



**White Hall**  
Academy

# **Recovery Curriculum**

**September 2020**

## Recovery Curriculum

As our school family begins to come together again, each pupil's health and well-being will indisputably be of paramount importance. It's therefore important that we do not try and forget what has happened over the last few months but instead acknowledge and learn from it. The pandemic has been a shared experience across the world and all our families will have their own stories and experiences to share. A common thread that runs through the current lived experiences of our children is 'loss'.

There has been a loss of friendships and social interaction as well as loss of routine and structure. Therefore, it's important that we give our pupils time to reflect and explore their feelings about the return to school. Now is the time to ensure that we restore mental wealth in our children, so that their aspirations for their future, can be a vision that becomes, one day, a reality, *Carpenter, B. et al (2015)*.

In her letter to the chancellor, the children's commissioner outlines a "cocktail of secondary risks" bearing down on vulnerable families, from poverty to homelessness to domestic violence.

If closing the gap means anything at all, it must now mean wrapping the right support around these children – really understanding how to support them – because they will not just bounce back. As an academy we have used the findings from the ACES study and Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) as a basis to our school's foundation.

During the first few weeks/months we need to ensure that our children feel safe and secure. Therefore, for the first period of the new term we will be implementing a 'Recovery Curriculum'. Our teaching in the first term will have a relationship-based approach which will focus on; re-building relationships, re-establishing routines and re-connecting as a school community.

The children most severely affected by the pandemic will not find it easy to "settle to learn" (Bomber, 2013) and we must expect their psychological distress to manifest in their behaviour.

### Placing relationships front and centre and building on social capital

- All adults within the school community to build positive relationships, especially with those children who struggle to form social bonds. Child psychiatrist Bruce Perry advocates "social buffering" and reaching out to children must be a deliberate strategy, not left to chance. In Treisman's memorable words: "Every interaction is an intervention."
- The more severely children are traumatised, the more repetition, the more positive relational experiences are needed for healing to occur. Child psychiatrist Bruce Perry calls this "therapeutic dosing". "The good news is that anyone can help with this part of 'therapy' – it merely requires being present in social setting and being kind," Perry explains in his book *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*. "The more we can provide each other these moments of simple, human connection – even a brief nod or moment of eye-contact – the more we'll be able to help heal those who have suffered traumatic experience."

- Deploy kind words and acts strategically, otherwise the Matthew Effect of sharing more of ourselves with children who are already relationally rich and less with the relationally poor will not be mitigated. Information sharing will be crucially important, so far as confidentiality allows it.
- Teaching staff as a priority, then all staff to be trained in Trauma Perceptive Practice. This is essential if staff are to understand the difference they can make, through simple connection. Most staff will be encouraged by the knowledge that the small things they do and say have such healing potential. Reassuring staff that the most powerful therapy for trauma is actually in abundant supply all around them will allow them to manage their own anxiety in relation to not doing enough or not being up to the scale of the challenge.
- Identify and support children in most need of social buffering
- Children to access a wellbeing rating scale
- Children to have access to a trusted adult.
- Ensure all distressed behaviours in children are recognised; from emotional outbursts, crying, dissociation, hiding and freezing. Bruce Perry is clear that the need to process events by revisiting them is universal. In the aftermath of a distressing or traumatic event, we have intrusive thoughts. We keep thinking about what happened and we keep telling and retelling the event to trusted friends or loved ones. This is because our brains know what to do – rather than locking pain away unprocessed, we are driven to habituate it through the act of talking. The pain of loss then becomes tolerable, not toxic.
- Flexibility, from all stakeholders, is a major way of demonstrating that wellbeing is our first priority.
- We are a listening school, listening to the worries and concerns of children and their parents and carers.
- Continue to check in with our vulnerable families.
- Reaffirm boundaries, rules and routines as safety measures
- Consistency – all staff will be consistent.
- Routines - also serve to create a sense of safety because they are predictable, allowing hyper-vigilant children to lower their guard. Contributing greatly to an atmosphere of order and calm, it is going to be important to reteach routines when pupils return and to provide visual as well as verbal reminders. It will be helpful to think of all pupils as new starters, in need of clear and reassuring instruction.
- Re-evaluate and reaffirm core values, recognising all.

## **In the classroom**

*We will use key principles based on our TPP work and Hobfall's key principles.*

### **1. A sense of safety**

We want the children to feel that school is an emotionally secure base. It is a place where they are listened to and valued.

### **2. A sense of calm**

We want to provide support that helps our children manage their emotions and stay calm. Our Mindfulness practice is central to achieving this.

### **3. A sense of self and collective efficacy**

We want the children to feel that they have control over what is happening to them, and a belief that their actions generally lead to positive outcomes; such as the importance of Growth Mindset.

### **4. Social connectedness**

It is important that our children in school feel they belong and have a network of people who can support them in school.

### **5. Promoting hope**

It has been a very difficult time and it is therefore important to promote hope. We want to provide all our children with reassurance and an understanding that things will get better in the future.

## **Our main objectives for our children are:**

- To reintroduce children to the tools to enable them to thrive and flourish, embracing both success and challenge.
- Share experiences to develop children to gain understanding, knowledge and empathy to become confident, caring and active members of our school and local community.
- Develop children's confidence, independence and readiness to embrace a challenging, deep curriculum.
- Actively re-engage children to be fully immersed in experiences and opportunities for deeper learning.
- Ensure that, while maintaining integrity of bubbles might limit our usual extra-curricular offer, (lunchtimes and after school) our recovery curriculum is accessible to all, and responsive to children's needs, interests and aspirations

## **Our hopes for our children:**

Every child is able to continue to grow academically, socially, morally, spiritually and culturally in the knowledge they are safe and valued within our school community.