



Fern House School

Relationship and Behaviour Guidelines



“The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love. People, not programmes, change people”.

Dr Bruce Perry



Introduction

This document outlines the philosophy, ethos and procedures for behaviour support at Fern House School. It is a practical guide for all staff on how to identify and address pupil behaviour, with specific guidance on areas such as bullying and Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI).

These guidelines are a working document, reflecting both our current practices and our ongoing commitment to improving our support for pupils. They are designed to be used alongside the **Connect Education Trust Behaviour Policy**, and all staff are responsible for their implementation.

At Fern House School, our approach is trauma informed and relationship focused. All staff who work with pupils, including senior leaders, teachers, specialist teaching assistants, and administrative and site staff receive training in these methods to ensure we provide consistent, effective support.

Our Vision

Fern House School will empower every child to have a love of learning, the strength to grow and the courage to be brave. Together, we change lives.

Our Values

These values are woven into our practice, curriculum, and policies. They are referenced daily to support our pupils' behaviour for learning.

Acceptance

We are comfortable with who we are and who you are.

Bravery

We do the right thing, even when it is hard or we are challenged.

Curiosity

We explore, we discover and we ask lots of questions.

Determination

We are committed to achieving our goals.



Rationale for Our Approach to Behaviour

At Fern House School, we believe that a safe and well ordered environment is essential for effective teaching and learning. Our staff are dedicated to fostering the holistic development of every pupil, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

At Fern House School, all pupils have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and/or Autism. These conditions can significantly impact their learning, communication and social skills. We recognise that many of our pupils require specific, structured support to help them lead fulfilling lives despite their diagnoses, or the effects of early life adversity and its impact on development.

Our Philosophy

Every staff member shares the responsibility of helping pupils develop behaviours that enable healthy relationships and full participation in learning. We recognise that all pupils require support to learn how to manage their emotions and responses. Our goal is to help pupils achieve and maintain a state of regulation. We do this by teaching them to understand their individual triggers and stressors, how their brain works, and how to use personalised self regulation strategies.

When a pupil is dysregulated, they may exhibit these behaviours and challenges:

- **Survival responses:** These are instinctive reactions to a perceived threat and can manifest as fight, flight, freeze, or fawn.
 - **Fight:** Reacting with aggression or anger.
 - **Flight:** Trying to escape a situation by running away or withdrawing.
 - **Freeze:** Becoming motionless or unable to respond, as if "stuck".
 - **Fawn:** Seeking to please others to avoid conflict or gain approval.
- **Social interaction challenges:** A lack of social reciprocity, difficulty with social cues and body language, struggles with turn-taking and conversational flow and social withdrawal or isolation. As a result, it can be hard for a pupil to form and maintain friendships.
- **Sensory processing differences:** Being either over or under sensitive to sounds, textures, lights or smells. This can lead to a pupil seeking out certain sensory inputs or actively avoiding others, which may result in distraction, discomfort or emotional distress.
- **Executive functioning difficulties:** Difficulties with planning, organising and managing time. A pupil might struggle to transition between tasks, remember instructions or complete multi-step instructions without significant adult support.



- **Need for predictability:** A strong reliance on routines and sameness to feel safe and secure. Any unexpected change can lead to significant distress, anxiety and a dysregulated response.

When a pupil is in a state of dysregulation, their ability to engage with education and access learning is significantly impacted. The brain's stress response prioritises survival over higher level thinking. This means that the part of the brain responsible for learning, memory and concentration is less active, making it extremely difficult for a pupil to process new information, follow instructions or remain focused in the classroom. From the pupil's perspective, their brain is in a "survival mode" which can prevent them from accessing the curriculum and participating in educational activities, regardless of their academic potential.

Behaviour as Communication

We view behaviour as a form of communication. While daily exposure to these behaviours can be frustrating, it is crucial that we interpret them within their proper context. Our approach is to separate the person from the behaviour and explore the underlying emotions.

We feel before we think. These behaviours are not permanent. With the right support in a nurturing, positive and predictable environment, our pupils can and do make significant, lasting progress both emotionally and academically.

