

# Fostering a positive, inclusive and safe school environment

Guidance



Fairness

Equality

Respect

Inclusion



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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# Ministerial foreword



Evidence shows that the majority of Scotland's children and young people behave well in our schools and the majority of children also report feeling safe in school. This is important.

However, the last few years have seen disruption and uncertainty for children and young people, with challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic impacting children across the world and the cost-of-living crisis impacting families in Scotland and the UK. Given the impact this has had on young people's relationships at school, their mental health, and their social and emotional development, it is unsurprising that the structured demands of the school day have been challenging for some pupils.

I do not shy away from the reality that staff report more disruptive behaviour and disengagement from learning than before the pandemic. I have listened to teachers, support staff and teaching unions who have shared their experiences with me and I am clear that schools and teachers must be better supported to tackle disruptive behaviour. And while the pandemic does not entirely explain the changes in behaviour, it has had an undeniable effect.

The impact of incidents of disruptive behaviour are felt throughout a school community. A young person being disruptive in class is not able to learn. Their classmates' learning is disrupted. School staff are diverted from teaching to support the child or young person causing the disruption. When faced with the most serious dysregulation, the young person themselves, their peers or school staff can be placed at risk.

We know the evidence clearly shows young people need structure and boundaries to support their development and having predictable consequences helps young people to feel safe. We therefore serve our young people best by applying high standards and expectations in order to support positive relationships and behaviour in schools.

Consequences are an important tool for schools to help reinforce these boundaries and expectations, and with the publication of the Joint Relationships and Behaviour in Schools Action Plan last year, the Government has committed to working with Local Government to improve behaviour in Scotland's schools. The actions that schools use in response to a child or young person's behaviour can provide positive reinforcement where expectations are met or exceeded, or can support young people whose behaviour is not in line with their school's values or expectations in a way that reduces the likelihood of this behaviour occurring in future.

I am clear that schools can take the steps necessary to foster a positive, inclusive and safe school environment. Identifying which response is appropriate, quite rightly, is a matter for teachers' professional judgement, informed by an understanding of the needs of individual children and young people who they know, and the particular circumstances surrounding the incident in question.

However, it is clear from my extensive engagement with our school workforce that staff want more guidance to support their responses to young people's behaviour. This guidance is a direct response to that ask.

I want to be clear that staff have a range of consequences open to them. This ranges from classroom management approaches, to the use of exclusion as a last resort, where this approach is proportionate and there is no appropriate alternative.

This guidance should be read alongside other key pieces of guidance on relationships and behaviour in schools. This includes our national guidance on exclusion, on restraint and seclusion, and on risk assessment for violent, aggressive and dangerous behaviour. Underpinning all these approaches is our commitment to Getting it Right For Every Child and to the UNCRC.

Our schools and school staff cannot promote positive relationships and behaviour alone. It requires all members of a school's wider community – staff, children and young people and parents and carers – to work together to identify the values that underpin school life, how this translates into expectations of behaviour, and to support appropriate responses.

This guidance has been agreed by the Scottish Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in schools, and this demonstrates a collective commitment to the principles of the guidance. As local authorities have statutory responsibility for delivering education, it will be key for the Scottish Government and COSLA to work together to support the implementation of the guidance.

At its core, this guidance is about improving outcomes for our young people. By helping children to understand boundaries and consequences we are giving them skills for life and enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.

**Jenny Gilruth MSP**

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

## Executive summary – key messages

- A school culture rooted in shared values, clear expectations, and consistent practice is foundational to creating a positive, inclusive and safe environment for all members of a school community.
- All approaches to behaviour should be underpinned by a commitment to upholding and promoting children's rights, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as well as protecting the rights of others, such as staff.
- Responses to children should always be in line with a school's relationships and behaviour policy. This policy should promote positive relationships and behaviour, based on early intervention and prevention and set within the framework of early intervention and prevention, as set out within Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC).
- A school's relationships and behaviour policy should detail its approach to responding when a child needs support with their behaviour. Understanding the school's context is key: approaches should reflect the unique needs and challenges of the school community and be embedded within a clear, accessible and understood relationships and behaviour policy, developed collaboratively with staff, children and young people and families.
- 'Consequences' are an essential part of a supportive learning environment. They are about reinforcing expectations and boundaries, promoting responsibility, and helping children and young people learn prosocial skills that allow them to actively contribute to and benefit from their school community.
- Engagement with children and young people, staff and parents<sup>1</sup> is vital to ensure understanding of expectations, consistency in application, and buy-in for implementation and developing a sense of collective responsibility. In an empowered school system, this should include the co-development of policies to ensure they are informed by the experiences and perspectives of the whole school community.
- Consistency in approach does not mean the same response should be used for every child or in every situation. There should be consistent expectations and boundaries, however, the response when expectations are not met may be different to reflect a child's specific needs and circumstances.
- Approaches to expectations should be inclusive and reflective of the diversity of age and developmental stages across the school community and framed in such a way that ensures children and young people are able to meet them, particularly those who may be disadvantaged or face barriers linked to a protected characteristic.
- Schools have a range of consequences available to them. In line with the national policy on exclusion, 'Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2', this includes up to and including exclusion as a last resort, where this approach is proportionate and there is no appropriate alternative.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the term 'parent(s)' will be used to apply to anyone with parental responsibility, including carer(s) and guardians, those providing a foster or residential placement, corporate parents, or the education authority where full parental responsibility rests with them.

- The focus for responses should be on addressing a young person's behaviour in a way that reduces the likelihood of negative behaviour occurring in future, or which reinforces positive behaviour and makes it more likely to occur in future. The emphasis should be on improving outcomes and ensuring positive and appropriate support is in place for all, including staff and other children and young people as appropriate.
- Effective support for children and young people often requires:
  1. action in the moment to ensure a safe and respectful learning environment by addressing behaviour as it occurs
  2. identifying underlying needs contributing to behaviour in order to put in place appropriate support for children and young people to support long-term change
- Schools should take a holistic view – identifying and addressing underlying needs through staged interventions, needs assessments and, where appropriate, multi-agency support, such as health and social work.



# Section 1: Introduction

## Purpose

This non-statutory guidance aims to support schools to foster a positive, inclusive and safe school environment through their approaches to positive relationships and behaviour. In particular, it provides clarity to all members of a school community – staff, parents and children and young people – on the use of consequences as part of relationships and behaviour policies. This guidance aligns with the [national policy on promoting positive relationships and behaviour](#), which is underpinned by evidence<sup>2</sup> that this is the most effective way of supporting children and young people’s wellbeing, achievement and attainment.

While this guidance is primarily aimed at public schools and education authorities, it may also be of interest to independent and grant-aided schools. This guidance does not apply to Early Learning and Childcare settings, including those that are located within schools.

## Why has this guidance been developed?

The [Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research \(BISSR\) 2023](#) highlighted that whilst the majority of children and young people are well behaved, there were concerns around the approaches available in school<sup>3</sup> to respond constructively to children and young people’s behaviour in order to ensure positive learning environments for all.

- Staff and local authority representatives reported that they felt there were a lack of meaningful consequences available.
- A ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy often fails to address the needs of children and young people with challenging circumstances or additional support needs.
- Staff reported the limited availability of alternative strategies when others prove ineffective. A lack of consistency in school-wide approaches, and limited opportunities for collaborative working and sharing practice, could lead to variations in approach within schools.
- Teachers’ confidence in their ability to ‘promote positive behaviour’ and ‘respond to indiscipline’ in the classroom remained high, although confidence in responding to indiscipline had decreased since the survey was last undertaken in 2016.
- There was a mismatch between the support local authority representatives identified as being available to schools, and the support schools reported receiving.
- There was inconsistent confidence in support from the senior leadership team, from both support staff and teachers’ perspectives.

<sup>2</sup> [Positive Relationships: Evidence Based Practice across the World | SpringerLink and \(PDF\) ‘Positive Relationships’ and their impact on wellbeing: A review of current literature](#)

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this document the term ‘school’ refers specifically to educational settings in Scotland, including primary and secondary schools, special schools, education within secure care settings, and alternative provision, but excluding Early Learning and Childcare settings, as well as further and higher education settings.



- Many staff reported that with children and young people being increasingly aware of their rights, this positive shift can sometimes lead to children and young people incorrectly citing or exercising rights to the exclusion of others where rights conflict or are incompatible.

BISSR highlighted the complex picture underpinning the trends in behaviour, including the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and other pressures such as austerity, poverty and the cost-of living crisis have had on mental health and wellbeing; and an increase in the number of children and young people identified with additional support needs.

