

# Behaviour Policy



COOMBE HOUSE  
SCHOOL

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## **Our Values**

This policy is based on the following values and beliefs:

- All pupils wish to belong, achieve and contribute to their school, family and community.
- All behaviour is a form of communication and the expression of underlying needs. It is not possible to effectively support a pupil without addressing these needs.
- Behaviours can be a below conscious reaction that is held within the nervous system of the pupil as a result of their previous experiences (meaning a pupil may not always be in complete control of their behaviours).
- Pupils need personalised responses to support their personal development and well-being.
- Relational approaches are effective in supporting the development of internal control and regulation.
- Consistency does not mean always responding in the same way to each pupil or behaviour. Whilst each individual pupil benefits from a consistent approach, which is outlined in their individual plans, being consistent and fair is not about everyone getting the same, but everyone getting what they need.
- Whilst punitive approaches may lead to short term results (behaviours ceasing through fear or shame) they do not lead to improved self-regulation that allows pupils to choose positive behaviours for themselves.
- Punitive approaches may re-traumatise pupils and further embed the behaviours causing concern in the longer term.

## **Our Approach**

In our school, our behavioural approach is not a bolt-on, is not separate, and is instead integrated into our culture. It should be considered alongside our other key policies (for example, our Curriculum Policy, our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and our Anti-Bullying Policy) that are listed on [our website](#).

There is a strong alignment between our educational approach, outlined within our curriculum policy, and the approach detailed in this policy. They support and complement each other and are best considered as a whole.

## **Behaviour and Safeguarding**

Our approach has safeguarding at its core. The way that we build and maintain relationships with our pupils means we know them, to notice small changes, to develop trust which allows them to feel safe to communicate about their experiences, thoughts and feelings, and for us to contain and support them when they do.

All staff are trained in safeguarding, have read the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy as well as the relevant sections of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024.

Staff know how to report their concerns and the school has strong procedures to ensure that any concerns are robustly responded to.

### **Our Expectations**

Our approach is underpinned by our school expectations, which are designed to be few in number, simple to understand and aim to allow everyone the opportunity to thrive within our school community.

1. Be Ready (*be ready to learn, be ready to let others learn*)
2. Be Respectful (*respect yourself, respect others, respect your environment*)
3. Be Safe (*keep yourself safe, keep others safe*)

What this means for each individual pupil is outlined in their individual plans so that the whole-school 'Ready, Respectful, Safe' approach is suitably personalised to each individual context.

### **The Importance of Relationships**

In order to be successful at school, pupils need to develop secure relationships which enable them to feel safe, secure and to experience success. In order for this to happen, relationships and kindness are at the heart of school life.

For many pupils the development of these trusting relationships will need to be explicit, meaningful and very clearly perceived and so these personalised approaches are detailed in their individual plans. Pupils who have additional barriers to building positive relationships may need additional time and support to achieve this.

Through these secure relationships, pupils allow adults to support them in understanding their feelings and emotions. Over time, they develop their understanding of social situations and develop healthy and positive feelings about themselves and develop emotional intelligence.

Our approach to developing relationships is based on providing:

- Protection
- Connection
- Understanding
- Care

## Protection

All pupils need to feel safe and secure. Without a sense of safety and security pupils cannot explore, play, learn or interact effectively with others. Pupils who do not feel safe tend to be hyper vigilant and have difficulty regulating their emotions.

Pupils get their sense of safety primarily from being in secure relationships with others. Pupils need to experience positive relationships with adults in school who are able to make them feel safe through being consistent, predictable, reliable and trustworthy as well as providing containment through structure, routines and boundaries.

Our way of interacting with the pupil is vital in securing a sense of safety. Safety cues are key to enabling the pupil to feel safe. Attuned friendly and warm facial expressions, careful modulation and frequency of the voice and non-threatening body movements indicate safety.

## Connection

Humans are biologically social creatures. To optimise our mental health and success we need to be able to socially engage. Connection can be considered on several levels: to the place, the curriculum, the adults and the pupils.

Developing a sense of connection and belonging is vital in terms of the development of social skills and understanding, a positive sense of self and agency.

