



# POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS POLICY (BEHAVIOUR)

## Policy Document (2023-2024)

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<b>Signed by:</b>	<b>S Hawthorne</b>

## **Intent**

To Promote Positive Relationships, Encourage Reflection and Develop Supportive Strategies to Reduce Behaviours of Concern.

## **Aims**

This policy is intended to help staff carry out tasks to create and maintain a safe environment for all, with a specific focus on working with behaviours of concern, maintaining a therapeutic environment, and - within this - ensuring a calm learning environment.

## **Introduction**

We know that children communicate their thoughts and feelings through their behaviours.

We have a responsibility to try to understand what they are telling us, even if this may not be immediately apparent. It is important to connect with the underlying reasons the child may be behaving in a particular way. Their observable behaviour is grounded in their own experience of SEMH and often as a result of coping strategies that they have developed over time, so our job is to support, identify, interpret and redevelop so that a child is able to respond to difficulties and challenges in different, healthier, and safer ways.

We also work hard to celebrate the uniqueness of each child and their experience of their SEMH so that, by the time they move on from Grow Independent School, they are better able to understand their own needs, the impact of their needs on themselves as individuals and on those around them and even to celebrate their differences.

We recognise that many of the young people placed at Grow School may have struggled in previous specialist or mainstream placements. A primary need of SEMH can encompass a range of needs with many of our students having experienced early childhood adversity alongside other co-occurring needs that are likely to have made school feel particularly difficult.

We also recognise that previous educational experiences may have resulted in the children and young people at Grow Independent School feeling a sense of shame about earlier failed placements that they have learned to cover with sometimes aggressive and avoidant behaviour.

Our role is to work therapeutically with all learners, to understand the uniqueness of their experience and to build and use healthy and positive relationships to help them develop greater self-esteem and realise that they can make different choices.

We come from a place of curiosity about behaviours, and staff are trained to think carefully about the complexities of a learner's experience in order to try to identify the feelings and thoughts behind their behaviours. Sometimes the feelings that working with a child can bring out in ourselves can give us insight into what the learners are experiencing. As an example, a learner who can display rigid thinking and demand avoidant behaviour has an ability to make those around them feel frustrated, powerless and at a loss as to how to help. If we can - as professionals - understand that our feelings are a reflection of those of the student, it enables us to act in a way that reassures, offers options and empowers the learner.

The combination of relationships, structure, routine, clear boundaries, and opportunities for thinking together promotes the development of positive, healthy, safe ways of relating to others. We ask that all stakeholders recognise this and offer support and patience when children who have experienced a period of dysregulation might have an impact on the progress and regulation of their own children.

Our Positive Behaviour Support takes the form of Primary and Secondary Strategies as outlined below:

### **Primary Strategies**

These are all the things that we do as a school all day every day to develop a safe learning environment. These things include everything from the safety of the school site and environments to the very individual support each learner needs around them, but include as well:

The culture throughout the school of supportive nurturing relationships with a focus on getting to know each child well so that each child has trusted adults within the school.

The structure of the school day so that learners know what to expect on their personalised timetables.

Communication and collaboration with parents to co-develop strategies and support for learners.

The development of Individual Care Plans to take account of the unique nature of a learner's needs, interests, triggers and responses to behaviours as detailed in their EHCP.

The involvement of children in decisions about their provision and the support and interventions they need.

The ongoing training and understanding of staff on matters relating to SEND practice and support.

The attitude and behaviours of staff in order to teach by example and model respect for the children, for each other, themselves, the school, and good ethical behaviours in all aspects of work.

The staff's expectation and assumption of positive interaction with peers and learning, whilst being prepared for, and aware of, possible behaviours of concern.

The presence of clear policies and procedures - followed by all - that provide consistency in approach and behaviours across the school.

The clarity of expectation from children so that they are aware of what is expected of them in terms of their learning, behaviour and responsibilities and are able to ask for help when needed.