Being out of school and early years settings during the pandemic has had a profound developmental impact on our children and young people. It has changed the type of learning we see in our settings, and it has altered relationships between settings, school and home, which are usually built over time and with consistent expectations. This guidance is therefore designed to support schools to reinforce approaches to promoting positive relationships and behaviour that take account of the wider needs of all children and young people.

## Policy and legal context

This guidance is underpinned by a legal framework which includes:

- UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
- Education (Scotland) Act 1980
- Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000
- Equality Act 2010

This guidance is set within the framework of early intervention and prevention, as set out within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). It should be considered in the context of Scottish education's focus on wellbeing and relational and rights-based practice. This practice includes nurturing, attachment-based, and trauma-informed approaches. The paper [Nurture, adverse childhood experiences and trauma informed practice: making the links](#) provides evidence on the effectiveness, and benefits of using these approaches, to build social and emotional competences and confidence and to improve educational outcomes.

Where children and young people feel included, respected, safe and secure and when their achievements and contributions are valued and celebrated, they are more likely to develop self-confidence, resilience and positive views about themselves and others. This has positive impacts on behaviour.

Responses to behaviour should always be in line with a school's relationships and behaviour policy. This policy should promote positive relationships and behaviour, based on early intervention and prevention. Responding to behaviour through the use of appropriate consequences should form an element of this policy.

This guidance should also be read in conjunction with specific policies relating to relationships and behaviour in schools, principally:

- [Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: preventing and managing school exclusions](#);
- [Included, Engaged and Involved Part 3: A Relationships and Rights-based Approach to Physical Intervention in Schools](#);
- [Violent, Aggressive and Dangerous Behaviour Risk Assessment Guidance](#);
- [Respect for All – Anti-bullying guidance for adults working with children and young people](#); and
- [The Promise](#).

These documents provide more detailed guidance for schools on these specific areas.

### Further support

This guidance is supported by Education Scotland's [Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities professional learning framework](#), in particular the Relationships theme. Education Scotland also have a range of [other resources to support schools to implement positive relationships and behaviour](#). A series of case studies has also been developed to accompany this guidance.

Further information can be found in the resources section.

## Section 2: The use of consequences in school

### Why is setting boundaries for children and young people important?

Children and young people's behaviour is shaped by their stage of development, life experiences, family culture, individual needs and socio-economic circumstances in which they live. Children and young people will also be trying to make sense of potentially complex societal issues and social influences. They are undergoing rapid social, emotional and cognitive development, with executive functions such as reasoning, long-term planning and impulse control still developing throughout childhood and adolescence. All these factors will influence the way that children and young people behave and communicate their needs, and may result in dysregulated behaviour.

Setting boundaries for children and young people, and ensuring they understand them, is fundamental to healthy child development. They provide structure and security, helping children and young people to navigate social interactions and build essential skills for life, learning, and work as they move into adulthood. Supporting children and young people to learn to behave well is also a key part of promoting wellbeing, as outlined in the [GIRFEC wellbeing indicators](#). Therefore, age and developmentally appropriate expectations for behaviour should be set, particularly where this impacts on other children and young people and adults within the school community.

Guidance on creating a whole-school approach to values-based boundaries and expectations can be found in section 3.

### What do we mean by 'consequences' in a school context?

Consequences are an important tool to help reinforce boundaries and expectations.

In this guidance, the term 'consequences' refers to the actions or interventions implemented in response to a child or young person's behaviour.

While these are often thought of as the actions or interventions taken in response to behaviour that falls below expectations, they can also be a response that reinforces positive behaviour and the meeting or exceeding of shared expectations.

The use of consequences where behaviour does not meet expectations is about addressing the young person's behaviour and supporting them in a way that reduces the likelihood of the behaviour occurring in future. This means approaches will often be tied to understanding the underlying drivers of a young person's behaviour, and taking separate, supportive action to address related needs.

The use of consequences to strengthen positive behaviour and make it more likely to occur in future is called reinforcement.

This guidance will refer to both 'responses' and 'consequences' throughout. The use of consequences within this guidance should therefore be interpreted as focusing on the response to support a child or young person.

A table of illustrative examples of consequences can be found at Appendix 1.

## How do consequences support children and young people's development?

When applied consistently, equitably and as part of a school's wider approach to relationships and behaviour, consequences can positively influence children and young people's outcomes, including social and emotional development, learning, and long-term behaviour. They can also help maintain a safe, supportive and happier learning environment for all. Conversely, inconsistent or punitive approaches can lead to disengagement, exacerbating inequalities, and can negatively impact wellbeing.

Constructive, logical, predictable and developmentally appropriate responses and interventions can help children to feel safe, to understand the impact of their actions, and to learn how to respond differently. The goal is therefore not just to uphold values and expectations, but to promote responsibility, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills.

## Use of consequences in schools

National policy emphasises the importance of promoting positive relationships and behaviour. Consequences are an essential part of a supportive learning environment and should be integral to a relationships and behaviour policy.

All children have the right to learn, and staff have the right to work, in a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment. Local authorities and schools have a responsibility to uphold these rights and ensure a secure, respectful learning and working environment for everyone.

Developing effective responses that promote good relationships and positive behaviour in the classroom/learning space, playground and wider community is essential for creating a learning and teaching environment, where all children feel secure, valued, and supported in their development. Helping children understand boundaries and consequences supports the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence – enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.

Schools have a range of consequences available to them. Section 5 of this document provides guidance around identifying appropriate consequences. Appendix 1 sets out illustrative examples of consequences and Appendix 2 provides reflective questions to support decision making around consequences. In line with the national policy on exclusion, 'Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2', this includes up to and including exclusion as a last resort, where this approach is proportionate and there is no appropriate alternative.

## The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

All members of a school community have rights that intersect and interact in different ways at different times. This is particularly pronounced in situations where a child or young person's behaviour is impacting negatively upon the rights, safety or wellbeing of others and an intervention is required to address this behaviour. In such circumstances, determining what response is appropriate may require consideration of the rights of all children and young people who may be having their learning disrupted, the needs and rights of the child or young person who is displaying the behaviour and the rights of staff, who have the right to work safely, in an environment free from violence and aggression.

Section 5 of the guidance highlights how the application of these different rights should inform decision making. However, an important principle is that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) does not preclude the use of consequences. Article 28, read with article 29,<sup>4</sup> highlights that in the context of a child's right to education, approaches to discipline must respect a child's human dignity and promote non-violence. A school must respond to behaviour in a way that respects a child's dignity.<sup>5</sup>

## Child-centred approach

Every child or young person is unique, and they will not all respond to the same consequence in the same way. In determining the appropriate response to a child or young person's behaviour, schools should adopt a child-centred approach specific to the individual child or young person in line with the school's relationships and behaviour policy.

However, taking a child-centred approach does not mean that for some children or young people's behaviour should go unchallenged or unaddressed. As set out in section 4, it is important for schools to develop consistent expectations and boundaries for behaviour, and that these expectations apply to all children and young people. However, the way in which a school might respond to and support a young person who is struggling to meet these expectations, may be different depending on a child or young person's specific needs and circumstances.

In particular, there are legal frameworks around care-experienced young people and children and young people with additional support needs that will need to be taken into consideration when determining the appropriate intervention to be put in place.

<sup>4</sup> [General-Comment-1.pdf](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Dignity in School - Children's Parliament](#)

## Section 3: Frameworks supporting whole-school approaches

### Developing a school's approach to consequences

In line with the Scottish Government's commitment to creating safe and nurturing school environments, the national approach to relationships and behaviour in schools is focused on prevention and de-escalation of concerns.

In framing their behaviour policies, schools should prioritise approaches that address behaviour through understanding positive relationships and intervention. Within this context staff should be supported to develop a clear understanding of their school's relationships and behaviour policy, and the arrangements for responding to different types of behaviour including de-escalation and the support that can be provided to them where situations do escalate.

A school's approach to consequences should therefore sit within the context of its relationship and behaviour policy, and broader efforts to support young people's engagement in their learning, including an inclusive curriculum that supports high quality teaching and learning.

Adopting a policy-based approach increases the predictability and consistency of responses, which is important for all members of the school community, including staff, children and young people and parents. Responding to unmet expectations is more equitable when the approach taken is predictable and consistent for all children and young people.

