

Trauma Informed Behaviour Policies and Approaches:

A Guide for Schools and Settings

November 2019



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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION



1.1 Aims of this guidance

The purpose of this guidance is to provide schools and settings with an overview of trauma informed approaches to behaviour. The guidance will begin by considering the difference between trauma informed approaches and behaviourist approaches, consider how children’s rights can influence your approach to behaviour, and discuss how trauma informed approaches can be embedded into the ethos of a school or setting.

1.2 Behaviourist and trauma informed theories in schools

The root of “discipline” is the word *disciple*, which means “student”, “pupil”, and “learner”. A disciple is not a recipient of punishment, but one who is learning through instruction.

(Siegel and Payne Bryson, 2018).

Behaviourism

Behaviourism is a psychological theory that aims to make sense of human (and animal) behaviour. Historically, this theory has dominated approaches to classroom management (Harold and Corcoran, 2013), and is embedded in key government policy documents on behaviour and classroom management (e.g. Department for Education, 2016).

“A teacher using behaviourist practices develops rules usually without student input, presents them to students, and tells students what will happen if rules are broken and what will happen if rules are obeyed”

(Landau, 2009)

Behaviourist approaches to classroom management tend to:

- Focus on using rewards and sanctions to increase or decrease the frequency of a behaviour
- See behaviour as being related to an immediate trigger (e.g. “the pupil started distracting others because he was bored”)
- Focus on treating all children and young people equally, regardless of need or circumstances
- Be used repetitively and consistently until the behaviour is changed.

Whilst behaviourist strategies can be effective for some children and young people, behaviourist approaches to behaviour management have been widely criticised by research literature. Researchers have argued that behaviourist approaches:

- “Encourage passivity, control and obedience rather than empowerment, autonomy and self-regulation” (Parker, Rose and Gilbert, 2016)
- Place the fault and the responsibility to change on the child (Harold and Corcoran, 2013)
- Do not consider context (Harold and Corcoran, 2013).

Trauma informed theories

In contrast to behaviourism, trauma informed approaches to behaviour management tend to:

- Place relationships and a child or young person’s sense of safety and security at the heart of classroom management
- Encourage nurture, warmth and empathy, even when a child or young person is presenting with behaviours that feel challenging
- Promote a sense of community and belonging
- Take individual circumstances into account.

Research suggests that *“when schools place a **strong emphasis upon the emotional health and well-being of all members of the school community, and***

*this ethos is **driven by the school's senior leadership team** and is evident in practice, this leads to **better outcomes for all** – e.g. staff retention, pupil attendance and attainment, positive home-school relationships” (Banerjee, Weare, and Farr, 2014, in [Brighton and Hove Council, 2018](#)).*

Additionally, *“**secure teacher–student relationships predict greater knowledge, higher test scores, greater academic motivation, and fewer retentions or special education referrals than insecure teacher–student relationships**” (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).*

Research of this nature supports the use of trauma informed approaches to behaviour in schools and other educational settings such as nurseries and colleges.

“We aim to adopt a **whole systems approach** to understanding how adverse childhood experiences can cause a **trauma response** in children, young people and adults. We will do this by adopting a **relationship based approach** to our work and in doing so acknowledge the value of **strong partnerships and collaborative working to prioritise positive mental health and wellbeing** for the children and young people of York”

(City of York Council Strategic Partnership for Emotional and Mental Health, 2019)

1.3 Exclusions

“Just 7% of children who were permanently excluded and 18% of children who received multiple fixed period exclusions went on to achieve good passes in English and maths GCSEs, qualifications that are essential to succeeding in adult life”.

([Timpson Review, 2019](#))

Practices aimed at excluding children or young people on a permanent or fixed term basis, through internal processes such as isolation, or through multiple managed moves, are seen as incompatible with a trauma informed approach to behaviour. These practices tend to be particularly punitive for children and young people who have experienced developmental trauma, and can retrigger trauma that was experienced in the past. **Fundamentally, any form of exclusion can have a significant detrimental impact on children’s relationship with and trust of school staff, and their sense of safety.**

Researcher: What is it about being in isolation that really winds you up?

Raggy: It’s just the feel of it – you know? – just horrible.

Researcher: The feel of it?

Spud: Small room.

Tazzer: Just like being in prison but not quite as horrible.

(Pomerantz, 2007)

Research has raised concerns about practices of exclusion and zero-tolerance approaches to behaviour management, including:

- A possible lack of attendance to the context of an incident or the circumstances of the child or young person (Harold and Corcoran, 2013)
- An increased likelihood of children and young people from the following groups being excluded:
 - Ethnic minority groups
 - Children and young people with Special Education Needs
 - Children who have experienced trauma
 - Children and young people from the LGBTQ+ community(Mallett, 2016)
- A lack of capacity for differentiation to meet individual needs (Harold and Corcoran, 2013)
- A negative impact on crime rates (Mallett, 2016)
- The capacity for exclusion to psychosocially isolate children and young people in their most vulnerable moment (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001).

