

Positive Relationships Position Paper

**Mauchline Primary School and Early Childhood Centre**



**August 2023**

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| Silver Rights Respecting School  Within this policy the articles and principles of the UNCRC are embedded with a particular focus on the following:   * Article 2: All children have these rights * Article 3: All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. * Article 19: You have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body and mind. * Article 29: Your education should help you to use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you to learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. |

**Rationale**

At Mauchline Primary School and Early Childhood Centre we set high expectations of behaviour. Together, we promote positive relationships with our children and young people.

The purpose of this position paper is to provide guidance on our relationship-focussed approach to promoting positive behaviour for all stakeholders and agencies.

This policy acknowledges that for many of our children and young people a traditional behaviourist model may not be appropriate and sets out an alternative model which focuses on a relationship-based approach. Evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (2019) emphasises that the use of zero-tolerance approaches are ineffectual and emphasises areas such as relationships; consistent approaches and the need for a more holistic approach. This holistic approach underpins [Getting It Right For Every Child](https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/) and [The Rights of the Child.](https://www.gov.scot/policies/human-rights/childrens-rights/)

Positive relationships are at the very core of effective learning and teaching and the development of the wellbeing of the whole child. We understand that strong, reciprocal relationships – those with high expectations and clear and consistent boundaries – matter most in terms of a child’s achievements and self-belief.

We have been guided in the development of this policy by the Education Scotland document [Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in Educational Settings, 2021](https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/promoting-positive-relationships-and-behaviour-in-educational-settings/) and East Ayrshire Council’s Relationships Framework. This position paper is in line with our Vision, Values and Aims.

**Our Vision, Values and Aims**

Vision:

Our vision for Mauchline Primary School and Early Childhood Centre is to create a learning community where every child is inspired, supported and motivated to work hard and try to achieve the very best they can, now and in the future.

Our Values:

* Respect
* Honesty
* Friendship
* Determination

Our Aims:

* We aspire to provide a safe, welcoming and nurturing learning community where everyone is included and respected.
* We aspire to motivate and inspire our pupils to be ambitious learners who are determined to succeed.
* We aspire to provide a curriculum which is stimulating and designed to promote challenge and enjoyment.

**Aims of the Position Paper**

* To provide a clear, fair, consistent and holistic approach to promoting positive behaviour, based upon trauma informed practice, nurture principles, rights of the child and restorative practice.
* To foster, nurture and value strong and healthy relationships to maximise the growth and development of children.
* To ensure flexibility in supporting behaviours that might be the result of Adverse Childhood Experiences and/or additional support needs and recognise that all behaviour is communication.
* To ensure our values (Determination, Respect, Honesty, Friendship) underpin our relationships-focussed approach.
* To ensure all children feel safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included (Getting It Right for Every Child, 2022), and that there is a mutual respect for rights to ensure learning experiences are maximised.
* To create a learning environment that works for everyone – children, staff, parent/carers, partners and wider community.
* To provide our school community with a range of tools to support the building of positive relationships.

**Key Concepts of a Relational Approach**

Children and young people learn and grow best in the context of safe and secure relationships. The following concepts help us to create that environment for them. More information on each of these approaches can be found in Appendix 1.

**Nurture**

A nurturing approach recognises that positive relationships are central to both learning and wellbeing. A key aspect of a nurturing approach is an understanding of attachment theory and how early experiences can have a significant impact on development. It recognises that in all school/ECC settings, staff have a role to play in establishing the positive relationships that are required to promote healthy social and emotional development and that these relationships should be reliable, predictable and consistent where possible.

A nurturing approach has a key focus on the school environment and emphasises the balance between care and challenge which incorporates attunement, warmth and connection alongside structure, high expectations and a focus on achievement and attainment.

It is based on the understanding of 6 Nurturing Principles which have been adapted and are outlined below:

1. All our children and young people’s learning is understood developmentally
2. Our learning environment offers a safe place for all children and young people
3. Nurture and nurturing relationships are important for the development of wellbeing
4. Language is a vital means of communication
5. All behaviour is communication
6. Transitions are important in children’s and young people’s lives

**ACES and Trauma Informed**

Being ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and trauma-informed means having an increased understanding of the impact of ACES and trauma has on our learners such as brain development, poorer wellbeing, social and educational outcomes. Experiencing trauma is common and can affect children, parents/carers and school staff. In relation to behaviour, trauma can cause difficulties with regulating emotions, difficulties with trust and relationships, and increase the likelihood of risk taking or self-harming. Additionally, those affected by trauma may be less likely to seek or receive the help or support they need.