All schools should have a relationships and behaviour policy,<sup>6</sup> in line with their local authority policy, that includes:

- a collaborative development process, involving children and young people, staff, parents, and the wider school community, in creating, revising and updating the policy as required (this should reflect the school's individual context, and have the support of the school community)
- a clear articulation and communication of behaviour expectations, ensuring a shared understanding among the school community
- a structured approach to responding when expectations are not met, outlining supportive interventions and appropriate responses, and processes for escalation
- clear expectations around prejudice-based behaviour, including how the school will respond to incidents, report and record them, and identify and monitor patterns, in line with relevant policy guidance
- regular review and updates, ensuring the policy remains relevant, effective and reflective of the school's evolving needs, led by professional judgement, collegiate dialogue, youth voice and data analysis

<sup>6</sup> Education Scotland Guidance developed with Headteachers – [Guidance for developing a local relationships and behaviour policy](#)



- genuine accessibility for all, with the policy readily available, through various channels, to ensure transparency and ease of reference, including families facing barriers such as digital, socio-economic or disability related barriers, for example

The school's policy should be supported by operational guidance which should provide staff with information on how to apply interventions, planned approaches, agreed classroom/learning space strategies and staged responses to escalating behaviour.

Education Scotland have resources available on their [website](#) to support schools to develop a local relationships and behaviour policy, including an [exemplar policy and operational guidance](#).

## Role of local authorities

Local authorities have a responsibility to uphold the rights of children young people while ensuring staff can work in a safe and supportive environment. This includes offering guidance and support to school staff.

Local authorities should develop an authority-wide policy and response to relationships and behaviour in schools. This includes:

- developing authority-wide relationships and behaviour policies, and exclusion policies, that should inform school-based approaches
- establishing procedures for the consistent reporting, recording and monitoring of incidents
- ensuring robust risk assessment protocols are in place for managing violence, aggression, and harmful behaviour in schools, and that these are regularly reviewed
- monitoring data on reported incidents and using this to tailor their support and training offers to schools
- supporting schools to implement appropriate risk mitigation strategies tailored to individual circumstances, and
- providing training and resources that enable staff to respond confidently and appropriately

There may be a variety of other support that local authorities can offer schools, including:

- networks, regular meetings and consultations to promote the sharing of good practice (monthly meetings with headteachers; termly school cluster meetings; consultations with teachers and parents; behaviour working groups)
- developing, updating and disseminating guidance and policies through curriculum networks, working groups
- providing training, specific support and engagement for individuals or a whole school in response to school's specific needs
- building staff capacity and confidence
- signposting to support; advice on debriefing after incidents; provision of confidential support lines for staff, counselling etc
- staged models of interventions



- provision of alternative learning support, enhanced support provision – specialist and targeted intervention
- risk assessments, health and safety assessments, environmental audits

Local authorities should seek to engage with their schools to understand how they could support them. Schools can also contact local authorities for advice regarding appropriate responses (see [processes for escalation](#)).

## Parental engagement

Working in partnership with parents is essential to promoting positive relationships and behaviour. When schools and families collaborate, children benefit from consistent messages, shared understanding, and joined-up support. Parents play a vital role in reinforcing expectations, modelling behaviour, and supporting their child. Schools should be clear that there is an expectation for parents to support the school's approach to promoting positive behaviour and upholding agreed consequences.

Positive engagement with parents should be proactive, respectful, and inclusive. This includes:

- working collaboratively with parents to develop the school's values, expectations and relationships and behaviour policy
- sharing clear and accessible information about school expectations and what happens when expectations are not met, and when they are met or exceeded
- involving parents early when concerns about a child or young person's needs or behaviour arise
- recognising and valuing the insight parents have into their child's needs and circumstances, including relevant triggers and effective strategies
- ensuring communication is culturally appropriate

While schools play a central role, parents also have a responsibility to promote positive relationships and behaviour in support of the school's approach. Expectations of a child or young person's behaviour at school may differ from those at home. Schools are highly structured environments, with specific routines that are designed to support the learning and wellbeing of all children and young people. While a behaviour might be acceptable at home, it may not be appropriate in a learning setting. Explaining these differences clearly – and why they matter – helps parents understand the rationale behind the approach. It is the responsibility of both school staff and parents to help children navigate these differences.

This shared responsibility is most effective when underpinned by mutual trust, transparency, and commitment to the child or young person's best interests. Schools must also be mindful that there may sometimes be barriers to constructive parental engagement in response to the school's approach to relationships and behaviour. This may relate to the parent's own experiences of education, differing perceptions of the behaviour, or challenges at home. Where there is resistance, it is important to take an empathetic approach, maintaining open and respectful dialogue. Listening to concerns and involving parents in the approach can help build trust and encourage shared responsibility.

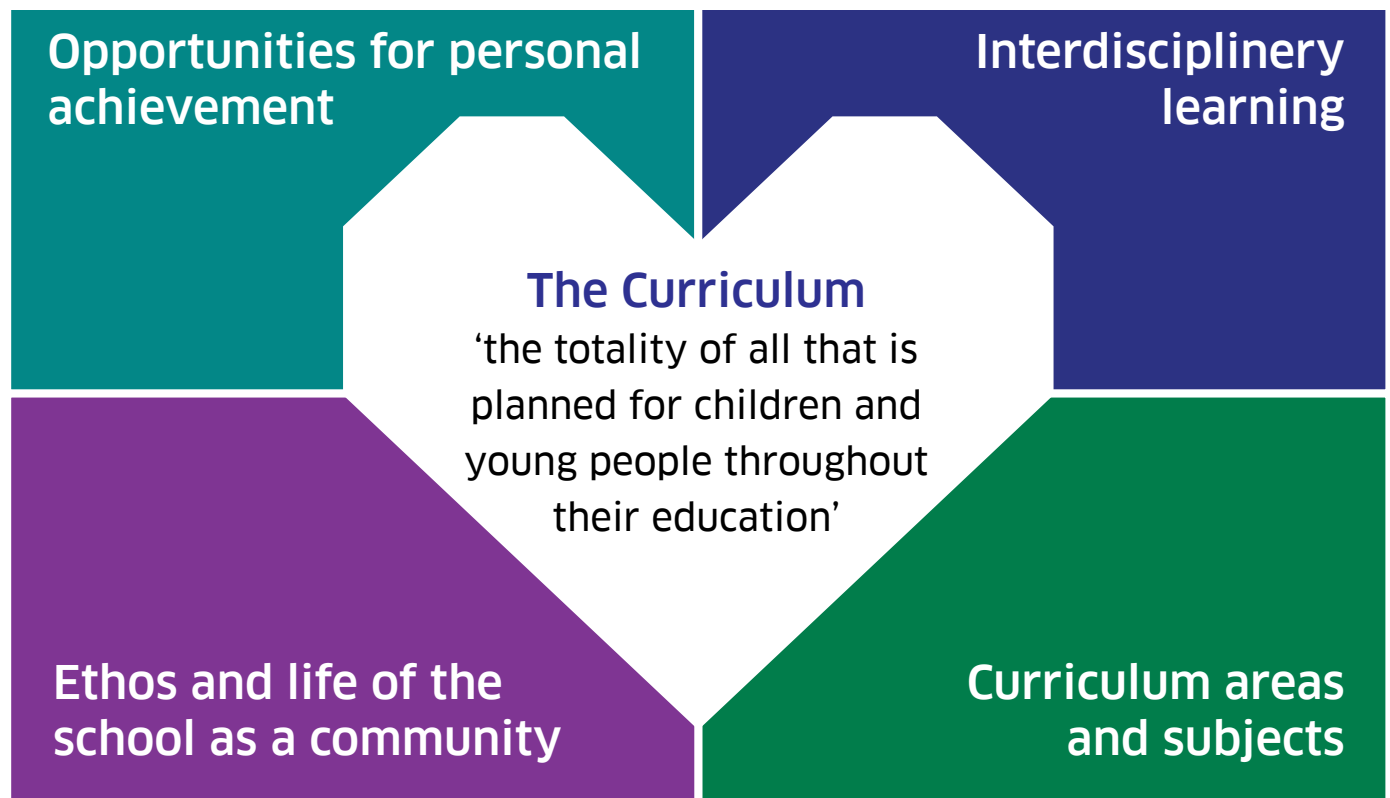
In cases where consequences are applied, engaging parents in restorative conversations or follow-up discussions ensures they understand the reasons for the response and how it links to their child's support. A strong school-home relationship is key to effective behaviour support and long-term positive outcomes.

## Section 4: Creating a culture of positive relationships and behaviour

The foundation of any school's approach to supporting a child or young person is a school's culture and ethos to positive relationships and behaviour.

