Educate U

Trauma Informed Endings Policy:

Supporting Students through Endings and Goodbyes

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Trauma-Informed Endings Policy: Supporting Students Through Endings and Goodbyes

Rationale

At Educate U, we recognise that transitions and endings can be significant and emotional experiences for our children and young people, particularly for those who have experienced relational trauma with a history of trauma, adverse childhood experiences or for our adopted and looked after children. Endings, whether they involve leaving a group, transitioning to a new school may evoke feelings of loss, uncertainty, and anxiety. These emotions, if not adequately addressed, can hinder a child or young person's emotional well-being and ability to engage effectively in future learning environments.

This Trauma-Informed Endings Policy is designed to provide structured and sensitive support during these transitions with specific guidance for staff. By embedding trauma-informed principles into our approach, the aim is to develop a sense of safety, stability, and empowerment, ensuring that all our children and young people experience endings in a compassionate, trauma informed way that promotes their resilience and well-being.

Defining Endings

In the context of this policy, 'endings' refer to:

- Significant endings that a child or young person may experience within their educational journey such as:
    - Leaving a class or group
    - Transitioning to a new school or education provider.
    - Concluding a therapeutic or educational programme.
    - Saying goodbye to trusted peers or staff members if they leave the class or school.

Endings mark a pivotal moment of change that can evoke a wide range of emotions, making it essential to address them with compassion and sensitivity.

Policy Objectives

1. **Promote Emotional Safety**: Ensure that our children and young people feel emotionally safe and supported during transitions and endings.
2. **Acknowledge the Impact of Trauma**: Recognise that endings can be particularly challenging for children and young people with trauma histories and plan accordingly.
3. **Strengthen Relationships**: Facilitate meaningful and positive goodbyes with peers, trusted adults, and parents and carers.
4. **Enhance Continuity and Closure**: Provide opportunities for reflection, celebration, and preparation for future steps including transition support.

Benefits of the Policy

This policy offers significant advantages for our children and young people, their peers, trusted adults, and families.

For our children and young people, it improves emotional well-being by reducing feelings of anxiety, loss, or abandonment and creating a sense of stability and security. It also strengthens resilience, equipping them with the coping skills and confidence needed to handle future transitions in a more positive way, while empowering them to feel valued and in control of their experiences.

For their peers, the policy promotes closer bonds by encouraging meaningful connections and mutual support, while also creating lasting positive memories and a shared sense of accomplishment.

For trusted adults and families, the policy enhances understanding by providing tools and guidance to support students during transitions, improves communication through stronger collaboration between Educate U and families, and brings a sense of closure, allowing families to celebrate their child's progress and contributions at Educate U and ready to take on the next stage in their child's journey.

Implementation Procedure: Trauma-Informed Endings

STEP 1. Prepare Students for Endings

ACTIONS:

Clear Communication: Share information about endings in a simple, honest, and age-appropriate way, allowing students time to process the upcoming change.

- Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) confirms the date when parents/carers/teachers will inform their child about an upcoming ending, whether it involves a student or a staff member leaving.
- A PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) communication support pack will be provided to parents/carers by the lead psychotherapist.

Predictability: Use consistent language and routines to provide stability and reduce anxiety.

- Class teachers ensure that students understand how and when they can say goodbye to key staff or peers.

Transitional Support: Assist students moving to new schools or providers.

- SENCO liaises with the new setting and collaborates with the student's current class teacher to support the student's transition.

Staff Guidance: Equip staff with strategies for discussing endings sensitively.

- Staff to use PACE principles to acknowledge the difficulty of the transition. Acknowledging how hard this must be for the child. Having Empathy to support the child through the change. Allowing choice over how a goodbye is managed. Establishing connection with the new routine.

STEP 2. Create a Safe Space for Emotions

ACTIONS

Acknowledge All Feelings: Encourage students to express sadness, worry, or confusion and reassure them that these feelings are normal and valid.

- Staff use Acceptance and Empathy from the PACE framework to validate students' emotions.

Model Emotional Regulation: Demonstrate calm and grounded behaviour to show that endings can be navigated with support.

