



Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in Schools

Guidance

March 2026

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1. Purpose and Context

This guidance is an updated version of our previous framework for promoting positive relationships and behaviours. It aligns with the Scottish Government's new guidance, *Fostering a Positive, Inclusive and Safe School Environment*, and reflects current national expectations for creating nurturing and inclusive learning communities.

Our updated *Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in Schools* guidance sets out a non-statutory framework to support Fife's educational settings in creating environments that are nurturing, inclusive, and safe. It is informed by national frameworks such as *Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)*, *Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)*, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and directly links to *The Promise Scotland's Independent Care Review (2017-2020)* aimed at ensuring care-experienced children grow up loved, safe, and respected and that loving, supportive, and nurturing relationships are the foundation for a child's well-being, directly linking the quality of these relationships to a child's behaviour and life outcomes.

Our approach prioritises early intervention and preventative strategies, recognising that timely support can mitigate escalation and promote wellbeing in our children, young people and staff. In light of the behavioural and emotional challenges that have emerged post-pandemic, this guidance encourages schools to adopt consistent, rights-based practices that are sensitive to the evolving needs of our children and young people.

All educational settings are expected to engage with the guidance in full and consider its principles and recommendations within the context of their own school communities. Schools should use this guidance and supporting resources to critically reflect on current practices and identify areas for development. As part of this process, each setting is asked to develop and implement a clear action plan that outlines how they will foster positive relationships and behaviours. These plans should include explicit commitments, aligned with the guidance, that detail the strategies, supports, and structures they will implement to create nurturing, inclusive, and safe environments for all children, young people, and staff. These plans should be reviewed annually and updated, if needed.

2. Principles of Effective Relationships and Behaviour

An effective Relationships and Behaviour framework is underpinned by a values-led culture in which respect, kindness, and responsibility are explicitly taught, consistently modelled, and integrated into everyday practice.

To achieve this, schools are expected to engage in consultation activities with their wider school communities, including young people, families, and staff, to develop approaches. Local action plans must demonstrate consistency in applying this guidance, while remaining responsive to individual circumstances and developmental stages.

Recognising behaviour as a form of communication is fundamental to this approach. Children and young people may express unmet needs, emotional distress, or confusion through their actions, and staff play a key role in recognising and responding to these behaviours with empathy, supported by professional learning and the wider support

structures available. Trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate responses help build trust and foster resilience, ensuring that behavioural support contributes to, rather than detracts from, a child's overall wellbeing and their learning.

3. Use of Consequences

Establishing clear, age-appropriate behavioural boundaries is essential to healthy child development. Such boundaries provide structure and security, enabling children and young people to develop social competence and key skills for life, learning, and work. Promoting positive behaviour is integral to wellbeing, as reflected in the GIRFEC indicators, and expectations should be tailored to developmental stages.

The Scottish Government defines consequences as the actions or interventions implemented in response to a child or young person's behaviour. While consequences are commonly associated with addressing behaviour that does not meet established expectations, they also serve an important function in reinforcing positive behaviour and recognising instances where expectations are met or exceeded.

When behaviour falls short of expectations, the application of consequences is intended to address the behaviour constructively and to support the young person in a manner that reduces the likelihood of recurrence. This approach typically involves understanding the underlying factors influencing the behaviour and implementing supportive measures to address the needs of the young person and the needs of the class as detailed in Appendix 3.

Conversely, the use of consequences to encourage and strengthen positive behaviour and thereby increasing its future occurrence is referred to as reinforcement.

Schools have a range of consequences available to them. Section 5 and Appendix 1 provide further guidance to our educational settings around identifying appropriate consequences. Appendix 1 supplements this through illustrative examples of consequences and Appendix 2 sets out shared reflective questions designed to support decision making around consequences.

In accordance with our exclusion policy, developed in alignment with the national legislative framework, exclusion may be used as a last resort where it is proportionate, and no suitable alternative exists.

4. Whole-School Approach

A whole-school approach involves the active participation of staff, young people and families in shaping behaviour approaches and practices. This collaborative process ensures that action plans are relevant, inclusive, and reflective of the school's unique context.

Our educational settings should have action plans that address behaviour through understanding positive relationships and appropriate interventions. They should also clearly articulate behavioural expectations, outline escalation procedures, provide operational guidance for staff, and include mechanisms for monitoring and review.

Within this context, it is essential that staff are supported to develop a clear understanding of their school's identified approach to responding to challenging behaviour. The Education Directorate is committed to enabling this through the provision of high-quality professional learning, including the implementation of De-escalation and Trauma-Informed Practice across educational settings.