Given these concerns, it is important for schools and settings to consider how they will prevent children and young people from being internally or externally excluded. Some ideas include:

- **Identifying and meeting the need** being communicated through a behaviour at the earliest opportunity (rather than giving sanctions for behaviour)
- **Restorative conversations** between the child or young person and a key attachment figure within the setting, at a point where the child or young person is calm enough to reflect on triggers, thoughts, feelings and what might help in the future
- Using a **relational approach** to behaviour management. A relational approach is one in which staff *“are aware of and explicitly focus on the quality of their interactions with students to develop classroom communities that promote academic, social, and emotional growth”* (Reeves and Le Mare, 2017)
- Using **Emotion Coaching** to provide co-regulation and to support a child or young person to understand their emotions.

(Gus, Rose, and Gilbert, 2015; Harold and Corcoran, 2013; [London Assembly Education Panel, 2019](#))

Despite these concerns, this guidance recognises that **exclusion may be necessary on very rare occasions, as an absolute last resort.** On these occasions, the following strategies may help to repair and restore relationships:

- Maintaining contact with the child or young person and their family throughout the process (e.g. telephoning the child or young person at the beginning and end of each day, to check how they are doing and how the work they have been set is going)
- Using Restorative Practice to structure reintegration meetings and reduce blame
- Holding a restorative group for staff involved in supporting the child or young person, e.g. using the ‘Coping Debrief Following Major Incident’ framework (p. 28)

- Placing the child or young person’s (and their family’s) voice at the heart of each step of the process.

([Hackney Learning Trust, 2015](#))

Additionally, if the child or young person is in care, please [contact the Virtual School](#) for support at the earliest opportunity, and before excluding the child.

Young person: (You) can’t just change like just cus your [sic] moving school cus you’re...gonna misbehave even more when you move school (.) when you don’t know no one (.) you’re gonna be angry (.) bout movin school.

(Wilkinson, 2014)

1.4 Key principles of a trauma informed behavioural approach

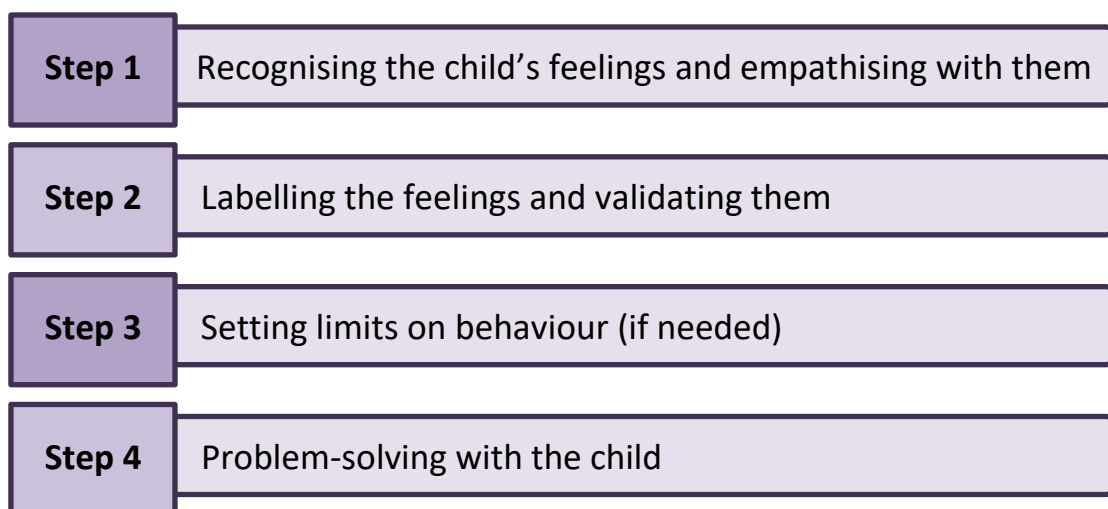
The five principles below have been developed by City of York Council Educational Psychology Service as suggestions for schools and settings to consider when applying a trauma informed approach to behaviour. These principles aim to compliment the [OFSTED Education Inspection Framework \(2019\)](#), in particular the references to relationships among learners and staff reflecting a positive and respectful culture, and the importance of learners feeling safe.

Principle One: Relationships, empathy and feeling safe take precedent over other means of discipline

Research suggests that children’s level of satisfaction in their relationships with school staff is the most important contributory factor to their overall wellbeing in school (Rees et al., 2013). Research also suggests that the development of

skills related to emotional wellbeing in pupils or students has a positive impact on academic attainment (e.g. Bonell et al., 2014). Trauma informed behavioural approaches prioritise relationships, empathy and feeling safe above discipline and other behaviour management principles. The four steps of Emotion Coaching provide a useful outline for embedding principle one within a relational approach:

Emotion Coaching steps:



Steps one and two of the Emotion Coaching framework provide an opportunity to prioritise relationships, empathise, and support the child or young person to feel safe. For further information about and/or training on Emotion Coaching, please [contact the Educational Psychology Service](#).

