

Building Trust & Rapport with Pupils

"Welcome to our first session in the Classroom Climate and Relationships series.

When we think about outstanding teaching, we often think about excellent explanations, strong subject knowledge or carefully planned lessons.

Whilst these things are incredibly important, research consistently tells us that one of the greatest influences on learning is something much more human...

The quality of the relationship between teacher and pupil.

Children are far more likely to engage, persevere and take risks when they feel safe, valued and respected by the adults around them.

Today's session is about exploring how we deliberately build those relationships—not through dramatic gestures, but through the small things we do every single day."

Slide 2 – Safeguarding Spark

"As always, we'll begin with our safeguarding reflection.

Today's question is:

When should child protection records be shared?

Take a few moments to discuss with the person next to you."

(Pause for discussion.)

Slide 3 – Safeguarding Answer

"Child protection records should only ever be shared on a strict **need-to-know basis**.

Information should only be shared with professionals who require it to keep the child safe.

Where appropriate, consent should be sought from parents or carers.

However, safeguarding guidance is clear that if seeking consent would increase risk or delay action, information can be shared without consent.

Whenever information is shared, it must be relevant, accurate and transferred securely, following both school policy and national safeguarding guidance.

Strong safeguarding relies on professional judgement, confidentiality and always putting the child's welfare first."

Slide 4 – Where This Fits

"Before we begin, it's worth looking at where today's session sits within the wider series.

Over the next six weeks we'll explore:

Building trust and rapport.

Establishing high expectations.

Creating a positive classroom climate.

Managing behaviour through relationships.

De-escalation.

And finally, sustaining a positive classroom culture.

Notice that relationships come first.

That's intentional.

Because every strategy we'll discuss over the coming weeks becomes more effective when it's built upon strong relationships."

Slide 5 – Why This Matters

"So why do relationships matter so much?

Research consistently tells us that pupils who experience positive relationships with teachers demonstrate better behaviour, higher engagement, stronger wellbeing and improved academic outcomes.

Think back to your own education.

Most of us remember teachers who made us feel noticed.

Who believed in us.

Who challenged us because they cared.

Those relationships often shaped not only how we behaved but how we viewed ourselves as learners.

Relationships don't replace high-quality teaching.

They make high-quality teaching more effective."

Slide 6 – Relationships Drive Learning

"When pupils feel known and supported, something powerful happens.

They're more willing to participate.

They're less afraid of making mistakes.

They're more likely to persevere when learning becomes difficult.

Why?

Because trust reduces the fear of failure.

Children are much more willing to answer challenging questions or attempt unfamiliar tasks when they believe mistakes will be treated as part of learning rather than something to be embarrassed about.

This creates classrooms where pupils feel psychologically safe enough to learn."

Slide 7 – Trust vs Rapport

"Today's key distinction is between **rapport** and **trust**.

These words are often used interchangeably, but they aren't quite the same.

Rapport is about connection.

Warmth.

Approachability.

Shared humour.

Positive interactions.

Trust goes much deeper.

Trust develops when pupils believe three things.

Firstly, that you're fair.

Secondly, that you're competent.

And thirdly, that you genuinely care about them.

Interestingly, research suggests that trust has a greater impact on motivation than simply being liked.

Children don't necessarily need teachers who are their friends.

They need adults they believe in."

Slide 8 – What Builds Trust?

"So what actually builds trust?

Firstly, consistency.

Pupils quickly notice whether adults respond predictably or unpredictably.

Secondly, fairness.

Children constantly compare how adults respond to different pupils.

They don't expect everyone to receive identical support, but they do expect fairness.

Thirdly, competence.

Children gain confidence when lessons are well organised, explanations are clear and adults demonstrate expertise.

Finally—and perhaps most importantly—care.

Taking time to know pupils.

Listening.

Remembering small details.

Showing genuine interest.

Trust grows when pupils feel they matter."

Slide 9 – What Builds Rapport?

"Rapport often develops through very ordinary moments.

Greeting pupils by name.

Making eye contact.

Showing interest in their weekend.

Sharing an appropriate joke.

Remembering they had a football match or music performance.

These moments may seem insignificant.

But together they communicate,

'I see you.'

'I know you.'

'You matter.'

It's important to remember, though, that rapport on its own isn't enough.

Friendly relationships without consistency rarely create trust.

The strongest relationships combine warmth with professional reliability."

Slide 10 – The Power of Small Moments

"This is one of my favourite ideas in today's session.

Trust isn't usually built through one dramatic event.

It's built through hundreds of ordinary moments.

Every greeting at the classroom door.

Every piece of feedback.

Every calm correction.

Every conversation in the corridor.

Each interaction either strengthens trust or weakens it slightly.

When those positive interactions happen repeatedly over time, pupils begin to predict how you'll respond.

That predictability becomes trust."

Slide 11 – High Expectations and Strong Relationships

"Sometimes people worry that relationship-based practice means lowering expectations.

In reality, the opposite is true.

The strongest relationships are built on high expectations.

Children feel safest when adults believe they are capable.

The best classrooms combine three things.

Warmth.

Structure.

Challenge.

Pupils know they're cared for.

But they also know they'll be expected to work hard, behave respectfully and persevere.

Relationships don't remove challenge.

They make challenge feel achievable."

Slide 12 – Common Pitfalls

"It's also worth recognising some common misconceptions.

Building relationships doesn't mean becoming 'too soft.'

It doesn't mean avoiding difficult conversations.

It certainly doesn't mean favouritism.

Nor does it mean trying to become every child's best friend.

Strong professional relationships are based on respect, consistency and care.

Children don't need adults who always agree with them.

They need adults who are predictable, fair and genuinely invested in their success."

Slide 13 – Reflection

"I'd like to finish with a moment of reflection.

Ask yourself:

Do pupils trust me?

Do they feel genuinely known?

What do I already do every day that builds relationships?

And perhaps most importantly...

What's one small thing I could begin doing tomorrow?

Maybe greeting every child individually.

Learning more names more quickly.

Using more positive narration.

Following up on conversations you've had previously.

Remember, relationships are rarely transformed overnight.

They're strengthened through small actions repeated consistently."

Slide 14 – Research

"Today's session has drawn on evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation, Ofsted and wider research into teacher-pupil relationships.

Although these organisations use slightly different language, they all reinforce the same message.

Strong relationships improve behaviour.

Increase independence.

Strengthen wellbeing.

And ultimately improve learning.

Perhaps that's because relationships aren't something separate from teaching.

They are one of the foundations of effective teaching."

Closing Reflection

"I'll leave you with one final thought.

Children may not remember every lesson we teach.

They probably won't remember every worksheet or every PowerPoint.

But they will remember how adults consistently made them feel.

Whether they felt respected.

Whether they felt listened to.

Whether someone believed in them.

Trust and rapport aren't built through extraordinary moments.

They're built through ordinary moments that happen extraordinarily consistently.

So as you leave today, I'd like you to reflect on one simple question:

'If I asked every pupil in my class whether they felt known, valued and believed in by me... what would they honestly say?'

Because when pupils trust the adults who teach them, almost every other aspect of learning becomes easier."