

Appendix A: Relational Practice Assessment Audit Tool

A reflective audit for schools implementing the Relational Practice Bridge framework

Purpose

This audit helps schools translate the *Relational Practice Bridge* into action by identifying strengths, tensions, and priority areas for growth. It offers a shared language for honest reflection and supports practical planning for sustainable relational culture.

How it works

The tool includes **30 questions** across the **five domains** of the Relational Practice Bridge.

Teams rate their current reality using a **Level 1 - 5 continuum** (Not Yet Established → Sustaining).

Results can be plotted on a **spider diagram** to create a visual profile of your school's relational culture and guide next steps.

The five domains

1. **Organisational Readiness:** The structures, alignment, and cultural conditions that make relational work possible and sustainable.
2. **Relational Thinking:** The mindsets, language, and internal stance needed to move from behaviour management to relationship development.
3. **Practices of Care:** Embedding restorative, collaborative, and curiosity-led approaches into everyday interactions with students, colleagues, and families.
4. **Student and Family Voice:** The skills, structures, and pathways that enable students and families to contribute meaningfully to understanding concerns and repairing relationships.
5. **Foundations for Success:** The policies, systems, leadership practices, and routines that protect and stabilise relational culture over time.

FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR 1 – ORGANISATIONAL READINESS

Creating the conditions and coherence for sustainable change within the Relational Practice Bridge framework.

| Question | Level 1: Not Yet Established | Level 2: Developing | Level 3: Progressing | Level 4: Embedded | Level 5: Sustaining |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Do leaders explicitly acknowledge past reform fatigue and show how this time will be different? | Fatigue is ignored; new initiatives feel layered on top of old ones and staff expect the work to fade. | Leaders make occasional reference to fatigue, but scepticism remains and follow-through is inconsistent. | Leaders name the fatigue clearly and begin explaining how this work differs from past efforts. | Leaders demonstrate consistency through action, modelling, and follow-through; staff see credible signs of change. | Staff trust leaders' honesty and direction; reform fatigue is acknowledged, addressed, and easing through transparent, steady leadership. |
| 2. What has the school deliberately stopped or scaled back to create capacity for relational work? | Nothing is pruned; relational work simply adds to existing workload pressures. | Some efficiencies are attempted but competing initiatives continue to crowd time and attention. | Leaders pause or reduce initiatives to protect time, space, and energy for relational priorities. | Pruning is purposeful, strategic, and explicitly linked to relational goals; staff notice and appreciate reduced load. | Pruning is proactive and cultural; leaders show foresight in safeguarding capacity, and staff trust that workload is managed intentionally. |
| 3. Where does responsibility for relational culture sit? | Responsibility sits with one champion or a single portfolio; practice is vulnerable if that person leaves. | Some distributed efforts appear, but many still view relational culture as the work of 'pastoral care people.' | The broader leadership team begins to share responsibility and reinforce expectations. | Structures, roles, and resourcing ensure multiple leaders carry and model the work. | Responsibility is collective; leaders at all levels are accountable for sustaining relational culture with consistency and clarity. |
| 4. Has relational practice been introduced as a quick fix, or set up for long-term sustainability? | Introduced as a one-off training or behaviour-management initiative; momentum fades quickly. | Pockets of practice appear, but follow-through is inconsistent; staff default to old habits under pressure. | Leaders signal commitment through modelling and clearer expectations; early systems begin forming. | Relational practice is supported by systems, modelling, documentation, and time; practice becomes reliable and trusted. | Relational practice is reinforced through leadership, policy, and culture; it shapes daily decision-making and 'how we do things here.' |
| 5. Do leaders create psychological safety for staff to offer honest feedback, challenge decisions, or express dissent? | Dissent is avoided; staff fear challenge will be taken personally or viewed negatively. | Some feedback is invited, but responses are inconsistent and follow-through is limited. | Leaders model curiosity and transparency when challenged; staff begin to test the safety of speaking up. | Staff experience respectful dialogue and trust that input influences decisions; challenge is met with steady, relational responses. | Inviting dissent is normalised; robust dialogue strengthens trust, learning, and shared responsibility across the school. |
| 6. Can staff articulate a shared 'why' for relational practice and trust leaders to stay the course? | There is no shared rationale; staff see tools or compliance expectations without a coherent purpose. | A few staff understand the why, but others remain unclear, unconvinced, or disconnected from the bigger picture. | Staff begin linking relational tools to broader cultural goals and everyday work with students. | A clear, consistent 'why' is evident in conversations, planning and daily practice; staff confidence and alignment grow. | The why is culturally embedded; staff see relational practice as integral to learning, wellbeing and long-term strategic direction. |