The nature of the challenges our pupils face means that, in some cases, Restrictive Physical Intervention may be unavoidable to ensure safety. This document, along with our policies, guidelines, reporting procedures and pupil profiles, is designed to support all staff in meeting our pupils' needs. It is the duty of every staff member to follow these guidelines.

What if we are curious about behaviour?



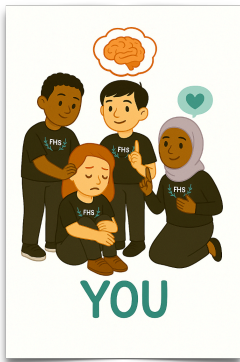
Fostering Healthy Relationships: The Fern House Way

At Fern House, we see behaviour as a critical part of learning. Our goal is to guide every pupil in developing the essential skills needed to form healthy relationships. We do this by focusing on:



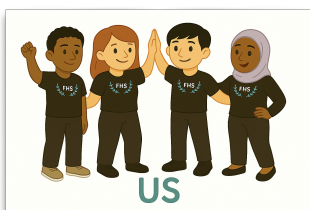
Self-Awareness (Me)

We help pupils to **understand who they are, their experiences and how they have shaped them**. They learn to **understand their personal boundaries, challenges and triggers**, as well as their **unique qualities, interests and aspirations**. This foundation of self-awareness is the first step toward helping them **understand their place in the world** and becoming **self-aware and capable of self-reflection**.



Empathy (You)

Next, we teach empathy. Pupils learn to **recognise that others exist and have an awareness of their needs**. They also learn to **recognise that others have feelings** and that they can **enjoy their company**. By understanding the **similarities and differences between us**, they begin to understand their **impact on others**.



Positive Relationships (Us)

By combining self-awareness and empathy, pupils are equipped to **build and maintain healthy relationships**. They learn to **feel comfortable and at ease with each other**, and **share their successes and support each other through challenges**. This helps them become an **active part of a thriving community** where they can **grow together, learning from each other**.

We put this into practice every day through our everyday interactions, relationships and teaching. We help pupils to reflect on their own behaviour by using ourselves as examples, sharing our own experiences and mistakes, and showing them how to resolve conflicts and manage feelings in a safe and healthy way.



Our Expectations

At Fern House School, we hold high expectations for our pupils, both on and off site. These expectations are guided by our core values of **Acceptance**, **Bravery**, **Curiosity** and **Determination**.



Acceptance

We accept our own experiences and how they have shaped us.
We accept that others have different perspectives based on their own experiences.

We respect other people's right to express their point of view.
We are open to feedback and support.
We celebrate differences in others.



Bravery

We do the right thing and uphold good morals.

We take responsibility for ourselves.
We take risks in our learning.
We allow ourselves to be vulnerable.



Curiosity

We ask lots of questions.

We wonder aloud

We are not defined by labels, we are curious about ourselves and others.

We want to learn new things.



Determination

We are hard working.

We are aspirational.

We are resilient.

We are committed.



The Role of Our Staff

It is the responsibility of all Fern House School staff to help our pupils meet these expectations.

Adults at our school will:

- Ensure pupils are at the centre of every action.
- Build positive relationships.
- Stay calm and promote a sense of calm.
- Be outstanding role models at all times.
- Maximise every moment of the day to support progress and achievements.
- Adhere to all school policies and procedures at all times.
- Keep pupils safe at all times.
- Provide emotional holding and containment.
- Proactively teach social and emotional skills.

Our Classrooms

In the classroom, we create an environment that supports our approach. We will see:

- A unique environment that reflects the individual needs of our pupils.
- A safe, calm and purposeful atmosphere.
- Embedded and predictable routines and rituals.
- Natural light and the use of biophilia to support healing and regulation.
- Reduced and planned transitions.
- Visuals to support communication and interaction.
- Celebration of successes and efforts.

Our Intervention Approach

We believe that every **interaction is an intervention**. Our strongest approach is built on the relationship between pupils and adults, as it is through these interactions that we deliver our interventions and support.

Through our unwavering care and connection, we empower pupils to make positive choices, always remembering to regulate, relate and reason. The safety of our pupils and staff is our highest priority and everything we do is underpinned by our safeguarding procedures.