**Authoritative Practice**

Changing how we respond to behaviour does not mean having no expectations, routines or structures. To help children and young people and staff feel safe, the environment needs to be high in both nurture and support, and high in structure and expectations. This is described as an authoritative style of discipline (see image below, Doing With) and has been shown to be effective in supporting positive outcomes such as reduced bullying in schools, higher levels of attainment and lower levels of pupil aggression. Predictable routines, expectations and responses to behaviour are part of this approach and should be modelled appropriately. Natural and logical rewards and consequences that follow certain behaviours are seen as being more impactful and should be made explicit, without the need to enforce punishments that have the potential to shame and alienate children and young people.



**Restorative Approaches**

Being restorative can be proactive (relationship building) or responsive (relationship repairing) and can be used at every level from everyday informal interactions to more formal restorative meetings/conversations. A Restorative Approach recognises that people are the experts of their own solutions and if implemented effectively will promote accountability and maximise personal responsibility. By giving learners this responsibility, we are supporting them in developing their own strategies for avoiding and resolving conflict.

To be restorative we:

* prioritise building relationships and take the time to nurture these
* listen and respond calmly, empathically and without interruption or judgment to all sides of an issue
* inspire a sense of trust and safety (physical and psychological)
* encourage people to express their thoughts, feelings and needs appropriately
* appreciate the impact of people’s thoughts, feelings, beliefs and unmet needs on their behaviours
* find solutions together that work for everyone involved

Using restorative approaches consistently we:

* Ensure children are emotionally ready to learn by creating a calmer, quieter and more productive environment
* support everyone to be more honest and willing to accept responsibility
* help everyone involved (including staff members) feel more supported when things go wrong

**UNCRC – A Rights Based Approach**

The UK Government ratified the UNCRC (United Nations Rights of the Child) in 1991, and in June 2019, the Scottish Government announced its intention to fully incorporate the UNCRC into Scot’s law, which will place a legal duty on all public bodies to promote and uphold children’s rights. ‘Getting it Right for Every child’ (GIRFEC) is underpinned by the UNCRC, and child protection and safeguarding policies and practice are upheld by children’s rights.

A rights-based approach means that the articles of the convention underpin the ethos of our school, and that all policies and practice are developed through consideration of the UNCRC.

A [rights-based approach](https://www.gtcs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/professional-guide-a-childrens-rights-based-approach.pdf) to education promotes improved relationships, ethos and attainment and achievement.

We are a Silver Rights Respecting School. This means that:

* Every class learns about the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) in class and at assembly.
* All members of the school community model Rights Respecting language.
* Parents, Carers and the wider community are included in our work as a Rights Respecting School.
* All classes have a class charter which are co-constructed with pupils & set out actions for children (rights holders) & adults (duty bearers) to ensure everyone’s rights are met.
* Conflicts are resolved using approaches, such as PATHS or restorative conversations, where children are empowered to seek solutions to problems.
* Children are empowered to become active citizens and learners.
* Pupils’ opinions and thoughts are sought, encouraged and respected in all aspects of the school’s work.

**Teaching Explicit Emotional and Relational skills**

In terms of relationship building and lifelong success we know that social and emotional skills are imperative. Below are the programmes and interventions used across the school (in addition to the Health and Wellbeing curriculum) to teach emotional and relational skills at Mauchline Primary School and ECC.

**PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)**

The PATHS programme teaches and promotes social and emotional learning. This is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. PATHS is incorporated into our Health and Wellbeing curriculum and is usually taught weekly.

The five key areas that we focus on through our PATHS programme are:

* self-awareness,
* self-management,
* social awareness,
* relationship skills,
* responsible decision making.

More information on the PATHS programme can be found in our HWB policy and on our [school blog.](https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/ea/mauchlinepsandecc/)

**Anti-Bullying: Respect for All**

In line with national guidance, the term bullying behaviour is used in this statement for incidents where someone is physically, mentally or verbally hurt by another individual or group of people whether intentionally or unintentionally. Bullying behaviour results in pain and distress to the person at the receiving end. It is behaviour that leaves people feeling helpless, frightened, anxious, depressed, demeaned. However, it is particularly important to distinguish it from natural conflict (eg; quarrelling, minor disputes or mutual dislike) between children and young people.