A key driver of this work has been the Core Approaches Networks, which have played a key role over recent years in embedding these practices. These facilitated peer networks have supported staff in deepening their knowledge and understanding of trauma-informed and de-escalation strategies and have also promoted collaboration across settings. By promoting the sharing of effective practice and co-developing resources, the networks have helped ensure that approaches to challenging behaviour are consistent, evidence-informed, and aligned with the needs of our settings.

Ongoing support and supervision can help staff navigate complex situations and maintain their own wellbeing. Staff should be encouraged to reflect on their own responses to behaviour, share experiences, and engage in professional dialogue. This creates a learning culture where behaviour support is continuously refined and improved, contributing to a more positive school environment. Whole school behaviour plans should be created and agreed on a collegiate basis.

Engaging families is also key. When parents and carers are involved in shaping and understanding our approaches to improving relationships and behaviour, it builds trust and shared responsibility. Schools should communicate clearly, offer opportunities for dialogue, and provide support where needed to ensure that families feel included and empowered.

5. Tiered Intervention Framework

Behavioural support should be delivered through a tiered model that allows for increasing levels of intervention based on need – universal, additional and intensive.

Universal strategies are preventative and applied across the whole school, promoting a positive climate and clear expectations.

Additional interventions provide individualised support for young people who require more personalised approaches, often involving small group work or individual plans.

Intensive interventions are reserved for complex cases and typically involve multi-agency collaboration, including health, social work, and educational psychology.

These interventions are further explained in Appendix 3 and require robust assessment and risk planning to ensure that support is coordinated and effective.

The use of data, including the development of the 3.1 Data Dashboards, is intended to strengthen professional judgement in identifying appropriate levels of intervention and in monitoring progress over time.

6. Rights-Based Decision Making

All decisions related to behaviour must uphold the rights of children and young people, as outlined in the UNCRC. This includes the right to express views (Article 12), the right to protection from harm (Article 19), the right to education (Article 28), and the right to develop to their full potential (Article 29).

Schools must balance the needs of dysregulated young people with those affected by it, ensuring that responses are fair, proportionate, inclusive and that classroom environments are safe and nurturing for all young people.

Rights also apply to learners impacted by any behavioural issues. All children have the right to an education and the right to develop to their full potential.

To ensure transparency and accountability in rights-based decision making, it is essential that children are meaningfully involved in discussions around behaviour and consequences, with their views taken seriously. Embedding these principles into daily practice requires a whole-school approach, as outlined earlier in the guidance.

Staff should be supported to understand and apply rights-based principles consistently, fostering a culture where every child feels valued, heard, and respected.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Education Directorate has a responsibility to ensure that all educational settings have access to robust and relevant data presented in a way that supports effective monitoring, evaluation, and informed decision making.

Achieving this requires accurate recording of information and incidents through our agreed processes. Consistency in these approaches across all settings is essential to fostering a culture where staff feel confident and supported to report incidents through the correct mechanisms.

By embedding these foundations, we are better positioned to develop, deliver, and monitor the effectiveness of school action plans aimed at promoting positive relationships and behaviour. Reliable data and consistent reporting enable us to identify emerging needs, evaluate the impact of interventions, and ensure that our strategies remain responsive, inclusive, and evidence-informed.

8. Staff Wellbeing and Support

Creating a positive, inclusive, and safe school environment requires a whole-school approach that includes supporting the wellbeing of staff. Staff who feel valued, supported, and safe are better equipped to foster nurturing relationships with young people and contribute to a culture of respect and inclusion.

This section outlines key principles and practices for supporting staff wellbeing:

- **Culture**
Leadership teams should actively promote a culture where staff wellbeing is

prioritised, and where open dialogue, mutual respect, and safety are embedded in daily practice.

- **Access to Support Structures**

Staff should have access to appropriate support mechanisms, including de-brief conversations, supervision or peer support. High quality professional learning should also be universally available.

- **Workload and Professional Autonomy**

Consideration should be given to workload management, opportunities for professional autonomy, and recognition of staff contributions. These factors are central to sustaining motivation and reducing stress.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Schools should regularly review staff wellbeing through their Staffwise survey data, further feedback opportunities, and professional dialogue. Insights should inform improvement planning opportunities.

- **Alignment with National Guidance**

This approach aligns with the Scottish Government's emphasis on wellbeing in Fostering a Positive, Inclusive and Safe School Environment, recognising that staff wellbeing is integral to whole-school wellbeing.