Sensitive, attuned, responsive care



Our Proactive and Preventative Approach to Behaviour

At Fern House School, we are committed to being **proactive, not reactive**, in our response to potentially stressful situations. We achieve this by fostering an environment where every interaction and aspect of our practice contributes to the prevention of challenging behaviour.

Primary Prevention

This refers to the proactive strategies we implement to minimise the occurrence of behaviours of concern. We invest time to truly know our pupils, spotting their individual triggers and intervening quickly. Our preventative practice is always underpinned by positive relationships.

Strategies include:

- Building strong relationships and using positive praise whenever possible.
- Teaching emotional literacy and self awareness through tools like the Zones of Regulation.
- Creating a safe, calm and predictable classroom environment with embedded routines.
- Ensuring clear and consistent communication of expectations.
- Providing opportunities for choice and control to promote autonomy and reduce anxiety.
- Using visual timetables and schedules to increase predictability and ease transitions.
- Facilitating regular emotional check ins with trusted adults to build rapport and identify needs early

Secondary Prevention

These are our established procedures for managing the early stages of behavioural escalation when primary preventative measures have not been successful. We use personalised regulation strategies based on a pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and the pupil profiles. The Zones of Regulation framework is a key tool in helping pupils identify their emotional state and in guiding our co-regulation efforts.

Strategies may include:

- Speaking quietly, limiting vocabulary and using calm body language to help them regulate their emotions.
- Utilising key adults, sharing our calm and identifying positive moments, such as a time when they successfully managed a response, or by reminding them of their strengths and regulation strategies.
- Using PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) to connect, co-regulate



and increase levels of oxytocin.

- Using sensory regulation strategies to help decrease arousal and reduce cortisol.
- Consistently communicating that we are there to support them with unwavering care.
- Using diversion or distraction, such as changing the activity or topic of conversation to remove pressure.
- Changing the adults - swapping places with a colleague if we feel the pupil might be better helped by someone else at that moment.

Our Approach to Rewards and Motivation

Our ultimate aim is for our pupils to be driven by intrinsic motivation, that is, to be motivated by their own positive feelings. This takes time and we will support them by making a clear link between their actions and a positive feeling. We do this by always backing up our praise with a real life example.

For instance, we might say, "I can see you're smiling. I wonder if you're feeling happy because you earned some money for the Woodland's Shop? It's a great feeling when you're successful!"

Before our pupils are able to do this on their own, we provide positive reinforcement through a system of rewards. At Fern House School, our rewards are directly linked to feelings to constantly reinforce the connection between behaviours and the positive feelings they create.

Possible rewards include:

- Class reward time
- Reward trips
- Positive phone calls home
- Visits to other adults
- Being given responsibilities
- Value stickers

The Woodland Shop

At Fern House School, we use our Woodland Shop to provide a tangible link between our school values and positive behaviour. Pupils can earn virtual money throughout the week, which is directly tied to how well they demonstrate **Acceptance, Bravery, Curiosity,** and **Determination**. Demonstrating a value "as expected" earns them 50p, while "significantly more than expected" can earn them up to £1. At the end of each half term, pupils can spend the virtual money they have saved at the Woodland Shop, choosing from a range of items as a reward for their commitment to our values. This system reinforces our core principles and gives pupils a clear, measurable way to track their progress.



Our Restorative Approach to Consequences

At Fern House School, we view consequences as a means of repair and restoration rather than as a form of punishment. We understand that a pupil's behaviour is often a response to stress and we use our knowledge of the stress response to guide our approach. Whenever possible, we use a natural consequence that is logical and directly linked to the incident, such as tidying up a mess that was made or replacing a broken item.

Our consequences are divided into two categories: Protective Consequences and Educational Consequences.

Protective Consequences

These consequences are used to protect the rights of others and ensure the safety of a pupil and staff. This may include:

- Using the Regulate, Relate, Reason process to help a pupil return to a state of calm.
- Identifying and using safe areas for a pupil to de-escalate.
- Communicating with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and other staff to ensure everyone's safety.
- Implementing a clear action plan to keep a pupil safe.
- Increasing staff ratio to provide additional support.
- Making appropriate adjustments to the school day or timetable.
- Involving parents and carers in the safety and support plan.
- Using suspension as a time for pupil reflection and for the school to implement changes. Upon a pupil's return, reintegration meetings are held to ensure a clear plan is in place to support them in repairing relationships and moving forward.
- Seeking police support in emergency situations to ensure the safety of our school community.

