Marksbury C of E primary School

Jesus said 'I have come that you may have life, life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)

Relational Policy

This document has been prepared to set out the Relational Policy of Marksbury CE Primary School. The document shall be reviewed every two years and approved by the School Leadership Team

Version	Revisions	Revised By	Approved By	date
1.0			SLT and Governors	DRAFT June 2026

Document Information

Review Cycle	Every two years
Category	Statutory
Effective Date	Immediately
Reviewing Authority	School Leadership Team (SLT)

At Marksbury Church of England Primary School we aim for all pupils to feel safe, learn and be successful. In order to allow children to flourish educationally, socially and emotionally, we create an ethos of positive behaviour. This is achieved through three core approaches:

- High standards with clear expectations
- Strong relationships
- Positive reinforcement

This policy, alongside our Behaviour Policy, outlines our underpinning principles and practices so that all of us - members of staff, parents, pupils, and governors - can work together to maintain outstanding behaviour, attitudes and standards of work.

'Schools where children achieve well and enjoy their learning are those where relationships are at the centre of all they do. In these schools we see teachers who are able to create an atmosphere where all feel valued, where the life chances of all children are improved and where children take with them the ability to form meaningful and caring relationships into their adult life."

Ian Hemelik, Virtual School Headteacher, Devon County Council

At Marksbury School we endeavor to create a happy, safe and inclusive environment for all children to learn. We aim for all children to be enabled to demonstrate positive behaviour at all times and outstanding behavior most of the time, both in and out of the classroom. Our aim is to support children to learn to manage their behaviour and to be responsible for their own actions through a relational approach to behavior management. At Marksbury we consider behavior to be a communication and SEMH support is a priority when responding to the behavior of all of all childeen. We recognise the importance of the relationships we are creating on a daily basis and understand that these are key in supporting children to be the best versions of themselves.

The core practices that underpin a relational policy are represented in the diagram (Devonshire County Council Guidance Document)

Relational Approaches in the classroom

A relational approach to behavior in the classroom will be applied by all adults to all children. This will include setting expectations for behaviour and consequences for poor behaviour (see Behaviour Policy for details of this). Most children will be responsive to this and need little else to remain 'on track'. Class teachers will use Class Dojo points as recognition of good conduct in all contexts but particularly those linked to the school's Christian values.

All adults will be inquisitive about behaviour transgressions in the classroom.

- Children will be regularly reminded of the expected behaviours as set out in our three school rules
- Events that are deemed significant should be managed out of class and privately (not in front of others – praise publicly, reprimand privately.
- Children who are dysregulated should be acknowledged as such and encouraged to use an agreed area for calming, away from others so that they are not publicly observed by peers.
- Discussion and reflection on the behaviour should be done at the earliest opportunity with the adult and child **when both are regulated**. This should be dealt with in private, so the child does not feel shamed by their behaviour.
- Reference and adherence to a Positive Behaviour/Relational Support Plan (Appendix 5) if in place, should be part of this action.
- We believe in logical and related consequences that teach, not punish. Where possible, consequences should be immediate and natural.

Developing Relationships

All children at Marksbury School learn alongside adults who are invested, consistent and have high expectations. From Reception to year six, children experience clear rules, boundaries and expectations which are underpinned by our key values and learning behaviours

- Be ready
- Be safe
- Be respectful

As well as commitment to building good relationships staff work together to foster an environment of caring and connection that is reflected in the PACE approach with all interactions, but particularly towards behavior transgressions of our most vulnerable pupils. (Appendix 1)

Playful
Acceptance
Curiosity
Empathy

Understanding the needs of all individuals sits at the root of Marksbury's behavior management whilst a consistent approach to behavior remains key.

All staff understand that most behavior is communication and persistent negative behaviours exhibited by children normally have a root source often linked to other causes. Whilst we recognise that this is not an excuse for unacceptable behavior such reasons can dictate appropriate responses. All staff work closely with the SENDCo to discuss and identify any children whose behavior could indicate additional needs such as

- difficulty with separation,
- concern around dysregulation,
- withdrawal,
- changes in behavior
- communication that is cause for concern (swearing, defiance, mood changes)
- behaviours linked to neurodiversity

Curiosity, understanding and empathy (part of the PACE approach) is vital and the importance of adults remaining regulated whilst managing behavior transgressions is also fully understood by staff. That is, *raised voices are undesirable* and a shared language around acknowledging emotions and associated behavior is commonplace.
Staff build good relationships with children by being curious about their behavior, not over reacting and offering opportunities for explanation and discussion from both children and adults. **This will not negate the need for sanctions where appropriate** but children will be clear about why those sanctions have been put into place (refer to Marksbury Behaviour Policy). They will have contributed to a discussion and decision around giving sanctions and the fairness and purpose of them in the context of the behavior transgression.

