

THE EDUCATION VILLAGE ACADEMY TRUST



**Marchbank Free School & Beaumont
Hill Academy**

Pupil Engagement and Emotional Support Policy

EVAT Version Control Document

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Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed every **annually** by the Policy Owner: **Nicole Gilbert**
The scheduled review date for this policy is **March 2025**.

Values and Ethos

Our values and ethos are inclusive and child centred. Our Trust is founded on the principles of inclusivity, diversity and fairness, and they are fundamental to our delivery of exceptional learning experiences.

EVAT stands for:

- **E**xcellence and high standards
 - a can-do culture and no-excuses ethos
- **V**alues driven with a deep sense of purpose
 - putting children and young people first
 - behaving ethically
- **A**mbition and aspiration for all
 - irrespective of background or barriers – being truly inclusive
- **T**eamwork
 - we do more, better and faster, together

We are a village. We collaborate, with our learners, their families and our communities, to provide exceptional education so that all the children and young people we serve achieve the best possible outcomes.

Our Ethos is to:

- Create a nurturing and friendly atmosphere and provide an environment where everyone feels valued for who they are
- Bring out the best in every child and young person and meet the full range of their individual needs
- Provide different and unique experiences, challenges and activities
- Show tolerance and respect for each other
- Prepare our children and young people for lifelong learning
- Improve the life chances of every child and young person we serve.

This policy, and its associated procedures and protocols, are based on these key principles.

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N.B. Where reference is made to an ‘Academy’ or a ‘School’ the intention is that the policy is universal and applies to both. Any reference to Principal may also include Executive Principal.

Introduction

Managing disengagement and emotional support is not a discrete, separate element of school life. When pupils disengage and or are responding differently, we view this as communications, all in response to an unmet need, a feeling, experience or stimulus. Everything we do, all our words, actions, interactions, planning, organisation, and also what we do not do, contributes to a pupil's response and indeed emotional state. It is therefore crucial that staff consider their own responses and what this is communicating at all times.

The reason for having a policy is to have a whole team approach and dynamic focus on that aspect of school life. This will ensure and bring coherence and consistency to the variety of interactions we all have with pupils, families and each other every day, to support as positive and safe a response as possible.

We aim to enable all young people to understand and value others and to appreciate diversity. We believe that this plays an important role in helping young people to become insightful and more resilient citizens within a diverse culture. We aim to facilitate a warm and safe school where pupils can thrive.

Serious incidents are logged on CPOMs, all files will be transferred to the next provider with the pupils as and when they leave school.

Any behaviour and emotional support policy will only be as effective as the work of the staff who put it into practice. As the Elton Report (1989) points out, there are no simple remedies. It is the totality of the responses the child receives and the quality of teaching and environment that will ultimately affect their behaviour and sense of emotional well-being for good or ill. So, any policy has to be applied with humanity, sensitivity and consistency.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Health Act 2006
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- The School Information (England) Regulations 2008
- DfE (2022) 'Behaviour in schools, advice for headteachers and staff'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education '
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and behaviour in schools'
- DfE (2015) 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years'
- DfE (2013) 'Use of reasonable force' in schools'
- DfE (2022) 'Searching, screening and confiscation'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school and Trust policies:

- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Peer-on-Peer Abuse Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Pupil Drug and Alcohol Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Positive Handling Policy

Shared Values and Beliefs

We believe the management of pupil engagement and emotional regulation should reflect the values of the schools. We choose an approach and procedures which enhance the quality of the 'adult – pupil' and 'pupil – pupil' relationships. If and when concerns arise, all staff are to follow procedures as outlined in our policy and procedure for complaints.

The formation of healthy relationships is one of our main goals and the basis of pupil engagement, regulated emotional states and effective learning. We are always aware that all responses to incidents involves values and we continually strive to find better ways of helping our pupils to develop the use of strategies that will support them to become more independently able to function in society.

We are a Thrive school. All staff are trained in understanding the theory behind Thrive and how to embed the Thrive approach into their day-to-day practice. We share THRIVE's vision for a world where a child's social and emotional needs are better understood and met. Created to support this vision, the Thrive Approach is a dynamic, developmental and trauma-sensitive approach to meeting the emotional and social needs of children.

We state our values clearly. We value:

- the right to be respected and treated with dignity at all times;
- the right to have fun and enjoy each other's company;
- the right to learn to the best of our ability;
- the right to feel happy and enjoy our time at school;
- the right to be heard and influence our experiences;
- equal opportunity and accessibility for everyone.

