

## **Southcraig School**

### **Positive Relationships Policy**

#### **Introduction**

##### **Our Vision**

At Southcraig School, we work together to provide an inclusive learning environment where everyone is valued and achievements are celebrated. We are committed to ensuring success, equity and wellbeing for all.

##### **Our Values**

Our values of Happiness, Respect, Independence, Communication & Inclusion reflect what we believe creates a positive and nurturing ethos within the school.

At Southcraig School we know that secure and trusting relationships are key to everything! Above all we aim to develop warm, supportive, respectful relationships with all pupils and to have unconditional positive regard for all.

<b>Our school ethos supports positive, supporting relationships by:</b>	
Being rights respecting	Supporting learners to know their rights and that we all have a responsibility to respect each others' rights
Being nurturing	Using the Nurture Principles in our practice. A caring ethos which develops resilience and social & emotional skills.
Being restorative	Supporting relationships with restorative conversations and resources to help young people to repair relationships and avoid conflict.
Being trauma sensitive	Creating safe and respectful environments that help anyone affected by trauma to heal, regulate their emotions and build healthy relationships.
Promoting wellbeing	Making sure everyone feels, safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included.
Promoting social and emotional learning	Helping our learners develop relationship skills, self-awareness, social awareness, self-regulation and responsible decision-making.

We understand that ALL behaviours are communication and that children and young people can use behaviour to tell us something. "Challenging Behaviour" is often a DISTRESSED child communicating an unmet need. We want to build a staff team that understands this and investigates the bigger picture when faced with behaviours focusing on the child and what they need. We also know that some behaviours can at times be inappropriate or challenging and can limit a pupil's opportunities. We wish therefore to help our pupils understand and regulate their emotions and behaviours, adapt to changing circumstances and demonstrate regulated and

appropriate behaviour as far as is possible to maximise their opportunities to engage with others and learn.

Crucially, we know that each child and young person has their own individual set of strengths and fundamental needs that must be considered on an individual basis. It is important to work with the child and the 'team around the child' (family and other agencies as required) to develop an understanding of needs and behaviours and to develop consistency in support strategies in a proactive way.

### **Leadership Team Responsibilities:**

- To ensure the health and safety of pupils, staff, visitors, parents, students etc.
- To provide support and advice as required.
- To facilitate professional development and training activities to be undertaken in order to develop a knowledgeable and skilled staff team.
- To provide access to resources that support positive regulated behaviour.
- To liaise with class team, parents and other agencies as required through a 'Team around the Child' approach.
- To review and update policies and procedures as appropriate.

### **Responsibilities of all Staff:**

- To build and maintain appropriate positive, supportive relationships with children and young people in order that they feel accepted, valued and important and receive the support they are entitled to.
- To treat all young people with dignity and understanding during challenging times.
- To contribute to the positive ethos of the school.
- To model appropriate behaviours in line with our vision, values and Rights Respecting School Charter.
- To work within the principles of GIRFEC and Curriculum for Excellence.
- To follow guidance in policy relating to supporting positive behaviour.
- To have clear boundaries and supports in the class environment.
- To promote and support each other's wellbeing particularly at challenging times.
- To be a behaviour 'detective' and investigate what is 'under the tip of the iceberg', identifying triggers and drivers of behaviours.
- To spend time getting to know a child's fundamental needs related to communication, sensory needs, motivators and learning approaches.
- To note all these clearly in pupil profiles, communicate these and associated strategies with team members and ensure consistency of approach. .
- To be as 'predictable' as possible to allow pupils to trust and feel safe.
- To use motivating, meaningful and purposeful learning and teaching approaches that meet individual learner's needs.
- To ensure good organisation of learning activities and support task demands and transitions with visual or other supports as required to promote understanding.
- To support pupils to relate to others and be effective in social situations.
- To support pupils to understand and regulate emotions as far as possible.
- To reflect on own practice and seek to deepen understanding and develop skills with regard to promoting positive behaviour through professional learning.
- To record incidents following agreed procedures.

