

Relationships & Behaviour Policy

Rationale

At Open Box Education Centre, we are committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment for students who have had difficult life and school experiences, and may have social, emotional and mental health needs, or unmet learning or sensory needs, because of these experiences. Many of our students have experienced trauma, loss, rejection and exclusion. Therefore, our flexible approach to behaviour support puts the power of caring, positive, predictable relationships between staff and students at its core.

We believe that in order to develop positive approaches, self-regulation and self-management skills, the emphasis should be on relationships, making the right choices, personal responsibility and an understanding of the needs of others, as well as a focus on the immediate and long-term consequences and benefits for the individual in terms of security, fulfilment, progress and achievement.

We will endeavour to provide the support structures necessary for students to develop academically, socially and emotionally in order to reach their full potential. Our school staff use a consistent, calm attachment-based approach where relationships are central. All staff act as secondary care givers and recognise that students communicate their needs via their behaviour. Every adult in our school is encouraged to look beyond behaviour and to be curious about students' needs. We recognise that students need support to keep emotionally regulated and cope in everyday social situations and in more challenging interactions.

In our setting, all students are offered compassion and co-operative learning with a caring, supportive adult. No student is ever intentionally shamed, and all students are regarded with respect by adults who believe in their innate goodness and their desire to learn and make progress.

All staff understand that:

- Basic physiological and emotional needs must be met before a student feels safe enough to relax and learn.
- All staff need to consistently demonstrate that they care and can be trusted.
- All staff need to be well regulated as raised voices, angry faces and body language create fear and stress.
- Strategies and skills to manage behaviour take time and effort to learn – all successes, big or small, need to be celebrated.
- Students are not always acting out of choice, but are sometimes engaging in survival behaviours that are mediated by unconscious processes
- Building a threat-free, safe environment where adults are in charge and take full responsibility means that students are free from the burden of having to keep themselves physically and emotionally safe.

Key principles

Encouragement

Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, relationships and responses.

Recognition

Student achievements and strengths are celebrated and areas for improvement are acknowledged and supported verbally during learning, informally with 'good news texts' home, and more formally during termly student/parent review meetings.

Support

A safe, secure and supportive environment is maintained in which staff can teach, students can learn and parents/carers can feel confident that students are safe and supported.

Challenge

Incidents of discourtesy are challenged, where appropriate, discreetly and quickly to prevent escalation and in ways that encourage positive relationships and responses.

Example

Courteous communication is modelled by all staff, and staff provide examples of positive responses and relationships.

Fairness

Incidents are dealt with fairly and supportively, through the process of restorative conversations and with an emphasis on the repair of relationships. Parents/carers may be involved, where it is appropriate.

Expectations for Learning

We expect our students to be:

- Ready
- Respectful
- Safe

Ready	Respectful	Safe
Come to school well-rested and ready for learning	Listen to staff and follow instructions for learning	Move around school calmly and quietly and follow staff instructions
Put mobile phones and vapes in the locked cabinet when you arrive	Treat everyone with respect and kindness	Be in the right place at the right time
Arrive on time for all sessions and stay until staff give permission to leave	Respect the property of others and of the school and use equipment appropriately	Keep comments, hands and feet to yourself
Come back from breaks at the correct time and be ready to learn	Put things right when you are calm	Ask for support from adults if you are not feeling safe

We expect our parents and carers to:

- Recognise that young people are best supported through strong staff and parent relationships
- Support your child to be ready, respectful and safe when they attend our school
- Support your child to attend all elements of their timetable
- Be prepared to be contactable by the Principal if the behaviour of your child is a danger to themselves or other students, or disruptive to the safe school atmosphere or the learning of others, and to let us know the name and contact details of another responsible adult we can contact if you are not available
- Be honest and open with us about your child's needs, for us to be able to support them and you as best we can

What does 'Ready for Learning' mean?

Arrive on Time

When students arrive after a lesson has started or leave before it has finished it is a distraction for everyone. You are 'ready for learning' when you arrive to school on time, you are well-rested and you start each lesson on time.

Mobile phones and other personal devices

Mobile phones and other personal devices are a distraction to learning and are not permitted during learning time (unless as a regulating strategy, which has been agreed with staff at the time it is required, for a fixed duration). If a student chooses to bring a phone or device it must be placed in the secure locked charging cabinet in the office on arrival and collected at the end of the session.

Drugs and Alcohol

A student under the influence of drugs or alcohol is not ready for learning and is not considered safe for learning. Under no circumstances should any student attend school either in possession of, under the influence of, drugs or alcohol. Anyone suspected of this will be expected to be collected by a parent or carer to return home. No student should be in possession of drugs or alcohol on site. Anyone suspected may be required to empty their bags and pockets and the police may be contacted.