FOUNDATIONAL PILLAR 2 – RELATIONAL THINKING

Replacing control with curiosity – seeing behaviour through a lens of development, safety and human connection.

| Question | Level 1 – Not Yet Established | Level 2 – Developing | Level 3 – Progressing | Level 4 – Embedded | Level 5 – Sustaining |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Do staff interpret behaviour as communication (difficulty, stress, lack of skill) rather than defiance or poor choices? | Behaviour is viewed as defiance or poor choices; compliance is the goal. | Some staff look beyond the behaviour, but most responses still aim to stop it quickly. | Many staff recognise behaviour as communication; responses begin shifting towards curiosity. | Curiosity consistently replaces control; staff seek to understand what made the moment hard. | Staff across the school reliably interpret behaviour through a developmental and relational lens; connection and regulation precede correction. |
| 2. Do staff clearly distinguish punishment from relational accountability, avoiding responses that prioritise control over insight or repair? | Consequences equal punishment; restoring relationships is rarely considered. | Some staff soften their responses, but the focus remains on control and compliance. | Staff begin using accountability that maintains relationship, but inconsistently. | Staff work with students to repair harm and rebuild trust, rather than impose consequences. | Accountability is restorative, respectful and relational across the school; punitive responses are rare. |
| 3. Do staff avoid over-relying on consequences (natural or adult-imposed), recognising that these create short-term compliance but do not solve the unsolved problem or build skills? | Consequences are the primary response to challenging behaviour; seen as ‘teaching a lesson’. | Some staff recognise limits of consequences, but they remain the default response. | Staff begin reducing unnecessary consequences and seek alternative approaches. | Consequences are used sparingly; staff prioritise insight, regulation and collaboration. | Staff rely on collaborative problem-solving and skill-building; consequences play a minimal and intentional role. |
| 4. When consequences are used, are they connected to the unsolved problem, paired with curiosity, preserving belonging, and held lightly as temporary scaffolds while collaborative capacity develops? | Consequences are imposed automatically, without connection to underlying difficulty. | Some effort is made to explain consequences, but they remain disconnected from the real issue. | Staff begin linking consequences to the situation and using curiosity to support students. | Consequences remain connected to the unsolved problem, preserve belonging and are held lightly. | When used, consequences are purposeful, relational and always accompanied by collaborative, skill-building approaches. |
| 5. Are staff supported to reflect regularly on their relational habits, mindsets and the moments when stress pulls them back into inherited patterns? | No time or structure exists for reflection on mindset or relational habits. | Reflection happens occasionally and individually. | Teams begin engaging in reflective dialogue, though not consistently. | Reflection is built into professional learning, coaching and team routines. | Reflective practice is a cultural norm; staff continually examine and refine their relational stance. |
| 6. Does everyday language across the school reflect relational values rather than punitive or deficit frames? | Language is often negative, shaming or punitive. | Relational language appears in formal settings only. | Relational language is increasingly used in classrooms and meetings. | Staff consistently use language that reflects care, respect and fairness. | A relational tone is the cultural norm; everyday language reinforces safety, belonging and dignity. |

ACTIVE PATHWAY 1 – PRACTICES OF CARE

Embedding consistent, compassionate and accountable habits that make care visible and measurable in daily school life.