We need to take care that we are truly connecting with pupils at their level and in a way that is meaningful to them. It is about them feeling a connection that they associate with emotional significance.

## Understanding

Pupils who have had interruptions in their emotional development that have impacted on their ability to develop and maintain trusting relationships can have difficulty understanding and processing their emotions in order to regulate themselves.

Difficulties with relationships are often associated with literacy difficulties and/or language impairment and so it is important to assess language and literacy needs alongside a pupil's relational needs.

Executive functioning difficulties can have a significant impact on the pupils' capacity to learn and may go unrecognised. Pupils may also have a difficulty with social skills which has arisen due to a lack of social learning opportunities.

Sensory needs can have a significant impact on all areas of life and can most definitely influence behaviours and presentation. Pupils with sensory needs can be hyper or hypo sensitive.

We understand that each of our pupils will experience challenges that are unique to them and we will adjust our responses accordingly. Our school is committed to research based approaches and our training and induction processes ensure that staff have the tools to understand the pupils they support.

### Care

Repeated experiences of being cared for, loved and soothed enables the pupil to feel good about who they are over time, effective, worthy of attention and able to calm themselves.

Ways of working that are successful in providing protection, connection, understanding and care for each pupil are detailed in their individual plans to ensure that each pupil has their needs met and experiences a consistent but personalised approach.

### **Managing Behaviour Positively**

*“I have come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a pupils’ life miserable or joyous.... I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanised or de-humanised.”*

Haim Ginott, Teacher and Child. (1972)

### **A Personalised Approach**

There is no universal script or approach that will work with all young people. How we develop relationships and learn about preferences, interests, and successful strategies is critical to ensure our responses are the right ones for the individual we are supporting.

As a school, we understand that consistency and predictability are important in creating a successful community, which is why our approach is underpinned by the common expectations of ‘Ready, Respectful, Safe’. We do believe however, that due to the individual needs of our pupils, their consistent and predictable experience is best realized on a personalised basis, based on their individual needs.

As we learn about the elements that make the support of each individual successful, we record these using the Behaviour Support Plan. In addition, our Individual Risk Assessment allows a bank of strategies to be built and shared to ensure successful proactive practices, and safety during moments of distress or dysregulation.

## **Responding to Behaviours**

It is normal for pupils of all ages to be playful, challenge authority and to test boundaries. Most pupils will at some point overstep a boundary and will need reminding about agreements and expectations. Our relationships, and the relational skills we utilise should be our first port of call at these times.

It is important to be mindful of the additional barriers that many of our pupils have and the impact this has on their stress regulation system. They may have a narrower window of tolerance than is typical and so the frequency with which they enter a state of fight/flight/freeze may be higher.

It is at these points that our pupils will need repeated experiences of safe adults alongside them, supporting them to feel secure in order to support the development of their own regulation systems and expand their window of tolerance over time.

Sometimes, when a pupil is experiencing strong emotions, the resulting behaviours may not be safe. In these circumstances, making the situation safe should be the primary objective.

When responding to the needs of a pupil whilst they are experiencing strong emotions, we must remain steady within our own self; to be aware of our own hooks and triggers, which may bring about emotional responses that might impact upon the effectiveness of our support. Learning to put our own ego aside and focussing on the needs of the pupil is helpful in the moment.

## **The Importance of Planning**

Our Behaviour Support Plans (BSP) and Risk Assessments allow for all known behaviours to be identified and suggested personalised responses to be planned. Staff working with pupils should understand these documents and use the guidance within them to ensure that the pupil experiences consistent and predictable support.

We understand that needs and behaviours change and as such, staff shall sometimes be presented with 'new' situations. When this happens, it is important to update these documents to help create a consistent and predictable approach should the event happen again.

Both documents contain information about how to best de-escalate situations that become challenging and reduce the risk of incidents becoming more prolonged or complex than they need to be.

## **Restrictive Physical Intervention**

We are committed to a restraint reduction culture regarding Restrictive Physical Interventions and the use of 'Reasonable Force'.

Restrictive Physical Intervention is a last resort and should only be used when there is no practicable alternative and when it is wholly necessary to prevent a greater or more significant harm.