Educational Consequences

These consequences are used to teach, encourage and support a pupil in understanding how to communicate differently in the future. They are always logical, appropriate and proportionate to the incident. This may include:

- Structured reflection time (e.g., during a break time or a specific activity).
- Completing a task that was missed due to dysregulation.
- Rehearsing and modelling prosocial behaviour through intentional teaching (e.g., social stories).
- Assisting with repairs for any damage caused (when possible and practical).
- Providing an educational opportunity for the pupil to learn about the impact of their actions.
- Giving the pupil an opportunity to "put things right" by reflecting on, repairing and restoring relationships.



Our Approach to Bullying

At Fern House School, we do not tolerate bullying. We are dedicated to creating a safe and secure environment where everyone can learn and thrive.

Defining Bullying

Bullying is defined as a deliberately aggressive and hurtful behaviour that is repeated over time, where there is an abuse of power. It is difficult for the person being bullied to defend themselves.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- **Physical:** Hitting, punching, kicking, spitting, or any form of physical violence.
- **Verbal:** Using offensive names, making insults, threats or abusive remarks.
- **Indirect:** Spreading rumours, social exclusion or damaging property.

Intent vs. Behaviour

We recognise that many of our pupils have social, emotional and mental health difficulties that can lead to challenging behaviours, including aggression or violence towards others. We differentiate between this behaviour and true bullying.

For an action to be classified as bullying, it must be done with deliberate intent to cause harm to a specific person. When a pupil's actions are an expression of stress, dysregulation or a personal difficulty, and lack this malicious intent, it is treated as a challenging behaviour requiring support and intervention, not as an act of bullying.

Our Procedure

As a school community, we will not allow bullying to go unreported. All instances of bullying must be documented on CPOMS and reported immediately to a member of the senior leadership team.

Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions

At Fern House School we prioritise de-escalation and positive behaviour support. All staff receive training in restrictive physical interventions (RPI) using BILD-accredited techniques from PRICE training. This is delivered by fully trained and accredited on site tutors, ensuring a high level of expertise and consistency.

Use of Reasonable Force

While our focus is always on preventative measures, we acknowledge that there are rare circumstances where the use of reasonable force is necessary to ensure the safety of pupils and staff. We adhere strictly to the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the latest DfE statutory guidance: *Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (effective from 1 April 2026)*.



Section 93 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 affirms the lawful right for a member of staff to use reasonable force. School staff may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances to prevent a pupil from doing, or continuing to do, any of the following:

- Committing any offence (or for a pupil under the age of criminal responsibility, what would be an offence for an older pupil).
- Causing personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil).
- Engaging in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline at the school, or among any pupils receiving education at the school, whether during a teaching session or otherwise.

Any incidents of reasonable force must:

- Be applied using the minimum amount of force and for the minimum amount of time possible.
- Be used in a way that maintains the safety and dignity of all concerned.
- **Never** be used as a form of punishment.

Managing Isolation (Seclusion)

The guidance outlines strict statutory governance for seclusion (keeping a pupil confined away from others and preventing them from leaving):

- **Purpose:** It must be a safety only and non disciplinary measure. It must never be used as a sanction or to enforce compliance.
- **Supervision:** Seclusion requires continuous supervision at all times to monitor wellbeing; intermittent checks are unlawful.

Recording Incidents

The LGB and Trust Safeguarding lead ensure that a formal procedure is in place to record every significant incident where force or seclusion is used. At our school, we use CPOMS as our online systems for recording all behaviour incidents. Every staff member has a unique login to ensure a clear and accurate record.