## **Ways in which we support positive behaviour at Southcraig School**

- Unconditional positive regard for all children and young people.
- Warm, positive, happy welcoming school ethos.
- Living our Vision, Values and Aims.
- Rights Respecting School's Charter and Right of the Week.
- Having clear boundaries as a positive part of a nurturing approach.
- Viewing distressed behaviours as communication, not challenge.
- Modelling appropriate behaviour and 'sharing your calm' in challenging situations.
- Attempting to identify and understand fundamental needs (sensory needs, communication needs, learning approaches etc.)
- Ensuring the learning environment is considered in relation to sensitivities and needs.
- Ensuring a Total Communication Approach for all learners.
- Ensuring well organised, structured and visually supported learning tasks.
- Having a proactive, supportive approach. Viewing behaviours as attention needing not seeking! Giving pupils what they need (regular interactions, sensory diets, top ups, breaks etc)
- Ensuring a child has the opportunity to express themselves and feel heard and make choices regularly about what they do or what happens to them.
- Linking with families and other agencies with a 'team around the child' approach.
- Sharing relevant information through pupil profiles with all relevant staff and any new staff joining the team (motivations, triggers, sensory needs etc.)
- Working with parents to share successes and strategies.
- Working with the young person as appropriate to discuss emotions and behaviour and design, teach and model coping strategies.
- Use of Zones of Regulation approach, appropriate to the learners.
- Ensure an appropriate sensory diet throughout the day and safe spaces and breaks to escape and rebound.
- Using a range of teaching approaches to meet learners' needs.
- Developing consequences if appropriate that are timely, proportionate and meaningful to the young person based on class boundaries.
- Deepening our understanding of behaviour and support through ongoing Professional Learning.

When distressed or dysregulated behaviours occur we have to try to understand what is going on from the child's point of view and ask the following questions: What is the purpose of this behaviour? What function does it serve? What is this child trying to get that they can't get in another way? What is this child trying to escape or avoid? What is this child gaining from their behaviour? What are they telling us? (anxious, overloaded, in pain, frustrated, overloaded, need stimulus or feedback e.g. in self-stimulating behaviours, self harm)

Behaviour very often serves four main functions – To get an object or activity, to avoid a task, to gain social stimulation/attention or for sensory stimulation. Having an awareness of these main functions can help design support systems for individuals.

When a child or young person displays dysregulated behaviours it can be because of a build up of stress or anxiety which they find difficult to understand or communicate. This then can lead to an 'outburst'.

Alternatively, as pupils develop, work with different or new staff members etc. they can test boundaries and use negative or control-seeking behaviours to do this. Outlined below are support strategies to prevent distressed or dysregulated behaviours, prevent escalation, what to do at crisis and afterwards.