Principle Two: Discipline represents an opportunity to teach and nurture

Discipline (or step three and four of the Emotion Coaching framework) is most effective when instigated when a child is calm (Siegel and Payne Bryson, 2018). Key areas to consider when providing discipline to any child or young person include:

- What was the function of (i.e. the reason behind) the behaviour?
- What lesson do I want to teach in this moment?
- How can I best teach this lesson?

(Siegel and Payne Bryson, 2018)

Discipline also provides an opportunity to provide **constructive, specific, positive feedback**. Practice based evidence suggests that children and young people can make significant shifts in their behaviour as a result of specific verbal praise. Sometimes, ‘flipping the narrative’ from providing feedback on behaviour that is challenging to providing positive feedback (however small the behaviour warranting this feedback is), can be enough to re-motivate children and young people to attend to a task.

A note on consequences: Consequences are not seen as a central element of trauma informed approaches to behaviour. However, some children and young people benefit from having the opportunity to co-construct ideas for repairing a situation, alongside an adult. An emphasis should be placed on restoration, not punishment or blame, and should aim to reduce feelings of guilt in the child or young person.

Principle Three: We aim to understand the function behind a behaviour

Trauma informed approaches to behaviour aim to understand what a child or young person might be trying to say to us through their behaviour. Behaviour that challenges is not seen as a choice, but as being a communication of an unmet need. Staff using a trauma informed approach strive to understand the function behind a behaviour, rather than using rewards and consequences to promote/discourage behaviour that is desirable/undesirable to the member of staff.

Individuals who aim to understand the functions behind a behaviour generally tend to avoid descriptors that place judgement on surface-level behaviour, and instead focus on describing the underlying need. For example:

- **‘Attention seeking’** could be considered to describe the surface-level behaviour, but not the underlying need. Instead, **‘attachment needing’** might reframe the behaviour as being the function of an unmet need
- **‘Manipulative’** is another word that describes the surface-level behaviour, and has negative connotations within society. Instead, phrases such as **‘trying to find a way to have their needs met’** or **‘feeling insecure in their relationships with others’** might be more appropriate.

Principle Four: The child or young person is separate from their behaviour

Approaches to behaviour management that draw on trauma and attachment theory tend to advocate separating the child or young person from any behaviour that challenges. This can be achieved through the language used to describe the child and their behaviour, for example:

- Using **externalising language** around behaviour that challenges and separating the child from their behaviour, e.g. ‘The expectations are that we..., so we need to...’ (rather than saying ‘you need to’)
- Using **internalising language** around behaviour that meets school expectations or can be celebrated, and showing warmth towards the child or young person, e.g. ‘You were very thoughtful when you... so you did brilliantly at showing me our ‘be kind’ expectation’.

Often, children and young people who have received regular feedback on their behaviour can develop reputations amongst staff and other children/young people. **These reputations often relate entirely to their behaviour, and are often powerful, pervasive and dominating.** As staff, we can work to challenge these narratives by:

- **Talking to other staff about exceptions**, e.g. ‘Jay was so kind today when she...’ (N.B. it is important to talk about exceptions in a way that avoids isolating other staff members/avoids a ‘she behaves fine for me’ discussion)
- **Reinforcing an alternative identity**, e.g. ‘Zak, you’re my ICT expert, can you help me...’
- **Seeking opportunities to reinforce exceptions** in the classroom, e.g. ‘Sami, it was really kind of you to get a pencil for Jack as well as yourself’.

Young person: Because I made a name for myself, I had to be more aware of what I was doing. Because I’d be easily in trouble... *Watch* this one or summat.

They didn’t, get to know me for who I am not what I do... I was the er, the th- the tough guy in this school... but I didn’t, I didn’t want to picture like that.

(Ardern, 2016)

Principle Five: Routines help people to feel safe, but some children and young people need differentiation within an overall structure

Whilst consistency of approach is important for children and young people to feel safe and secure, it is also important to differentiate expectations and approach according to a child or young person’s abilities, needs and experiences. Whilst the majority of children and young people will

“Being ‘fair’ is not about everyone getting the same (equality) but about everyone getting what they need (equity).” (Brighton and Hove Council, 2018).

thrive when a whole school approach to behaviour is applied, some will need further support and intervention, and a few will require more intensive, individualised support. As such, behaviour policies should outline the different levels of support available dependent on the child or young person’s level of need. There is an example of a framework for documenting levels of support, available in the Sample Behaviour Policy (section 2.1, p. 22).

Any child or young person who is experiencing difficulties which are presenting through their behaviour should be considered in terms of whether they have Special Educational Needs (SEN). Staff should contact their Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) or Learning Support Manager to discuss whether a child or young person has SEN.