Restrictive Physical Intervention must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary and must never be used as a punishment: It should only be used if there is an immediate and significant danger to pupils, staff or school property.

Restrictive Physical Intervention must only be used if all other strategies have failed. It must neither be threatened nor employed in a punitive manner, nor to force compliance with staff instructions and should never use more force or last longer than the minimum that is required.

It is important to understand the impact of using Restrictive Physical Intervention can have on the stability of relationships and on the emotional state and development of a pupil.

Restrictive Physical Intervention may be used where a pupil is on school premises or elsewhere in the lawful control or charge of a staff member and must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary to the circumstances.

The school uses the Crisis Prevention Institute's 'Safety Intervention' training to ensure staff can manage challenging situations safely, are able to effectively use de-escalation strategies, can understand our 'restraint reduction' approach, as well as understand their duties should a Restrictive Physical Intervention be required (and is judged reasonable proportionate and necessary). This is complemented by other training focussed on meeting the individual needs of our pupils and the individualised guidance that is within their personalised plans.

The school has opted to train staff to use a small number of the techniques that are available and approved by the 'Safety Intervention' framework as it believes the more significant, more restrictive holds are unlikely to be required in our setting. There is a mechanism for the school to alter the number and types of holds that are taught to staff but this shall always be within an overarching culture of championing the principles of restraint reduction.

Restrictive Physical Interventions are recorded and monitored closely. The Managing Director and the Nominated Safeguarding Director are notified of every incident that involves a Restrictive Physical Intervention and become involved in its review as necessary. Processes for debrief and lessons learned are in place, in line with best practice guidelines from 'Safety Intervention.'

Safety Intervention training is accredited via the British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD).



## **Involvement of Police**

There may be occasions when an incident is/has been significant and that staff consider whether to contact the police for support. There are occasions when this is absolutely appropriate and necessary but equally, careful thought should always be given to the decision.

When viewed through the context of the significant barriers that many of our young people already have to achieving a happy, safe and fulfilled adulthood, we should be mindful of the additional barrier that criminalisation and involvement with the criminal justice system can become.

Research has shown that once a pupil becomes 'known' to the police and the criminal justice system, the chances of them progressing to commit further crimes increases significantly.

We know that the sometimes complex needs, early childhood experiences and diagnosis of our young people are often significant factors in the situations that lead to their involvement with the police and criminal justice institutions. Often, a relational approach, such as the one outlined in this policy represents the best intervention to avoid incidents becoming long term patterns of behaviour.

The National Police Chief's Council has produced [guidance](#) which will be referred to when considering whether to contact police.

## **Post Incident Processes**

### **A restorative approach**

We believe in restorative approaches.

Staff engaging in a restorative interactions:

- are mindful of their relational skills (safety cues, curiosity, empathy, containment, soothing etc.) as described in the earlier sections of this policy.
- believes and shows that every individual, regardless of their behaviour, is a worthwhile person who has a right to be listened to and taken seriously.
- understands that each pupil shall require a personalised approach.
- knows there is no one truth about a given situation and is curious about how others see the same situation, inviting them to tell their story and acknowledging their right to their point of view.
- acknowledges and accepts feelings – does not judge feelings as right or wrong. Attunes to, validates and contains feelings with care and compassion.

- is reflective about how thoughts, feelings, needs and behaviour are influencing each other, both in terms of themselves and then others. Is able to hear and express feelings and needs within the stories they hear and tell.
- has the intention of listening and talking in a way that builds, maintains or repairs relationships in order to support participants in finding a mutually acceptable outcome or at least a way to cope with the situation as it is.
- consider where the pupil is in their development of understanding physical sensations, feelings and emotions.

Pupils must feel that they can trust the process to make the situation better and that they will be safe throughout.

With a trusted adult alongside them exploring, our repair and restore approach invites and supports the pupil to consider:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking?
- How were you feeling?
- Who else has been affected by this?
- What do you need, and what needs to happen now, so that we can repair and restore?

For many of our pupils, accessing these questions in a meaningful way is challenging and requires a variety of personalised approaches.