Develop a habit of asking pupils if you can approach them, sit with them, if they require your help, etc - this places a sense of control with them about their personal space.

Keep the learners in a place of unconditional positive regard by all who work at Grow Independent School and maintain the desire to seek resolution through reflection and reflective practice, sharing pride and enjoyment alongside children when they achieve.

### **Secondary Strategies**

These are the things that all staff are trained to think carefully about, in order to manage and support the day-to-day interaction between people on site:

No single approach or technique is helpful in all situations for all children. Staff, therefore, have a commitment to paying attention to the child's individual needs and to do what actually helps them, here and now, using the most appropriate strategies outlined in the child's Risk Assessment/EHCP

We ask staff to notice and be curious about the learner's behaviours, understanding when a learner is feeling emotions and recognising when they might need support to identify, name, describe or manage the feelings they are experiencing.

We ask staff to use de-escalation strategies to try to reduce the potentially volatile nature of interactions and feelings through distraction, diversion, affirmation, compromise and ultimately reflection and restorative practices. Grow School recognises that teaching young people to recognise and name their feelings is a core part of our work. This can be through the use of Zones of Regulation and the PACE models (please see Appendix A).

We ask staff to consciously aim to separate a learner's feelings from their behaviours - whilst it may be unreasonable for the child to kick, bite or scream, it is not unreasonable for them to feel cross or unhappy.

The most important part of managing any incident at school is the learning conversations that take place afterwards and when a child is calm and ready to reflect. Staff are trained to find a range of ways to support a learner to have these conversations in order to support them to explore other - more constructive - ways to express feelings and frustrations.

We ask staff to make use of positive language, so to give learners options for acceptable behaviours rather than asking them to refrain from unacceptable behaviours, for example, "let's do this" rather than "don't do that".

We ask staff to use clear, supportive language to reduce ambiguity and to make clear the boundaries; this includes using statements of reality for learners, which can be useful in grounding and supporting the learner to understand their current experience, ie 'you are shouting at the moment'.

We ask staff to reduce the use of language when a learner is becoming heightened and upset, in order to reduce the amount a learner has to process at that time; being present, offering a listening ear and making suggestions to give learners options are all useful strategies when a learner is starting to feel a lack of control. For learners with a more demand avoidant profile, we ask staff to make adjustments to their communication to remove demand, offer options and reassure the learner, thus treating a 'meltdown' more as a panic attack.

We ask staff to recognise their own feelings when supporting a learner, and to be vigilant too about other staff, to identify when they might need to step away from a situation. We are not seeking a win-lose situation, we will always seek a win-win, where both parties can be supported to find a suitable solution to resolve a matter. Over time, this is one of the single most effective ways to develop resilience and strategies for a child to resolve conflict.

When supporting a child who might be becoming heightened, we ask staff to reduce any perceived threat of their presence by sitting, kneeling, or giving space for the child to move about. Body language is evidenced to be even more important than verbal language at these times and can be the difference between inflaming a situation and calming it.

As a rule, the following strategies should be used as a quick guide:

- Change personnel if behaviour feels targeted or if the member of staff needs to regain composure.
- Be aware of positive and supportive body language.
- Be aware of the tone and timbre of your voice in maintaining calm reassurance.
- Reduce the content of language to simple choices or reassurances and make sure your language is age and stage appropriate.
- Avoid any mention of sanctions.
- Check that the environment is safe, free from hazards and, where possible, without an audience; try to remember that it is frightening to feel out of control.

When a learner continues to struggle with ongoing dysregulated behaviour, the school is committed to exploring this behaviour, convening team meetings, solution circles and instigating Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycles to enable staff to think carefully about the behaviour they are seeing, plan responses accordingly and take action to support change. As part of an ongoing response to periods of dysregulation for children and young people, we aim to work with parents and colleagues to identify different strategies and encourage more regulated behaviour. It is through the ongoing process of review that we can affect change positively.