1.5 Using language that reflects trauma informed approaches

The language we use to describe children/young people and their behaviour can have a significant impact on classroom environments (Orsati and Causton-Theoharis, 2013). The section below provides some examples of language to avoid, and language that can be particularly helpful:

Language to avoid:

- **Language that reinforces staff control**, for example ‘enforce’, ‘punishment’, ‘rule’, ‘power’, ‘control’, ‘confiscate’, and ‘impose’
- **Language that places negative judgement on a child or young person or their behaviour**, including ‘malicious’, ‘choice’, ‘poor behaviour’, ‘misbehaviour’, ‘manipulative’, ‘naughty’
- **Language that reinforces negative gender stereotypes**, such as ‘naughty boy’, or ‘bossy girl’.

Language that can be particularly helpful:

- **Language that promotes trauma informed approaches and acknowledges the need behind a behaviour**, for example ‘emotionally dysregulated’, ‘flipped their lid’ (see [Dr Dan Siegel’s Hand Model of the Brain](#) for further information), ‘what is the function behind this behaviour?’ ‘attachment needing’, ‘feeling unsafe’, ‘presenting as distressed’.

1.6 Some more general tips

The following tips may be useful for schools and settings adopting a more trauma informed approach to behaviour management:

- Aim to **embed the principles into your values** so that all children/young people and staff are guided by them on a day to day basis, and so that they can be seen in action
- **Write scripts** for responding to behaviour that feels particularly challenging. Scripts should be used consistently by all staff who come into contact with a child, young person or group, and can be used at a whole setting level, group level, or to provide consistent differentiation for an individual
- **Aim to make day to day routines highly predictable.** Routines and predictability help everyone to feel safe
- Children and young people **can often think of restorative solutions or strategies for supporting changes to behaviour** when given the right tools. Conversations that avoid blame, take place when a child or young person is calm, and use visual prompts, can often help children and young people to think about what might help next time, or what they could do repair a situation
- Aim to maintain **consistently calm responses**
- **Involve pupils/students** in developing strategies to respond to whole setting issues (e.g. litter dropping).

1.7 Working with children and young people who have experienced trauma

Children and young people who have experienced trauma are much more likely than others to experience ‘toxic shame’. Toxic shame can be defined as an overwhelming and relentless sense of unworthiness, inadequacy, and self-disgust (Bomber, 2007, and Taransaud, 2011). Children and young people who

experience toxic shame are likely to find any form of discipline challenging, and may:

- Misinterpret well-intentioned or constructive feedback as being a personal attack against them
- Ruminates over/find it difficult to move on from discipline
- Find public discipline or praise difficult to tolerate (and demonstrate this through behaviour that challenges)
- Appear to 'hold a grudge' quickly
- Recreate the chaos they have experienced in their early life
- Need more time to calm down following an episode of distress, compared to children who do not experience toxic shame.

When working with children and young people who experience toxic shame, the following approaches may help:

- **Talking to the child or young person** about what helps, what they find difficult, looking at the setting's behaviour policy and developing a differentiated plan together
- **Avoiding public praise and discipline**
- Staff **taking extra time to build relationships** with/find out about the child or young person, and then taking time to ask them personal questions at the beginning of each lesson (e.g. 'Alex, how was gymnastics at the weekend?')
- **Using humour or personal interests** within discipline (e.g. 'Ahmed, did you see how focused Harry Kane was on that ball before he scored at the weekend? That's the level of focus I need to see from you for the next five minutes')
- **Using scripts**
- **Setting personalised behaviour targets** that are **easily achievable**
- **Referring to the child's individualised support plan** and having **regular discussions** with colleagues to **reflect** on what has been working well and make changes to scripts/approaches as required.

For further information about supporting children and young people who experience toxic shame, please talk to your SENCo or Learning Support Team in the first instance. The book '[Inside I'm Hurting](#)' (Bomber, 2007) may also be useful.

1.8 Respecting children's rights

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 1989) can be a useful resource for considering whether your approach to behaviour respects children's rights. Articles that may be particularly relevant when developing a trauma informed behaviour policy include:

- **Article 3:** The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children
- **Article 12:** Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously
- **Article 28:** Every child has the right to an education. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights
- **Article 29:** Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment
- **Article 37:** Children must not suffer other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment. They must be treated with respect and care, and be able to keep in contact with their family
- **Article 39:** Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

Settings (including Early Years and College settings) that are interested in embedding the UNCRC articles in their practice can work towards the [Rights Respecting Schools Award](#).

1.9 Looking after ourselves

Systemic changes within settings, and particularly those that require individuals to make significant investments in their relationships with others, are likely to have an emotional impact on staff. As a result, settings adopting a trauma informed approach should include strategies that aim to support the wellbeing of staff. Strategies could include:

- Having whole setting planning and review sessions to evaluate your approach and maintain a consistent shared ownership and implementation of the approach
- Ensuring staff use a solution focused model to reflect in pairs/small groups following a difficult event (e.g. using the 'Coping Debrief Following Major Incident' framework, p. 28)
- Considering the arrangement of regular reflective teams/support groups for staff working with children/young people who have needs that present regularly through their behaviour.