We believe that:

- pupils who feel safe, valued, cared about and are successful, tend to respond in a more positive and appropriate way;

- when pupils are treated fairly and consistently, they are able to distinguish between desirable and undesirable responses, they begin to feel safe and trust in the predictable environment, enabling them to take risks in their learning;
- if the ethos of the classroom and the school is positive, there will be an atmosphere of mutual respect and enhancement of self-esteem in which pupils are actively engaging in a positive manner, and teaching and learning is leading to achievement;
- good rapport between staff, pupils and their parents/carers, contributes to and has a positive impact on, pupil engagement;
- responses from staff can be clear and direct, yet supportive and responsive to the pupil's needs;
- when pupils' needs are met, they are more likely to be actively engaged and regulated;
- when we feel happy, regulated and safe, we learn far better.

We aim:

- to create a warm, caring, calm and orderly atmosphere of belonging in the schools that positively promotes learning and a sense of community;
- to achieve consistency of attitude and response by staff which gives a sense of security and safety;
- to promote and encourage the continual development of all staff in the understanding and working with pupils with SEND and review our practice regularly;
- to promote in all pupils a sense of self-discipline and an ability to take responsibility for their actions;
- to create a climate of mutual respect between all pupils, staff and visitors and a proper concern and respect for the school environment;
- to help pupils to understand their needs and recognise their emotional states so that they can begin to process their feelings and implement strategies with increased independence;
- to create an environment that is safe, physically and emotionally, for everyone in the schools;
- to develop a partnership with our pupils families which recognises and respects important factors in the home life and lived experiences of the pupil, and through ongoing dialogue supports parents and carers to take a proactive and confident role in meeting and responding to their
- s needs;
- To implement a multi-disciplined approach to review the needs of the pupil when they continue to be disengaged.

Procedures

The Pupil Engagement and Emotional Support Policy deals with all areas of the pupils' intrinsic development, alongside the Trust's Positive Handling, Safe Touch and Safeguarding policies.

Teaching and Learning

We strive to create the **stimulating and engaging environment** and the conditions that facilitate every aspect of learning. **Routines** also give a sense of security and are crucial to the establishment of effective teaching and learning.

- We aim to systematically review the impact of approaches and provision to ensure the optimum climate for engagement in learning is created for each pupil
- We aim to establish and maintain routines in the classroom and to train staff and pupils to observe these routines. This helps to maintain boundaries and support the development of good habits.
- We aim to promote positive and appropriate responses, and so prevent many difficulties from occurring by good practice.
- We recognise that well planned, interesting lessons which are well structured and organised, experiential and contextualised to the pupil are crucial elements of good practice.

Establishing Shared Routines for Teaching and Learning

We recognise that establishing and maintaining simple routines is a powerful way of helping our pupils to engage in their learning and implement strategies that support them to regulate.

Here are some of the guidelines we follow for classroom practice:

- We are always in class before the pupils to greet them on their arrival in the morning and after other break times.
- We establish and maintain positive relationships with pupils and their parent/carers
- We plan learning thoroughly to be stimulating, coherent and well-organised.
- All pupils have up to date ABC plans and Risk Assessments, these documents are informed by the pupil's EHCP and through continued review of effectiveness of strategies, all staff working with pupils have an up-to-date knowledge of a pupil's ABC and RA.
- We have all learning tasks well prepared, including specifically differentiated materials for pupils who need them.
- We make sure that the room is tidy and laid out thoughtfully and all the materials and equipment are ready for use.
- We display the pupils work prominently and attractively.
- We establish positive norms of classroom conduct.
- We model clear communication and positive interactions between each other and between adults and pupils.

We acknowledge that a preventative approach is key in creating a calm and positive climate for teaching and learning. This also includes:

- ✓ establishing positive relationships with pupils and their parents/carers
- ✓ regular communication with pupils and parents/carers
- ✓ creating a positive supportive climate in the classroom
- ✓ providing a constant adult presence, never leaving the pupils unsupervised
- ✓ teaching the pupils strategies to deal to support them with state management disengagement and dysregulation

- ✓ using appropriate humour and relationships to ensure all pupils feel a sense of belonging in their class groups.

Keeping Everyone Safe and feeling secure

We recognise that the schools will only function effectively if both staff and pupils feel safe and happy. Effective teaching of safeguarding, measures and procedures are used to ensure that safety. The schools follow all statutory, government and LA guidelines on safeguarding. (See Safeguarding Policy, Health & Safety Policy, Touch Policy and Positive Handling Policy).