There are a number of strategies that can help pupils to access a 'repair and restore' interaction and these are typically outlined in their personalised plans. In these cases, the following can be helpful:

- Change the environment; it is important to consider the location of the communication; meetings in offices, particularly with professionals in authority may have considerable associations with previous traumatic interactions and could cause fear and anxiety. Consideration of the adult letting the pupil choose where they would like to meet or meeting somewhere neutral can be helpful. Often a 'walk and talk' or meeting off site can feel less intimidating.
- There can be a preconception that the 'repair and restore' conversation must be with certain people; perhaps with the adult who was most involved in the incident or the most senior member of staff. In fact, it might be appropriate to allow the adult who has the best relationship with the pupil to lead on the process.
- It can be helpful to work through others. For example, communicating with parents/ carers and allowing them to scaffold the conversation at home can be helpful if the

pupil does not yet have a strong enough relationship to feel able to engage with staff in school.

- Preparation and pre-warning can help. If a pupil knows ahead of time what will be discussed, what the potential outcomes might be, where it will be held, how long they need to be there and who will support them, they will feel empowered to engage more readily.
- Changing the format can help. A conversation is a complex interaction and may be too difficult. An exchange of notes or letters, or reflections through visuals or creative processes such as art/crafts, role play or comic strips can make an interaction more accessible for some.
- Group meetings and conversations can help some pupils. Whilst this may need support, it can be incredibly powerful in assisting them to own and be accountable for their own responses.

### **Recording and Reporting**

#### **Recording positive behaviours**

We prioritise the recording of positive behaviours and moments of progress using our Management Information System (MIS) and celebrate and share positive news wherever we can.

Certificates, phone calls home, praise from their staff (or other senior/favoured staff) and suitable rewards are used based on individual needs and context to recognise success.

#### **Recording behaviours of concern**

It is critical to record incidents promptly and accurately to ensure that there is sufficient reflection and learning in the period afterwards. It is by observing and recording carefully that we start to see patterns over time, can start to understand the thoughts and feelings that are behind some of the behaviours that we see and can work to offer the appropriate support in response.

Low level concerns are recorded using the school MIS, which is monitored to see patterns over time.

Significant incidents are recorded using a 'significant incident form' within 24 hours for leadership review (below).

#### **Post Incident Review**

After an incident, there are a number of processes which must take place in order to ensure that the appropriate responses have been made, that sufficient support has been provided to

the pupils and the team around them so that everyone can learn and move forward towards improved outcomes.

### Updating BSPs/Risk Assessments

It is important that if a BSP and/or a Risk Assessment is updated, staff who work, or might work with that individual pupil is aware. Teachers oversee these documents and are responsible for sharing updates with the relevant team members.

For more significant updates, information may be shared additionally via email, or within one of the relevant meetings/briefings.

### Debriefs

The school believes that there is value in post incident debriefs. They allow staff and pupils to reflect and learn from what has happened, to plan a different approach for next time, or to identify ways to de-escalate or avoid reaching a point of distress, dysregulation or risk.

Debriefs can be held between staff and pupils, or between staff without pupils, dependent on the circumstances.

Debriefs are recorded and kept with incident reports.

### Considering Safeguarding Implications

When reviewing incidents, leaders are trained to consider safeguarding implications. For example, they will consider whether there is a safeguarding concern that has acted as a trigger, whether the incident itself has created a safeguarding concern, or whether the conduct of any staff member through their management of the incident might constitute a low-level concern or an allegation.

In such circumstances, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is followed.

### Relevant Escalation

The Headteacher, as part of their monitoring of incidents shall promptly escalate details of incidents that are of concern to the Managing Director. The Managing Director shall further escalate details to the Board (typically to the Nominated Safeguarding Lead) as required. These procedures assist additional review processes being put in place if necessary.

Incidents that require escalation include:

- Any incident that involved a restrictive physical intervention
- Any incident that involved a significant injury to a pupil or staff member
- Any incident that resulted in a subsequent absence from school (pupil or staff)

Any incident considered to be a potential safeguarding concern shall be reported in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

### Daily and Weekly Monitoring

Where there is a need to oversee an incident immediately, or on the same day, there is leadership capacity to support this.