There are further resources for supporting staff mental health in Primary, Secondary, and Further Education settings available via the [Mental Health at Work](#) website.

1.10 How can City of York Council support your school/setting?

The Educational Psychology Service

City of York Council Educational Psychology Service can offer support to schools and settings wanting to embed a trauma informed approach to behaviour, including:

Using your Educational Psychology time allocation

- Providing consultation around supporting individual children using a trauma informed framework
- Acting as a critical friend to support you to evaluate your current behaviour policy and practice.

Commissioning training

Schools and settings can commission training from the Educational Psychology Service on:

- Emotion Coaching
- Developmental Trauma and Attachment
- Attachment Friendly Behaviour Policies
- The Education and Emotional Wellbeing of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

Please contact your setting's Educational Psychologist directly, or contact the team by [email](#), should you require any further information about the services outlined above.

The School Wellbeing Service

The School Wellbeing Service (SWS) offers consultation to schools and settings around children or young people who may have emerging emotional and mental health needs. Support provided by the SWS includes:

- **Universal support:** Delivery of whole school trauma informed approaches (e.g. the 'How to Calm your Meerkat' intervention), training related to mental health, and problem solving sessions for staff on topics related to mental health
- **Targeted support:** Direct work with children and young people with emerging emotional and mental health needs, and problem solving sessions around a specific child/young person

- **Specialist support:** Supporting settings to make with referrals to/communication with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, when appropriate.

Further information about the SWS, please visit [their section of the Yor-Ok website](#).

The Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care

The Virtual School for Children and Young People in Care is able to provide consultation and advice on supporting children and young people in care. In particular, the Virtual School Headteacher and the Virtual School Learning and Wellbeing Worker support Designated Teachers and other professionals to provide trauma informed practice and to enhance the educational experience of children and young people in care. Please contact the [Virtual School](#) for further information.

1.11 Feedback on this guidance

City of York Council Educational Psychology Service values the huge range of experience and knowledge of practitioners working in and alongside schools and settings, as well as family members, children and young people, and researchers in the field. We would welcome feedback on this guidance – if you would like to provide feedback please contact Dr Cathy Ardern (Educational Psychologist) via educational.psychology@york.gov.uk.

SECTION TWO: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



2.1 Sample behaviour policy

Sample School Behaviour Policy September 2019

Date for review: September 2020

1. Policy statement

Sample School strives to create a school community which is trauma informed. This trauma informed approach is embodied by our aspiration to build a nurturing, caring ethos which permeates our school environment. We have developed a behaviour policy which places relationships as the cornerstone for children/young people to thrive, both academically and in relation to their wellbeing.

2. Our aims

- To ensure that all members of the school community feel safe
- To encourage relationships between all members of the school community that facilitate effective learning
- To allow children/young people to develop a strong sense of morality that allows them to take on board the thoughts and feelings of others
- To teach children/young people how to communicate their thoughts and feelings in a way that would be beneficial in their adulthood.

3. Purpose of the behaviour policy

To provide guidance to staff and learners that can be:

- Easily understood and used
- Used to create and embed a nurturing, inclusive whole school ethos that reflects the aims of the policy
- Monitored and evaluated as part of a plan-do-review cycle, with input from children/young people, parents/carers and governors.

4. Relevant UNCRC articles

Sample School aims to promote the rights of children, as outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Articles that we particularly aim to promote through this behaviour policy include:

- **Article 3:** The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children
- **Article 12:** Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously
- **Article 28:** Every child has the right to an education. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights
- **Article 29:** Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment
- **Article 37:** Children must not suffer other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment. They must be treated with respect and care, and be able to keep in contact with their family
- **Article 39:** Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

Key components of our behaviour policy:

Three expectations:

- 1. We are ready to learn**
- 2. We are kind**
- 3. We are safe**

Differentiation:

We differentiate our behaviour policy as appropriate to meet the needs of all children/young people within our school community, in line with the Equality Act (2010).

A graduated response*:

We apply a graduated response to behaviour, in which we aim to recognise and respond to the needs being communicated by the behaviour.

Environmental consistency:

At Sample School, we recognise that consistency and routines help children and young people to feel safe. We aim to ensure that:

- All school staff have read the school's behaviour policy and feel confident in applying the policy
- We refer to the school expectations every time we provide feedback or discipline, in which we explain how a behaviour has/has not embodied these expectations
- All school staff are aware of the strategies being used to support individual children/young people with additional needs
- All school staff use Emotion Coaching to support children/young people's emotional needs and provide discipline.