### Values, climate and belonging

Evidence shows that a focus on fostering an inclusive, relationally rich school ethos is likely to impact positively on behaviour.



In Scotland the ethos and life of the school as a community is an integral part of the curriculum. It is the responsibility of all staff to proactively promote positive relationships and behaviour in the classroom/learning space, playground and the wider school community.

In order to develop skills such as positively participating in groups, acquiring and developing social skills and being able to manage their own emotional regulation, children and young people need strong, trusting relationships, to feel known by the adults and peers in their school, and opportunities to acquire and develop such skills through modelling, planned experiences and learning. This also involves clear expectations, consistent routines and boundaries, effective responses and opportunities to learn from their behaviour. This provides the structure that allows them to acquire and develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. In doing so, it supports their growth as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors – the four capacities of the curriculum.

Educational settings should be able to clearly articulate their core values and translate these values into expectations around behaviour. Priority should always be given to health, safety, wellbeing and systems that promote positive behaviour in line with agreed expectations. There should be a direct link between values and expectations.

## Developing a whole school ethos

A strong ethos begins with a set of cohesive values that reflect the identity and aspirations of the learning community. To ensure that schools' approaches to responding to behaviour support this ethos effectively, schools should adopt a structured approach based on clear values, expectations and consistent application.

## Identifying values

To develop an effective approach to relationships and behaviour, schools should first determine their core values that underpin their approach. These values should be:

- meaningful and relevant to the particular context, ensuring they are understood and agreed across the school community
- developed collaboratively with children and young people, staff and parents to foster shared ownership and commitment
- clearly communicated so that everyone understands their significance and how they shape the culture and approach to behaviour
- embedded and reinforced in daily practice to ensure modelling, consistency and clear link to expectations and responses

Schools should regularly reflect on how well these values are shaping their culture and practice. This includes using self-evaluation processes such as:

- analysing behaviour data to identify patterns, trends or areas that require additional focus through self-evaluation mechanisms, such as HGIOS4
- conducting surveys or consultations with children and young people, staff and parents to gather diverse perspectives
- engaging the wider school community in ongoing dialogue about how values are lived and experienced within the school environment

Values should be regularly reviewed and adapted in response to what is working, what is changing, and the evolving needs of the school community.

## Translating values into expectations

To ensure that values translate into daily practice, schools should develop clear, practical expectations that align with them, in collaboration with the whole school community. This involves:

- defining specific behaviours that reflect the identified values
- ensuring expectations are inclusive, simple, explicit and easy to meet
- communicating expectations consistently through daily interactions, assemblies, classroom/learning space discussions, school policies, and parental engagement sessions
- applying expectations to all members of the school community, including children and young people, staff, and parents

Approaches to expectations should be inclusive and reflective of the diversity of age and developmental stages across the school community and framed in such a way that ensures children and young people are able to meet them, particularly those who may be disadvantaged or face barriers linked to a protected characteristic. For example, an expectation that children and young people should ‘follow instructions first time’ may be unachievable for children and young people due to their age, developmental stage or neurodiversity. ‘To follow instruction’, may be an alternative, more inclusive and achievable expectation.

## Applying expectations consistently

Underpinning a whole school approach to relationships and behaviour is the importance of consistency. This means that while expectations of behaviour apply equally to all members of a school community, the support and interventions provided will be tailored to individual needs, ensuring a child-centred equitable approach that is most likely to lead to change.

Key aspects of consistency include:

- all members of the school community – children and young people, staff and parents – should be expected to uphold school values and model expected behaviours to create a predictable, structured environment
- where a child or young person’s behaviour does not meet expectations, it should be addressed in line with the school’s relationship and behaviour policy, which outlines processes for responding
- expectations are regularly and positively reinforced across the setting, with clear and consistent messaging to and from all members of the learning community
- a clear escalation process should guide the progression of responses when expectations are not met
- high expectations should emphasise children’s rights, fostering a sense of fairness, equity, accountability and social and moral responsibility
- expectations should be applied equitably, with responses tailored to individual needs

- opportunities for professional learning for all staff to ensure a shared understanding of expectations and effective responses to types of behaviours, or situations, that present staff with more challenge, in line with the relationships and behaviour policy

Consistency is promoted through a structured, staged approach, in line with the GIRFEC approach and Additional Support for Learning Statutory Guidance.<sup>7</sup> Further information on a staged approach can found in section 5.

### Reporting, recording and monitoring

An important element of consistency in approach is a standardised approach to reporting, recording and monitoring incidents. Schools should have clear processes for recording incidents in line with local authority procedures and national guidance, such as [Respect for All](#).

There is a clear expectation that all incidents involving violence towards other children and young people or staff should always be recorded.

A common criticism of current approaches to promoting positive relationships and behaviour is that responses can be perceived as being 'rewards' for not meeting expectations or if they are not visible, it can be perceived that nothing has been done in response. Where there have been incidents between children and young people, mitigations may impact on either or both of the children or young people which can lead to concerns the person affected by behaviour is being further victimised.

Such perceptions can impact on the culture and ethos of the school, particularly if little is perceived to have been done in response to behaviour that is violent or perceived to be abusive.

It is therefore important that schools are clear about how they will communicate their response to all relevant parties (staff involved, children and young people affected, and their parent(s)). There will often be confidentiality issues relating to the other child or young person involved meaning information cannot be shared with the person affected. In such instances the need to respect confidentiality should be explained and reassurance given that action has been taken, and as far as is possible, the reasons for decisions.

Messaging about upholding expectations should also be regularly reinforced through whole-school approaches, in order to create a strong culture and ethos. Staff understand the need for individualisation for some children and will be able to support all children to understand this in terms of equity.

<sup>7</sup> [Additional support for learning: statutory guidance 2017 - gov.scot](#) page 35 – see Annex A

## Examples



### Monitoring and reviewing consistency

It is important for schools to continually reflect upon and evaluate their school's culture and ethos, strengths to build on, and areas for improvement; the nature of child development is such that even schools with very strong cultures will still experience instances of behaviour that does not align with the school's expectations. Schools will also have very different contexts or face different challenges. To ensure consistency and effectiveness in supporting positive behaviour, schools should have a robust reporting, recording and monitoring process in place. See section 6 for more information.



## Section 5: Identifying appropriate consequences

Behaviour interventions sit within the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) staged intervention<sup>8</sup> framework, ensuring responses are proportionate, fair and tailored to individual needs. These responses can be:

- universal (preventative approaches linked to underpinning ethos and culture)
- targeted (individualised approaches for those requiring additional support)
- specialist (for more complex needs or linked to a specific risk assessment, often involving multi-agency support)

### Universal (whole-school level)

As set out in section 3, a school's culture, values and ethos should establish clear expectations and boundaries for behaviour. This allows for consistency in expectations across all areas of the school and in classrooms/learning spaces ensures all children and young people understand what is expected of them.

As set out in the section above on consistency of approach, responding to behaviour at a universal level should involve staff persistently stating and reinforcing expectations, linking these expectations to school values. Proactively identifying when these values are not being evidenced, through warmly stating the expectation and reminding children and young people of them is important. This means explicitly teaching and practising routines, structures, transitions and appropriate learning behaviours.

Staff can deploy a range of classroom/learning space management strategies to encourage positive behaviour and address low-level disruption. For example, acknowledging and praising children and young people who meet expectations or using non-verbal cues such as eye contact, proximity or hand signals to redirect behaviour subtly. Schools should seek to develop standardised approaches such as agreed and consistent use of merits, warnings, and de-merits, training on de-escalation techniques and processes that are used to avoid further escalation of behaviour.

Most children and young people will respond positively to this approach. Responding to unmet expectations is more equitable when the approach taken to consequences is predictable for all children and young people, staff, and parents.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the common features to be found in most models of staged assessment and provision and in the approach adopted through Getting it right for every child and the National Practice Model can be found on page 35 of [Supporting Children's Learning: Statutory Guidance on the Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) Scotland Act 2004 \(as amended\): Code of Practice \(Third Edition\) 2017](#).

## Targeted

There may be situations where universal approaches are not enough and a child or young person requires more support, for example:

- when the needs of the child or young person require a more individualised response
- when the nature or severity of the behaviour requires a targeted response
- when universal approaches have been unsuccessful and additional support is required

## Specialist

When targeted interventions have not been successful, specialised support may be required through an individualised support plan.

