

CLEARSPACE LEARNING LTD

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Clearspace Learning believes that positive behaviour stems from positive relationships, felt safety, and meaningful engagement. Our approach to behaviour management is trauma-informed, relationship-based, and child-centred.

We work with children and young people who often have complex histories, including exclusion, adverse childhood experiences, and neurodevelopmental differences. We recognise that challenging behaviour is communication—an expression of unmet needs, distress, or overwhelm.

Our Core Philosophy:

- Connection before correction – Relationships are the foundation of behavioural change
- Regulation before reasoning – Calm nervous systems enable learning and cooperation
- Understanding over punishment – Behaviour has meaning; we seek to understand it
- Co-regulation over control – We help young people regulate rather than controlling them
- Repair over consequences – We focus on healing relationships after ruptures
- Child-led engagement – When students have agency and choice, behaviour improves

We do not use:

- Punishment or sanctions as primary responses
- Public humiliation or shaming
- Physical intervention (except in genuine emergencies to prevent serious harm)
- Withdrawal of education as a consequence
- Zero-tolerance approaches

2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy complies with:

- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Use of Reasonable Force (DfE Guidance 2013)
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions (DfE 2015)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools (DfE 2018)
- Behaviour in Schools (DfE 2022)

This policy is compatible with referring schools' behaviour policies while recognising that alternative provision exists precisely because mainstream approaches have not worked for these young people.

3. UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR: OUR TRAUMA-INFORMED LENS

3.1 Behaviour as Communication

We understand that behaviour tells us something important:

- "I don't feel safe" – anxiety, hypervigilance, fight/flight responses
- "I don't understand" – confusion, frustration, shutdown
- "I'm overwhelmed" – sensory overload, emotional flooding
- "I need connection" – attention-seeking as connection-seeking
- "This doesn't make sense to me" – task avoidance, refusal
- "I'm in pain" – physical or emotional distress

3.2 The Window of Tolerance

We recognise that learning and cooperation happen within the "window of tolerance"—a state of optimal arousal where the nervous system is neither hyper-aroused (fight/flight) nor hypo-aroused (freeze/shutdown).

Our goal: Keep students within or help them return to their window of tolerance.

We recognise signs of dysregulation:

- Hyper-arousal: Agitation, shouting, pacing, hyperactivity, aggression
- Hypo-arousal: Withdrawal, shutdown, lethargy, dissociation, giving up

3.3 Neurodevelopmental Considerations

Many students we support have:

- ADHD: Impulsivity, difficulty with transitions, need for movement
- Autism: Sensory sensitivities, need for predictability, literalness
- PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance): Extreme anxiety around demands
- Trauma histories: Hypervigilance, trust difficulties, emotional dysregulation
- Dual exceptionality: Giftedness alongside learning differences

We adapt our approach accordingly, recognising that traditional behaviour strategies often fail or cause harm for neurodivergent learners.

4. PROACTIVE STRATEGIES: CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

4.1 Relationship Building

The foundation of all our work:

- Genuine interest in the student as a person
- Consistent warmth and respect
- Playfulness and humour
- Shared activities and interests
- Time spent not focused on learning or behaviour
- Unconditional positive regard

We invest time building trust before expecting compliance.

4.2 Environmental Design

We create environments that support regulation:

- Sensory considerations: Lighting, noise levels, seating options, movement breaks
- Predictability: Clear routines, advance warning of changes, visual supports
- Choice and agency: Students have genuine choices within safe boundaries
- Safe spaces: Physical and emotional space to decompress
- Engaging activities: Hands-on, meaningful, interesting work reduces behavioural challenges

The "Beautiful Chaos" Approach:

We embrace productive, child-led exploration. When students are genuinely engaged in meaningful making and discovery, behavioural issues dramatically reduce.