### **Prevention**

- Build trusting relationships with the children and young people. Get to know their likes, dislikes, motivators, strengths, triggers, early warning signs, behaviour drivers, needs. What is the communication 'key' for this child? Get to know how the child or young person responds to pain, illness, sensory difficulties, hunger etc. Use this information when planning, assessing and developing support.
- Ensure a nurturing approach and have high expectations and clear boundaries.
- Use information provided from home through diary, phone calls etc. to support understanding of how the pupil is feeling when they come into school. Are there issues or challenges at home we need to be aware of?
- Aim to keep the child calm and organised by providing pro-active supports throughout the day such as a sensory diet or movement breaks to organise sensory systems and release stress chemicals and safe spaces or periodic breaks to escape and regroup.
- Have fun in class! Increase tolerance, increase connection, increase choices!
- Be prepared and organised for lessons, transitions, outings etc. Make sure information is shared with the team as appropriate.
- Provide regular positive experiences, safe sensory exploration and play throughout the day.
- Make sure learning tasks are meaningful, purposeful and motivating for individuals. What is the 'hook' for this child? Is this task desirable for the child? Think about task demands for individuals and how they respond. Does the child understand what is expected of them? Do we need to reduce demands, make demands in a different way, chunk the task up, support the task demands visually? What transactional supports will allow the child to understand what is expected of them and engage as fully as possible? How does the child know, what is expected of them, what they need to do and when they will be finished?
- Are we developing independence skills? Are there opportunities to be independent?
- Think about the learning environment and other external factors –tidiness, temperature, distractions, lighting etc. Is the child experiencing sensory confusion or overload? Can we adapt?
- Ensure a high level of structure and predictability. Develop familiar and predictable routines in class. Support the child to understand these through visual or written timetables or the use of objects of reference.
- Prepare children and young people for what is expected of them through visual structure, learning intentions, 'first, then' strips, objects of reference, social stories etc. This is particularly the case if there is a change of routine.
- Ensure regular positive social interactions as well as regular opportunities to communicate and make choices and decisions throughout the day – use AAC and preferred modes of communication as required to support this basic right.
- To keep communication positive and clear, adopt the 'one person, one message' principle when interacting. Be mindful of own body language and the volume, tone etc. of verbal prompts – who is the message for? Who else needs to hear it? Be aware of the distracting effect of social chat at work times.
- Give children and young people time to process information, instructions or requests.

- Support children to understand their emotions over time through teaching and naming, use of visuals etc.
- Provide calming strategies and coping tools for tackling stress and emotional overload e.g. the use of a break card, sensory bag, breathing exercises etc. but do not expect the child to be able to use these independently to self-regulate without modelling and direct instruction over a period of time. It is very important to practice the coping strategies when calm before coaching the child to use them when upset.
- Develop consistency in responses to challenging behaviour across the team. Ensure everyone knows strengths, needs and identified strategies in pupil profiles and that everyone adheres to these. Support families to use approaches across home and school to further develop consistency.
- Use praise frequently in a way that is meaningful for the individual.
- Recognise and get to know early warning signs of anxiety, dysregulation and defensive behaviours.

### **De-escalation**

- Stay calm - behavior influences behaviour! Consistent, calm adult behaviour.
- Distract the child or young person calmly if possible. Use humour if appropriate. Be supportive and empathetic. Reassure and attempt to redirect.
- Acknowledge how the child or young person is feeling. Name the feeling - understand and empathise.
- Change the location/task/person – sometimes this creates a shift.
- Give control by offering a choice if possible.
- Reduce demands and lower stimulation.
- Slow down and lower your voice. Use minimal language. Use brief, simple, clear statements. Reduce or cease questions.
- Use Intensive Interaction/Responsive Communication to let them feel 'heard' (match the child or young person's level of expression, then help them bring it down)
- If receptive, calm with deep pressure or rhythmic patterns but do not force your assistance.
- Encourage or co-actively support the child or young person to use calming strategies already taught– positive self-talk, comforters, sensory equipment, familiar objects.
- If they can self-regulate, let this happen as appropriate (go to a quiet space, use a chewy tube, use a gym ball for example)
- Give positive instructions – tell the children and young people what you want them to do rather than what you don't want them to do.
- Plan ignore the behaviour (not the person) if appropriate to do so( giving inappropriate behaviour attention can reinforce it) but even then seek to understand what the child is doing and why he/she needs to do it.
- Involve the child or young person in decisions as appropriate – give choices to resolve and explain consequences if behavior continues.
- Use clear, simple language
- Praise the other children or young people who are doing the right thing
- Use non-verbal communication – tone, volume, eye contact, gesture etc. to reinforce what you are saying.

### **At crisis/meltdown/sensory overload**

- Stay safe - give the person space, change location of person or the rest of the group.
- Remove or direct the person to a safe space or area only if possible.
- Share your calm! Stay calm and quiet (on the outside at least!) and respect personal space.
- Communicate acceptance and safety. Reassure and let the person know they are safe (“It’s ok – you are safe”; “I am here, we are safe”; “This will end soon”)
- Give the person time to work through time of difficulty.
- Think about the sensory aspect of the area – lights off, reduce sound, etc.
- Be there for the person – if it is safe to do so.
- Follow their behaviour support plan and get help as required.
- If physical intervention is required, or a calm area is used then all staff must follow SAC Management Guidelines on the use of Physical Intervention and Seclusion.