Promoting Positive Behaviour

We promote positive behaviour in the following ways:

- Knowing our students well and understanding how their past experiences and current needs affect their current presentation.
- We read and contribute to Student Profiles regularly to ensure we are up to date on each student's needs, and share relevant information confidentially regarding students' experiences, presentation and emotions in our Daily Staff Briefing.
- Underpinned by our attachment awareness and our trauma perceptive practice, all staff start with consistent, calm adult behaviour that focuses on prevention rather than reaction.
- We recognise when student behaviour needs intervention with an approach that prevents escalating behaviour.
- The individual needs of our students are recognised in an 'Escalation Prevention Plan' (see appendix 3). Where appropriate, students are invited to contribute to their Escalation Prevention Plan, and offer insights on how we can help them to regulate their emotions
- We allow for sensory snacks and movement/sensory breaks to encourage regulation
- We use strategies and resources to support executive function, e.g. visual timetables; visual timers etc.
- We have visual reminders of expected behaviours across the school
- We work alongside parents and carers, regularly communicating with them to support their children's learning and wellbeing.

- We acknowledge positive behaviours and emotional regulation, particularly everyday small successes, with immediate praise, sharing them with parents and carers through 'good news texts'
- We use "check-ins" and "check-outs" to gauge the emotional temperature of our students and to support them early with any issues they are having.
- We use Skills for Success lessons, Personal and Social Education lessons, therapeutic activities, mentoring and counselling to build resilience and emotional literacy
- We target particular needs with one-to-one or group interventions
- We refer to SET-CAMHS, Social Care, Family Solutions etc. as appropriate for external help
- We encourage students to build their own emotional toolkit from which they can draw support in the future

When children are escalating on the crisis continuum, some examples of our approach include:

- Speaking quietly and using our body language to encourage students to regulate their emotions.
 - Picking up on the positives, e.g. a time when they have successfully changed a response, or we remind them of their strengths or personalised targets
 - We offer alternative strategies such as reflection time and/or relocation
 - We repeat that we are there to support them and communicate care
 - We never shout and we ensure our body language is positive
 - We ensure our students have personal space and we are in the supportive stance
 - We use diversion/distraction, e.g. change the activity or topic of conversation to remove pressure
 - We use a change of face – swap places with a colleague if we feel the student might be better helped by someone else in this moment
 - We remind them of the school's expectations and that their actions have consequences
 - We never use force, restraint or any other physical interventions, beyond the use of 'reasonable force', as outlined by the DfE, in rare emergency situations to ensure the safety of staff or students or to protect from serious physical harm. Guidance provided from the DfE says: 'The use of force is reasonable if it is proportionate to the consequences it is intended to prevent. This means the degree of force used should be no more than is needed to achieve the desired result (of ensuring safety and protecting from serious physical harm)' and 'reasonable in the circumstances' means using no more force than is needed and can mean passive physical contact, such as standing between pupils or blocking a pupil's path'. In our school we would only consider the use of 'reasonable force' to prevent a student from attacking a member of staff or another student, to stop a fight or to prevent a student causing serious or life-threatening harm to themselves.
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444051/Use_of_reasonable_force_advice_Reviewed_July_2015.pdf

Motivators

Rewarding positive behaviour is effective only when students understand when and why they are being given it and that all staff apply this consistently. Motivators should be relational in nature and clearly understood and recognised by the student.

Examples of motivators:

- Relational activities eg. playing a game, going for a coffee or a walk, listening to a piece of music together
- Verbal acknowledgement of good behaviour
- Special mention in school
- Positive messages communicated to parents/carers e.g. postcard, phone call, 'good news text' message, email
- Individual reinforcement such as a visit to another member of staff to celebrate
- More subtle forms of praise for students who find overt praise difficult to accept
- Recognising and celebrating achievements more formally in parent/carer meetings or celebration events

Responses and Natural Outcomes

Although actions do have consequences, students are not always acting out of choice; they are sometimes engaging in survival behaviours that are mediated by unconscious processes. Therefore, caution should be used with the word ‘choice’.

