

Promoting **Positive**

Relationships and Understanding
Distressed Behaviour

**Guidelines for
Establishments**

Introduction and Rationale

“All behaviour is communication... children and young people with particular Additional Support Needs or disabilities may display anxiety or distress through behaviour that presents to adults as challenging.” (No Safe Place, 2018)

Research has shown that a positive ethos based on mutual trust and respect has a positive impact on improving learning and behaviour (The Scottish Government and Scottish Advisory Group on Behaviour in Schools – SAGBIS, 2012).

South Lanarkshire Council Education Resources’ approaches for establishments on promoting positive understanding behaviour are set out in these guidelines and the following documents:

- Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour – Approaches and Strategies for Understanding and Dealing with Distressed Behaviour Poster
- Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour – Distressed Behaviour Management Arrangements
- Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour – Appendices and Supporting Documents

These reflect the key policy drivers of the Scottish Government including:

- Getting it Right for Every Child
- Curriculum for Excellence
- Included, Engaged and Involved, Part 2: A Positive Approach to Preventing and Managing School Exclusions (2017)
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended
- Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research (2012)
- “better relationships, better learning, better behaviour” (2013)
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014
- Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People (2017)
- National Improvement Framework (2018)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)

Establishments should also refer to Education Resources' Operating Procedures on:

- Child Protection (A22 & A22A)
- Additional Support for Learning (A28)
- Preventing and Managing School Exclusions (A8)
- Violence at Work Reporting (A30)
- Prevention and Management of Incidents Involving Offensive Weapons

Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour

Head Teachers and managers within Education Resources should refer to this guidance and to “better relationships, better learning, better behaviour” (Scottish Government, 2013) to inform their roles and responsibilities in developing procedures to improve relationships and behaviour within schools and establishments and across Learning Communities.

Where children and young people feel safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included, they are more likely to develop self-confidence and resilience.

It is essential for staff to recognise and understand that all behaviour is communication and that distressed behaviours are responses to anxiety, confusion, vulnerability and a range of other needs. This includes children and young people with severe or profound learning needs who may employ a very limited repertoire of behaviour to communicate a variety of needs. Support and guidance for children and young people with severe and profound learning needs can be found in the “Framework for a Curriculum for Pupils with Severe and Profound Learning Needs - South Lanarkshire Council” and in a range of motivational scales (see References and Useful Links at the end of this booklet) to help us understand why a young person with these needs may behave in a particular way.

All staff have a responsibility to be proactive in Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour particularly in relation to the Health and Wellbeing component of Curriculum for Excellence including:

- Establishing open, positive and supportive relationships
- Promoting a climate in which all children and young people feel safe and secure

- Modelling behaviour which promotes health and wellbeing and encouraging it in others
- Being self-aware, recognising your own triggers and the impact your actions may have on others
- Using learning and teaching methodologies which promote effective learning
- Being sensitive and responsive to the wellbeing of each child and young person

“better relationships, better learning, better behaviour” (2013)

Positive relationships are at the centre of our work with children and young people and their families. They are the basis upon which staff support children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Positive relationships and an understanding that every behaviour is communicating a need are essential to the promotion of positive behaviour, the reduction of incidents of bullying and exclusion, improving learning and teaching and raising attainment and achievement for all.

Policy and procedures within establishments

All establishments should continue to work together to support the development of relationships within a positive ethos and culture. Establishments should:

- Develop and implement an establishment behaviour document to support a focus on positive relationships and understanding behaviour. This will be based on robust planning and monitored and reviewed regularly
- Continue towards fully embedding current positive approaches to relationships and understanding behaviour, using a wide range of strategies which encourage a focus on the promotion of wellbeing, e.g. restorative approaches
- Ensure peer-to-peer conflict is explored through opportunities for children and young people to engage with positive approaches, e.g. restorative approaches, solution oriented meetings, Cool in School
- Promote the understanding of working with children and young people with distressed behaviour to take account of the child or young person’s range of needs. It is important to be sensitive to the child/young person’s readiness to learn and take account of this in individual planning
- Develop a shared understanding of wellbeing, with a focus on the mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of staff and children and young people