We will provide feedback on your child's emotional wellbeing at parent meetings, but will also contact you immediately if we have any concerns about your child's wellbeing. We also place great value on feedback from parents/carers about the wellbeing of your child. If you have any concerns, or would like to provide feedback on our behaviour policy, please do not hesitate to contact {insert name/contact details here}.

How will staff behave?:

- We cherish and prioritise our relationships with children/young people and their families
- We will be consistently calm
- We will model the behaviour we wish to see
- We will always give children/young people a fresh start as required
- We will use Emotion Coaching principles to support children/young people, parents/carers and our colleagues.

Recognising behaviour that embodies our school expectations:

At Sample School, we recognise behaviour that embodies our school expectations by providing specific verbal feedback or other rewards. At the beginning of each year, all children/young people are asked to think about the types of rewards that might motivate them, and we attempt to honour these perspectives wherever possible.

Pupil/student transition:

Pupil/student transition (e.g. into or out of school, into the dining hall, from one classroom to another) should be considered carefully (DfE, 2016). At Sample School, we support pupil/student transition by:

- Greeting children/young people at the entrance to the classroom/school/dining hall
- Maintaining high staff levels during less structured times (e.g. breaks/lunch)
- Ensuring all children/young people know where to go to seek help if required
- Providing individual arrangements for children who find transitions particularly difficult (e.g. leaving the classroom before/after other children).

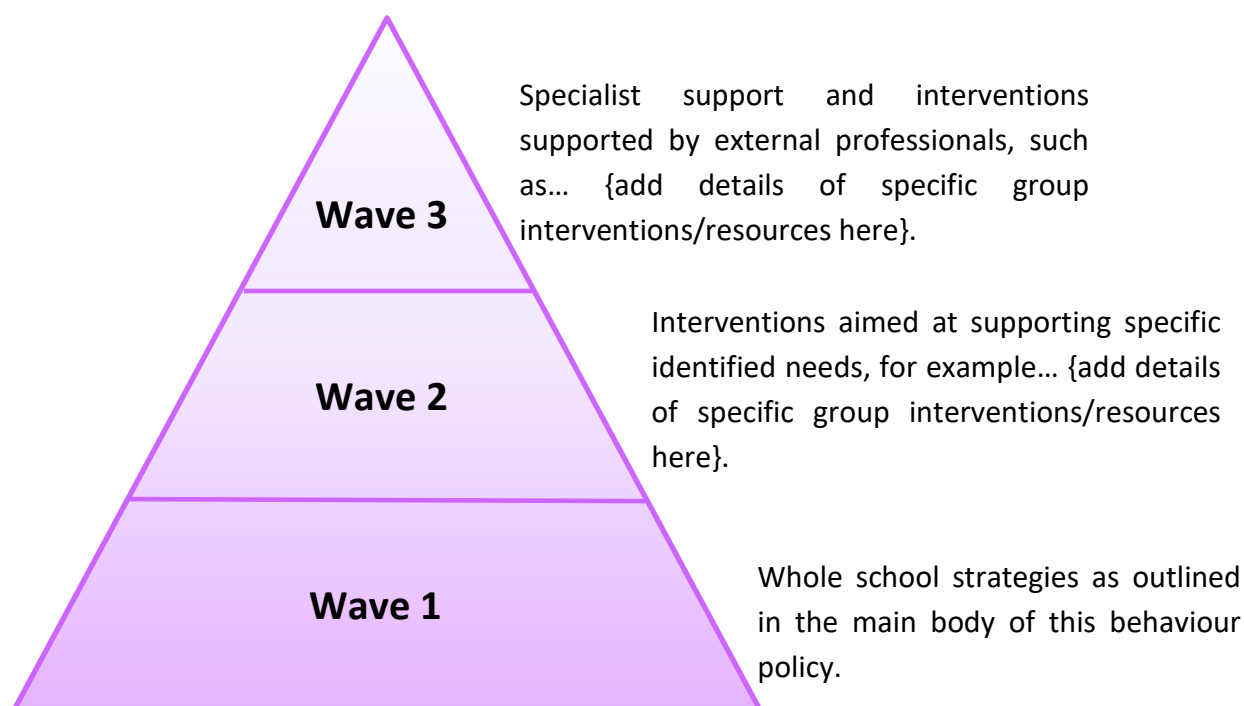
Engagement with parents/carers:

Sample School values parents/carers as experts.

Additional information:

*Further information on our graduated response

Children/young people have a wide range of individual needs which change over time. As such, children/young people require a flexible approach within an overall structure of consistency. Whilst we envisage that our Wave One behavioural approach (please see below) will be effective for the majority of children/young people at Sample School, some children/young people will require extra support in order for us to ensure an equitable school environment. A graduated response to behaviour allows staff to support children/young people according to their current level of need. The pyramid below provides some examples of support offered at each wave of our graduated response:



Children/young people will be provided with support based on their level of need. Given that Sample School views behaviour as a communication of need, frequent behaviour will be seen as an indication that level of support may need to be increased (e.g. a child receiving support at Wave One would begin to receive assessment and support at Wave Two). Decisions about the level of support required will always be made in consultation with the child or young person, their parents/carers and external professionals as appropriate.