- A ‘Connection before Correction’ approach is used, so the priority is always on repairing the relationship and establishing emotional safety. Using any sanction is effective only if students are clear about why it has been given and that it is given after they have a chance to reflect on their behaviour when they are in a calm state.
- Outcomes should only be applied when the student is regulated and able to reflect upon their behaviour.
- Staff avoid any actions which lead to shaming or humiliation of a student.
- Only the adult who is involved in supporting a student to regulate behaviour should comment, unless they invite another adult to help with supporting the student.
- The developmental age and specific needs of the student will be considered when deciding appropriate outcomes, as will the student’s physical and emotional state at the time. A ‘one size fits all’ approach is not appropriate and this should be kept in mind when deciding upon an appropriate natural outcome, as outlined below.
- A restorative conversation takes place as soon as possible, focusing first on the student’s own feelings (physical and emotional) and how the other student/person may have felt (see Appendix 2)
- Outcomes of behaviour are responsive to the needs of the student rather than punishing or isolating.
- Natural outcomes include *making up time for lost learning* and *reflection time*, where the lens is upon the student’s own bodily and emotional state and *reparation time*, where the person that has been affected by the student’s action is the focus, and actions are taken to repair the relationship. Students are never forced to say sorry.
- If the context is repeatedly problematic, e.g. Starter Lesson, an adult works with a student to ensure subsequent participation can be successful, e.g. having reduced time / supervision / or not taking part in the activity. The student is given an alternative activity, supported by an adult. This is a protective strategy rather than a punitive one, and this should be clearly communicated to the student.

Serious or Ongoing Incidents

The steps in appendix 1 should be followed by staff to manage issues of inappropriate behaviour that occur. Serious or ongoing incidents will be discussed with the referring school or agency. The Principal may decide to issue notification of a fixed term exclusion in response to a serious or ongoing incident or, as a very last resort to protect the safety and progress of all students, issue a notification of permanent exclusion. Open Box Education Centre staff recognise that we work with students who communicate through challenging behaviour or who require extra support and care, and leaders will do everything in their power to avoid imposing fixed term and permanent exclusions. Records of fixed term and permanent exclusions will be maintained by the school.

Approved by: (Principal) (date)

Authorised by:..... (Chair of Governors) (date)

To be reviewed every: 2 Years

Next review date: February 2027

Date of Review	Reviewed by	Ratified by Governors	Date of next review
Jan 2019 version 1.0	Siobhan Garrett		Jan 2021
Jan 2021 version 1.0	Alison Dolan		Jan 2023
Feb 2023 version 1.1	Alison Dolan (and all staff)	21-03-2023	Feb 2025
Feb 2025 version 1.2	Alison Dolan	11-03-2025	Feb 2027

Appendix 1

Steps for Supporting Positive Behaviour

In most circumstances, Step 1 is adequate and effective in encouraging positive behaviour. Where this is not the case, the teacher should move to Step 2 to encourage positive behaviour.

Step 1: Teacher

Verbal reminders to the student to make the right choice, or prompts to use an agreed emotional regulation strategy.

Step 2: Principal

The Principal engages in focused and constructive discussion with the student, exploring strategies to encourage positive behaviour and avoid the unwanted behaviour.

Step 3: Parent/Carer involvement

If the student shows no improvement from stage 2, parents/carers will be contacted by telephone and, if necessary, called in for a meeting to discuss the situation and partner with the school to encourage positive behaviour and restorative action.

Step 4: Formal meeting

If there is still no improvement in behaviour the student may be issued with a fixed term exclusion until a formal meeting can be arranged with the Principal, student and parent/carers (and with a representative from the referring agency). Conditions will be agreed for returning to education through a restorative meeting and a restorative agreement will be drawn up with the student and parent/carers. The student's behaviour and responses will be monitored and reviewed.

NB In certain situations where a student poses a serious physical or emotional risk to others that cannot be managed safely, it may be necessary to move to Step 4 more quickly.

Appendix 3

ESCALATION PREVENTION PLAN	
Name: EXAMPLE	
Baseline: Friendly and conversational. Makes appropriate use of eye-contact, body language and facial expressions.	
Known triggers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexpected changes to his timetable or being wrong about what he thinks his timetable is for the day • Not being allowed to self-regulate by moving around • On a scaling, moves from 2-5 very quickly 	
Supportive classroom strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All teachers to agree strategies with him that he can use in each lesson and around the school to regulate himself • Use emotion coaching to help him self-manage his behaviour positively • Avoid confrontation • A regular reminder of the teacher's understanding and respect for the student • Opportunities for him to demonstrate the skills he does well • When the schedule changes or a different activity has been scheduled, prepare with him individually • Praise positive behaviour 	
Behaviour Level	Staff Approach
Early Signs of Dysregulation/Anxiety	Supportive Approach
Sometimes engages in compulsive behaviours as protection	Name it and rationalise with him
Defensive Behaviour	Directive Approach
Swearing Shouting	Have a plan to de-escalate himself
Risk Behaviour	Emergency Plan
Punching walls when angry Throwing furniture	Call for support Manage the environment Encourage movement towards an exit
Tension Reduction	Rebuilding Relationships
Tearful and tired Withdrawn	Supportive of need to speak with family Offer hot drink and a walk Give space and time to calm Allow to call home if requested