- **Responsibility:** It is the responsibility of the first staff member involved to initiate the behaviour incident form, as they have firsthand knowledge of triggers and initial de escalation strategies. Classroom staff should collate all information into one comprehensive report to prevent multiple reports for a single pupil on the same day.
- **Timing:** All incidents must be recorded internally in writing as soon as practicable. Staff must submit records to the Headteacher/SLT no later than the end of the same school day.
- **Legal Scope:** The duty to record applies even if the use of restrictive interventions is already agreed upon within a pupil's Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) or EHCP.
- **The ABC Approach:** We use the Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence approach when recording incidents. This ensures every report is analytical, helping us to identify patterns, triggers and the times when behaviours occur.



The Headship Team regularly uses this data to analyse behaviour, allowing us to proactively identify triggers, implement new strategies and help all staff make crucial links to respond effectively to ongoing behaviour concerns.

Mandatory Reporting to Parents and Carers

The school has a statutory duty to report each significant use of force or seclusion to the pupil's parents or carers.

- **Notification:** Parents must be informed as soon as practicable, ideally on the same day.
- **Written Communication:** While an initial phone call is often best practice for immediate communication, the school must provide the details of the incident in writing (e.g., via email).
- **Statutory Exceptions:** Notification may be withheld *only* if the pupil is aged 20 or over, or if the school has reasonable grounds to believe that reporting to a specific parent would result in serious harm to the pupil. In such cases, the local authority will be notified.

Post-Incident Support

Following any intervention, the school will provide immediate support. This includes a medical assessment for injuries and an evaluation of any "adverse impacts" on the pupil's well being. A follow up discussion will be offered to parents to review de escalation strategies and update support plans.

Behaviour Categorisation: Red and Amber Behaviours

To ensure consistency in our approach and reporting, we categorise pupil behaviour into two levels: Red and Amber. All staff must be familiar with these categories.

Red Behaviours

Red behaviours are serious incidents that pose a significant risk to the safety, well-being or learning of pupils and staff. All red behaviours **must** be recorded on CPOMS with a detailed and comprehensive report.

- Abuse against sexual orientation and gender identity
- Behaviour of concern
- Bullying
- Child-on-Child Sexual Harassment
- Child-on-Child Sexual Violence
- Damage (includes damage to school or personal property)
- Drug and alcohol related
- Inappropriate use of social media or online technology
- Physical assault against a pupil



- Physical assault against an adult
- Racist abuse
- Racist Language
- Self-harm
- Sexualised language
- Spitting at someone
- Theft
- Use or threat of use of an offensive weapon or prohibited item
- Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against a pupil
- Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult
- Wilful and repeated transgression of protective measures in place to protect public health

Amber Behaviours

Amber behaviours are disruptive actions that, while not immediately dangerous, interfere with the learning environment and may escalate if not addressed. These behaviours should also be managed according to the principles in this document, with a focus on de-escalation and proactive intervention. It is also important to record amber behaviours on CPOMS as this helps build a picture of those pupils whose behaviours are not as serious but are still a concern.

- Avoidance
- Non compliance
- Disruptive behaviours
- Shouting
- Spitting
- Swearing



This guidance is based on the following:

Louise Bomber and Daniel A. Hughes, *Settling To Learn: Settling troubled pupils to learn: Why relationships matter in school*

Louise Bomber, *What About Me?: Inclusive Strategies To support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day*

Louise Bomber, *Inside I'm Hurting: Practical strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in schools*

Louise Bomber, *Know Me To Teach Me: Differentiated discipline for those recovering from Adverse Childhood Experiences*

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D, *The Power of Showing Up: How parental presence shapes who our kids become and how their brains get wired*

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D, *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 proven strategies to nurture your child's developing mind*

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D, *No-Drama Discipline: The whole-brain way to calm the chaos and nurture your child's developing mind*

Kevin Street, *School As A Secure Base: How peaceful teachers can create peaceful schools*

Heather T.Forbes LCSW, *Help For Billy: A beyond consequences approach to helping challenging children in the classroom*

Touchbase, *7 day Attachment Lead Training / Trauma Responsive Education Course*

Touchbase, *Inside I'm Hurting – Supporting the child who has experienced significant relational traumas and losses, Foundational Level 1*

Touchbase, *What About Me?' – What might attachment support look like during a school day? Foundational Level 2*

Enfield Educational Psychology Service, *Enfield Trauma Informed Practice in Schools and Settings (E-TIPSS)*