Specialist interventions could involve risk assessments and/or multi-agency collaboration, including joint work with educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, or child mental health services. These interventions can also involve consideration around the curricular offer, bespoke environment, groupings, pedagogical approaches or interventions designed on assessment of need. In some cases, it may also be appropriate to seek advice from specialist organisations, particularly when supporting children and young people where issues of discrimination, inequality or identity are present.

### Assessment

In many cases, **targeted and specialist** interventions should be informed by:

- an assessment of the child or young person's needs and behaviour; and, if appropriate,
- a risk assessment to identify and mitigate the likelihood of further harm to the child, other children in the class or staff, or the recurrence of behaviour.

Schools and education authorities should have clear processes and Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) in place to support staff in carrying out these assessments and implementing appropriate, proportionate responses.

### Needs assessment

An assessment of a child's needs should align with GIRFEC policy guidance and Additional Support for Learning legislation and statutory guidance. Where behaviour is an ongoing area of need, it is a wellbeing concern.

In order to do this, an assessment of the child's needs should be made using the GIRFEC key questions.

What is getting in the way of this child or young person's wellbeing?

Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?

What can I do now to help this child or young person?

What can my agency do to help this child or young person?

What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?

To answer these questions schools need to assess what the barriers are to a child being able to effectively engage in and contribute to the life of the school.

### **Risk assessment (see guidance)**

The nature of the behaviour or the child or young person's needs may also require a risk assessment and a safety plan to be put in place. This risk assessment is distinct from the needs assessment as it is focused on identifying what actions can be taken to keep both the child, and other children, young people and staff, safe. If a risk assessment does not effectively mitigate risk, it must be promptly reviewed and adapted in collaboration with relevant professionals.

Risk assessment should support educational settings to

1. reduce risk both in terms of frequency and intensity of the risk and
2. promote safety and improve wellbeing of everyone in the learning community by identifying risk.

Further guidance on risk assessments is available from [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot).

## **Relational approaches**

As highlighted earlier in the guidance, responding constructively to a child or young person's behaviour that doesn't meet the expectations of the school community plays a vital role in supporting positive relationships and behaviour while ensuring the safety of all children and young people and staff. This should happen in a staged approach depending on the schools values, expectations and needs of the individual child or young person.

There are a number of approaches and strategies that schools can use to support improved relationships and behaviour. These include:

- nurturing approaches
- good use of class management strategies
- developing social, emotional and behavioural skills through curriculum delivery
- collaborative working between pastoral care/child or young person/behaviour support teams
- relational and restorative approaches
- solution-oriented language and approaches, and
- Mentors in Violence Prevention programme (MVP)

For more information about these approaches see [Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2, Annex B](#).

Determining the most appropriate response in each individual circumstance is a matter of professional judgement within the context of the school's relationship and behaviour policy. In many instances it may be appropriate to adopt a combination of approaches. For example, evidence suggests<sup>9</sup> restorative approaches work when implemented effectively as a whole school approach, rather than being a restorative conversation in isolation, and may involve other appropriate consequences to respond to the child or young person's behaviour.

### Support for staff

Education Scotland provide a [suite of learning resources](#) to support staff to promote positive relationships and behaviour. This includes units on:

- relationships matter
- relational approaches
- expectations and consequences
- the brain and emotional regulation
- self-regulation
- co-regulation and de-escalation
- attunement
- active listening
- reframing

### Core principles

- Appropriate responses should include both support and challenge, aiming to improve relationships and behaviour while reinforcing a positive school ethos.
- The focus should not be on punitive action, instead linked to interventions designed to support and encourage behavioural change.
- They should help ensure the rights to safety and education for all children and young people and staff.
- They should be proportionate, fair, and tailored to both the needs of the child or young person and the wider school community.
- They should relate back to the values and expectations a school wants to reinforce.
- They should focus on learning and improvement, reinforcing the desired behaviour.
- They should be embedded in the school's culture and ethos and implemented fairly.
- They should be used in response to consistent whole-school expectations, but should be child-centred and tailored to children's needs.
- They should take account of the legal and policy frameworks underpinning considerations relating to children with additional support needs and those who are care experienced.
- They should be natural, logical or positive where possible.

<sup>9</sup> [Use of Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices at School: A Systematic Literature Review - PMC and Implementation of Whole School Restorative Approaches to Promote Positive Youth Development: Review of Relevant Literature and Practice Guidelines.](#)

There are two main elements when identifying appropriate responses.

1. Action that is required in the moment. This is to ensure a safe and respectful learning environment by addressing behaviour as it occurs.
2. Identifying underlying needs contributing to behaviour and potential risk mitigations. This allows appropriate support to be in place for children and young people to support long-term change and to keep themselves and others safe.

An effective approach balances both elements. Responding in the moment ensures that expectations are upheld consistently, while longer-term support ensures children and young people's needs are met and they are supported to develop the skills, understanding, and self-regulation needed to engage positively in school life and beyond.

## Responding in the moment

Where behaviour occurs that doesn't meet expectations as previously agreed by the school community, a decision will need to be taken about how to respond in the moment, on the basis of professional judgement, within a framework of known school processes and supports.

There will be number of factors that could influence this decision making, including:

- the nature of the behaviour, including whether it requires immediate escalation, such as if relates to safety or prejudice (safety must always be a priority for attention)
- if a previous needs assessment or risk assessment has been carried out for a child or young person which means there may be a planned approach in place for responding to their behaviour
- the context of the incident, including whether the child or young person is in an emotionally regulated state to engage with the response effectively, or if it would be more appropriate to delay the response until they have had time to calm down
- the whole school approach to positive relationships and behaviour as set out in the school's policy, including operational guidance for staff
- the specific needs of the child and whether they have additional support needs

A school's relationships and behaviour policy, and accompanying operational guidelines for staff, should provide clarity around the processes to be followed by staff, including steps for escalating concerns and responses.

When identifying appropriate responses, staff should be mindful that certain approaches can unintentionally reinforce feelings of shame, particularly for children and young people who have experienced adversity or trauma. Shame can undermine a child's sense of belonging and self-worth, leading to disengagement or escalation in behaviour. Feelings of alienation can also emerge in this context, especially when young people perceive themselves as excluded or misunderstood. As such, an assessment of need, as outlined above, should be undertaken.

Consequences should be positive, natural, or logical where possible.



**Positive consequences** should be reinforced all of the time. They provide positive recognition for behaving well. They support emotional health and relationships.



**Natural consequences** occur without adult intervention, allowing children and young people to experience the direct results of their actions. They are proportionate and help develop cause-and-effect thinking skills.



**Logical consequences** are directly related to the behaviour, aiming to help learners understand the impact of their actions and encourage responsible decision making.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC emphasises the importance of respecting and upholding the rights of all children (being those under 18) in actions and decisions that affect them. School staff have a responsibility to implement consequences in a way that is consistent, transparent, and aligned with the UNCRC.

To support schools in putting children's rights into practice, Together Scotland has developed a [UNCRC Framework](#) designed to help embed the UNCRC across policies and practice.

The UNCRC does not prevent the use of consequences but it does require that discipline in the context of education is undertaken in a way that is consistent with the child's dignity.

Children have the right to express views in decisions that affect them (Article 12), which includes being involved in discussions about their behaviour and any resulting responses. This approach helps to empower them to take responsibility for their actions while ensuring their right to education (Article 28) and ensuring all children are protected from harm (Article 19). Consistent with this, when the child is calm and regulated, helping them learn from the situation is crucial.

As children have the right to be safe from harm and to an education, it is important that our approach to behaviour recognises that disruptive and harmful behaviour can often see one child infringing on another child's (or staff member's) rights. There must be particular attention to reinstating and protecting the rights of those who have been harmed by poor behaviour. Often, those harmed are disempowered in some way, and their needs and rights can be ignored or forgotten. The rights of the child who has caused harm cannot be allowed to obscure or override the rights of those they have harmed.

Responses must be aligned to a child's developmental stage and support reducing the frequency and intensity of the undesirable behaviour over time. The ultimate goal is for all children and young people to learn appropriate and safe ways to behave.

When addressing behaviour that impacts on teaching and learning, and/or the safety of others, it is essential to balance the rights of the individual child with the rights of other children and the adults who support them.