Supporting Inclusion.

Children whose behavior is considered to be as a result of, or part of, a special educational need and disability will need additional support for them to form good relationships so that they can fully understand how their behaviours are seen to affect others. This will be done by consistent management and additional time spent with trusted adults where explanations and expectations are reiterated.

Support and management will be in-line with advice from supporting agencies such as Autism and Communication Team, Community Peadiatrics and Play Therapists who can advise on, for example, attachment, Autism, ADHD. Strategic advice may also form part of a Positive Behaviour Support Plan. The plan would be facilitated alongside the **graduated response** to Social Emotional Mental Health support (Appendix 2 - The Graduated Response) to ensure the child's self-esteem is maintained and sense of self-worth is preserved.

SEMH as SEND
Pupils whose behavior is considered to be very challenging and **High Need** in the SEND category of **SEMH** (see SEND information report and SEND policy), will be monitored and supported on a case by case basis. The relational approach will always form the basis of Marksbury's method of supporting all individuals with behaviour challenges including those with the highest needs.

Parents and children will be involved in regular reviews of Positive Behaviour Support Plans and teachers will be supported through a collegiate and joined up approach to managing their pupils. This will include support from the senior leadership team through consistency in using PACE and the **Relate, Regulate Reason and Repair approach.**
In addition, and as a preventative and reactive response to need, the school can offer further provision to support the relational approach to our pupils Mental Health and Wellbeing, such as:

- Thrive support
- Nurture Provision

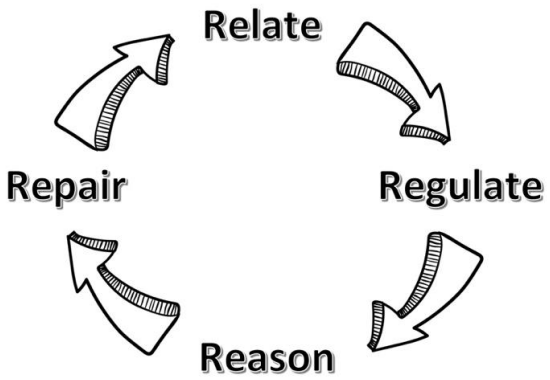
- Referral to The Mental Health Support Team
- Sign Posting to Young Somerset.

In some cases, school will seek support from the BANES **Inclusion Support Service** and the local inclusion panel to facilitate outside agency support.
The school will positively support reduced timetables for the wellbeing of the pupils with the highest needs who are unable to attend a full day or full week at school – such timetables will be reviewed every 2-4 weeks with the child, staff and parents. Every effort will be made to support a child back to a full time timetable with the aim of **fostering good relationships** to generate success.

The Head/SENCo/SLT will respond to the individual needs of pupils whose difficulties with their behaviour may need to be sensitively shared with some (or all) of the pupil community. The aim of this would be to achieve understanding of peers by peers leading to less judgment, reduced labelling and an increased recognition of difference/ diversity additionally modelled by staff. This can also be facilitated through teaching for example, emotion coaching such as the hand model of the brain (Appendix 3) or sharing key information about behavior 'drivers' or 'triggers'. This would be done in partnership with SENCo, parents and teachers, and where appropriate, with sensitive involvement of the pupils who are finding it challenging to adhere to the Marksbury rules.

Responding and calming
Understanding Behaviour
How we feel and respond to our emotions through our behaviour is linked to underlying and unconscious physiological and emotional processes which in turn are a product of our brain development.

In order to support children, we must understand how to meet the underlying developmental needs not just manage the symptoms. This means developing positive relationships with children in order to foster trust and connection and thus make a difference to their sense of belonging and self-worth.
If children are to engage socially, and with learning, we need to provide them with an environment within which they can feel safe and valued.
Children gain their sense of social safety from the adults around them.
When children feel safe we will need to provide them with opportunities to stimulate and reinforce (practice the use of) the neurological pathways which support good social engagement.
We also need to provide them with experiences that calm their defense pathways.



Relate
In order to be successful at school all children need to develop relationships which enable then to feel safe, secure and good about who they are. In order for this to happen, relationships need to be at the

heart of school life alongside clear boundaries and expectations. We aim to promote positive relationships, active engagement and wellbeing for all pupils. Protection, connection, understanding and care are the cornerstones of the relationship and should be part of all interactions at all times at a whole school, classroom and individual level.