| Question | Level 1 – Not Yet Established | Level 2 – Developing | Level 3 – Progressing | Level 4 – Embedded | Level 5 – Sustaining |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| 1. Do staff create emotional safety and readiness before entering repair, ensuring students are calm, prepared and supported to participate? | Repair conversations are rushed or reactive; students enter unprepared, dysregulated or unsure of what to expect. | Some staff slow the process or check in beforehand, but readiness is inconsistent or incomplete. | Staff increasingly use preparation conversations, brief settling routines and clear structure before repair. | Readiness is standard practice; students feel safe, oriented and emotionally prepared before entering a combined conversation. | Preparation-first architecture is culturally embedded; staff and students value the clarity, fairness and psychological safety it provides. |
| 2. Do staff maintain relational presence – steady tone, attunement, regulation and authenticity – especially when pressure, emotion or conflict is high? | Staff tone or presence escalates tension; interactions become procedural or reactive. | Some staff remain calm, but attunement varies under stress or in complex situations. | Staff increasingly adjust tone, timing and body language to de-escalate and stay connected. | Calm, attuned, and authentic communication is visible across teams; staff maintain relational steadiness even under pressure. | Relational presence is a professional hallmark; staff model steadiness and support peers in developing this capacity. |
| 3. Do staff use questions that invite insight, empathy and accountability – avoiding positioning, judgement, ‘why’ questions and accidental shame? | Questions are directive, accusatory or aimed at confirming the adult’s interpretation. | Some staff attempt curiosity but slip into leading or confirming questions. | Insight-building questions (‘What happened?’, ‘What was hard?’) appear more consistently. | Staff regularly use open, steady, non-positioning questions that support accountability and emotional safety. | Relational presence is a professional hallmark; staff and leaders model attunement and authenticity. |
| 4. Do staff discern the right response for the moment – repair, problem-solving, prevention or a combination – rather than defaulting to a single approach? | Staff default to one approach (e.g. always restorative practice or always ‘a chat’), regardless of context. | Staff begin recognising different response types but lack confidence in choosing. | Teams discuss options and increasingly match responses to readiness, impact and context. | Staff consistently demonstrate discernment: choosing repair, planning, prevention or sequencing processes as required. | The school reflects on response patterns, learns from outcomes and adapts practice collectively; discernment is strong and shared. |
| 5. Do staff avoid ritualised, over-formal practice, holding relational processes lightly and adapting them to the needs, readiness and capacity of those involved? | Processes feel scripted, rigid or mechanical; procedure overrides presence. | Staff attempt flexibility but often revert to scripts or formality. | Staff adapt processes within a clear structure; practice feels more relational and responsive. | Processes are held lightly; staff confidently tailor conversations based on readiness and context. | Staff demonstrate strong presence over procedure; relational practices are adaptive, responsive and context-driven. |
| 6. Do staff repair harm and solve problems in ways that uphold dignity, belonging and fairness (procedural, relational and substantive) for everyone involved? | Students experience processes as unclear, unfair or unequal; dignity is compromised. | Some efforts towards fairness appear, but inconsistencies remain. | Students and staff report improved fairness and voice across conflict and problem-solving processes. | Repair and problem-solving processes reliably uphold dignity, belonging and fairness; students feel heard and respected. | Fair process is a cultural norm; even in complex or high-stakes situations, dignity and belonging remain central. |

ACTIVE PATHWAY 2 – STUDENT AND PARENT VOICE

Building confidence, capability and systems that enable students and families to participate in, influence and help shape relational processes, repair and problem-solving across the school.

| Question | Level 1 – Not Yet Established | Level 2 – Developing | Level 3 – Progressing | Level 4 – Embedded | Level 5 – Sustaining |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| 1. Are students regularly invited to express ideas and concerns about relationships, learning and wellbeing? | Student voice is tokenistic (e.g. surveys without follow-up), adult-directed or used to confirm existing beliefs. | Students are occasionally consulted but with limited transparency about how their input influences decisions. Follow-up is inconsistent. | Students share views through class meetings, circles, discussion groups or advisory structures; emerging examples of actioning feedback. | Predictable feedback structures exist; students see tangible follow-through, and leaders routinely close the loop. | Student voice shapes decisions, policies and relational practices. Students report psychological safety, trust and meaningful influence. |
| 2. Are students explicitly taught the language and processes of repair, reflection and collaborative problem-solving? | Students receive no explicit teaching about handling conflict, emotions or relational repair. Skills are assumed, not taught. | Some wellbeing content touches on conflict or empathy, but teaching is inconsistent or highly teacher-dependent. | Students learn restorative questions, reflective routines, or steps of collaborative problem-solving through structured lessons or practice. | Relational tools are embedded across curriculum, wellbeing programs, peer leadership, and daily routines. | Students demonstrate independent use of restorative language and CPS-style thinking; conflict competence is visible across the school.. |
| 3. Do students have guided opportunities to practise conflict-competent dialogue with peers and staff? | Adults handle conflict for students; students have little involvement beyond recounting events. | Students occasionally participate in guided conversations but only when prompted by adults. | Structured restorative or CPS dialogues occur with staff support; students practise turn-taking, perspective-sharing and problem-solving. | Students initiate or co-lead aspects of repair or collaborative planning with increasing independence and confidence. | Students demonstrate mature conflict competence; peer-led restorative/problem-solving interactions occur naturally and safely. |
| 4. Do staff model curiosity and listen to understand during student or parent conversations? | Staff dominate conversations, move quickly to explaining or defending, and often respond from assumption rather than curiosity. | Some staff attempt active listening but struggle to sustain curiosity under pressure or when views differ. | Early, relational engagement is increasing; communication is more transparent, calm and focused on shared understanding. | Curiosity, validation and perspective-taking are consistently modelled; students and families report feeling genuinely heard. | Listening with curiosity is a cultural expectation; staff coach colleagues, and feedback indicates high relational trust. |
| 5. Are parents invited early and supported to develop readiness for relational, problem-solving and restorative conversations? | Parents are contacted only after escalation or as part of a compliance-based process. Conversations feel transactional or punitive. | Some staff involve parents earlier, but the tone or timing is inconsistent, and relational intent is not always clear. | Early, relational parent engagement is increasing in confidence and clarity. | Staff reliably involve parents with empathy, context and clarity, inviting shared ownership of prevention, problem-solving or repair. | Parents are trusted partners in early intervention, repair and collaborative planning. There is strong parent confidence in the school’s relational approach. |
| 6. Is collective wisdom – students and families – visibly shaping relational culture over time? | Relational decisions are made solely by staff; student and family perspectives are largely excluded from relational culture. | Students and parents are acknowledged but rarely influence outcomes; contribution is occasional or symbolic. | Students and families contribute through advisory groups, circles, feedback loops or co-designed initiatives. | Structures for regular collaboration exist (forums, panels, design groups); insights meaningfully inform relational decisions and practices. | A culture of co-creation is visible and reliable. Students, families and staff collectively sustain shared relational values and practices. |