### **Immediately afterwards**

- Give time to gradually recover and process what has happened.
- Be aware that the child may still be distressed inside and vulnerable to overload or escalation.
- Continue to use calming and supportive strategies and recovery techniques as required in the child’s plan. The aim is to help the child re-engage in class or individual learning activities when ready.
- Move on – this is especially important in maintaining the child or young person’s self-esteem. To keep bringing up inappropriate behaviour can be damaging to a child or young person’s self-esteem.
- Repair and reconnect with the child positively.
- If the child or young person wants to talk about it then do so in a calm manner. Try not to dwell on it too long.
- Accept apology if given (this may be verbal or through body language or the way they approach a task)
- Reassure the child or young person – they may be worried they have damaged the relationship between you and them. Although the behaviour has been inappropriate they still need your acceptance.
- As the adult involved in a challenging situation, you may need time to recover and talk through the event. If you want to talk through what happened, please think about where you do it and who can hear. After a serious incident a de-brief can take place with a member of the SLT, when it is appropriate and safe to do so.

### **Once the situation has calmed**

- Think about what happened – were there triggers you could identify?
- Could anything have been done differently? How else could the task have been approached?
- Is there a pattern of behaviour building?
- Is there a need to review the child’s profile and support plan?
- Could restorative conversations and resources be used to discuss the situation with the young person?
- Please record behaviours following agreed procedures.

## **Targeted Supports**

Some pupils may need specific support strategies to help them through a challenging period, or to engage in their learning. This is known as targeted support and a Team around the Child (TAC) meeting may be called to review and plan supports:

- *Action Plan following Team with the Family (TWF) meeting.*
- *Updated Profile Information – any support plan should be recorded and followed by all involved*
- *There may be a requirement for a Risk Assessment to be created, agreed by parents and followed by all involved.*
- *Behaviour Targets in Wellbeing section of Learning Plan*
- *Sensory Assessment/Sensory Profile/Sensory diet*
- *Dietary Profile*
- *Communication Strategies*
- *Boxall Profile highlighting social & emotional targets.*

Ensure that any young person experiencing a challenging time has plenty opportunities for positive experiences and positive feedback throughout their day. It can be easy for the challenging behaviour to become all-consuming but we need to find ways to improve the young person's life generally if we can.

Please see our Relationships Toolkit for professional learning, resources and strategies to support your everyday practice.

## **Anti-bullying ethos**

We share South Ayrshire Council's anti-bullying vision and promote a culture where bullying behaviour is not acceptable. We are committed to establishing a caring, learning community where all members are valued and everyone has a responsibility to promote respect, openness, honesty and understanding.

Respect is one of our school values, and is promoted around the school and through assemblies. Our children and young people are encouraged to practice kindness to each other.

All of our children and young people have the right not to be discriminated against or treated unfairly; to be treated in their best interests and to have their rights respected, protected and fulfilled. Our children and young people have the right to say what they think and have their opinions taken into account; to get and share information and to think and believe what they want, as long as this is not damaging to others.

All incidents of bullying reported or witnessed, will be recorded as soon as possible and responded to, with actions taken and outcomes being recorded. Incidents will also be recorded in the Bullying and Equalities Module within the SEEMiS system.

**We recognise that schools should place a greater importance on inclusion and belonging through promoting positive relationships and behaviour, effective teaching and preventative responses.**

**All children wish to belong, achieve and contribute to their school, family and community. Child-centred approaches, where their voices are central and where plans utilise their strengths, resources and qualities are integral to success.**

**All of us need to feel safe and cared for and enjoy a sense of belonging. Schools play a vital part in developing both relationships and the sense of belonging for all children.**

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