- **Staff Safety & Duty of Care**

Staff should have access to clear procedures for incident reporting, risk assessment and follow up support and debriefing. Staff should have access to Fife Council's Employee assistance programme.

Appendix 1

Illustrative Examples of Consequences

Behaviour	Underlying needs and functions of behaviour	Examples of responses
Meeting or exceeding expectations.	A child is feeling safe, valued and connected within their environment. A child is experiencing success and positive feedback, reinforcing their motivation to engage and behave positively. A child feels a sense of belonging and agency within the school community. A child's needs are being proactively met, including emotional regulation, sensory input, social connection, and cognitive support. A child may be seeking to contribute positively to the school culture and relationships.	Verbal praise that is specific and genuine. Opportunities for increased responsibility or leadership roles. Celebrating progress and effort, not just outcomes (e.g.: 'You worked really hard to stay focused through a tough task'). Recognition in assemblies or merit systems. Time with a trusted adult to reflect on what helped them succeed. Encouraging the child to model positive behaviour or mentor peers. Maintaining supportive relationships and regular check-ins even when behaviour is positive.
Low-level disruptive behaviour (e.g., continually disrupting learning and teaching, disengaging from learning by wandering in corridors instead of being	A child seeking connection may enjoy the reaction from peers or adults. A child who struggles with low self-esteem may act out to avoid situations where they feel they might fail.	A reminder of the expectation. Being asked/instructed to move to different seat within teaching area. Being asked/instructed to complete work in a different room/area under supervision.

in class, continually or seriously disrupting extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes or after school).	A child experiencing difficulties at home may struggle to focus and use disruption as a distraction. A child with additional support needs may become frustrated and disruptive when this need is unmet, and they are unable to participate equally. A child struggling with work, or with attention lapses, may disengage to avoid work they find challenging. A child may be seeking acceptance from their friends so following the crowd. A child who struggles with transitions may find it hard to shift from classroom/learning space expectations to a more informal setting. A child who lacks confidence in their abilities may disrupt to avoid participating. A child who has difficulty with authority may see after-school activities as less structured and act out.	Being given an alternative activity to the rest of the class that allows the child to regulate their emotions or behaviour. Being asked to take a break from the class or activity for a short time. Discussion and reflection with the child to assist self-regulation. A reinforcement of the expectation with differentiated explanation. A reduction in the stress load for the child, for example if they have dyslexia, Autism or ADHD. Access to learning support. Support strategies such as check-ins or a one-to-one conversation to help address the underlying causes of behaviour. Period by period registration and letting home know any period a young person does not attend. Identify a safe space for the young person if mainstream class becomes too overwhelming. Parental communication (truancy texts, attendance information, parental meeting). Timetable adaption.
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Unsafe, anti-social, or otherwise unacceptable behaviour, including shouting, abusive or potentially physical behaviour during breaks or period changes (secondary).	A child may be showing off to friends to gain authority/acceptance/status. A child with ADHD may struggle with impulse control and act without considering consequences. A child who feels excluded or lonely may engage in disruptive behaviour to gain attention or connection. A child with autism may be seeking sensory input or struggling with personal space. A child is not yet developmentally able to understand and manage big emotions and feels overwhelmed. A child is modelling the behaviour of others. 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. An excitable child may accidentally knock into others without realising the impact. A child with a sensory impairment may not be aware of their proximity to	Restricted access to corridors/areas during lunchtimes/morning breaks for a period of time. Requirement to undertake additional supervised activities during lunchtime/breaks for a period of time. Requirement to be collected by parent/carer for intervals and/or lunchtimes. Additional time with staff or in a smaller group at break or lunch time. Reflective time/exercise to consider the impact of the behaviour on themselves and others. ‘Out of class two minutes early’ so they move through corridors while largely empty. Escort to collect and walk child to next class. A reduction in transitions. Additional adult support to aid co-regulation. 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. Explicitly taught the skills they do not yet have in a way that leads to learning in this area. Social and emotional skills curricula.
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	others. A child with high anxiety may rush through corridors to avoid social interactions. 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.	In-school alternative provision for a period of time (to allow matters to calm, time for planning, parental meetings etc). Exclusion from school (to allow matters to calm, time for planning, meeting with parents etc). 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).
Displays prejudice-based behaviours such as racism, misogyny or gender-based violence, homophobia.	A child may be seeking to establish social capital by targeting those seen as 'different'. A child may be being influenced by other people in their lives, such as family, friends or online influences. A child may be repeating language they have heard elsewhere. A child may be vulnerable to prejudice based narratives because they feel excluded, or marginalised. A child may be vulnerable to far-right radicalisation. A child may be displaying behaviours they have themselves experienced. A child or young person's behaviour	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. Removal from unsupervised corridors/areas during lunchtimes/morning breaks for a period of time. Requirement to undertake additional supervised activities during lunchtime/breaks. Referral to specialist agencies. 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. Identifying whole-school interventions to ensure promotion of an inclusive and respectful school culture, such as embedding a whole-school approach to anti-racism.

