

Watergate School - Behaviour Principles

Agreed by Governors – 19/03/21

Reviewed: March 2025



What we believe

When we behave in a certain way we are communicating, intentionally or unintentionally, important information about how we feel and what we want or need.

At Watergate school we do not judge behaviours to be 'good' or 'bad', they are an observable expression of thoughts, feelings, wants or needs.

All behaviours occur for a reason and they serve important functions for the individual, for example: if I smile at you, you smile at me and give me a hug – therefore I have an effective strategy for telling you I need you close to me. Similarly, if I hit you and you go away, I have an effective strategy for telling you I do not want you close to me.

Some children may express themselves through active behaviours. Other children will express themselves through behaviours which are more passive and which tend to be less noticed (and seen as problematic) by others. Quiet, passive behaviour can be a very effective means of ensuring that you are left alone. For example: if I sit quietly and do not look at anyone people are less likely to intrude in my world and I am less likely to be asked to do things.

It is important that we recognise the function of all behaviours. For this reason, we use the terminology 'behaviours that cause us concern' rather than 'behaviours that challenge' as the latter phrase implies more active behaviours and the former phrase reminds us to be aware of the needs of all our pupils.

Many behaviours of concern occur because the individual is in an elevated state of arousal, due to stress and anxiety. When someone is in this elevated state they are unable to learn. Similarly, someone who is under-aroused is not ready to learn either. To be able to access learning we need to be on our baseline, neither under, nor over-aroused.

Everything in the environment has an impact upon behaviour: the people, the place, the sounds, smells, lights, the activities, etc. All of these factors can have an effect upon levels of stress, anxiety and general well-being.

Being able to self-regulate and manage one's own behaviour effectively involves: being able to recognise internal sensations of stress and anxiety; to relate those sensations to what caused them and then being able to employ a strategy that will help to reduce the stress and anxiety. This is a complex process which we all struggle with at times. The more stressed or anxious a person is the harder it is to effectively manage the situation.

All children have a right to feel safe and secure in school, and their learning and well-being should not be adversely affected by the dysregulated behaviour of their peers.

What we do

We develop a deep understanding of each child: learning from the individual; from their family; and from all those who work with them. [We use this knowledge to collaboratively develop effective Relational Support Plans]

Through our knowledge of the individual and our child-centred approach we seek to develop the optimal learning environment for each child, so they are able to access the best possible learning, for them.

As a school we are committed to understanding the functions of observable behaviours and therefore to adapting and managing the environment for each child, developing teaching strategies that mean a child is either able to communicate their wants and needs more effectively or is more able to engage positively with those around them. This approach ensures that the child does not need to communicate through a behaviour of concern.

We teach our children to recognise their internal states and to connect those states with the event(s) that caused them, as this is the first step to finding ways to problem-solve and self-regulate, e.g. My head hurts because the music is too loud for me. To feel better I can ask to go somewhere quiet, or to put on my ear defenders.

Through the use of pro-active, positive approaches and Relational Support Plans we ensure that the impact of dysregulated behaviours on the learning and well-being of other pupils is minimised.

We continually assess and adapt support plans as pupils grow and make progress, because the challenges they experience change over time.

What we don't do:

Sanctions/consequences

- Take things away – activity, reward they have earned, comfort item, toys
- Use a thinking chair/ naughty step / time out
- Put a child outside alone and shut the door
- Reward other children and leaving one child out – e.g. all have a biscuit but not...
- Use a different member of staff as a threat to enforce compliance
- Insist a child sticks with their original choice – e.g. having to stay in the adventure playground, not wanting something
- Shout – raise our voice, tell children off for behaviour that is communication
- Deliberately ignore a child rather than the behaviour
- Exclude children, either from an activity or from school
- Force a child to eat, withhold a preferred food until they eat a non preferred food
- Hold children by their wrists

Restraint

- Restrain a child – e.g. hold them to prevent them from moving from one place to another unless there is a risk to safety such as running into a road
- Pick children up unless there is a risk to their safety – e.g. sitting in a road
- Pull or drag a child to move them from one place to another
- Use previously learnt physical intervention techniques to move a child
- Sit behind a child and block them with your body or a chair to keep them at an activity
- Carry children from one place to another (force transitions)
- Hold hands when the child shows you they do not want you to do so
- Hold clothing – e.g. pull hoods, jumpers, shirts
- Hold children's hands down
- Use your physical presence
- Lock doors or block doors, e.g. with our body or by sitting in front of them

Never forget:

In our school:

- The challenge we may feel is ours
- Watergate is a school for children with severe/ profound and complex needs and many have social communication difficulties – our expectations should be in line with their development
- You can call on colleagues for help if you are struggling, we are a team
- We model positive behaviours and use positive language
- Our children have spiky profiles and may shine in one area but find others really hard
- Rome wasn't built in a day – we are all learning! It can take months for new things to be embedded
- Every child is different
- Language can develop more quickly than understanding and generalising
- Children need to feel safe and regulated before they can learn
- Positivity breeds positivity!

Our behaviour

- We never talk about the child in front of them (unless positively and involving them in the conversation)
- We use simple language with visuals
- We recognise that we need to focus on our own regulation – a dysregulated adult cannot regulate a child
- We use positive language and say what we want to happen
- We never argue in front of the children, we have professional discussions at appropriate times
- We show respect to other colleagues and offer support – we are all doing our best