Relate in practice

Adults will protect by:

- Being predictable, reliable and trustworthy
- Containing their own emotions
- Providing structure and boundaries
- Anticipating that things may be picked up as threat or danger (triggers)

Adults will connect by:

- Being physically and emotionally available
- Attuning to the child's tone and mood
- Being responsive, expressive and interactive
- Being playful in their interactions
- Showing interest
- Promoting pupil voice

Adults will show understanding by:

- Being curious about a pupil's feelings, thoughts and behaviour
- Accepting their feelings and emotions
- Thinking for them
- Expressing empathy
- Helping pupils to process

Adults will show care by:

- Being friendly, kind and compassionate
- Being deliberately bothered
- Using transitional objects
- Soothing and comforting

Regulate

Every child will face challenges and at times and experience strong emotions which block their access to learning and positive social interactions. Recognising these emotions and regulating the child so that such emotions do not become overwhelming is integral to keeping the child and classroom calm.
When some children experience strong emotions they may need to be co-regulated to support them to calm. Some children will need repeated experiences of being co-regulated in order to be able to self-regulate. Over reacting to strong-emotions in whatever form they take can serve to reinforces a sense of shame and belittles the validity of such feelings.

Regulate in practice

Adults will support the child to regulate their feelings (co-regulation) with skilled relational approaches:

- Attunement – demonstrating an understanding of how they are feeling by recognising their emotional energy
- Accepting and validating – demonstrating that their feelings are real and justified

• Containment of feelings – demonstrating you can catch their feelings and help make them a survivable experience
• Soothing and calming – demonstrating emotional regulation by offering supportive phrases until the child is able to respond.

Reason

Once a child is in a state of calm or alert to interaction that is, regulated, we can then engage the thinking part of their brain and reflection and learning can take place. Without this state of regulation thinking and learning cannot be properly stored and reasoning/thinking behavior is not activated. It is important to recognise that achieving a state of regulation after an episode of dysregulation can take time and this time differs for individuals. Building relationships and understanding individual need is key to successful support with this.

Reason in practice

Adults pay attention to the pupil's perspective, acknowledging their thoughts, feelings, viewpoint. Adults can then articulate other possible motives/intentions using **stem sentences** (Appendix 4) to open a dialogue.

Adults will help the pupil create a narrative/timeline in manageable steps with frequent recapping.

- What did you hear?
- What did you see?
- Who was there?
- What were you feeling?

For some pupils, it is important to vary the form of communication used. Instead of using just words adults and pupils could also use:

- Drawings
- Comic strip conversations
- Everyday objects
- A story or book

Repair

Repairing relationships is a vital learning experience. Using a restorative framework can ensure that pupils do not carry guilt, shame or rejection and can teach them that they are worthy and deserving of lasting relationships. It supports children to develop greater understanding, empathy and responsibility.

Repair/Restore in practice

Using a restorative framework following conflict or incidents where harm has been caused, allows the child to consider:

- What happened.
- What the outcomes were.
- Who else has been affected
- What do you need, and what needs to happen now, so that the harm can be repaired?
- What do you need to do to stop this happening again.

In order to repair harm, there needs to be a restorative encounter between those involved. Time needs to be spent sharing understanding and coming to an outcome which helps to repair relationships. 'Restorative Conversations' and 'How to say sorry' (Appendix 5)

The restorative framework is embedded in everyday interactions and classroom practice, from making time to talk, PSHRE curriculum and regular circle times.

Supporting Staff Well-being and Professional Development.

Anita Crawley the school SENCo is a Senior Mental Health Leader with responsibility for ensuring that Marksbury School is aware of the mental Health and Well Being of all its stakeholders including staff, children and parents.
The SMHL is committed to ensuring that there is ongoing professional development around attachment, trauma informed practices and other training for the successful implementation of the Marksbury's Relational and Behaviour Policies. We acknowledge that by supporting staff mental health and well-being we are enabling them to maintain optimum self-regulation.
The following are actions supported by the SMHL and in place to further support Educational Endowment Foundation focus points at Marksbury School. (Appendix 6)

- Ongoing focus on staff training for key aspects of impactful practice to support good behaviour.
- Organisation and implementation of children's well-being survey where areas of need are identified and acted upon.
- An annual Staff Well-being survey identifying areas of need that are acted upon (TPT)

The Relational Policy Principles of promoting good behaviour through building connections and relationships will always apply.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour Policy
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- SEND Information Report and SEND Policy

Appendix 1 – an overview of the P.A.C.E approach

(based on the work by Dr. Dan Hughes, an American psychologist who works with traumatised children)

PACE is an attachment and brain-based parenting approach, developed as an effective way for caregivers to communicate with and care for children and young people who have experienced trauma. The PACE attitude enhances the child's sense of safety and increases their trust in the caregiver. There are four key elements.