- Consider children’s rights within all aspects of the life of the establishment
- Children and young people should be active participants in the process of addressing their behaviour
- Ensure anti-bullying approaches are embedded (Treat Me Well)
- Develop approaches on the safe and responsible use of technology, including personal mobile devices, with the involvement of whole establishment communities (staff, children and young people and parents/carers) in line with Education Resources guidelines
- Engage parents and carers as partners in ensuring the consistency of approach to Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour between home and the learning environment
- Analyse training needs of staff, secure relevant training opportunities and measure its impact
- Include all staff in the strategic approach to Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour, including access to professional development
- Include a statement about culture, ethos, values and aspirations in the School Handbook and be able to demonstrate this consistently through day to day practice

Staged Intervention

South Lanarkshire Council recognises its responsibility to keep everyone safe and also acknowledges that some children and young people can, for a variety of reasons, present significant concerns in relation to their behaviour.

A thorough and appropriate level of assessment is required to determine appropriate interventions. This is outlined in the document Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour – Distressed Behaviour Management Arrangements

Everyone needs support to help them to learn. Some may need additional support. By implementing a staged intervention approach we can ensure that learners receive the help they require when they need it.

The staged intervention procedure for identifying, assessing, planning and monitoring in respect of additional support is outlined in the Framework for Inclusion and Equality folder and must be an integral part of teaching and learning processes in all educational establishments. This should encompass all additional support needs including those arising from communication, social, emotional and behavioural needs.

It is important to assess what is causing the behaviour, for example, difficulty accessing the curriculum, environmental issues, emotional turmoil, attachment issues or sensory needs before identifying the support, strategies or intervention which may be appropriate.

Intervention Approaches and De-escalation Techniques

When dealing with children and young people, and particularly those with social, emotional and behavioural needs, it is essential that all staff work hard to prevent situations from escalating.

All behaviour takes place within the context of a relationship and is a form of communication. Research indicates that the position adopted and promoted by adults plays a pivotal role in determining the outcome of a situation. There are a number of intervention approaches and de-escalation techniques which help maintain a positive and purposeful ethos. A poster for staff is available: Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour – Approaches and Strategies for Understanding and Dealing with Distressed Behaviour.

Intervention Approaches

The following approaches and strategies should be used as preventative and supportive ways of managing children and young people with concerning patterns of behaviour.

Structuring the Environment:

It is important to set routines which maintain a safe, secure, consistent and predictable environment to help reduce stress and uncertainty for children and young people. Many children and young people, particularly those who have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or who have some form of attention difficulty, e.g. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) find a bright and busy environment over stimulating. Consideration of the appropriate learning environment is very important in such situations and staff should consider appropriate adaptations. For example, it may be helpful to identify a quiet learning area or individual study area within the classroom for some children and young people.

Understanding and planning for the needs of individual children and young people can be the most effective way of preventing distressed behaviour. Clear routines and supported transitions are essential for many individuals and, in particular, for those who have ASD or difficulties with attachment. Prompts and visual timetables can be useful in supporting the understanding of routines and transitions and can prevent raised anxiety levels which may otherwise lead to distressed behaviour.



Some children and young people have very specific sensory needs which, if not met appropriately, can lead to high levels of agitation which may lead to distressed behaviour. These may include hyper sensitivity to bright lights, loud noises, busy areas and touch. It is important to identify and meet these needs to allow the child or young person to access the curriculum.

Building relationships with children and young people:

Building positive relationships with children and young people is at the centre of our work in developing a positive and inclusive ethos in which children and young people feel safe and secure. These positive relationships enhance the shared understanding of behaviours and can help to promote better behaviour choices. It is important for the whole staff team to share values and have a consistent approach.

Further guidance and development opportunities can be accessed from a range of sources including:

- Learn Online modules
- People Connect
- Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour training matrix (available on the SLC intranet and PPRUDB tile in Glow)
- Psychological Services
- Inclusive Education Service
- Youth, Family and Community Learning Service
- Education Scotland's Rights, Support and Wellbeing Team

Further information is also available for staff in the poster: Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour – Approaches and Strategies for Understanding and Dealing with Distressed Behaviour.

