



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Education and Children's Services



Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour Policy:

January 2025



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

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Positive Relationships - A Whole School and Systems Approach

1. Introduction and Guiding Principles

1.1. Introduction

This policy has been developed to provide a consistent approach across schools and early years settings across the Western Isles. The information in the policy will support schools develop their own policies and implement an authoritative, nurturing, relational approach. National guidance from Education Scotland requires all local authorities and all schools to have a relationships and behaviour policy in place to inform practice in educational settings.

The values we have are reflected in the relationships we have, are demonstrated in our interactions with others and influence the way we consider and behave towards each other. Adults in a learning community play an important role in modelling positive, respectful relationships for learners. Ethos and culture permeate school life and are essential elements to the development of good relationships and the creation of effective learning environments. There needs to be a shared understanding of wellbeing, inclusion, equality, and equity. This is underpinned by children's rights and how these factors affect relationships and behaviour.

Curriculum for Excellence promotes health and wellbeing as a responsibility of all, to ensure that achieving good affective outcomes for all children and young people is a priority.

Steps have been made towards developing a nurturing culture and ethos across CnES Education and Children's Services, schools, and early years settings. This policy will further support progress and consistency in providing whole school, whole systems approach: focusing on nurture and relationship-based approaches. This will impact positively on all learners and support all staff to meet needs.

1.2. Guiding Principles

Wellbeing	It is essential that the whole school community has a shared understanding of wellbeing and the dignity and worth of every individual. This promotes a culture and ethos of positive relationships.
Inclusion	Inclusion is everyone's responsibility. Inclusion happens when educational settings create environments that meet the diverse needs of all learners, through personalised learning and support that takes account of individual needs, choices, and circumstances.

	An inclusive and positive ethos which is embedded across the whole school community enables positive relationships to thrive. Inclusion entails children and young people being present, participating, achieving, and being supported.
Equality and Equity	Education settings that promote equality treat individuals fairly, value and celebrate diversity and challenge all forms of discrimination. Equity in education ensures that each child and young person is given the right support, at the right time, in the right place to achieve their full potential.
Children's Rights	Promoting positive relationships and behaviour is underpinned by a rights-based approach. Getting it Right for Every Child and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires every practitioner to familiarise themselves with and take account of the UNCRC, which has been incorporated into Scots Law (2024), in their day-to-day practice.

2. Rationale

From the research that exists, we know that positive relationships and behaviour are at the core of effective learning and teaching and the development of the wellbeing of the whole child. Strong, reciprocal relationships, those with high expectations and clear and consistent boundaries, matter most in terms of pupils' achievements and self-belief.

The guiding principles of nurture help us to take a holistic approach to the child or young person which consolidates the approach to wellbeing in Getting it Right for Every Child. The relationships that benefit children and young people most of all are those which recognise that all behaviour is communication.

Relationship based approaches when thoroughly understood and implemented lead to:

- Improved behaviour
- Improved attendance
- Greater academic attainment
- Reduced exclusions
- Improved attachment to staff, school, and community
- Improved resilience
- Improved long term outcomes

Whilst this approach is of benefit to all children and young people, it is especially beneficial to those who have experienced adversity and trauma in their lives. Research into Adverse Childhood Experiences indicates that a relationship with a trusted adult can mitigate the detrimental impact of these experiences. Early Years settings and schools are well placed to ensure that all children and young people are included, engaged, and involved by creating opportunities and building skills to develop positive relationships.

3. National and Local Policy Context

3.1. National Context

The legislative landscape emphasises the importance of wellbeing and relationships in shaping positive outcomes for children and young people. This is evident in national reviews requiring educational establishments and local authorities to review their current practice, policies and guidance around relationships and behaviour, for example:

- The Independent Care Review (Feb 2020)
- The ASfL Implementation Review (June 2020)

The importance placed on relationships and behaviour is founded on appreciation that approaches need to be developed from an understanding of children's needs and children's rights as documented in for example:

- Education Scotland Act (2016)
- Getting it Right for Every Child (Scottish Government 2022)
- Incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law (January 2024)

Some common principles are interwoven across Scottish Education legislation and guidance. For example: Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour (Scottish Government 2018) states that:

- All schools should have a relationships and behaviour policy
- All schools have a programme for providing professional learning to support the implementation of the policy

3.2. Local Policy and Guidance

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant local authority policies and guidance documents.