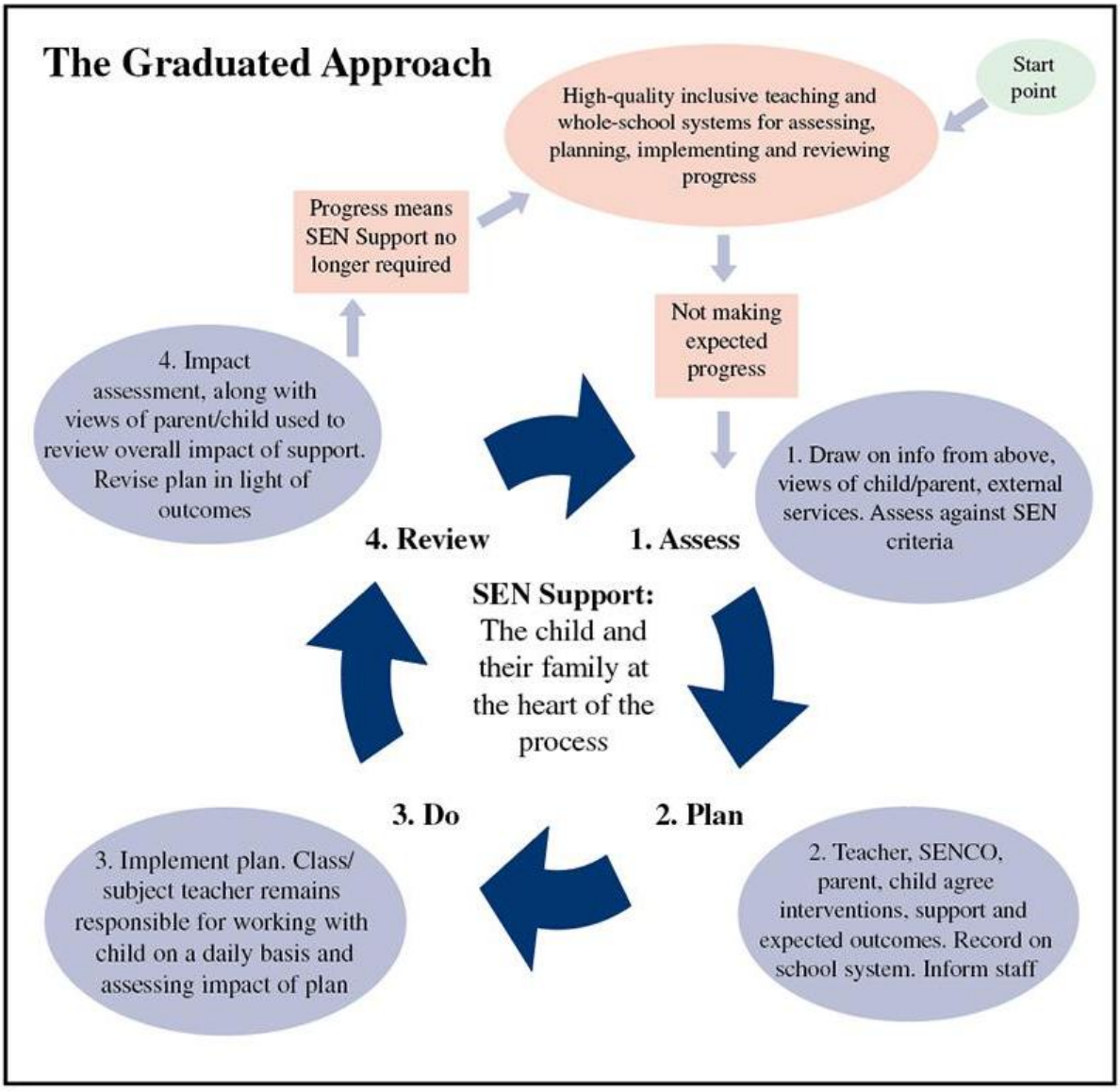
Playfulness
Playfulness means creating an atmosphere of interest and fun using a light tone of voice, as in story telling. When effective, the child's brain will trigger chemicals engendering trust and enabling them to feel safe with the adult.
For example: After a child drops a glass of milk and it breaks, to say 'Whoops, let's clean this up together…let's not cry over spilt milk!'.