Setting and maintaining limits:

Children and young people find it helpful to have predictable routines and boundaries which promote a sense of security. It is helpful for all children and young people, and particularly for those who find it difficult to self-regulate their behaviour, to be involved in the process of agreeing and setting these ground rules.

Listening:

It is important for staff to hear and understand what children and young people are saying as this gives an insight into the feelings and needs of the individual. Active listening techniques equip staff to gather these insights effectively.

Teaching:

Assessing and planning for the learning needs of individual children and young people is crucial and will lead to better behaviour.

By supporting children and young people to process incidents and events, staff can help them develop more appropriate ways of coping and dealing with distressing feelings and emotions.

Additional Support Plans, Coordinated Support Plans and Behaviour Assessment and Support Plans should be considered to assist in the identification of numeracy, literacy and health and wellbeing targets, as well as appropriate strategies and approaches to support behaviour. Appropriate planning should also be put in place to ensure smooth transitions, including a robust future plan for securing a positive post-school destination.

De-escalation Techniques

Where children or young people are displaying signs of anxiety, tension or distress they should be dealt with empathetically. Staff should be aware that their own behaviour and body language, as well as the actual words spoken and the tone in which they are said, can influence the outcome of a situation.

When a child or young person displays distressed behaviour, it is important for staff not just to respond to the behaviour, but to consider the feelings and needs behind the behaviour. Seeking an explanation for the signs of tension or distressed behaviour may often be helpful in preventing a situation reaching a crisis point. It is important to recognise that external factors, such as feeling unwell or circumstances at home or school/establishment can lead to heightened anxiety and distressed behaviour.

Adults should avoid confrontational approaches. To help to prevent situations from escalating, unacceptable behaviour should be addressed in a calm, firm manner. It is essential to maintain a controlled, calm atmosphere.

It is important that all staff use a range of strategies and approaches to prevent an escalation in confrontational behaviour. The de-escalation strategies used can often be helpful in diffusing a situation. This is not an exhaustive list and staff will require to use judgement as to what is appropriate in any set of circumstances. This will include considering the child or young person's age, stage, level of understanding, any relevant medical information, knowledge of the child or young person and your working relationship with them.

- Seeking to understand what the child or young person is communicating by the behaviours
- Talking quietly and calmly to the child or young person
- Allowing children and young people time to think, and to make a choice
- Giving children and young people the opportunity to explain their perspective – active listening
- Redirecting attention to positive activities
- Providing personal space
- Removing others from the vicinity
- Setting limits in a non-confrontational way
- Planned ignoring of inappropriate low level behaviour and positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour
- Allowing time out
- Involving another adult who has a positive relationship with the child or young person
- Using restorative conversation as an opportunity to repair relationships
- Allowing each day to be a “new day”

Managing Distressed Behaviour

An establishment's approach to Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour should be positive, welcoming and nurturing and will promote effective strategies to support children and young people who display low level behavioural concerns.

Where a child or young person is exhibiting worrying patterns of behaviour they are likely to have an additional support need under the terms of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. The Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice (Revised Edition) 2017 states that there are a variety of reasons a child or young person may require additional support including:

- Being bullied
- Having had their learning interrupted
- Being looked after by a local authority (under the Act, these children and young people are deemed as having an ASN unless otherwise assessed and should be assessed for a co-ordinated support plan)
- Living with parents/carers who are abusing substances
- Living with parents/carers who have mental health problems
- Not attending school regularly
- Emotional or social difficulties
- Communication or learning needs including those arising from having ADHD, an ASD or attachment disorder
- Being on the child protection register
- Being young carers
- Having a series of adverse childhood experiences (trauma)
- Living in a family where there is domestic violence

Where a pupil's behaviour is causing concern consideration should be given to involving Psychological Services in a school assessment of the pupil. This may lead to the opening of an Additional Support Plan (ASP) in consultation with the child or young person and the parents/carers.

The generic risk assessment will have been completed for the establishment. Where further discussion and interventions are required, an individual Behaviour Assessment and Support Plan (BASP) should now be completed. Guidance on the completion of these documents is available in the PPRUDB Management Arrangements booklet.