Where a child's behaviour is impacting on the rights of others to access their right to an education, an assessment of their needs is required to ensure that their educational offer, is in keeping with the UNCRC, including

- Article 2 (non-discrimination)
- Article 3 (best interests of the child)
- Article 12 (right to express views and be heard)
- Article 28 (right to education) (specifically, every child has the right to an education and discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and rights), and
- Article 29 (goals of education) (education to be directed to: the development of every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full; the development of the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and national values, and the environment; preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society)

From the above, it is therefore important that in order to learn how to respect the rights of others, a child displaying behaviours that are impacting on the rights of others, is very likely to require an individualised approach (which may include the use of exclusion) to meet both their rights and those of their peers.

## Processes for escalation

There may be situations where the response to behaviour would involve escalation. In some situations, the requirement for escalation may be immediate. Examples of such situations may be:

- behaviour where the immediate safety of the child or young person, their peers or staff, is at risk
- the behaviour constitutes a child protection concern requiring those procedures to be invoked
- other features of the behaviour, for example where it has an underlying basis of prejudice (such as racism, misogyny, homophobia, or other forms of discrimination), requires decision making on the response to be approached with particular care to ensure it is appropriate and will not lead to further trauma for the person experiencing the behaviour, and that it includes effective responses for promoting equality and inclusivity
- behaviour that significantly compromises teaching and learning or the integrity of the physical environment
- if they have reason to believe that a crime may have been committed against either a child, staff member or other adult and are required to seek the immediate advice of Police Scotland

In other situations, escalation may be required if approaches to responding to behaviour are unsuccessful, or if a child or young person's behaviour is worsening, indicating additional support or responses are required. This would mean progressing through the school's Staged Intervention Approach.

A school's relationships and behaviour policy, or operational guidelines for staff, should be clear about the situations which would require an immediate escalated response.

Safety must always be a priority for attention. There should also be clarity about the processes for escalation, for example, where responses should involve a Principal Teacher or a member of the senior leadership team, or might involve Educational Psychology or outside agencies, such as CAMHS or social services. Staff can seek advice from the relevant local authority Education Officer.

There will be situations where exclusion is being considered as a proportionate response when there are no appropriate alternatives, for example in order to facilitate immediate safety. Exclusion is an appropriate and necessary tool which is available to school leaders in certain circumstances. However, exclusion alone is unlikely to lead to behavioural change for children who require additional social, emotional and behavioural support, or who may have a disability. The aim of an exclusion should be to improve outcomes for the child or young person and therefore the space provided by exclusions must be used constructively to resolve the situation and ensure positive and appropriate support is in place for all. This could include developing a plan to provide appropriate support to address the child's behaviour and prevent recurrence and to undertake a risk assessment that protects them as well as the safety and wellbeing of other children and young people and staff. Where exclusion is being considered, decisions should be taken with reference to the national guidance on exclusion 'Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2' and local guidance and exclusion policy. Schools and local authorities must ensure continued access to education through appropriate alternative educational provision for the duration of the exclusion.

There will also be particular considerations under legal and policy frameworks for example, where the child has an additional support need to ensure responses are not discriminatory, or where the child or young person is care experienced. Further information can be found in [Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2](#).

## Supporting longer-term change

For many young people, a one-off response that reinforces a boundary or expectation will be sufficient to address the behaviour of concern.

However, for other young people, simply addressing disruptive behaviours in the moment, without also planning and providing follow-up support, is unlikely to lead to long-term change, and therefore more targeted or specialist support is required to address their behaviour. In such circumstances, it is important that schools do not just respond to behaviour in isolation and that they assess why it may be occurring. If consequences are applied without understanding the function of the behaviour, they may unintentionally reinforce it or fail to address the underlying cause, making long-term positive change in their behaviour less likely.

As such, responses should have two goals with regards to promoting positive relationships and behaviour:

1. to promote the child's wellbeing – including their social skills, executive function and emotional regulation

2. to reduce the frequency and intensity of the behaviour over time (reducing the need for adults to address the behaviour)

Situations requiring consideration of approaches to support longer-term change could include:

- if a child or young person is not responding to the school's universal approach to relationships and behaviour
- the behaviour is not changing despite multiple targeted interventions, suggesting the staged approach is not effective, the school should review the individualised response to the child or young person's needs to reconsider which interventions may be effective.
- assessment of a child's need is such that they will require multiple opportunities to develop pro-social skills and behaviours that support learning and personal growth, such as through reinforcement of messages or more targeted support specifically around emotional regulation, social interaction and/or by reducing stressors.

As set out in section 5, consideration of how to support longer-term change may require a needs assessment to be undertaken, aligned with the GIRFEC and ASL Act frameworks.

In addressing a young person's underlying needs, schools may be able to draw on the support of other local services, such as Educational Psychologists. These services may be able to support schools by carrying out Functional Behavioural Analysis which is an evidence-based approach to understand the underlying reasons for behaviour which inform decision making around appropriate responses and supports. This analysis involves:

- considerations relating to the behaviour, including what happened before the behaviour and what the potential triggers were; what behaviours were observed; and what happened after the behaviour
- taking into account the broader context of the child, including other sources of assessment, and an understanding of trauma, adversity linked to poverty and protected characteristics such as disability on a child's developmental presentation

## Section 6: Monitoring and reviewing impact

Effective approaches to positive relationships and behaviour requires ongoing monitoring and review. This should be done at:

- individual level, to assess whether interventions support the child or young person in the most appropriate way and have been successful in responding to the behaviour
- school level, to identify trends or patterns over time and use this to inform improvement planning

Schools should routinely:

- track behaviour patterns over time, at individual and school level
- review whether responses are having the intended effect
- involve the child or young person in reflecting on what is working
- adjust approaches in response to emerging or changes in circumstances

Regular review helps ensure that responses remain relevant, fair, and effective. Where the same behaviours persist despite intervention, schools should revisit their understanding of the behaviour and consider whether the support in place is sufficient or needs to be adapted. Where approaches are not working, school staff should follow escalation processes, including seeking the advice of their local authority where appropriate. Monitoring is a key part of ensuring behaviour support is both child-centred and supports long-term change.

Schools should regularly review the consistency of expectations and consequences. This can be achieved through:

- staff discussions and professional dialogue
- children and young people and staff feedback
- behaviour data analysis
- whole school approaches
- engaging with the whole school community

## Appendix 1: Illustrative examples of consequences

This guidance cannot prescribe specific consequences schools should use to respond to particular behaviours. The table below is for illustrative purposes only, highlighting a range of behaviours, some possible underlying reasons, and examples of potentially appropriate responses. It aims to demonstrate that there can be a number of underlying reasons behind behaviour and that children and young people may act in similar ways for very different reasons and therefore the appropriate response will differ depending on the particular context and needs of the child. Responses should be considered in line with local authority policies, procedures and approaches as not all responses illustrated here may be appropriate or available in all areas.

Schools should take a child-centred approach when determining an appropriate response. Understanding the specific needs of each young person is crucial, as the most suitable response to a behaviour may vary – even for the same child – depending on their circumstances on a given day. In some cases, staff may not be aware of the underlying need at the time of the incident, but a response is still required. Where the underlying need is unclear, taking steps to understand it after is an important part of providing effective support.

While immediate responses to behaviour are often necessary, consistently applying universal approaches (such as simply asking a child to apologise) may address the surface-level issue in the moment but fail to resolve the underlying cause. Children and young people are still developing – both emotionally and neurologically – and factors such as puberty, mood changes, societal or personal challenges can influence their behaviour. However, this table reinforces the importance of looking beyond the behaviour itself to ensure that responses support the child's development and long-term wellbeing.

The list below is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive and responses may sit across different categories.