4.3 Clear Expectations and Boundaries

We establish clear, minimal boundaries:

- Safety for self
- Safety for others
- Safety for property
- Respectful communication

Expectations are:

- Co-created with students where possible
- Explained clearly and modelled
- Few in number (focus on essentials)
- Consistently applied with flexibility
- Revisited and negotiated as needed

4.4 Reducing Demands

For students with demand avoidance (PDA) or high anxiety:

- Reduce unnecessary demands
- Use indirect language ("I wonder if..." vs. "You need to...")
- Offer choices and collaboration
- Build in "control" for the student
- Use humour and lightness
- Embed demands within play or preferred activities

4.5 Communication Adaptations

We adapt how we communicate:

- Clear, concrete language
- Visual supports where helpful
- Allow processing time
- Check understanding without testing
- Use minimal verbal language during dysregulation
- Match communication style to student's needs

5. RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES: SUPPORTING REGULATION

5.1 Early Intervention

We recognise early signs of escalation:

- Changes in body language (tension, clenched fists, pacing)
- Changes in voice (louder, higher pitch, faster speech)
- Changes in behaviour (task avoidance, non-compliance, withdrawal)
- Changes in engagement (looking away, fidgeting, restlessness)

Early responses:

- Check in with curiosity: "I'm noticing... Are you okay?"
- Offer a break or change of activity
- Reduce task demands
- Offer regulating activities (movement, sensory input, drink/snack)
- Use humour or distraction
- Acknowledge feelings: "This seems hard right now"

5.2 De-escalation Techniques

When a student is becoming dysregulated, we use:

1. Trauma-Informed Practice

- Prioritise safety (emotional and physical)
- Remain calm ourselves (co-regulation)
- Lower our own voice and slow our speech
- Respect personal space
- Avoid power struggles

2. Co-regulation Over Behavioural Control

- We use our regulated nervous system to help regulate theirs
- Calm, steady presence
- Regulated breathing (modelling, not instructing)
- Soft tone and gentle movement
- "I'm here with you" vs. "You need to calm down"

3. Offering Acceptable Choices

- "Would you like to step outside or take a break here?"
- "Shall we pause this and do something else, or take 5 minutes and come back?"
- Choices maintain dignity and agency

4. Validation Without Fixing

- "I can see this is really frustrating"
- "That sounds really hard"
- "It makes sense you're upset about that"
- We don't minimise, dismiss, or try to talk them out of feelings

5. Strategic Safe Spaces and Exits

- Permission to leave the immediate situation
- A designated "cool down" space or activity
- No stigma attached to taking space
- Return when ready, not when we dictate

6. Strategic Ignoring of Minor Behaviours

- We don't escalate by addressing every minor infraction
- Focus on what matters (safety)
- Allow face-saving by not correcting everything

7. Non-Verbal Support

- Hand on shoulder (if welcome)
- Sitting alongside in parallel
- Offering a fidget or sensory tool
- A drink of water, tissues
- Minimal words during peak dysregulation

6. CRISIS MANAGEMENT

6.1 When De-escalation Isn't Working

If a student is in crisis (significant risk of harm):

Priority: Safety for the student, staff, and others

Actions:

1. Remove audience – Send others away or move ourselves
2. Increase distance – Give physical space
3. Reduce demands to zero – Stop talking, instructing, or requiring anything
4. Wait and monitor – Crises pass; we stay present but non-intrusive
5. Call for support if needed:
 - Parent/carer
 - Referring school staff
 - Emergency services (999) if serious risk of harm

We DO NOT:

- Escalate with threats or ultimatums
- Physically intervene unless absolutely necessary to prevent serious harm
- Leave the student alone if at risk

- Demand apologies or compliance during crisis

6.2 Use of Physical Intervention

Clearspace Learning uses a "no restraint" approach except in genuine emergencies.

Physical intervention (restraint) will ONLY be used:

- To prevent serious harm to the student
- To prevent serious harm to others
- As an absolute last resort when all other strategies have failed
- For the minimum time necessary
- Using the minimum force necessary

If physical intervention is used:

- It will be recorded in detail immediately
- Parents/carers will be informed the same day
- The referring school and commissioning LA will be notified
- An incident debrief will be conducted with the student when calm
- Risk assessment will be reviewed and updated
- Alternatives will be planned for future situations

Given the 1:1 nature of provision, physical intervention is extremely rare. If a student's needs require frequent physical intervention, alternative provision may be more appropriate.