Managing Crisis Behaviour

There is usually a predictable stage in the escalation of an incident where de-escalation can work, but once the crisis stage has been reached, the child or young person is not likely to be rational. It is important to do the following to help avoid physical escalation of the crisis situation:

- Keep talking to the child or young person in a calm, reassuring manner. Keep the use of language to a minimum in situations where this is causing the situation to further escalate
- Keep a safe distance
- Avoid prolonged eye contact
- Be understanding - do not be dismissive of the individual's feelings
- Be non-judgemental - everyone is entitled to their own values and opinions
- Use active listening
 - listen to what is really being said and be clear in your response using short words and sentences that are jargon free
 - use "I" messages
- Respect personal space - invading that space can make the situation worse
- Be aware of your own body language - standing to the side at an appropriate distance is less confrontational and safer
- Avoid shouting - this can increase the challenge to the individual
- Be clear about what is acceptable behaviour - consistency of approach is essential
- Impose realistic and manageable boundaries
- Keep calm, professional and objective
- Follow the principle of minimum intervention - use a range of de-escalation techniques wherever possible
- Plan ahead

Once the child or young person has regained control they may still require some time and space before they will be able to discuss the incident. When they are calm it is important that a solution orientated approach is used in order to help them understand the consequences of their behaviour. The de-brief form can be used to facilitate this discussion. This should also include taking time to help them understand their feelings and identify more appropriate behaviour for the future. It may be helpful to use visuals or social stories to help some children and young people.

It is important to complete all relevant paperwork and debrief all staff involved in the incident (see the PPRUDB Management Arrangements booklet and the PPRUDB Appendices and Supporting Documents.)

Following any significant incident it will be necessary to review the risk assessment, the ASP, the BASP, and, where appropriate, complete a request for assistance form.

In more serious incidents or when numerous incidents have taken place, the head of establishment/line manager should discuss the circumstances with and take advice from the Senior Manager Pupil Support, Lead Officer, Educational Psychologist and/or Inclusion Officer, as appropriate. This discussion may result in agreeing further actions or requirements for additional supports for the child/young person and/or establishment.

The Voice of the Child

It is important to listen to the views of the child or young person and parent/carer in relation to all aspects of education.

The United Kingdom ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991, ensuring that the voice of the child or young person is recognised by Scottish law. Article 12 of the UNCRC states that all children and young people have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.

The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 provides that school education should develop the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of children and young people to their fullest potential, taking account of the views of children and young people in decisions that significantly affect them.

Some children and young people with communication difficulties will require assistance in voicing their views. Interventions such as Alternative and Augmentative Communication aids, visual prompts, objects of references or social stories can be helpful to assist in the expression of views.

Duty of Care - Legal Framework

As an education authority, the Council has a duty of care in respect of the health, safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in its care.

The Council's position is that it is only acceptable to physically intervene with a child or young person where the member of staff reasonably believes in all the circumstances that if he/she does not physically intervene with the child/young person, the child/young person's actions are likely to cause physical damage or harm to that child or young person or another person.

Members of staff should avoid physically intervening with children and young people unless that intervention is reasonable, appropriate and necessary in all the circumstances. Any physical intervention should use the minimum possible force for the shortest possible time appropriate to the circumstances. The use of physical intervention should be a last resort for staff.

The legislation governing education in Scotland recognises that staff may require to physically intervene with a child or young person in certain situations:

Section 16 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 establishes that where anything is done for reasons which include averting –

- a) an immediate danger of personal injury to; or
- b) an immediate danger to the property of, any person (including the pupil concerned),

those actions are not to be taken to be corporal punishment (corporal punishment being unlawful if given by, or on the authority of, a member of staff to a pupil).

The Council's view is that seeking to avert damage to property alone will not be sufficient reason for physically intervening with a child or young person. However where staff are of the view that any damage to property is reasonably likely to lead to the child or young person or another person being injured, minimal intervention for a minimal period of time may be justified.

The decision as to whether it is reasonable, appropriate and necessary for a member of staff to physically intervene with a child or young person in any circumstances must be taken by staff on a case by case basis, always having regard to the duty of care that they owe.