4. Relational Approaches – Key concepts

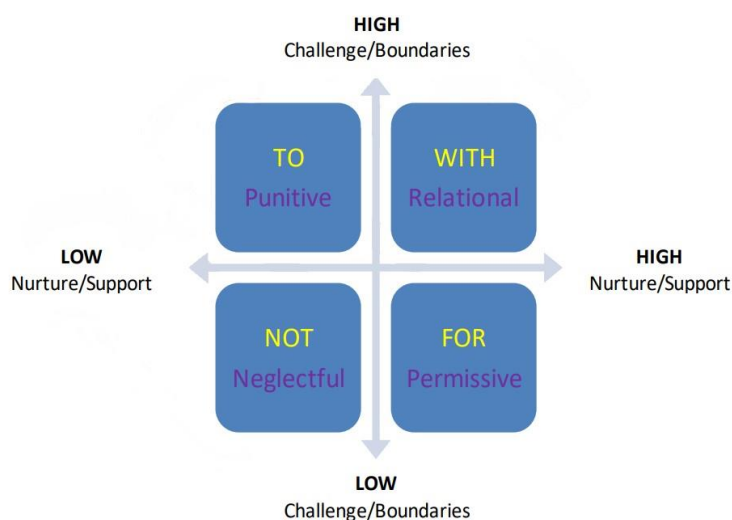
Several approaches are outlined in this document that are relational in nature, the key concepts of these are summarised below.

Attachment and child development	Approaches which are relational in nature are based on psychological theory, including child development and attachment theory. Children learn about themselves and others within their early interactions and relationships with others. Developing safe and secure relationships with attachment figures supports a child's regulation, social interaction, and learning. With a secure attachment which provides a safe base, the child or young person is more confident to go out and explore the world. Children who have not had the opportunity to form appropriate attachments or who have experienced significant trauma and stress are more likely to operate at a younger age developmentally and require
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Attachment and child development (continued)	guidance, support, and teaching to develop appropriate social and emotional skills.
Trauma Informed Practice	Trauma informed practice recognises the prevalence of trauma, including childhood trauma, and takes account of its impact on emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. Keeping the possibility of trauma, and the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of people who may be trauma survivors, in mind when planning approaches is the first step towards trauma informed practice. Understanding how stress can affect an individual is important. Knowing this will make us less likely to fuel other people's stress levels. Trauma informed practice means paying attention to how we engage with other people, as well as to what we do, thinking about what may have happened to someone, rather than judging what is wrong with them. We should not underestimate the capacity of positive interactions, even routine interactions, to be therapeutic and validating. Positive experiences of relationships are central to trauma recovery.
Nurturing Approach	A nurturing approach values everyone across the whole school community. Positive and attuned relationships are central to a nurturing approach. They form the foundation for effective teaching and learning, and the development of wellbeing. Children and young people's life experiences are taken into consideration as well as their strengths and interests. Nurturing Approaches can also be used as a targeted intervention, but they are particularly effective when used as a whole establishment approach which creates a nurturing and inclusive community. A Nurturing Approach is based on 6 Nurturing Principles: • Children's learning is understood developmentally • The environment offers a safe base • The importance of nurture for the development of wellbeing • Language is a vital means of communication • All behaviour is communication • Transitions are important in children and young people's lives
Expectations, Support and Consequences Expectations, Support and Consequences	Expectations and Support: Having appropriate levels of expectation and support has been shown to be effective in promoting positive outcomes such as reduced bullying in schools, higher levels of attainment and lower levels of pupil aggression.

Expectations, Support and Consequences
Expectations, Support and Consequences
 (continued)

To help children, young people and staff feel safe, the environment needs to provide high levels of nurture and support as well as high levels of structure, boundaries, and expectation. This is shown in the Social Capital Window below.



Expectations should apply all of the time and to everyone. They should, therefore, be created and agreed by everyone (learners, parents/carers & staff). They should be closely linked to the principles: for example, *'we keep ourselves safe'* or *'we respect each other'*. The connection between specific behaviours and the guiding principles can be made as required for example: *'We walk in corridors to keep ourselves safe'*, *'We leave the toilets clean because we respect each other'*. The aim is that children will learn to generalise what, for example, keeping ourselves safe, means in different scenarios without adult explanation.

Responding when behaviour falls below expectations: The policy for each setting should be clear about the principles of how situations in which behaviour falls below expectations will be resolved rather than focusing on fixed responses (sanctions).