However, the school also reviews incidents more strategically on a weekly basis to ensure that patterns are identified, safeguarding considerations are discussed, updates to documents are made and changes to provision are committed to.

### Monitoring Over Time

As well as the learning and reflection that occurs after each individual incident, it is also important to analyse over time, so that patterns can be explored and further adjustments for support and provision can be arranged.

### Governance Overview

Incident review features in the school's quality assurance and governance procedures.

Data is shared with the Managing Director and the Board of Directors, who offer effective support and challenge to the school as part of their duties.

### Learning for the Adults

It is critical that the 'repair and restore' process is not solely about reflection on the part of the pupil. There will almost always be learning on the part of the school and of individual staff. Staff should model humility and where appropriate, share what they feel they might do differently next time as part of the process.

This policy sets out the support that will be afforded to our pupils when they experience difficulties. It is acknowledged that staff may also need support as part of their own 'repair and restore' processes. The school takes this responsibility seriously and has structures and processes that offer the support that they need.

### Sanctions/Consequences

We do not believe in punitive sanctions or punishments. Research shows that they do not change behaviours and can reinforce the feelings that a pupil is not good enough, is not worthy and should feel shame. These feelings and emotions are not helpful in promoting meaningful learning over time and do not support the development of skills.

There are times where it is appropriate however, to consider natural consequences. A natural consequence is where a pupil is helped to understand the natural consequences to them in terms of the effect a particular behaviour has on themselves or others. Successful natural consequences for each individual are typically noted in each pupils' personalised plans.

Examples of natural consequences, applied through the approaches detailed within 'Repairing and Restoring' include:

- If something is broken, it is no longer available for use.
- Where damage or disruption to the school environment has been caused by a pupil, then assisting to put this right is a useful consequence that could aid learning.
- If a pupils' behaviour causes harm to someone else, an attempt to restore and repair may be an appropriate natural consequence, but it is important to ensure this is genuine and not forced. A pupil being encouraged to apologise when they do not understand or agree with doing so has little value.
- If a pupil's presentation whilst learning in a particular context was judged to be unsafe, the school may make adjustments to their timetable to ensure that they can be more safe; e.g. if a pupil is not safe whilst in school transport, their Individual Safety Plan is updated to allow for a period of time where they do not travel in school transport and instead focus on developing skills so that they can do this again later.
- If a pupil is misusing school equipment (e.g. craft scissors, kitchen knives, IT equipment) and the result is that there is risk or harm or of disruption to learning, a temporary period whereby they do not have access to the equipment might be considered (whilst understanding the importance of always prioritising learning how to use equipment safely in the longer term).
- If a behaviour causes concern, staff may choose to call parents/carers to inform them of the behaviour. This is not to punish or humiliate the pupil but to facilitate effective communication and a consistent approach to support the pupil to develop their skills.

### **Our Graduated Response**

The principles of how we respond to individual incidents is outlined above. However, as part of the wider monitoring of incidents over time, a graduated response may be needed in order to make modifications to the provision we offer our pupils.

It is important that these modifications are proportional to the individual context and that when they are required, they are actioned as promptly as is practicable.

#### **Responses include:**

- Making changes to the peer group, staffing ratios or staffing personnel that are involved in supporting the pupil.

- Adjusting the timetable, learning approach or planned activities to further maximise chances of success. In some cases, a full or partial return to our 'Overcoming Barriers' curriculum approach may be required.
- Providing additional 1:1 or small group time to work on the skills needed to manage learning time effectively.
- Offering enhanced leadership oversight or more time with staff who know them best.
- Accessing additional/specialist advice with regard to understanding needs. For example, discussion and planning with a Clinical Psychologist or other relevant professionals.
- Additional staff training to improve the quality of the support provided.
- Increased partnership working with parents/carers to increase the effectiveness and alignment of the chosen approaches.
- Increased multi-agency involvement to increase the support provided to the pupil and the adults around them. For example, support from children's social care, mental health professionals or the police.
- Partnerships with specialist external providers (suitably safeguarded) to offer approaches and support that the school cannot offer in house - e.g. off-site therapeutic youth work, specialist forest school activities or particular learning activities that will engage and regulate.
- Outreach from staff to offer intervention and support in the community which may, in some cases, reduce the triggers that may be present within the school environment.
- Emergency Annual Review to allow for multi-professional review and planning.
- A suspension to provide time to reflect and plan for a successful return where needs can be better met.
- Permanent exclusion as an absolute last resort where there is no practicable alternative.