All instances of seclusion and restraint, whether in a mainstream or additional support needs setting, are considered as physical intervention and should be recorded, including details of date, time, name of child/young person, name of member of staff and circumstances and parents/carers advised immediately. A recording sheet for incidents of physical intervention is available at Appendix 7.

Training Opportunities/Approaches

Staff are the most important resource in ensuring that children and young people are provided with the range of experiences necessary to promote educational, personal and social development. The demands placed upon staff by disaffected children and young people and those with significant or persistent social, emotional and behavioural needs can be considerable.

Opportunities for ongoing professional development and support with regard to managing and dealing with distressed behaviour are provided through the programme of continuing development opportunities. Staff should have opportunities to access specialised training in this area when a need has been identified through the normal staff development procedures utilising the training needs analysis paperwork.

Learning and development opportunities relating to PPRUDB and other linked subject areas are referred to in the PPRUDB Learning and Development Matrix which is available on the SLC Intranet and the Inclusion tile on Glow.

All establishments have the opportunity to discuss training needs with Psychological Services, the Inclusive Education Service and the Curriculum and Quality Improvement Service.



References and useful links

Links to Functional Behaviour Assessment tools to aid understanding of behaviours and the motivation for them:

Motivational Assessment Scale (MAS):

https://91372e5fba0d1fb26b72-13cee80c2bfb23b1a8fcedea15638c1f.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/materials/motivationalassessmentscale1_Jul_6_2016-11_46_46.pdf

Functional Assessment Screening Tool (FAST):

<http://www.cmhcm.org/userfiles/filemanager/961/>

The Classroom: Functional Assessment Screening Tools:

<https://www.theclassroom.com/functional-assessment-screening-tools-7652159.html>

South Lanarkshire Council Documents

All South Lanarkshire Council documents referred to in this guidance can be found on South Lanarkshire Council's intranet or on the Inclusion tile on Glow

<http://intranet.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/>

Getting it Right for Every Child

www.girfecinlanarkshire.co.uk/

Scottish Government

Scottish Government (2018) "Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour"

Scottish Government (2017) "Included, engaged and involved part 2: a positive approach to preventing and managing school exclusions"

Scottish Government (2017) "Respect for All: The national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people"

Scottish Government (2013) "better relationships, better learning, better behaviour"
Preventing Offending by Young People- A Framework for Action

National Strategic Commissioning Group (additional support needs) taking forward The Doran Report Recommendations: The Right Help at the Right Time in the Right Place. Strategic Review of Learning Provision for Children and Young People with Complex Additional Support Needs.

Looked after children and young people: we can and must do better:

Scottish Strategy for Autism: outcomes and priorities 2018-2021

Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour:

These and other related documents are also available on the Scottish Government website:
www.scotland.gov.uk

Links to reports from Scottish Advisory Group on Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2009 and 2012 –

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/11/20101438/0

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/10/5408

Education Scotland

Rights, Support and Wellbeing Team and links to further information about positive behaviour approaches

www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners/positivelearningenvironments/positivebehaviour/contactamember.asp

Embedding inclusion, equity and empowerment

<https://education.gov.scot/what-we-do/Embedding%20inclusion,%20equity%20and%20empowerment>

Restorative Approaches exemplar:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/practice-exemplars/Video%20examples%20of%20restorative%20approaches>

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

www.educationscotland.gov.uk

No Safe Place: Restraint and Seclusion in Scotland's Schools

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/ufiles/No-Safe-Place.pdf>

Legal Framework

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

Additional support for learning: statutory guidance 2017

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-education-additional-support-learning-scotland/>

Equality Act 2010

Equality commission website – guidance for Scottish Schools

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

www.scotland.gov.uk

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

Further reading:

- Attachment Theory e.g. Louise Bomber, (2007); Bruce Perry; (1995), (2006), (2013); Dan Hughes, (2012)
- When the Adults Change, Everything Changes: Seismic shifts in school behaviour. Paul Dix (2017)
- Education Scotland and GLOW have a range of information and guidance on the website – follow the links for Supporting Learners.



If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

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