6.3 Working with Police/Emergency Services

If emergency services are called:

- We remain with the student
- We advocate for trauma-informed, proportionate responses
- We share relevant information about the student's needs
- We involve parents/carers immediately
- We document thoroughly

7. POST-INCIDENT REPAIR AND REFLECTION

7.1 Immediate Aftermath

After a crisis or significant behavioural incident:

- Allow time and space for everyone to regulate
- No immediate processing or consequences
- Practical care (water, comfortable space, reassurance)
- Contact parents/carers
- Contact referring school

7.2 Restorative Conversations

When everyone is calm (often the next session):

- Check in: "How are you feeling about what happened?"
- Listen to the student's perspective without judgment
- Validate: "It sounds like you were really overwhelmed"
- Explore: "What do you think happened? What might help next time?"
- Repair relationships: Address any hurt caused, make amends if appropriate
- Plan together: "What could we do differently?"

This is NOT:

- A lecture or telling-off
- Focused on blame or shame
- Extracting apologies
- Imposing our narrative

This IS:

- Collaborative problem-solving
- Learning together
- Strengthening the relationship
- Building skills for next time

7.3 Staff Reflection

Stuart Knox reflects on:

- What contributed to the incident?
- Were there early signs I missed?
- What environmental or demand factors played a role?
- How was my own regulation?
- What worked or didn't work in my response?
- What do I need to do differently?

Learning is applied to prevent future incidents.

8. CONSEQUENCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

8.1 Our Approach to Consequences

We believe:

- Natural consequences are often sufficient
- Logical consequences can be educational
- Punitive consequences damage relationships and rarely change behaviour
- Accountability comes through repair, not punishment

Natural Consequences: The inherent result of the behaviour

- Example: Refusing to wear a coat → feeling cold
- We allow natural consequences when safe

Logical Consequences: Directly related to the behaviour

- Example: Damaging equipment → helping to fix or replace it
- Example: Leaving a mess → helping to clean up
- Focused on repair and learning, not punishment

Punitive Consequences: Not used

- Exclusion from activity as punishment
- Extra work
- Withdrawal of privileges unrelated to the behaviour
- Humiliation or shaming

8.2 Restorative Justice

When harm has been caused:

- The focus is on repairing relationships and damage
- "What happened? Who was affected? How can we make it right?"
- Students are supported to make amends in meaningful ways
- This builds empathy, responsibility, and community

8.3 When Clearspace Provision Cannot Continue

In very rare circumstances, if:

- The student's needs are beyond our capacity to meet safely
- There is ongoing risk of serious harm despite interventions
- The match between student and provision is not working

We will:

- Discuss concerns with the student, family, and referring school
- Give notice rather than sudden endings where possible
- Support transition to more appropriate provision
- Share detailed information about what worked and what didn't

- Recognise this as a systemic issue, not a failure of the student

9. BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT PLANNING

9.1 Individual Behaviour Support Plans

For students with significant behavioural needs, we create Individual Behaviour Support Plans in collaboration with:

- The student
- Parents/carers
- Referring school
- Other professionals involved

Plans include:

- Understanding the student's needs and triggers
- Proactive strategies to prevent escalation
- Early warning signs
- De-escalation strategies that work for this student
- Crisis management if needed
- Preferred communication styles
- Sensory needs and preferences
- What helps this student regulate

9.2 Dynamic Risk Assessment

We continually assess:

- Is the environment safe and supportive?
- Is the student within their window of tolerance?
- Are demands at an appropriate level?
- What might this behaviour be communicating?
- Do I need to adjust my approach?

Flexibility is key. Plans are guidelines, not scripts.

10. WORKING WITH FAMILIES

10.1 Partnership with Parents/Carers

We believe parents/carers are experts on their children.

- We listen to their knowledge and insights
- We share observations and strategies
- We maintain regular communication
- We avoid judgment about parenting or home circumstances
- We recognise parents may themselves be stressed or struggling

10.2 Communication About Behaviour

When discussing behaviour:

- We focus on understanding, not blaming
- We highlight strengths and progress
- We share what's working
- We collaborate on strategies
- We're honest about challenges while maintaining hope

We don't:

- Complain about the child to parents
- Make parents feel blamed
- Compare to other children
- Focus only on negatives

11. RECORDING AND MONITORING

11.1 Recording Behaviour

We record:

- Significant behavioural incidents (see Incident Report Form)
- Use of physical intervention (always)
- Patterns or triggers
- Successful strategies
- Progress and improvements

Records include:

- Date, time, location
- Antecedents (what happened before)
- Behaviour (what happened)
- Consequences (what happened after)
- Interventions used
- Outcome
- Follow-up actions

Records are:

- Factual, not judgmental
- Stored securely
- Shared with referring schools as agreed
- Used for learning and improvement

11.2 Monitoring Progress

We track:

- Frequency and intensity of challenging behaviours
- Progress toward individual goals
- What strategies are most effective
- Engagement and wellbeing indicators
- Relationship quality

We celebrate progress, recognising that behaviour change takes time and isn't linear.