Use of exclusion

Sample School recognises the potentially detrimental impact of exclusion and consequently avoids using any form of exclusion to respond to behaviour that challenges us. In order to avoid exclusions, we:

- Identify and meet the need being communicated through a behaviour at the earliest opportunity (rather than using sanctions to reduce the behaviour)
- Use restorative conversations alongside the child or young person to reflect on triggers, thoughts, feelings and what might help in the future
- Use a relational approach to behaviour management
- Using Emotion Coaching to provide co-regulation and to support a child or young person to understand their emotions.

On the rare occasions that exclusion is used, we will:

- Maintain contact with the child or young person and their family throughout the process (e.g. telephoning the child or young person at the beginning and end of each day, to check how they are doing and how the work they have been set is going)
- Use Restorative Practice to structure reintegration meetings and reduce blame
- Hold a restorative group for staff involved in supporting the child or young person
- Place the child or young person's (and parent's/carer's) voice at the heart of each step of the process.

Allegations against school staff

The Department for Education (2016) requires that school behaviour policies *“set out the disciplinary action that will be taken against pupils who are found to have made malicious accusations against school staff”*. In line with our trauma informed approach to behaviour management, any accusations made against school staff would be interpreted on an individual basis, with staff, the child or young person and parents/carers working together to understand the possible functions of this behaviour. In addition, a Restorative Practice based

approach (e.g. a restorative conference) would be used in order to repair relationships between the child or young person and the staff member, whilst aiming to avoid eliciting shame in the child or young person. The member of staff involved would also be provided with access to emotional support from staff on a more private basis, and/or counselling if required.

2.2 COPING debrief for staff following major incident

Date of incident.....

Date of debrief.....

Staff Members involved.....

	✓	Notes and Agreed Action
Control: Check staff feel able to discuss incident at this stage. Ensure staff feel supported and ready to engage in this session.		
Orient to the facts: Each staff member gives their account of how they perceived what actually happened.		
Patterns: Previous incident forms for this student are reviewed looking for patterns. Examine patterns of effective and less effective staff responses with this student.		
Investigate: Look at alternative responses which staff could try in these circumstances and any resources which could help		
Negotiate: Come to agreement about what the plan is for future incidents, and who will do what, in the light of what has been learnt from this and previous incidents.		
Give: Support and encouragement given to member of staff.		

(Adapted from the NonViolent Crisis Intervention Programme © 2005 Crisis Prevention Institute Inc, and with thanks to Derbyshire County Council Educational Psychology Service)

2.3 Examples of support that could be offered as part of a graduated response

The strategies below were compiled by City of York Council Designated Teachers for children and young people in care and Educational Psychologists.

Wave one: Whole class strategies

- [Whole school staff training](#) via the Educational Psychology Service e.g. on developmental trauma and attachment, executive function, Emotion Coaching, trauma informed behaviour policies and approaches, loss and bereavement
- Identification of and preparation for specific triggers for an individual (e.g. particular times of the year, visits to birth family, transitions from one activity to another, less structured activities)
- Positive feedback that is tailored to ensure it is relevant and tolerable to the individual
- Use of Emotion Coaching
- Staff support systems, e.g. reflective/solution focused planning sessions, debriefing sessions
- Application of approaches and principles as documented within this guidance
- [Nurturing classrooms/schools](#)
- Developmental trauma and attachment champions (staff within school who have responsibility for developing staff knowledge and promoting attachment/trauma friendly approaches)
- Use of models such as the [Secure Base Model](#) to audit the purpose of interventions currently in place and evaluate whether the focus of intervention needs to change
- Use of strategies documented in trauma and attachment publications. **There are lots of additional wave one strategies** in online resources by [Beacon House](#) and [Inner World](#) and books by authors such as [Louise Bomber](#) and [Heather Geddes](#).

Wave two: Interventions aimed at supporting specific identified needs

Wave one interventions plus (where appropriate):

- Direct work from an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) – N.B. ELSAs have sessions on developmental trauma and attachment, nurturing classrooms and bereavement as part of their training
- The [School Wellbeing Service](#) offer support around emerging mental health needs that may be underpinned by developmental trauma and/or attachment based needs
- Ensuring children/young people have access to (and are aware of) spaces that they feel safe in during less structured times of day (e.g. lunch club)
- Life story work for children and young people in care and adopted children
- Support from the [Virtual School Learning and Wellbeing Worker](#) for children and young people in care
- Online support e.g. via the [Kooth](#) app/website (an online counselling and wellbeing platform)
- Regular reviewing of strategies to ensure they are being implemented consistently and are supporting the child/young person effectively
- Use of resources specifically designed for supporting children with developmental trauma and attachment based needs (e.g. resources/books developed by [Karen Treisman](#))
- Use of targeted assessment and intervention planning tools, e.g. the [Boxall Profile](#)
- Working with the child or young person to reflect on their feelings and identify triggers/strategies, and develop plans for support (e.g. using resources such as [The Incredible Five Point Scale](#), [The Zones of Regulation](#), and [A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Grounding, Soothing and Regulating Cards](#)).