### **Shared Language**

Shared language is incredibly important within the school and staff are asked to think carefully about the language they use both toward, and about, children and young people. We do not use punitive language at school;

Children are not 'banned' from things; rather, we find a more appropriate time to rearrange the planned activity, when a child is better able to access this.

Children are not 'punished'; rather, we want to encourage them to talk about what went wrong and how behaviour might have been changed by all involved to bring about a different outcome.

Sanctions are not administered; rather, we support the child to recognise the natural consequences of their actions and make positive choices

We do not withdraw privileges from learners; rather, we look at how to use interests and merits positively as an incentive, rather than the removal of these as a punishment

Incidents are described in neutral and blame-free language; examples to use include:

'the child became emotionally dysregulated', not 'the child was behaving badly'

'there was a conflict', not 'they were out of control'

'the strategies we have tried so far were unsuccessful', not 'nothing's working'

Children are not isolated from others; rather, we try to identify the sources of conflict and put measures in place to reduce heightened behaviours and restore relationships.

We recognise that this process can take considerable time, as repairing relationships and building trust takes time.

Staff, students and parents alike are asked to commit to this process for all learners in the class, as it is being with others that leads to the ability to:

- manage and repair conflict
- make compromises
- accommodate the needs of others
- ultimately manage their own tolerance and ability to be around others with different needs and interests.

We consider all of the above as essential life skills and it is the learning of these things that can sometimes be the focus for children at first, whilst we introduce and slowly increase academic demands.

Our response to conflict is to think carefully about restoration and we use the principles of restorative justice whenever supporting learners. We ask that all those participating in the restorative process do so with the following core values:

- A desire to address and repair any harm
- A willingness to participate voluntarily
- A fair and unbiased attitude
- A commitment to creating a safe environment throughout the process
- A commitment to ensuring the process is accessible to all
- A willingness to ensure respect and dignity for all

### **Sanctions**

It is not Grow Independent School's practice to administer punitive sanctions; there is strong evidence-based research into SEMH, autism and childhood developmental trauma that reflective and restorative practices are more likely to bring about lasting change to behaviours than extrinsic sanctions. These practices also support the child in the long term to develop and implement strategies for managing their own behaviours in more positive ways.

If a child has missed work due to dysregulated behaviours, they will be supported to complete this work later. This represents our day-to-day approach with learners as we will always look for more regulated times to introduce tasks and support a learner to achieve academically.

If a child has had a disagreement with a peer, they will be supported to have restorative conversations which support them to understand one another's perspectives; this is not only important in bringing about reparation between peers but will teach the children strategies for conflict management in the future.

If a child is reluctant to follow staff instructions, they may be given an opportunity to do the task in a different way, or in a different order, with staff support, or later in the day, in order that staff can celebrate achievements with the child. It is good practice to praise a child when they even make an *attempt* at the work, as we recognise that starting a task can often be the hardest part to do.

If a child is showing unsafe behaviours, it may be necessary to postpone a trip or planned event to a later date; again, the removal of this event is not punitive and the anticipation of a renewed opportunity can often be used positively to support the child to make good choices.

It is the school's policy that children will be included in any educational or planned activity outside of school if they are safe and able to do so.

Reflective 'learning conversations' should therefore take place after every incident where a child has shown behaviours of concern and should be handled by familiar members of staff who can approach these conversations supportively and at a time when a child is most receptive.

Learning conversations intend to:

- promote appropriate behaviour
- help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the adults caring for them, and the wider community
- help children accept responsibility for their actions
- support a child to undertake reparative and restorative action
- provide a space for thinking, feeling, and making things better

It may, on occasion, be necessary to ask parents to meet with staff to talk about the best ways forward with the learners; it is our experience that when parents and school work together, agreeing on the best ways to support a child, this is likely to be the most effective way to bring about positive change.