12. STAFF WELL-BEING

12.1 Supporting Staff

Working with children with complex behavioural needs is demanding. Stuart Knox ensures:

- Regular breaks and self-care
- Supervision and debriefing after challenging incidents
- Professional support and consultation as needed
- Continued learning and development
- Realistic expectations about what can be achieved

12.2 When Staff Feel Overwhelmed

It's okay to:

- Take a break
- Ask for help
- Recognise limits
- Feel frustrated or tired
- Seek consultation from the referring school or LA

Self-regulation is essential. We cannot co-regulate if we are dysregulated ourselves.

13. PROHIBITED PRACTICES

Clearspace Learning does NOT use:

- Physical punishment or restraint as behaviour management
- Humiliation, shaming, or public criticism
- Withdrawal of meals, drinks, or toilet access
- Deprivation of sleep
- Withholding of education as punishment
- Seclusion or isolation (locked rooms)
- Prolonged periods of timeout
- Unreasonable or humiliating consequences

14. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Stuart Knox has training in:

- Trauma-informed practice
- De-escalation and behaviour management
- Autism and ADHD understanding
- PDA approaches
- Mental health awareness
- Safeguarding (including recognising distress)

Ongoing development includes:

- Keeping up to date with research and best practice
- Reflective practice and supervision
- Learning from incidents and experiences
- Consultation with specialists as needed

15. RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- SEND Policy
- Complaints Policy

16. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually (September 2027)
- Updated in light of incidents or learning
- Shared with commissioning schools and families
- Evaluated for effectiveness

Evaluation considers:

- Are behavioural incidents reducing?
- Are relationships strengthening?
- Do students feel safe and respected?
- Is provision effective for the students we serve?
- Are we meeting our trauma-informed commitments?

INCIDENT REPORT

Date/Time of Incident:

Location:

Student Name:

Reporting Staff:

Antecedents (What happened before):

(Include time of day, activity, transitions, demands, environmental factors)

Behaviour (What happened):

(Describe objectively what the student did)

Severity:

- ☐ Minor (low level, brief)
- ☐ Moderate (disruptive, extended)
- ☐ Serious (risk of harm, major disruption)

Duration:

Approximate length of incident:

Interventions Used:

(What strategies were tried?)

- ☐ Verbal de-escalation
- ☐ Offered choices
- ☐ Changed activity
- ☐ Provided space/break
- ☐ Co-regulation strategies
- ☐ Other:

Outcome:

(How was the situation resolved?)

Follow-Up:

- ☐ Restorative conversation conducted
- ☐ Parents/carers informed
- ☐ School/LA notified
- ☐ Risk assessment reviewed
- ☐ Behaviour plan updated

Injuries: Yes/No

If yes, details:

Physical Intervention Used: Yes/No

If yes, details and justification:

What Worked:

What Could Be Done Differently:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

When a student is escalating, try:

Early Stage:

- Curiosity and check-in
- Offer a break or movement
- Change the activity
- Reduce demands
- Humour or distraction
- Acknowledge feelings

Moderate Stage:

- Lower your voice and slow down
- Increase personal space
- Offer limited choices
- Strategic ignoring of minor behaviours
- Non-verbal support
- Safe space option

Crisis Stage:

- Prioritise safety
- Minimal words
- Maximum space
- Wait and monitor
- Call for support if needed
- Do not engage in power struggles

Always:

- Stay calm
- Validate feelings
- Avoid shame or blame
- Allow face-saving exits
- Repair relationship afterwards

POLICY APPROVAL

This policy has been approved by:

Stuart Knox

Director, Clearspace Learning Ltd

Date: September 2026

Next Review: September 2027

Company Registration: 15950890

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