Promoting Positive Relationships

A positive relationship with the pupil is at the heart of our pupil engagement and emotional support policy. It is our view that the deliberate, skilful cultivation by the staff member of positive relationships with the pupils creates a foundation for the pupil to learn and grow.

Through our interactions with each other, we model positive and respectful relationships for the pupils. Language and listening skills are key elements in this.

We recognise that elements of such relationships are:

- ensuring every opportunity is developed to enable communication
- increasing the pupil's communication with the adult
- increasing the pupil's responsiveness to using strategies to support them
- responding in a way that demonstrates an understanding of their needs
- being an emotionally available and resilient adult
- adopting language that is positive and supportive
- treating each other with respect and dignity

Communicating verbally – we strive to show an interest in the pupil's work and interest, listening, decoding the language of the pupil's responses, sharing appropriate personal interests and creating regular opportunities to gather and respond to pupil voice.

Communicating non-verbally - we project warmth, care and safety through smiles, physical proximity, contingent touch, awareness of positive postures and adopt non-threatening stances.

Relating to pupils in an empathic and positive way – we are willing to engage in activities with the pupil, maintaining a non-punitive stance and hold a space for a pupil to enable them to feel safe emotionally and physically. We build trust, giving opportunities to restore and repair and by our reflective approach to difficulties.

We recognise and honour without judgement the importance of the pupil's family system, and their place within and loyalty to these.

We continuously take opportunities to foster positive relationships by using a positive tone of voice, our facial expressions, our reactions to their achievements and challenges. Modelling in all interactions by all staff is crucial to foster such relationships. We use touch proactively, appropriately, and positively to reassure and calm, provide guidance and support and to model appropriate touch.

We continually reflect on how we respond to individuals on a personal level.

Equal Opportunities

We believe in equality of opportunity for all pupils, regardless of their needs and we make every effort to put it into practice at all times. (See *Equality Information and objectives*).

Parental Involvement

The schools endeavour to develop, maintain and harness impactful relationships with parents and carers. The schools see the parents/carers as essential partners in the task of pupil engagement and pupil wellbeing. We endeavour to encourage parents to engage in the wider aspects of the school community, to share their voice and value their contribution.

Effective Parental Engagement within our schools ensures our parents are engaged, supported and in a position to influence best practice.

We communicate with parents regarding pupil engagement at home and at school and offer support for families with resources and strategies to help with regulation. The FROG online communication platform is also extremely valuable in ensuring daily communication.

Families are also supported through the direct work when required, this can be done through the Early Help process (consent required), referrals to single agency support, signposting to appropriate services and personalised enrichment opportunities to promote engagement.

Parent/carer consent and partnership are essential when there is a need to implement a staged response and or access to any of our integrated therapies such as Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist and THRIVE support. Practitioners will seek input from the adults who are actively involved and work collaboratively to maximise the outcomes.

Rewards and Positive Reinforcement

We use a range of approaches for tracking pupil engagement. Whilst we recognise the importance and efficacy of rewards, we do not want the pupils to become overly dependent on them. We try to move them from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. Our rewards reflect the needs of our pupils, we ensure that pupils are consistently praised in a fair and consistent way on a day-to-day basis. We also implement termly rewards/celebrations for all pupils.

Supporting pupils in crisis

Staff follow the pupil's individual ABC and RA to manage pupils in crisis.

Staff implement a number of responses which aim to support regulation. If appropriate, we may use the Team Teach "Help Script" for pupils:

- **Name**

- **I can see that....**
- **I want to help**
- **When you're ready, you talk and I will listen**
- **Come with me and....**

Staff are also trained to use Vital Relational Functions 'VRFs' which are tools used in Thrive to address a pupil's emotional state during a crisis, they are:

- **Attunement** – demonstrating an understanding of how they are feeling by “catching and matching” their emotional state
- **Validation** – demonstrating that their feelings are real and justified
- **Containment** – Offering their feelings back to them, named and in small pieces.

Following the incident, staff, parents and pupils reflect on the possible triggers and effectiveness of the strategies implemented, this approach aims to reduce the risk of further incidents occurring. We may also seek multi agency support if we have repeated episodes of crisis and pupils will be further supported through the staged response..