Behaviour	Underlying needs and functions of behaviour	Examples of responses
Meeting or exceeding expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child is feeling safe, valued and connected within their environment.</li> <li>• A child is experiencing success and positive feedback, reinforcing their motivation to engage and behave positively.</li> <li>• A child feels a sense of belonging and agency within the school community.</li> <li>• A child's needs are being proactively met, including emotional regulation, sensory input, social connection, and cognitive support.</li> <li>• A child may be seeking to contribute positively to the school culture and relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal praise that is specific and genuine.</li> <li>• Opportunities for increased responsibility or leadership roles.</li> <li>• Celebrating progress and effort, not just outcomes (e.g.: "You worked really hard to stay focused through a tough task").</li> <li>• Recognition in assemblies, newsletters or merit systems.</li> <li>• Time with a trusted adult to reflect on what helped them succeed.</li> <li>• Encouraging the child to model positive behaviour or mentor peers.</li> <li>• Maintaining supportive relationships and regular check-ins even when behaviour is positive.</li> </ul>

Behaviour	Underlying needs and functions of behaviour	Examples of responses
<p>Low-level disruptive behaviour. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continually disrupting learning and teaching</li> <li>disengaging from learning by wandering in corridors instead of being in class</li> <li>continually or seriously disrupting extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes or after school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A child seeking connection may enjoy the reaction from peers or adults.</li> <li>A child who struggles with low self-esteem may act out to avoid situations where they feel they might fail.</li> <li>A child experiencing difficulties at home may struggle to focus and use disruption as a distraction.</li> <li>A child with additional support needs may become frustrated and disruptive when this need is unmet, and they are unable to participate equally.</li> <li>A child struggling with work, or with attention lapses, may disengage to avoid work they find challenging.</li> <li>A child may be seeking acceptance from their friends so following the crowd</li> <li>A child who struggles with transitions may find it hard to shift from classroom/ learning space expectations to a more informal setting.</li> <li>A child who lacks confidence in their abilities may disrupt to avoid participating.</li> <li>A child who has difficulty with authority may see after-school activities as less structured and act out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A reminder of the expectation.</li> <li>Being asked/instructed to move to different seat within teaching area.</li> <li>Being asked/instructed to complete work in a different room/area under supervision.</li> <li>Being given an alternative activity to the rest of the class that allows the child to regulate their emotions or behaviour.</li> <li>Being asked to take a break from the class or activity for a short time.</li> <li>Discussion and reflection with the child to assist self-regulation.</li> <li>A reinforcement of the expectation with differentiated explanation.</li> <li>A reduction in the stress load for the child, for example if they have dyslexia, Autism or ADHD.</li> <li>Access to learning support.</li> <li>Support strategies such as check-ins or a one-to-one conversation to help address the underlying causes of behaviour.</li> </ul>



Behaviour	Underlying needs and functions of behaviour	Examples of responses
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Period by period registration and letting home know any period a young person does not attend.</li> <li>• Identify a safe space for the young person if mainstream class becomes too overwhelming.</li> <li>• Parental communication (truancy texts, attendance information, parental meeting).</li> <li>• Timetable adaption.</li> </ul>

Behaviour	Underlying needs and functions of behaviour	Examples of responses
<p>Unsafe, anti-social, or otherwise unacceptable behaviour, including shouting, abusive or potentially physical behaviour during breaks or period changes (secondary).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child may be showing off to friends to gain authority/ acceptance/status.</li> <li>• A child with ADHD may struggle with impulse control and act without considering consequences.</li> <li>• A child who feels excluded or lonely may engage in disruptive behaviour to gain attention or connection.</li> <li>• A child with autism may be seeking sensory input or struggling with personal space.</li> <li>• A child is not yet developmentally able to understand and manage big emotions and feels overwhelmed.</li> <li>• A child is modelling the behaviour of others.</li> <li>• A child has limited control in other areas of their life, resulting in a need to assert themselves and retain agency within the safety of the school setting.</li> <li>• An excitable child may accidentally knock into others without realising the impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restricted access to corridors/areas during lunchtimes/morning breaks for a period of time</li> <li>• Requirement to undertake additional supervised activities during lunchtime/breaks for a period of time.</li> <li>• Requirement to be collected by parent/ other responsible adult for intervals and/or lunchtimes.</li> <li>• Additional time with staff or in a smaller group at break or lunch time.</li> <li>• Reflective time/exercise to consider the impact of the behaviour on themselves and others.</li> <li>• 'Out of class two minutes early' so they move through corridors while largely empty.</li> <li>• Escort to collect and walk child to next class.</li> <li>• A reduction in transitions.</li> <li>• Additional adult support to aid co-regulation.</li> </ul>

Behaviour	Underlying needs and functions of behaviour	Examples of responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child with a sensory impairment may not be aware of their proximity to others.</li> <li>• A child with high anxiety may rush through corridors to avoid social interactions.</li> <li>• A child with a history of being bullied may push through crowds defensively as a stress response or safety mechanism in response to the trauma they experienced.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A conversation to jointly problem solve with the child and perspective take, once they are regulated, with regards to what to do differently next time.</li> <li>• Explicitly taught the skills they do not yet have in a way that leads to learning in this area.</li> <li>• Social and emotional skills curricula.</li> <li>• In-school alternative provision for a period of time (to allow matters to calm, time for planning, parental meetings etc).</li> <li>• Exclusion from school (to allow matters to calm, time for planning, meeting with parents etc).</li> <li>• Risk Assessment and safety planning to be completed, if appropriate, that may have mitigations that are restrictive or limiting to some extent (depending on location, activity, triggers etc).</li> </ul>

Behaviour	Underlying needs and functions of behaviour	Examples of responses
<p>Displays prejudice-based behaviours such as racism, misogyny or gender-based violence, homophobia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child may be seeking to establish social capital by targeting those seen as 'different'.</li> <li>• A child may be being influenced by other people in their lives, such as family, friends or online influences.</li> <li>• A child may be repeating language they have heard elsewhere.</li> <li>• A child may be vulnerable to prejudice based narratives because they feel excluded, or marginalised.</li> <li>• A child may be vulnerable to far-right radicalisation.</li> <li>• A child may be displaying behaviours they have themselves experienced.</li> <li>• A child or young person's behaviour may reflect an exertion of power or control over others, influenced by their own position of relative privilege in relation to an oppressed group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising break or after-school time to educate and reflect on the harm caused by the prejudice-based behaviour through developmentally appropriate education and discussion.</li> <li>• Removal from unsupervised corridors/ areas during lunchtimes/ morning breaks for a period of time.</li> <li>• Requirement to undertake additional supervised activities during lunchtime/breaks.</li> <li>• Referral to specialist agencies.</li> <li>• Reviewing curricular-based responses, such as learning through Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education to promote empathy for others and learning about the impact of language, or topics such as consent.</li> <li>• Identifying whole-school interventions to ensure promotion of an inclusive and respectful school culture, such as embedding a whole-school approach to anti-racism.</li> <li>• Some behaviours may require more tailored responses. <a href="#">See Respect for All.</a></li> </ul>

Behaviour	Underlying needs and functions of behaviour	Examples of responses
Being violent towards others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child experiencing frustration or anger may be lashing out due to difficulty regulating emotions.</li> <li>• A child who has experienced trauma may perceive a threat and act defensively.</li> <li>• A child with attachment difficulties may struggle with relationships and misinterpret social cues as hostility.</li> <li>• A child experiencing stress at home may have heightened emotional responses and struggle with self-regulation.</li> <li>• A child may be modelling abusive relationships witnessed at home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-school alternative provision for a period of time (to allow matters to calm, time for planning and for any additional staffing or alternative placements to be put in place, parental meetings etc).</li> <li>• Exclusion from school (to allow matters to calm, time for planning, meeting with parents etc).</li> <li>• Risk Assessment and safety planning to be completed, if appropriate, that may have mitigations that are restrictive or limiting to some extent (depending on location, activity, triggers etc).</li> <li>• Provide a developmentally appropriate list of actions to take when frustrated in the future. Laminated set of bullet points, for example- to remind and support them to step away, seek help and follow an agreed, and rehearsed process.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2: Reflective questions

### Reflective questions to assess culture and ethos

#### Developing values, priorities and expectations

- How have staff/children/young people/parents collaborated in the development of the school's expectations?
- What opportunities are provided for the school community to share their views and experiences in order to build a shared understanding of the school's climate and culture?
- How is data used – alongside collegiate dialogue and the views of professional associations – to identify particular challenges and develop informed, collaborative responses?
- Have young people had sufficient opportunity to express their views and be listened to and taken seriously, in line with Article 12 of UNCRC?

#### Promoting values, priorities and expectations

- How does your school communicate with children and young people, parents and staff to ensure there is a shared understanding of school's expectations?
- What teaching, displays, and communication takes place to ensure expectations are exemplified and reinforced regularly throughout the year?
- What measures are in place to support supply or temporary staff to understand the school's approach to boundaries and expectations?

#### Applying values, priorities and expectations

- How are the views of staff gathered to ensure they feel equipped to support the values ethos and climate of the school?
- What CLPL opportunities are available to ensure all staff have a consistent understanding of how school-wide expectations should be implemented?
- What time is made available to support staff to reflect on this and to come together to discuss the impact of the CLPL collectively?
- How are values reinforced daily, weekly and throughout the year?
- How does the leadership team support and model best practice, such as through its visibility to children and young people and staff?
- How are the views of parents gathered to establish whether there is buy-in or push-back from parents regarding any approaches?
- What support is afforded to the leadership team to implement local authority and national policy and guidance?