Although Grow Independent School's Positive Relationships Policy lays out clearly the school's ethos, response to learners and the primary and secondary measures to support the development of a child's behaviour, it is important to make clear that the following sanctions will **not** be used within school and could lead to disciplinary action for the member(s) of staff involved:

- Any form of corporal punishment;
- Any punishment involving the consumption or deprivation of food or drink;
- The use or withholding of medication, or medical or dental treatment;
- Any intimate physical examination;
- Withholding any aids or equipment needed by a disabled child;
- Any measure involving punishing a group of children for the behaviour of an individual child;
- Denying access to the toilet;
- Threats or verbal abuse intended to humiliate, shame or degrade a child, his/her family or other important people;
- Removal of curriculum entitlement for any reason other than health & safety;
- Removal of rewards that have already been earned;
- Enforced seclusion, where a child is forced to spend time alone as a consequence. Any separation from the child's group would be in the company or close proximity to an adult. We do understand that sometimes children choose to be alone and this is noted on their risk assessment or care plan accordingly
- Any sanction that could subject a child to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In certain rare cases, it may be required to keep a child in a room to remove them from others or reduce their own risk of harm, but this would always be with a member of staff and in the best interests of the individual(s) involved. In line with mandatory reporting, this would be recorded as a restrictive physical

Intervention in the usual way with parents informed accordingly. Locking of external doors in order to provide safety for the children and prevent unauthorised persons from accessing the building is permitted.

## **Exclusions**

Any form of exclusion, either fixed-term or permanent, should only be used rarely and in *exceptional* circumstances. The decision to exclude can only be made by the Head (DfE guidance, 2017) or Executive Principal. Whilst a one-off episode or incident of behaviour may sometimes be positively managed with a fixed period out of school, it would be our usual practice to consider whether Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Strategies had been fully explored. However, it is also important to remember that:

Individual needs, risks and context will always be considered when contemplating an exclusion of any sort.

Fixed-term (temporary) exclusions of between 1 and 5 days may be considered when the child and/or the school feels that some time might be necessary in order to re-think approaches or make changes to provision and where a break from school, coupled with a reintegration meeting with the student and parents, could be a really effective way to restart provision in a more positive way for the learner and their staff.

Fixed-term exclusions may also need to be considered in serious circumstances, to allow the school to reflect with parents, carers, social workers and/or other professionals on the cause of the incident or behaviours and to plan for more successful reintegration.

Unfortunately, permanent exclusions may be a necessity in more extreme circumstances, where for example, the safety or wellbeing of others at school has been significantly compromised. Such extreme circumstances might include the following, which is not an exhaustive list:

- Use of weapons or weaponry within school towards another
- Selling of drugs or drug paraphernalia
- Premeditated actions to hurt or harm another
- Continued and repeated disruptive behaviour and unwillingness to engage with support or learning
- Repeated, long-term targeting of another or others/peer-on-peer abuse
- Single or repeated serious violence or assault

Whenever a fixed-term or permanent exclusion is issued, parents/carers and the placing Local Authority, including the social worker of any looked-after children, will be notified by phone and letter. Parents/carers will also be advised of their right to appeal and the process that will be followed should they choose to exercise this right.

## **Role of Staff**

- To be familiar with this policy.
- To ensure that behaviour management in the school is an active process that anticipates the children's needs and meets these where possible before acting out behaviour becomes extreme.
- To use their knowledge of the child to contribute to keeping EHCP and any additional behaviour support plans up to date.



- To ensure that any measure of discipline or control is used with thought and care in the best interest of the child(ren).
- To reflect on their own practice and be a critical friend to colleagues.
- To contribute to developing best practices, including being open to changing and improving their own practice on an ongoing basis.