It is every child’s right to grow up free from bullying. Our ‘Anti-bullying: Respect for All’ Establishment Statement details the ways in which we work with children, adults and our wider community so that all parties are enabled to prevent and respond effectively to incidents of bullying behaviour.

**Responsibility of all Staff**

Staff at Mauchline Primary School, and where appropriate, Mauchline Early Childhood Centre, will promote positive behaviour in a number of ways:

**All staff create a welcoming environment by greeting children.** This may be as simple as a smile and a ‘good morning’ when the child enters.

**All staff model and promote positive,** **calm and consistent behaviour.** Staff model positive, calm and consistent behaviour with children and always set boundaries and expectations enabling pupils to feel safe. Expectations are clear, nurturing and reinforced at the class and whole school level.

**Staff plan lessons and activities that engage,** **challenge and meet the needs of all learners.** Staff provide the conditions for learning behaviours to develop by ensuring children and young people can access the curriculum, engage with lesson content and participate in their learning.

**All staff praise and over-communicate desirable behaviours.** The use of praise in developing a positive atmosphere cannot be underestimated. It is the key to developing positive relationships, including with those learners who are hardest to reach. A quiet word of personal praise can be as effective as a larger, more public, reward.

Pointing out and praising positive behaviours rather than dealing with unwanted behaviours can often be more effective.

Methods we use for praise include – simply saying ‘well done’, positive phone call or note home, recognition board, achievement assembly certificates, House points, sharing positive news with a member of SLT.

**All staff establish routines.** Having clearly defined routines enable children to feel safe and secure in predictable classroom environments.

We must teach children routines and expectations and keep reminding them, so they begin to self-regulate. Reminders may include trying the routine again (and again!) and/or praising pupils who carry the routine out correctly. Examples of routines that need to be taught include:

* Lining up quietly.
* Quiet walking around the school and into the building.
* Entering the classroom.
* Working with a group.
* Getting resources from around the class at the beginning of a lesson.

**Co-construction of Class Charters.** Co-constructing class charters gives pupils ownership of the expected behaviours. Class Charters include positive; rights respecting language and should be referred to and revisited often.

Guidance on how to construct a charter can be found [here.](https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/charter-guidance/)

**Teaching and reinforcing our school values.** Our school values are kindness, respect, determination and honesty. The explicit teaching and reinforcement of school values instils a sense of belonging and community.

**Use knowledge of The Three Rs (Dr Bruce Perry) to intervene in a simple sequence: Regulate, Relate and Reason.**

Regulate – first we must help the child to regulate and calm their fight, fright, freeze responses.

Relate – second, we must relate and connect with the child through an attuned and sensitive relationship.

Reason – third, we can support the child to reflect, learn, remember, articulate and become self-assured.

**School Approaches and Interventions**

When children and young people are not following the school values or if unsatisfactory behaviour occurs, staff can utilise the following approaches:

**Discrete interactions**

Staff should try to avoid shaming the child wherever possible. Focusing on positive and expected behaviours may distract. Or a quiet or private dialogue with the child may be required.

**Distraction**

Staff should try to distract and de-escalate, where possible, allowing an opportunity to calm down; this may be a walk to the toilet, making use of the class calm area or asking the pupil to help you with something.

**Counting for Self-Regulation**

1. First reminder (count “1”) Children are reminded about expectations and school values and given the opportunity to adjust their behaviour.
2. Second reminder (count “2”) Children are given a second reminder about the same behaviour and given a further opportunity to adjust this.
3. Third reminder (count “3”) If the same behaviour persists within the same period, then a member of the SLT will be informed that day and/or the parent called.

**Focus on Positive Behaviours**

Staff should use whole school approaches to praising and rewarding positive behaviours. This includes awarding a child a House Point using the class chart. Staff can also award Class Points as a whole class reward for positive behaviours. Individual stickers can be used by any member of staff and there may be cases where individual children would benefit from their own sticker chart to support and encourage positive behaviour.

If a teacher wishes to use group points for a child, this can only be used of the teacher has a discrete method for recording the points and no children feel shamed by displays of points. Points should not be removed from children once they have been earned.