	may reflect an exertion of power or control over others, influenced by their own position of relative privilege in relation to an oppressed group.	Some behaviours may require more tailored responses. See Respect for All.
Being violent towards others.	A child experiencing frustration or anger may be lashing out due to difficulty regulating emotions. A child who has experienced trauma may perceive a threat and act defensively. A child with attachment difficulties may struggle with relationships and misinterpret social cues as hostility. A child experiencing stress at home may have heightened emotional responses and struggle with self-regulation. A child may be modelling abusive relationships witnessed at home.	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). Exclusion from school (to allow matters to calm, time for planning, meeting with parents etc). 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). 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.

Appendix 2

Reflective Questions to Support Decision Making

Question	Suggested Response	Solution / Example Action
What is the behaviour we saw—not what we felt about it?	“The pupil repeatedly talked over others and left their seat without permission.”	Calmly remind the pupil of classroom expectations; re-establish seating or proximity support.
	“The pupil used inappropriate language towards a peer.”	Restorative conversation; apology; link consequence to impact.
	“The pupil walked out of class without warning.”	Safe return to class; check for underlying need; short regulation break if needed.
What need or function might this behaviour be serving?	“Seeking attention or connection.”	Provide structured attention opportunities, e.g., roles, leadership, peer support.
	“Avoiding challenging work.”	Scaffold tasks, chunk work, provide visual instructions.
	“Dysregulated / overwhelmed.”	Short regulation break, check-in with trusted adult, offer coping strategies.
Is this behaviour new, persistent, or part of a pattern?	“New today—may be linked to break incident.”	Monitor, offer support, and follow-up reflection.
	“Weekly pattern, usually last period.”	Implement targeted strategies, e.g., adjusted timetable, check-in system.
	“Seen across subjects.”	Whole-school support plan, guidance involvement, behaviour tracking.
Could ASN, wellbeing, or safeguarding factors influence behaviour?	“Has emotional regulation needs.”	Include SfL / guidance in plan; targeted interventions.
	“Family stressors at home.”	Check-in, pastoral support, possible external agency referral.
	“Peer conflict flagged by guidance.”	Mediation / restorative meeting.
How did my interaction influence the situation?	“Tone may have escalated behaviour.”	Reflect on approach; use calm non-verbal support next time.

	"Proximity helped calm pupil."	Repeat for similar situations; model positive reinforcement.
	"Didn't check understanding."	Give instructions verbally and visually; check for comprehension.
Have I made expectations clear and explicit?	"Revisited Ready to Learn expectations."	Display classroom rules; model desired behaviours.
	"Instructions were verbal only."	Add written/visual support; chunk tasks.
Have I used de-escalation/restorative approaches?	"Used calm gesture; gave space."	Continue with non-confrontational support; record for review.
	"Restorative chat attempted but too heightened."	Revisit later when regulated; schedule reflection session.
Is the pupil connected to a trusted adult?	"Yes—guidance teacher has positive relationship."	Use guidance for check-ins, mentoring, and support.
	"No clear connection yet."	Assign key adult for mentoring or pastoral support.
Is the consequence proportionate and linked to behaviour?	"Seat move reduced disruption."	Temporary seating adjustment with clear explanation; follow up positively.
	"Restorative conversation more appropriate than removal."	Conduct discussion; record reflection outcomes.
	"Loss of privilege linked to behaviour."	Apply and explain clearly; review after behaviour improves.
Does the consequence help pupil do better next time?	"Checklist supports organisation."	Provide visual reminders; monitor completion.
	"Agreed coping strategies."	Model strategies; check understanding; provide scaffolding.
Is it a natural or logical consequence?	"Completing missed work during supervised session."	Provide catch-up session; reinforce learning.
	"Reparation for damage supports accountability."	Have pupil repair / contribute to solution; discuss impact.
Is exclusion being considered only as last resort?	"Other supports tried; risk remains."	Follow exclusion policy; document all interventions.