Responses to disengagement

We have an approach to disengagement which is focused on the team systematically reviewing the needs of the pupil, responding to pupil and parent/carer voice and where appropriate, involving a multi-disciplined approach to reviewing their needs, the effectiveness of the provision and any interventions.. Pupils are supported through the implementation of a whole school staged response, there are 3 stages which support those working with the pupil to respond accordingly and maximise the impact (appendix A).

Dealing with challenging incidents, disruptive behaviour and aggression

We use many strategies and options to manage these situations. The selection of specific management techniques depends in part on the personality and character of the individual pupil and staff member and their relationship. No strategy or set of strategies guarantee success. However, the following principles inform and govern our management decisions.

- We remain **objective and calm** in both speech and actions. We recognise that firmness does not require shouting or threats and as such **we do not shout at pupils**. We understand that shouting may be re-traumatising for our pupils.

We understand that our own state will impact on the pupils, we ensure we take a moment to check that we are calm and relaxed. Strategies such as taking a step back and deep breath can help with this or we may seek support from another adult as a change of face

- We constantly strive to improve our understanding of the pupils and their behaviour.
- We look beyond the behaviour presented by the pupil for the possible meaning or message being expressed. So, we ask ourselves what the behaviour means to help us think and respond appropriately.

- We try to listen quietly and respond quietly to the pupil. We do not overwhelm the pupil with loud and insistent directives.
- We try to maintain positive attitudes that are constructive. We remind the pupil of previous good behaviour or similar situations that they dealt with well, progress they have made and how they made it.
- We use a range of diversionary strategies. Humour is a powerful tool when used sensitively, appropriately, and respectfully,
- Involving other people in a non-threatening way can divert the confrontation and reduce the aggression and is a strategy we often use.
- It is sometimes necessary to remove the pupil from the situation and guide, hold or restrain. We try to do this in a neutral way, which is uncontaminated by negative or hostile feelings. Our message is **'we care about you and want to help, we want to support you to be in control; so that you don't hurt yourself or others/cause damage.....'** Where possible, we will aim to seek consent by asking the pupil if they want us to help.
- We always promote physical safety and do everything possible to prevent physical injury to everyone.
-
- We will seek parent/carers support if the pupil is not responding and continuing to cause significant disruption and/or putting themselves, staff and peers at risk

We will seek multi agency support where appropriate

If a pupil persistently acts in a way that is unsafe whilst onsite, putting themselves and others at risk of harm, we may seek an alternative full time educational offer off site

Staff will model high expectations of behaviour and attitudes at all times

Pupils will be supported to understand the natural consequences and impact of their actions, they will be supported to repair relationships through restorative approaches Where appropriate, pupils may be given a consequence, staff will consider the pupils needs and lived experiences whilst ensuring the consequence is proportionate and purposeful

Exclusion

4. Exclusion for a fixed period (see the Trust's Exclusions Policy)

We use this extremely rarely. Where possible, we would seek to involve external agencies and the local authority to avoid a pupil being excluded for a fixed period and would only use this as a last resort.

Permanent Exclusion (see the Trust's Exclusions Policy)

We only invoke this when it is clear that we cannot meet the pupil's needs and he/she has become a danger to him/herself and to others in the school. We would firstly seek to work with the Local Authority to find another placement through a managed move to avoid permanent exclusion. Exclusion would only ever occur as a last resort.

Summary

Our Pupil Engagement and Emotional Support Policy, along with THRIVE and Team Teach training, is designed to **minimise risk** and help young people to **build and maintain positive relationships**. All staff receive clear guidance and regular training so that they are more likely to be both confident and competent at supporting the young people we care for. Confident staff can reassure people who are anxious, offer boundaries and choices and assertive care when required, with safe and effective physical intervention strategies as a last resort. Our curriculum pathways are designed to support all pupils to gain an understanding of their needs and feelings, how to respond safely and how to treat others respectfully. We use and teach a range of strategies to support pupils to communicate their needs and feelings to enable them to have more control at times when they feel overwhelmed. Beaumont Hill Academy and Marchbank Free School are places where pupils, and adults know they will be positively cared for and feel safe.

Physical Intervention

Physical intervention will only be used as a last resort and as a method of restraint. Staff members will use their professional judgement to decide whether physical intervention is necessary. Please See the Trust's Positive Handling Policy.

Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

In preparing or amending this policy, the author has given due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; that is, they have considered any potential impact on people who share certain protected characteristics. These protected characteristics are defined as: race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

Appendix A Flow chart to show responses to pupil disengagement