ACTIVE PATHWAY 3 – FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Designing structures, supports and leadership practices that protect relational culture, sustain emotional labour and align systems with values.

| Question | Level 1 – Not Yet Established | Level 2 – Developing | Level 3 – Progressing | Level 4 – Embedded | Level 5 – Sustaining |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| 1. Has the school built internal capacity to lead, coach and sustain relational practice? | Relational work relies on a few passionate individuals without support or succession planning. | Interest in leading relational practice emerges, but time, recognition or clarity of role is limited. | Staff with relational expertise begin to influence practice; emerging coaching roles or informal leadership appear. | Clear roles, time allocations, and professional learning develop internal leaders and coaches with visible impact. | Distributed relational leadership is culturally embedded; succession is planned, supported, and resilient through staff or leadership change. |
| 2. Do staff have the capability and confidence to address relational issues within their role – without defaulting to referral? | Staff frequently escalate issues to leaders or support teams; relational work feels overwhelming or outside their role. | Some staff attempt early relational responses but feel unprepared or unsure about next steps. | Confidence is growing; referrals are more selective, and staff increasingly attempt early resolution with guidance. | Most staff initiate relational responses with clarity and support. | Staff consistently and confidently address relational issues; escalation is intentional, proportionate and based on complexity rather than discomfort. |
| 3. Are relational practices protected and stabilised by systems – routines, documentation, induction, shared language, and structural supports – rather than individual goodwill? | Practice depends on individual champions; when key people are absent or leave, relational work loses momentum or consistency. | Some relational routines or documents exist, but usage depends on individual interpretation and varies across teams. | Induction, shared language, and basic routines begin anchoring practice; systems support consistency across some teams. | Relational systems, documentation, expectations and routines are used reliably across the school; consistency increases. | Systems ensure continuity through change; relational practice is stable, consistent and culturally anchored regardless of personnel shifts. |
| 4. Does the school recognise and contain the emotional load of relational work through structured reflection, supervision or peer support? | Emotional labour is largely invisible; staff manage distress alone, with no formal support. | Informal debriefing occurs within trusted relationships but lacks consistency or structure. | Reflection or peer supervision is offered for some teams or roles, usually those dealing with high-load situations. | Structured supervision, mentoring and reflective team routines are prioritised, supported and resourced. | Containment of emotional load is a cultural norm; staff and leaders proactively use reflective structures that maintain wellbeing and relational capacity. |
| 5. Do leaders actively safeguard relational integrity – addressing drift, resistance or misalignment before culture erodes? | Drift or resistance is left unaddressed; challenges are avoided, and practice becomes inconsistent. | Leaders respond reactively after conflict or damage occurs; difficult conversations feel uncomfortable. | Some leaders address misalignment early, using fair and firm conversations to protect expectations. | Leaders consistently address drift and misalignment with relational clarity, transparency, and shared accountability. | Courage, clarity, and fairness are cultural expectations; leaders routinely protect relational integrity while modelling empathy, steadiness, and principled action. |
| 6. Is relational practice strategically embedded – and regularly reviewed through planning, feedback, and reflection? | There is no strategic plan; relational practice is informal, unreviewed, and vulnerable to competing priorities. | Values appear in documents, but practice is inconsistent; planning and review lack relational focus. | Strategic plans and feedback processes begin reflecting relational intent; early review cycles emerge. | Relational practice is integrated into planning, resourcing, professional learning, and routine review. | Strategy, systems, and culture align; ongoing review cycles, data, feedback, and reflection consistently strengthen and evolve the school's relational work. |

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Sue Chandler – Transformative Schools

sue@transformativeschools.com.au

www.transformativeschools.com.au