	"Short-term Inclusion Hub more appropriate."	Allocate temporary safe space; restorative follow-up.
Could the consequence disadvantage pupil?	"Completing work at home isn't feasible."	Provide supervised in-school catch-up.
	"Removal from practical work reduces access."	Offer adapted in-class role; maintain access to learning.
Have similar behaviours been addressed consistently?	"Matches previous departmental approach."	Ensure consistency; share across staff team.
Does the pupil have unmet needs?	"Anxiety impacting attendance."	Targeted pastoral support; check-in/check-out; scaffolded tasks.
Are class needs considered?	"Seat change supported learning environment for all."	Adjust classroom seating; maintain learning focus for peers.
Has harm been acknowledged?	"Pupil recognised impact on class."	Facilitate restorative conversation; encourage verbal/written apology.
Have those affected had a voice?	"Peer explained feelings; staff contributed."	Include peers in restorative discussion; safe sharing environment.
Can pupil make amends meaningfully?	"Completed reparation; reflection written."	Assign practical tasks; discussion and follow-up check.
How will relationships be repaired?	"Fresh start next period; follow-up check-in."	Teacher greets pupil; ongoing monitoring and positive reinforcement.
What support is needed to reduce recurrence?	"Check-in/check-out; regulation breaks."	Implement support plan; monitor effectiveness.
Who needs to be involved?	"Guidance, parents, SfL, SLT if necessary."	Communicate plan; coordinate interventions across staff.
What strengths can we build on?	"Responds well to structure; strong practical skills."	Assign roles and tasks leveraging strengths; positive reinforcement.
When will we review progress?	"After one week / three lessons / next pastoral meeting."	Schedule review; adjust strategies based on outcome.

Appendix 3 - Relationship & Behaviour based interventions within the GIRFEC framework for intervention

1. Universal (Whole-School Level Supports)

Purpose: Preventative approaches linked to positive ethos and culture

Examples:

- Clear focus on positive relationships characterised by respect and care
- Staff training in relationship-based core approaches
- Clear behaviour expectations aligned with school values
- Explicit teaching of routines and transitions
- Use of calm, clear language, supported by non-verbal cues (eye contact, facial expression, supportive physical proximity)
- Praise and recognition for meeting expectations
- Consistent systems (e.g. merits, warnings, de-merits)

2. Additional (Individualised Supports)

Purpose: For children/young people needing additional support

Examples:

- Assessment of support needs undertaken to inform support planning (e.g. Summary of Support, Child's Plan)
- Targeted adult support (e.g. Support for Learning, Guidance staff, PSA) or mentoring
- Adaptations to learning tasks, activities, routines, and environments
- Targeted interventions (e.g. social skills groups)
- Advice sought from support services (e.g. EPS, SLS, PSS)

3. Intensive (More Targeted Supports)

Purpose: For children/young people presenting with complex needs

Examples:

- Individualised risk assessment and proactive management plan
- Multi-agency involvement and planning (e.g. EPS, SLS, PSS, SW, Allied Health Profs)
- Bespoke curriculum and/or learning environment

Appendix 4 - Relationships and Behaviour Action Plan

What is the key issue of challenge?	What do we need to do to address this? (Outcome) (Examples Below)	What actions will be needed? (What is the timescale for doing this?)	What evidence will we have of progress, completion or impact?	Who will lead this action?
Example; Safe, Supportive, and Inclusive Work Environment	Staff feel safe and supported, with confidence in their employer's compliance with legislative duties (e.g. Health & Safety, Equality Act 2010)			
	Wellbeing is actively supported, with access to wider services where needed			
	Staff are confident in addressing behaviour linked to inequality and protected characteristics			
Example; Evidence-Based Practice and Professional Empowerment	Schools have the knowledge and confidence to identify key behaviour trends and improvement priorities through access to accurate and robust incident reporting data			
	Staff are empowered to implement high expectations through understanding of behaviour, child development, and classroom management.			
	Access to national guidance, professional learning, and exemplars supports evidence-based approaches to relationships and behaviour.			
	Staff are confident in assessing, recording, and responding to behaviour and wellbeing concerns, including trauma-informed practice			

What is the key issue of challenge?	What do we need to do to address this? (Outcome) (Examples Below)	What actions will be needed? (What is the timescale for doing this?)	What evidence will we have of progress, completion or impact?	Who will lead this action?
Example; Collaborative and Consistent School Culture	Schools have clear, collaboratively developed policies on relationships and behaviour aligned with national guidance			
	A culture of collegiality is fostered among staff, families, children, and multi-agency partners.			
	Robust procedures are in place for assessment of need, risk, and multi-agency support.			

*Support in embedding establishment action plans will be provided to ensure maximum impact and successful outcomes for Children, Young People & Staff