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Aberhill Primary School

Positive Relationships Policy

*In designing and implementing policies, the school aims to demonstrate its positive approach to inclusion.*

All members of staff have a responsibility for ensuring that ***every*** classroom provides a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment where positive behaviour and relationships based on trust and respect are promoted. Research shows us that when children have safe and secure relationships with staff in schools, learning is optimised. Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour (Scottish Government, 2013) states:

‘*Research demonstrates that investing time and resources into improving relationships and behaviour in establishments leads to positive outcomes around inclusion, engagement and achievement in the short term, and community safety and cohesion in the longer term’.*

For this reason, at a universal level, we use the Emotion Works programme to develop emotional literacy in all our children from P1 – P7. It is really important that our children can identify and talk about their feelings in a safe and supportive environment. We also refer to the eight wellbeing indicators: **S**afe, **H**ealthy, **A**chieving, **N**urtured, **A**ctive, **R**espected, **R**esponsible, **I**ncluded and discuss what they mean for our children. Our other significant resource is The Seven Habits Leader in Me programme which encourages our children to be responsible and creates opportunities for leadership.

The school’s ethos is that of an extended family with good relationships at its heart. In this family, older children are encouraged and expected to set a good example for the younger children to follow, showing concern and respect for each other. All adults are encouraged and expected to be calm, consistent and caring. Our guiding principle is to be positive about behaviour at all times and to promote appropriate behaviour through having high expectations, being good role models and acknowledging and praising appropriate behaviour.

Whenever difficulties arise, as they do in any family context, the children are encouraged and expected to own up to any wrongdoing and settle their differences quickly and amicably, learning to exercise self-discipline and tolerance.

Children are encouraged and expected to recognise the difference between right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and to be seen to be trying to do what is right and to make the right choices. They should treat others as they would wish to be treated themselves, and at all times act with integrity and honesty. Everyone in our school is encouraged and expected to show respect for each other at all times.

The boundaries of acceptable behaviour are defined in terms of avoiding all behaviour that is hurtful or disrespectful to others, or infringes their right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment. This principle extends to the school environment as a whole, with children being expected to care for the school property and premises.

Children learn from an early age to recognise bullying as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time. Bullying, in all its forms, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Rewards and consequences are fairly and consistently applied. Rewards include verbal and written praise, the award of stickers and certificates, special mention in assembly and a positive postcard home. At times, the class may work toward a special treat just for their class. Children are encouraged through our ‘Leader in Me’ programme to take on leadership opportunities in their own classes and across the wider school community. This develops confidence and self-esteem and fosters skills for learning, life and work.

Consequences might include verbal warnings, time out to think, time apart from others to calm down and in more serious instances, sent to the Depute Headteacher or the Headteacher who will decide on the course of action to follow. We expect children to make reparations and apologise for their actions. Where these consequences are not sufficient, the parents of the child in question will be contacted by the Headteacher or Depute Headteacher to discuss the problem and agree a way of working together to get things back on track.

Rewards and consequence systems don’t work for every child. Some children with special educational needs are unable to understand the rules or stay within the boundaries. In these cases, we work closely with parents/carers, our Support for Learning teacher the Class Teacher and on occasion and where appropriate, our Educational Psychologist. We will, if necessary, make an individualised behaviour plan which will be kept under regular review.

Through our training on attachment and the impact of trauma1, we recognise that there are times when children who have been subjected to adverse childhood experiences may be unable to stay within the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Sometimes children who have experienced trauma within early relationships can become very hard to manage as they are in fight, flight or freeze mode. We recognise they are not challenging us, but that they need more practice putting ‘the lid back on’. Sometimes, traumatised children cannot talk about their feelings as the trauma happened when they were too young to process language. The safe adults around these children don’t need to know the details, but how to deal with a child experiencing trauma.

Our response in this situation is to stay calm and de-escalate (even if this appears to others to be ‘giving in’ to the child). A trauma-informed approach is one that recognises the impact of stress and adversity and responds with acceptance and empathy. As adults, we wait until the emotional brain has calmed down and the thinking brain has re-engaged before we can reflect on the incident. When they are calm, an adult will work with the child using emotion coaching techniques through our Emotion Works Programme. We will aim to:

* Regulate (A way of soothing)
* Relate (A way of connecting)
* Reason (A way of reflecting)
* Repair (A way of re-connecting)

Children who exhibit traumatised behaviour will have more intense ongoing support to enable them to explore their thoughts and feelings in a safe and supportive environment.

Temporary fixed term exclusion is a sanction that we use very sparingly. All cases eligible for exclusion are individual but are likely to include an element of either intended physical assault against a pupil or a member of staff or unsafe behaviour where they put themselves or others at risk. Permanent exclusion is an absolute last resort when every other possibility has been exhausted. Fife’s guidelines will be followed at all times in all cases.

*For information*

1Trauma is the emotional, psychological and physiological residue left over from heightened levels of toxic stress that accompanies experiences of danger, violence, significant loss and life-threatening events. Young children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of trauma.