Recognition boards can be used to focus on the wanted behaviour and names added. However, displays of children’s names must not be used to shame a child or record unwanted behaviours, e.g. images of sunshine and sad clouds.

**Prepare Children for Transitions**

Use the whole’s school inclusive approaches and ensure children are prepared for transitions. This could be using a visual timer or through a countdown from the teacher and warnings; “We have 5 minutes left until we will be tidying up...”.

**Track Incidents of Behaviour**

Use an ‘ABC’ chart to record observations – what happened before the behaviour, what may the trigger have been, what was the behaviour? This can be used to support interventions and/or to support dialogue with SLT if further supports are required.

**Restorative Conversations and the use of Consequences to Support Learning in the School**

In some cases, there may be a need for a consequence and/or a restorative conversation (a consequence is not always needed - a restorative conversation may be enough for the child to learn about the impact of their behaviour).

Both restorative approaches and the use of natural and logical consequences can fit well within a relationship-based approach as they are about helping children and young people learn about the impact of their behaviour and are not used purely for punitive purposes. Consequences that help young people to learn about the impact of their behaviour are more likely to reduce the likelihood of a reoccurrence of the behaviour.

**Restorative Conversations**

Restorative conversations centre around a set of key questions that help children and young people think about their behaviour and the impact it has had. Staff will use these questions prompts to support a restorative conversation:

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|  | **Key Questions** |
| Person Responsible | 1.What happened? (…and then what happened?)  2.What were you thinking at the time and what have your thoughts been since?  3.Who has been affected by this and how?  4.What do you think needs to happen now? How can we move forward from this? What will make things better? (sometimes best once both parties have given their account) |
| Person Harmed | 1.What happened?  2.What were your thoughts at the time?  3.How have you been affected? How did it make you feel?  4.What would make things better? How can we move forward form this? |

**Natural and logical consequences**

Natural and logical consequences are those that relate to the context of the behaviour that has taken place. Consequences that have little connection to the child’s behaviour can be meaningless, ineffective and can feel coercive, which can result in a long-term negative impact. Consequences, however, can be useful, when used in the context of effective nurturing practice. Where possible, consequences should be relational, educational and occur that day (where possible). When children and young people see the natural or logical consequence of their actions this can be help them to learn about the impact of their behaviours.

The consequence should not shame or humiliate the child and should not impact their right to play and relax. If a child has become dysregulated (has difficulty regulating their emotions) staff will use their knowledge of ‘The Three Rs’ to support a child to regulate, relate and then reason. Only when a child can reason, should a consequence be considered. We must also always protect pupil dignity.

Examples of logical consequences include:

* A child runs into the classroom – they are sent back to walk carefully.
* If a child throws things on the floor – they are asked to tidy it up.
* A child has been hitting other children – they spend break time outside with an adult to be supervised or in more extreme cases they may spend it indoors with SLT (the child must be able to eat their snack and given the opportunity to sit if they need a rest)
* A child repeatedly chats with other children at their desk – they are moved to a different group.

If the given consequence is not helping the child to learn from their behaviour, then the consequence should be changed or escalated e.g., if a child is continually talking and is being moved seats every day then try a different consequence e.g., a phone call home or speaking to SLT.

Communication is key to ensure a consistent approach – with the pupil who has displayed the behaviour, any pupils who have been wronged by the behaviour, with members of staff involved, with parents (if required). This may be in person, on the phone or via pastoral notes. However, if an incident has happened in the playground and been dealt with, there is no need to extend this into the classroom.

**Serious Incidents and Behaviour**

The safety of every member of the school community is paramount in all situations. If a child’s behaviour endangers the safety of others, then this must be reported to SLT. Also, if there are any incidents or bullying, theft, damaging property, racism or anything else deemed to be serious, this must also be reported to SLT. Teachers should also complete a pastoral note at the earliest opportunity to keep a record of such incidents.

**Supporting Staff Wellbeing**

In order to look after the health and wellbeing of the pupils in our care (and therefore build positive relationships), we must first look after our own mental health. Staff work hard to build positive relationships within the team. Staff are encouraged to meet in the staffroom after 3pm for a tea/coffee and blether. SLT have an open-door policy. Staff are aware and directed to East Ayrshire’s staff wellbeing portal.