- Staff use Acceptance and Empathy from PACE.
- Trusted adults utilise the "name it to frame it" approach to help with a child or young person
- Therapists provide additional support sessions if needed for a child/young person. Class teacher or SLT request via the lead psychotherapist if needed.

STEP 3. Engage in Rituals for Goodbye

- **Goodbye Activities**: Offer simple rituals, like a goodbye card, a shared story, or a memory book, a blanket, an engraved memory box to provide closure and create positive associations with the ending.
- Class-based staff personalise farewell activities based on the student's interests.

Transitional Objects: Offer small keepsakes, like a blanket or engraved memory box, to remind students of positive relationships and connections. Staff attending Central team meetings will support with this and arrange for the child with the support of the class teacher.

STEP 4. Apply PACE Principles

- **Playfulness**: Use warmth and light-heartedness to ease the goodbye process.
- **Acceptance**: Embrace each child or young person's feelings and behaviours without judgment.
- **Curiosity**: Help the child or young person explore their thoughts and feelings, gently addressing any worries or memories.
- **Empathy**: Show understanding and compassion, letting the child or young person know they're not alone in how they feel and with their experience of this loss.

STEP 5. Consistent Support

- **Team Approach**: SLT to ensure all staff are prepared to support the child through the transition, reinforcing messages of stability and care.
- **Reflect Together**: Central team and class teacher to discuss as a team how best to support each child individually, sharing strategies and observations to create a unified approach.
    - **Headteacher to Invite the class teacher or team to central meeting** - To discuss how we support staff on the ending of a student or to support staff in supporting the child or young person with their ending, or with the ending of another child or trusted adult.
- **Collect and gather relevant data** to share with new provisions including academic data, therapeutic reports and safeguarding files. This will be completed by the SENCO, Lead Psychotherapist and DSL

Appendix 1 outlines a Trauma-Informed Endings: Staff Procedure Checklist

Monitoring and Review

Educate U is committed to regularly reviewing this policy to ensure its effectiveness. Feedback from students, families, staff, and external professionals will be collected to refine our approach and ensure that all students feel supported through their endings and goodbyes.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Appendix 1: Trauma-Informed Endings: Staff Procedure Checklist

Student Name: _____ **Class:** _____
Date of Ending/Transition: _____
Staff Lead: _____

Step 1: Prepare the Student

- ✅ Confirm date when student will be informed (SLT/SENCO)
- ✅ Share information in a simple, honest, age-appropriate way
- ✅ Provide PACE support pack to parents/carers
- ✅ Explain routines and how student can say goodbye
- ✅ Collaborate with receiving school/setting (if applicable)
- ✅ Plan staff approach using PACE: Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy

Step 2: Create a Safe Space for Emotions

- ✅ Encourage expression of sadness, worry, or confusion
- ✅ Validate all emotions using Acceptance and Empathy
- ✅ Model calm, grounded behaviour
- ✅ Use "name it to frame it" to help student identify feelings
- ✅ Request additional therapist support if needed

Step 3: Engage in Goodbye Rituals

- ✅ Plan personalised goodbye activities (cards, stories, memory books)
- ✅ Offer transitional objects (blankets, keepsakes, engraved items)
- ✅ Ensure rituals reflect student interests and relationships
- ✅ Coordinate support from Central Team if required

Step 4: Apply PACE Principles Throughout

- ✅ Playfulness – use warmth and light-heartedness
- ✅ Acceptance – respect feelings and behaviours without judgment
- ✅ Curiosity – explore thoughts and worries gently
- ✅ Empathy – show understanding and compassion

Step 5: Ensure Consistent Staff Support

✅ Ensure all staff are briefed and prepared to support student
✅ Central team/class teacher discuss strategies and observations
✅ Headteacher facilitates staff meetings for guidance and support
✅ Collect and share relevant data for receiving setting (academic, therapeutic, safeguarding)

Step 6: Reflection and Review

✅ Document student response to ending
✅ Gather feedback from staff, student, and family
✅ Review and update approach for future endings

Notes / Actions Needed:

Staff Sign-off: _____ Date: _____