When consequences need to be applied, they should be logical, related to the situation, have a focus on learning, and should take into consideration the needs and capacity of those involved. This will mean responses may vary for different individuals because their needs are different, for example a younger child or a child with additional support needs may not have the skills, understanding or ability to behave as an older or more able child might. The approach, however, remains consistent – focusing on repairing the harm caused, preventing it happening again, and returning to and refocusing on learning as quickly as possible.

Expectations, Support and Consequences (continued)	In practical terms when adults need to apply consequences the aim is for them to be: • Related to the behaviour • Respectful in the way they are communicated and enforced • Reasonable, proportionate, and developmentally appropriate
Restorative Approaches	Restorative approaches promote accountability and seek to repair any harm caused in a situation. Children and young people require the opportunity to hear about and face up to the harm and distress that they have caused others. This will help them to become responsible citizens. Restorative approaches have been found to be a more effective response than a traditional disciplinary approach. These approaches can change the emotional atmosphere in a school and lead to more positive relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff.
Staff Wellbeing	Staff wellbeing is a key factor in ensuring a nurturing, positive school environment. To be effective role models for the young people in their care, staff require good health, strength, and resilience to carry out their role successfully. Employee health and wellbeing is embedded in the culture, leadership, and people management of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, recognising the important role that everyone in education plays in supporting positive outcomes for children and young people. It is the role of senior leadership to protect and foster wellbeing by embedding appropriate strategies and approaches within management systems. Opportunities should be provided for collegiality, peer support and professional dialogue which allows staff to reflect on their practice and seek support when required.
Career Long Professional Learning	To embed greater knowledge and understanding of these approaches ongoing professional learning will be essential. This will include, attending courses, self-directed study, reflective practice, practitioner enquiry, coaching and mentoring. It will be the responsibility of the Local Authority and schools to identify and promote suitable learning opportunities.

5. The Practical Application of Policy: A Systems Approach

5.1. Whole School or Setting Level

The journey towards system change involves everyone having a shared understanding of why change is required, what needs to change, and how this will be achieved. Collective change requires a strategic approach that is multifaceted and persistent over a long period of time.

The Western Isles approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviour across the authority and wider community includes the implementation of a nurturing and restorative approach across the whole school or setting and requires the collective efforts of everyone in the education system.

Adopting relational approaches at a whole school/setting level takes time: time for staff to develop a shared understanding of the underpinning principles, time to learn, practice and refine the skills and strategies to support the approach, time to become confident and consistent in their use.

Key features of a whole systems relationship approach are outlined below:

- It is created in partnership with the wider school community with clear expectations about everyone's role within this
- It is clearly documented in a policy
- It requires consistency of practice to support the development of positive relationships
- Approaches are agreed upon and implemented consistently across the whole school

Staff behaviour is crucial in promoting positive relationships and behaviour:

- Staff model positive relationships and behaviour in their daily practice
- Staff are flexible and responsive to children and young people's needs
- Staff are reflective about how their behaviour can influence children's responses

5.2. Classroom or Early Years Setting Level

Working with children who have a high level of need is the responsibility of all adults in school/early years setting.

Practices that support the development of a nurturing classroom / early years setting:

- Curriculum
 - Relationship-based approaches are threaded through all areas of the curriculum and as part of the wider school system
 - Formal and informal interactions during the school day nurture positive relationships and behaviour
- Pedagogy
 - Relationship building is promoted and supported in the classroom

- Universal support is provided via a high-quality learning environment, underpinned by positive, nurturing, and respectful relationships between staff and young people
- Quality teaching is vital in order to support children to regulate, develop pro-social skills and take responsibility for their actions
- Pupil Support
 - Adults in the classroom have a range of relational approaches to draw on in order to manage needs
 - Management of low-level disruption through relational approaches and good quality inclusive teaching, leads to a calm and supportive environment where all children are able to learn
- Parent/Carer Engagement and Involvement
 - Parents/carers are actively encouraged to participate in life of school/early years setting
 - Open and effective communication between staff and parents/carers
- Other Supports, for example:
 - Assemblies
 - Parent Councils
 - Family-Community Supports

5.3. Staged Intervention

Staged assessment and intervention processes are well embedded across all schools in the Western Isles in line with all Local Authorities in Scotland. These processes ensure that children get the right support at the right time in the right place.

The majority of children and young people's additional needs will be best met through differentiated support provided alongside their classmates; however, a minority might require a more targeted approach.