## Reviewing values, priorities and expectations

- How does the school measure the impact of its approach?
- What are the indicators of success that tell you the approach to behaviour and relationships is effective?
- How is feedback from children and young people, staff, and parents used to refine policies?
- How is support available from the local authority used to assist with self-evaluation and planning next steps?

## Reflective questions for staff in for responding in the moment

### Behaviour

- What is the nature of the behaviour?
- Does the nature of the behaviour impact on the rights of the young person themselves, the rights of others or of staff?
- What might motivate this behaviour? is there an underlying unmet need?
- Could this behaviour be the result of a communication need, such as difficulty with speech, language, understanding instructions or expressing emotions?
- Can the behaviour be dealt with through universal approaches or does it require a targeted or specialist approach?
- Are there any features of the behaviour that require particular consideration, such as where it involves prejudice or an additional support need?
- Is the nature of the behaviour such that it requires an immediate response, such as where safety or dignity is compromised?

### Rights

- Does the proposed response impact on any rights under UNCRC, for example right to an education, right to play, right to safety or other rights such as those protected under the Equality Act 2010/Health and Safety legislation/European Convention on Human Rights?
- If so, is the approach compatible with these, and is it proportionate, and legitimate in order to address both their needs and the need to protect the rights of others?
- Does the response maintain a child's right to dignity?
- Does the proposed approach involve a plan for how any removed privileges will be reinstated over time?
- Are there other children or young people whose rights must also be considered in determining an appropriate response?



## Child-centred

- Does the child or young person have an identified additional support need that is relevant to the behaviour?
- Does the child have experience or trauma/adverse childhood experiences that are relevant to the behaviour?
- Is there a child's plan or risk assessment in place, and what guidance does it provide regarding appropriate responses?
- Is the proposed approach aligned to a child's developmental stage and does it support reducing the frequency and intensity of the disruptive behaviour over time?
- Does the child have a level of social and emotional development that allows them to engage effectively with the approach?
- Holistic assessment – what is happening for the child or young person in the community and at home?
- Has the young person been asked what might be causing them to behave in that way?
- Has the young person had the opportunity to participate in discussions about approaches to consequence?

## Interactions with policies and legal frameworks

- Does the proposed action constitute seclusion<sup>10</sup> as defined in Included, Engaged and Involved Part 3?
- If considering exclusion, has account been taken of the checklist of Key considerations to be made prior to, during and after exclusion, as set out in Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2?
- Is the young person care experienced?
- Is the proposed action compatible with duties under the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) legislation?
- Is the response consistent with the school's duties under the UNCRC, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and the Equality Act 2010?

## Strategies

- Timing of response – is the child in a position where they are able to constructively learn from the intervention?
- Is CLPL, guidance and support available and promoted to staff to support them in navigating challenging conversations with young people?
- Does the nature of the behaviour require particular considerations to appropriateness of intervention, such as where it involves prejudice and the need to avoid contributing to any trauma or mental health impact for any person affected?

<sup>10</sup> An act carried out with the purpose of isolating a child or young person, away from other children and young people, in an area from which they are prevented from leaving.

## Reflective questions for senior leadership teams for supporting responses in the moment

### Processes

- How are the views of staff gathered, including through engagement with relevant professional associations, to establish whether they feel supported in responding to behaviour in school?
- What opportunities are available to ensure all staff have a consistent understanding of how school-wide expectations should be implemented?
- What structures are in place to support all staff to apply relationships and behaviour policies consistently?
- How are the views of staff gathered to support a shared understanding of when responses should be escalated, and are there clear pathways for that?
- What CLPL or other opportunities are there for staff to train together and have professional dialogue and are staff able to engage with these?
- How are children and young people supported to reflect on the impact of their behaviour?
- How are supply or temporary staff supported to understand the school's approaches to expectations and processes for responding?
- What opportunities are there for staff to share experiences and undertake peer learning?
- How are new or temporary staff joining mid-year provided with clear information and guidance to implement responses in line with school policies?

### Implementation

- What arrangements are in place to ensure staff have the time to implement approaches effectively?
- What support is available to ensure responses can be conducted in a timely manner?
- If only certain staff are trained in such approaches, what mechanisms are in place to ensure they have sufficient capacity to undertake approaches in a timely manner?
- What CLPL is available to support the implementation of approaches such as restorative, nurture and solutions-oriented approaches?
- How is consistency in approach supported across all staff and departments?

### Engagement

- When and how are parents informed and engaged in responses to address their child's behaviour?
- How are staff supported by senior management in promoting positive relationships and behaviour when there is resistance from children and/or their parents?
- How is feedback gathered from staff about how things are working and what support might be required?

## Reporting, recording and monitoring

- How is the effectiveness of approaches monitored?
- How are reports of violence and aggression followed up both with the local authority and with staff members involved? Are these in line with local authority procedures?
- Has any young person, or staff member, affected been supported, as well as provided with reassurance, within confidentiality parameters, that appropriate action has been taken?

## Reflective questions for senior leadership teams

- What specific operational guidance is there for staff outlining the processes and possible steps staff can take to address behaviour through targeted interventions?
- What CLPL opportunities are available to ensure all staff have a clear understanding of the processes in place should targeted interventions be required?
- What time is afforded within working hours to undertake CLPL and support effective implementation of the strategies involved?
- How are all staff, including support staff, given the opportunity to discuss children's individual needs to inform the development of appropriate plans and responses?
- How are the underlying needs of the child or young person being assessed and supported?
- How are all staff, including support staff, informed about the details of plans in place to support children's needs?
- How is feedback gathered from staff about how things are working and what support might be required?
- What assessment is undertaken to review the curricular offer to ensure it supports young people's engagement?

## Assessments

- How does the school ensure that needs assessments are conducted consistently and in a meaningful way?
- What processes are in place to regularly review and update needs assessments to maintain their relevance and accuracy?
- How are all staff, including support staff, given the opportunity to contribute to assessments that inform the development of appropriate plans and responses?
- How is relevant information from assessments and plans shared with all staff, including support staff, so they can implement it in their practice?
- What structures are in place to draw support from other services?
- What evaluation is carried out to ensure responses used are effective in changing behaviour while supporting wellbeing?
- Do the assessments show examples of impact and improvements?
- Are there clear timeframes for review, and are these shared with all relevant individuals?

- What processes are in place to assess risk, implement appropriate risk mitigation measures, and ensure consistent reporting, recording, and regular review of risk assessments?

## Reflective questions for school leadership on monitoring

- What guidance is in place to support approaches to incident recording and monitoring?
- What processes are in place for oversight of patterns of individual behaviour, to enable a holistic view to be taken of a child or young person's behaviour and needs? For example, is a young person repeatedly displaying the same behaviour across different classes, or receiving repeated consequences for the same issue, which might indicate the need for a more targeted response?
- What processes are in place to track school-wide patterns around culture, behaviour and responses and to ensure this is properly interrogated? If monitoring indicates that responses are being applied more frequently to particular groups or characteristics, an equality impact assessment may be warranted.
- Are there particular times or locations that increase the likelihood of incidents, and how might these be better managed?
- How is data collected and used to support staff and children and young people?
- What feedback does the school engage with from various affected groups?
- Is child/young person voice gathered from varied groups? For example, Pupil Council, care-experienced young people, children and young people with additional support needs, those with previous exclusions or low attendance?

## Appendix 3: Policy framework and resources

### Policy framework

[Health and wellbeing | Curriculum areas | Curriculum for Excellence | Education Scotland](#)

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot](#)

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023 - gov.scot](#)

[Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: promoting and managing school attendance - gov.scot](#)

[Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: preventing and managing school exclusions - gov.scot](#)

[Physical intervention, restraint and seclusion - Physical intervention in schools - a relationships and rights based approach: guidance - gov.scot](#)

[Additional support for learning: statutory guidance 2017 - gov.scot](#)

[Relationships and behaviour in schools: national action plan 2024 to 2027 - gov.scot](#)

[Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence: A Whole School Framework](#)

[Equally Safe at School | A whole school approach to preventing gender based violence](#)

[Anti-bullying guidance for adults working with children and young people - gov.scot](#)

[Violent, Aggressive and Dangerous Behaviour Risk Assessment Guidance](#)

### Resources

[Promoting positive relationships and behaviour in educational settings | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

[Restorative approaches to support positive relationships and behaviour | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

[Inclusion, wellbeing and equalities framework | Leading professional learning | Professional Learning | Education Scotland](#)

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