### **Role of the Headteacher**

The headteacher has a responsibility to know and understand what is happening in the school in terms of behaviour, including:

- The nature and frequency of incidents
- The way in which individual children are supported
- How groups are working together
- What interventions, approaches, therapies and relationships are in place to support and develop positive behaviour both across the school and for individual learners
- How well staff are trained on the relational approach and are adhering to the principles of these approaches for learners

This involves:

- Ensuring that there is sufficient oversight of, monitoring of, and accountability for the behaviour across the school
- Monitoring and improving the systems to record behaviour within the school
- Monitoring the progress of individual learners and groups over time, to inform the priority areas where the Multidisciplinary Team, Psychologists and Behaviour and Welfare Team are allocated for the most impact
- Monitoring the reflective practice/learning conversations within the school
- Ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for training

### **Role of Pupils**

It is intended that, through participation in restorative conversations, as well as through the reflective process, children should come to understand their own behaviours and develop their own capacity for verbalising feelings and self-regulating. This should lead to a reduction in behaviour that challenges overtime to be replaced with more effective strategies for managing heightened emotions.

### **Role of Parents/Carers**

We know children make the most progress when the school is working well with the parents/carers. This means good clear communication between home and school with the parents/carers understanding the ways in which we are working with behaviour. This policy should be shared openly with parents/carers, as should their own child's EHCP which outlines the individual needs of their child in terms of the likes, dislikes, cues and triggers for their child's behaviour as well as how the school should respond for the most positive management of behaviours.

We also ask that all parents understand the context of the school and support us when another child in their child's class is struggling and displaying behaviour that challenges. Whilst the impact on your own child is fully recognised and it can be a very unsettling time, the school will do what we can to regulate the child in question and reduce the impact of their behaviours, as we believe that everyone should get the chance to be understood and get the right support; eventually, when they feel safer and understood, they will be able to self-regulate and make progress again.

## **Appendix**

### Dan Hughes' PACE Approach

PACE refers to Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy:

- Playfulness involves spontaneity, openness and exploration; have fun and share enjoyment with the child. Using playfulness can defuse tense situations and is useful to manage minor behaviours, as the child is less likely to respond with anger or defensiveness.

- Acceptance involves unconditional positive regard for the child. Accept the child's inner experience without judgement and make sense of why the child is behaving in a certain way. Acceptance does not mean accepting negative behaviours, but accepting the reasons behind behaviour. When necessary criticise the behaviour, but not the child.
- Curiosity involves wondering about the reasons behind the behaviours, rather than being angry. This shows the child that you care and helps them make sense of their behaviour, feelings and experiences. Use phrases like "I wonder if you are feeling like this because..." to open up discussions with the child.
- Empathy involves showing them that you understand how difficult they are finding things and reassuring them that you want to help them to manage this. Validate the child's emotional experience with phrases such as "I know how difficult that must have been for you" and work together to find ways to support them. For more information about the PACE approach please refer to literature by Dan Hughes.

### Kuypers Zones of Regulation

The Zones of Regulation framework and curriculum (Kuypers, 2011) teaches students scaffolded skills toward developing a metacognitive pathway to build awareness of their feelings/internal state and utilize a variety of tools and strategies for regulation, prosocial skills, self-care, and overall wellness. This includes exploring tools and strategies for mindfulness, sensory integration, movement, thinking strategies, wellness, and healthy connection with others. The Zones of Regulation provides a common language and compassionate framework to support positive mental health and skill development for all, while serving as an inclusion strategy for neurodiverse learners, those who have experienced trauma, and/or have specific needs in terms of social, emotional, and behavioral development.

The Zones of Regulation creates a systematic approach to teach regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete colored zones. Integrating in cognitive behavior therapy, students build skills in emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and social cognition. The framework is designed to help move students toward more independent regulation while also honoring and respecting each student and their unique self.

*The Zones of Regulation* curriculum incorporates Social Thinking® ([www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)) concepts and numerous printable visuals to support students in identifying their feelings/level of alertness,

understanding how their behavior impacts outcomes, problem solving conflicts and learning what tools they can use to regulate their Zones.

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