Wave three: Specialist support and interventions supported by external professionals

Waves one and two interventions, plus (where appropriate):

- [Limetrees Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services](#) (CAMHS) offer specialist assessment and treatment of serious mental health problems and associated risks in young people under the age of 18 years
- The [Educational Psychology Service](#) – direct casework
- Therapy for children and young people in care (commissioned by Social Care) or adopted children/children under Special Guardianship Orders (commissioned by the [Post-Adoption Support Team](#)) with significant developmental trauma or attachment based needs, including Chrysalis, play therapy and art therapy
- Support from charities (e.g. the [NSPCC](#), [IDAS](#), mentoring and group work via [The Island](#)).

2.4 Poster summary of trauma informed behaviour approaches

The poster on the following page provides a summary of trauma informed behaviour approaches. It could be printed onto A3 paper and displayed in a public place (e.g. a staff room).

Trauma Informed School Behaviour Principles

What is a trauma informed approach?

Trauma informed schools tend to:

- Place **relationships and a child or young person's sense of safety and security at the heart of classroom management**
- Encourage **nurture, warmth and empathy**, even when a child or young person is presenting with behaviours that feel challenging
- Promote a **sense of community and belonging**
- Take **individual circumstances** into account.

Some suggested principles:

Principle One: Relationships, empathy and feeling safe take precedent over other means of discipline

What this means: Prioritising relationships, empathy and feeling safe above behaviour management principles (e.g. consequences). Using an approach such as **Emotion Coaching** to ensure these areas are consistently prioritised during interactions.

Principle Two: Discipline represents an opportunity to teach and nurture

What this means: Considering the **function** of (i.e. the reason behind) the behaviour, what **lesson** you want to teach in the moment, and **how best** to teach this lesson.

Principle Three: We aim to understand the function behind a behaviour

What this means: **Understanding** and **meeting the need** behind the behaviour, rather than using rewards and consequences to promote/discourage behaviour. Using language that reflects the need, e.g. **'attachment needing' not 'attention seeking'**.

Principle Four: The child or young person is separate from their behaviour

What this means: **Reinforcing** that the child is separate from their behaviour, e.g. by using **externalising language** around behaviour that challenges, e.g. 'The expectations are that we..., so we need to...' (rather than saying 'you need to'), using **internalising language** around behaviour that can be celebrated, e.g. 'You were very thoughtful when you... so you did brilliantly at showing me our 'be kind' expectation'.

Principle Five: Routines help people to feel safe, but some children and young people need differentiation within an overall structure

What this means: Differentiating expectations and approach according to a child or young person's abilities, needs and experiences.

Emotion Coaching Steps:

- Step 1** Recognising the child's feelings and empathising with them
- Step 2** Labelling the feelings and validating them
- Step 3** Setting limits on behaviour (if needed)
- Step 4** Problem-solving with the child

Who benefits from a trauma informed approach?

Research suggests that ALL children benefit:

*"When schools place a **strong emphasis upon the emotional health and well-being of all members of the school community**, and this ethos is **driven by the school's senior leadership team** and is evident in practice, this leads to **better outcomes for all**"* (Banerjee, Weare, and Farr, 2014, in Brighton and Hove Council, 2018)

"Being 'fair' is not about everyone getting the same (equality) but about everyone getting what they need (equity)." (Brighton and Hove Council, 2018).

2.5 Requirements of behaviour policies

The requirements of behaviour policies are outlined by the departmental advice '[Behaviour and Discipline in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff](#)' (Department for Education, 2016). This advice states that:

“Maintained schools

The headteacher must set out measures in the behaviour policy which aim to:

- *Promote good behaviour, self-discipline and respect*
- *Prevent bullying*
- *Ensure that pupils complete assigned work*

and which

- *Regulate the conduct of pupils.”*

p. 4

The advice also states that:

“In developing the behaviour policy, the headteacher should reflect on the following ten key aspects of school practice that, when effective, contribute to improving the quality of pupil behaviour:

1. *A consistent approach to behaviour management*
2. *Strong school leadership*
3. *Classroom management*
4. *Rewards and sanctions*
5. *Behaviour strategies and the teaching of good behaviour*
6. *Staff development and support*
7. *Pupil support systems*
8. *Liaison with parents and other agencies*
9. *Managing pupil transition; and*
10. *Organisation and facilities.*

The school’s behaviour policy should set out the disciplinary action that will be taken against pupils who are found to have made malicious accusations against school staff.

The behaviour policy should acknowledge the school’s legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, in respect of safeguarding and in respect of pupils with special educational needs (SEN).”

p. 5-6

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