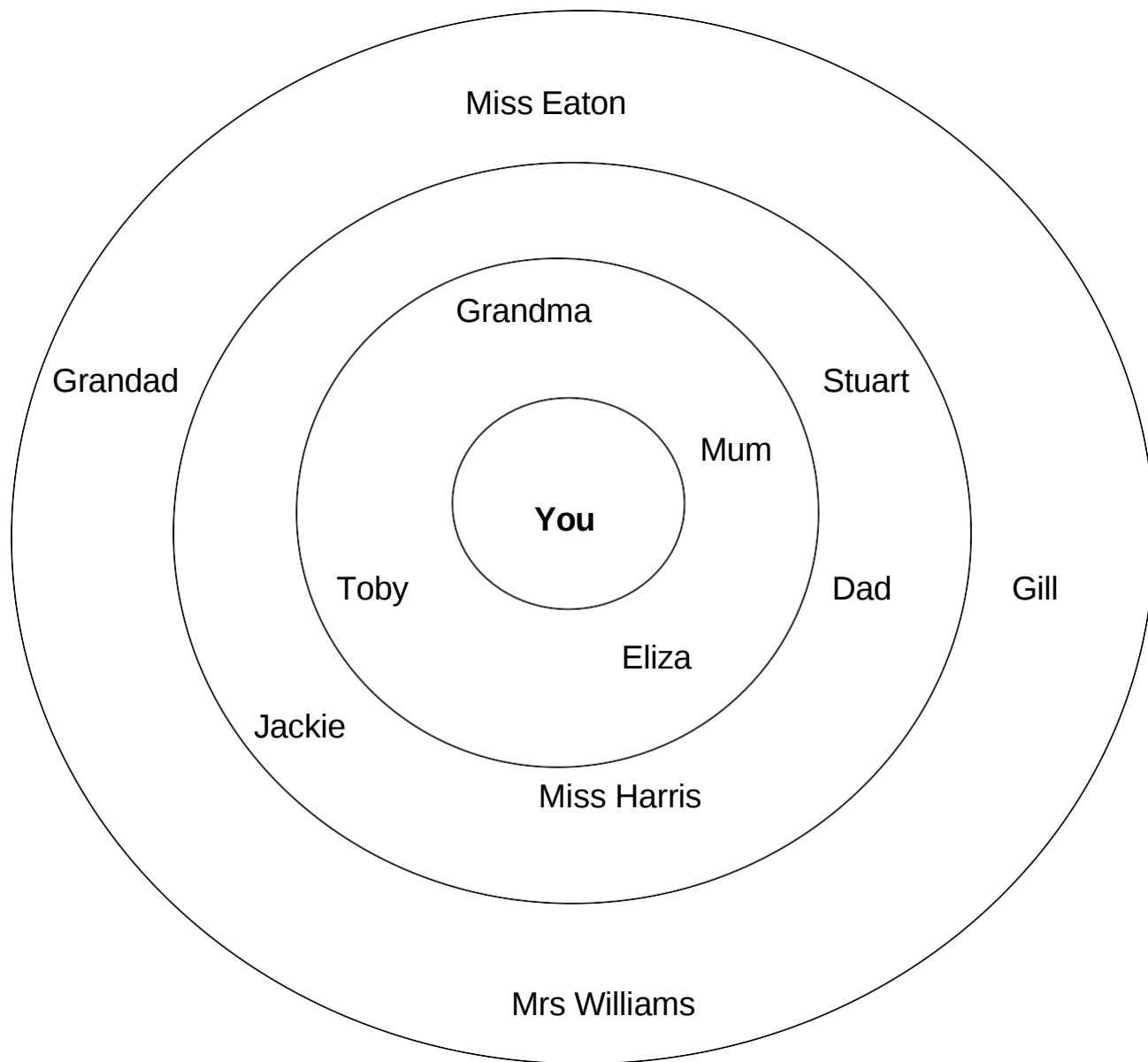
Trauma: In this policy we are referring to psychological trauma rather than a physical trauma. Trauma is an experience or event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury or witnessing an event happening to another person. For an event to be regarded as traumatic it would need to be so distressing and upsetting it would at least temporarily overwhelm a person's internal resources, examples include, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, witnessing domestic violence, major losses or separation. Complex trauma occurs when a person is exposed to multiple traumatic events. When complex trauma occurs in early childhood within the family home it is described as developmental trauma. This will leave long lasting affects on a child, they will develop attachment difficulties, blocked trust and fear of relationships.

Appendix 1 – Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Source: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs

Appendix 2 – Example of a Relationship Circle



Appendix 3 - How the Juniper Team Behave – The Juniper Way

The Juniper Team have a defined and consistent way of working underpinned by our school motto of Kindness, Enjoyment, Achievement; we call it The Juniper Way. It informs how we all act and behave, which shapes our culture. It helps us express the ambition we have for our school, children and wider community. At the heart of what we do are the relationships we invest in and nurture.

Kindness

	I invest in my own self-care to be the best version of myself I can be.
	I show kindness to myself.
	I care about people in the Juniper Community and speak to them respectfully.
	I give my time to all member of the Juniper Team to support them as best as I can.
	I choose my language carefully.
	I recognise when I've made a mistake, I'm not afraid to say sorry.
	I thank people and give honest feedback. I praise readily, I make people feel good.
	I am able to slow down and connect to how I am feeling.
	I am honest, I behave with integrity, I build trust and show with empathy.

Enjoyment

	I have a positive, optimistic outlook.
	I enjoy being with the children.
	I laugh and show a sense of humour.
	I am present when I am talking to others.
	I display confidence and credibility.
	I enjoy my role on the Juniper Team.
	I take advice and consult with others.
	I enjoy reading and learning.
	I am inquisitive. I share my ideas that may benefit Juniper.
	I promote a culture of inclusivity and value diversity.

Achievement

	I begin each day with a sense of renewed confidence.
	I invest time understanding others and develop positive relationships.
	I am enthusiastic about working at Juniper.
	I am reflective; I'm aware of my own strengths and weaknesses and am committed to my own personal growth.
	I remain calm in a crisis, and look for creative ways to solve problems.
	I am approachable, fair and open minded.
	I see the learning in every situation.
	I am determined and never give up.
	I have the confidence to take risks.
	I go the extra mile for the Juniper Community.
	I have a strong sense of commitment to the children, staff, parents and governors at Juniper.

Appendix 4 – Individual Development Plan

<u>Individual Development Plan:</u>	Date -
Name of pupil:	
Class/Form:	
Pupil Team *	
Designated Key Adult :	
Class Teacher/Form Tutor:	
SENCO/INCO:	
Head of Year/Assistant Head:	
Headteacher:	
Parents/carers:	
Siblings at home/elsewhere:	
interests/hobbies of pupil enjoyed in and outside of school:	
Strengths and Resilience factors: (eg: qualities/skills)	
Building resilience 1:1 quality time in week:	
Special dates to be aware of:	
Identified stress triggers for pupil:	
Stress presentation of pupil:	
Sensory breaks used currently and frequency:	
Description of Safe Space and frequency of Safe Space use in school:	
Additional strategies known to support the pupil into a calm, alert, open and engaged state:	
Overwhelm plan for pupil:	
Reading level:	
Writing/English level:	
Maths level:	
Additional strategies to support basic learning skills at home and school:	
Whole staff responsibilities:	
KA specific responsibilities:	
Parent/carers responsibilities	
Any support agencies to be referred to or worked with. (include email add)	

Date of review for pupil team and parents/carers:	
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Kindly shared by Louise Michelle Bombér

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