### **Flexible Arrangements**

When considering the use of individualised, creative, planned packages of support that may include time with off-site partners to prevent suspension or exclusion, decisions need to be made with consideration of the views of the pupil, family and partner agencies.

In these cases, it should be made clear what the purpose of these alternative packages is:

- What needs are being met that cannot be met in school?
- What outcomes are being worked towards and how is the provision meeting these needs?
- How will the pupil remain connected to the school?
- How will they reintegrate into school?

It is vital that adults from school maintain their relationship with the pupil and that when the pupil returns, they will return to a setting which is able to meet their needs and welcomes them back.

See the school's Alternative Provision Procedures for further information.

### **Suspension and Exclusion**

A suspension is only to be used as a last resort and should be a proportionate response where there is no alternative. In the rare circumstances where a suspension is considered, we always carefully consider the purpose of the exclusion and the impact that it will have on the pupil.

A suspension should be a short-term measure with the aim of improving outcomes. It should enable further planning and assessment and provide an opportunity for reflection for both the pupil and staff involved.

Relational approaches as those outlined in this policy should be used to guide and support a pupils return to school. How does re-integration occur, particularly for families further away? How are they represented?

We do not advocate the use of permanent exclusion. However, we also recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances where a pupil is not able to have their needs met in our school or where our school cannot guarantee the pupil or other pupils' safety.

The decision to suspend or permanently exclude is made by the Headteacher. It will be for the Headteacher in liaison with the school leadership team to determine the length of a suspension (up to 45 days in any one year) based on facts relating to the specific case.

A second suspension for a similar offence may well be for a longer term than the first. All exclusions are recorded in writing with copies of the letter being sent to all relevant parties, including the local authority.

Further details regarding the use of suspension and exclusion can be found in our Suspension and Exclusions Policy.

### **Version Control**

Date of adoption of this policy, by or on behalf of the Proprietor	March 2023
Date of last review of this policy	August 2023
Date for next review of this policy	February 2024
Policy owner (Proprietor)	Dorset Centre of Excellence



## Appendix 1 Screening and Searching of Pupils

Although rarely required, the school has provision for responding to risks that may require the screening and searching of pupils. Where screening and searching is required, it will be done so in the spirit of this policy. This means the dignity, privacy, individual needs and disabilities of any pupil shall be carefully considered prior and throughout any such activity.

Where practicable, adults who have the strongest relationships with a pupil shall support with the decision making and the support of a pupil that is subject to any screening or searching.

The school approach is in line with *'Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools'* DfE (July 2022) and considers *'Keeping Children Safe in Education'* (DfE 2024).

The school has assessed that it does not have a need to screen pupils routinely upon arrival and/or departure from school.

In the event of an identified need to search, or confiscate, the Headteacher shall be informed, who will act, or act others to act in accordance with *'Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools'*.

The school is mindful of publicised cases, such as that of 'Child Q', and is keen to ensure that the dignity and reasonable privacy of a pupil is balanced with any risks or safeguarding concerns that are presented, particularly if the Police attend site and support with a search.

If reasonably practicable, the Headteacher shall discuss the matter with the Managing Director, or another appropriately experienced colleague, before commencing with a search.

Screening, searching and confiscation matters shall always be recorded in line with *'Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools'*.

The list of items identified as prohibited by the school for the purposes of *'Searching, Screening and Confiscation'* mirrors that from *'Searching, Screening and Confiscation Advice for schools'* and is:

- knives and weapons;
- alcohol;
- illegal drugs;
- stolen items;
- any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be used:
  - to commit an offence, or

- to cause personal injury to, or damage to property of; any person (including the pupil).
- an article specified in regulations:
  - tobacco and cigarette papers;
  - fireworks; and
  - pornographic images.