5.4. Targeted approaches

Through ongoing assessment and intervention, it will be identified that some children and young people will need support that is additional to, or different from, the support provided for their peers. These children may need specific targeted support to develop their ability to regulate and engage in the social behaviours that build positive relationships and cohesive communities. Children may need to be taught specific skills for example, emotional regulation, turn taking, understanding of social expectations, and acceptance of social boundaries.

6. Implementation of Policy

Implementing this policy effectively in the Western Isles will require:

- Initial awareness raising of authority policy
- A review of current policy and practice, at authority and establishment level, including readiness within current systems
- Identification of ongoing professional learning need
- Identification of improvement and self-evaluation activity
- Implementation and review

Education Scotland highlight self-evaluation and implementation science as methods to achieve these aims.

6.1. Self-Evaluation

Establishments need to be prepared to carry out extensive self-evaluation of established systems to determine their suitability within a relational approach, as outlined in this policy.

The practice of self-evaluation is well established throughout education settings, supported by existing frameworks:

- How Good is Our School? 4 (HGIOS 4) (Education Scotland, 2015)
- How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (HGIOELC) (Education Scotland, 2016)

Both HGIOS 4 and HGIOELC emphasise the importance of positive relationships as features of highly effective practice in learning, across different quality indicators, for example:

- *The learning environment is built on positive nurturing and appropriately challenging relationships which lead to high quality outcomes (QI 2.3)*
- *Children tell us that they have been able to build up positive relationships with consistent adults who they trust enough to talk to when they need help (QI 2.1)*
- *Relationships across the school community are positive and supportive, founded on a climate of mutual respect within a strong sense of community, shared values, and high expectations (QI 3.1)*

Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach: A Framework to Support Self-Evaluation (Education Scotland, 2016) provides self-evaluation measures guided by the nurture principles. Tools included within this document support the implementation of relationship-based approaches at the whole school and systems level.

These self-evaluation frameworks will enable schools to align their systems to the relationship-based approaches outlined in this policy.

6.2. Implementation Science

Implementation science is the science of making interventions and programmes effective in real world contexts. It looks at the factors that might impact on the effectiveness of implementing an intervention in your context, including how you ensure fidelity to an approach. It also encourages schools to evaluate and measure outcomes along the way to ensure impact (Education Scotland 2017).

Successful implementation of a relationships-based approach at whole school and systems level may be evident by the achievement of the following aims:

- All school policies are developed in collaboration with children and young people, parents and carers, and staff to ensure a consistent and nurturing relationships-based approach
- Staff at all levels have a clear and shared understanding of what this means in practice
- Senior leaders work with school/setting community and partners to ensure that systems and school improvement plans are developed with a clear focus on the wellbeing and rights of children and young people
- Approaches towards supporting positive behaviour sit within the establishment's Promoting Positive Relationships Policy.

7. Summary

It is hoped that schools will find this information useful when developing their own policy and practice to promote positive relationships and behaviour. An effort has been made to summarise the information. To apply these approaches further information will be needed. Some further information can be found in the references.

8. References

Legislation

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, (amended 2016)

Education (Scotland) Act 2016

[Education \(Scotland\) Act 2016 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/12/section/1)

UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/12/section/1)

References (continued)

Scottish Government Policy

Scottish Government (2018) Developing a Positive whole-school ethos and culture: Relationships, Learning and Behaviour

[Developing a positive whole-school ethos and culture – Relationships, Learning and Behaviour \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (2022) *Getting it Right for Every Child*

[Supporting documents - Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\): policy statement - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (February 2020) *The Independent Care Review (The Promise)*

[Independent Care Review – The root and branch review of Scotland's care system.](http://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (June 2020) *Support for Learning all our Children and All their potential*

[Support for Learning: All our Children and all their Potential \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Education Scotland Guidance

Education Scotland (2015) *How Good is our School?*

[How good is our school? \(4th edition\) \(education.gov.scot\)](http://education.gov.scot)

Education Scotland (2015) *How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare?*

[How good is our early learning and childcare? \(education.gov.scot\)](http://education.gov.scot)

Education Scotland (2017) *Applying Nurture as a Whole School Approach*

[Applying nurture as a whole school approach - A framework to support self-evaluation | Resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](http://education.gov.scot)

Education Scotland (2017) *Using implementation science to support the implementation of interventions in real world contexts*

[Using implementation science to support the implementation of interventions in real world contexts | Resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](http://education.gov.scot)

Education Scotland (October 2023) *Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in Educational Settings*

[Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in Educational Settings](http://education.gov.scot)