Acceptance
Unconditional acceptance is at the core of the child's sense of safety to know that they are loved and accepted without judgment underneath any outward behaviour. Whatever the problem is at hand, it is important for the adult to ensure that the child knows that you will support them.
For example: 'That did not go well, so let's try again and let's see if it goes better this time".

Curiosity
The adult stays curious about the child's behaviour, interactions and relationships, conveying a wish to understand, often by wondering out loud about the meaning behind their behaviour (without expecting answers).
For example: I wonder if you were wanting more noodles now because your brain remembers when there was no food in the house when you were younger and you might be hungry later on.

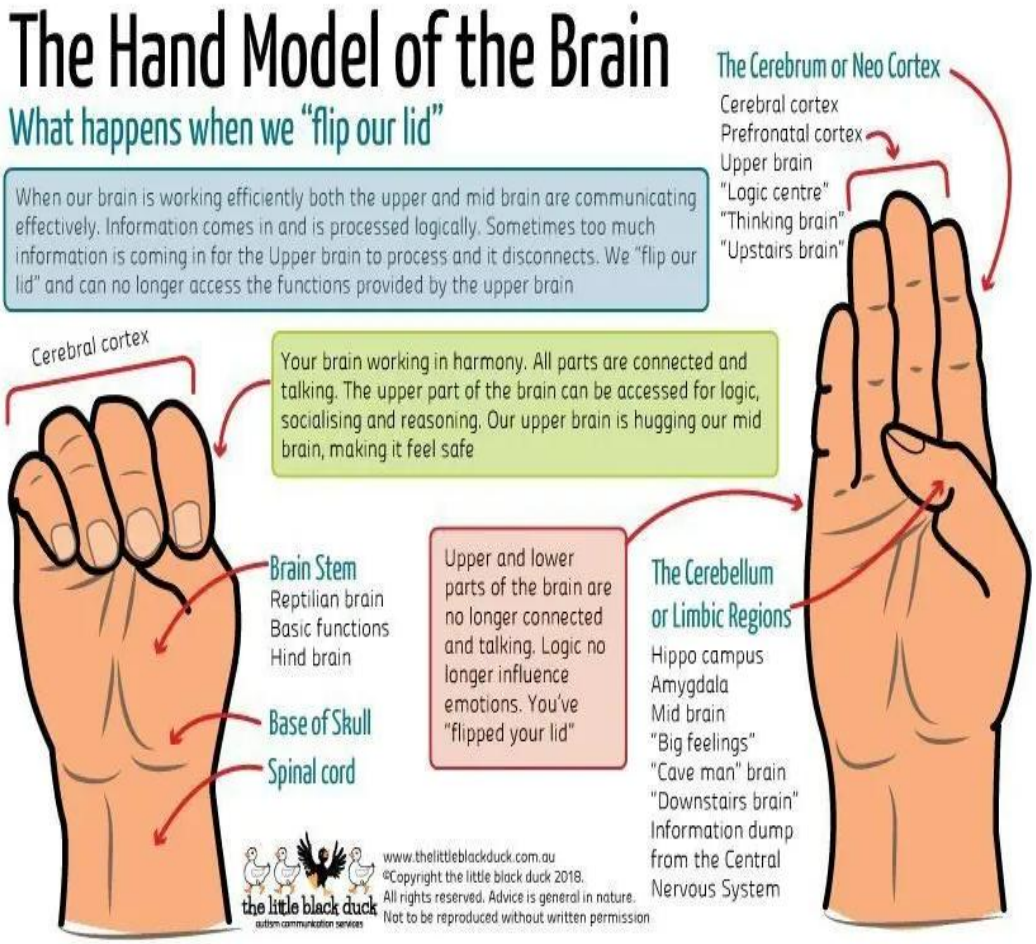
Empathy
In being empathic, the adult shows the child that they are doing their very best to understand how things are and have been, and helps the child make sense of and better manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviour.
For example: Saying something that shows you understand when they are distressed such as "I know things are tough right now, but this is a problem we can share and solve together'.

Appendix 2 – The Graduated Response



Appendix 3 - Hand Model of The Brain

The hand model of the brain is a helpful way of showing the functions of the brain and what happens when we 'flip our lids'. This is what happens when the lower parts of our brain take over (fight, flight or freeze) and our cortical, or thinking, brain becomes disconnected. Although the picture below is useful in illustrating the hand model, I highly recommend taking a look at one of the videos on Youtube where this model is explained. This video by Jeanette Yotte, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_dxnYhdyuY, is a lovely example of how the model can be explained to children.



When we have 'flipped our lids', the different part of our **brain** are not integrated and, as such, we cannot learn, communicate our needs, stay connected with others or problem-solve. Maintaining a healthy balance in our brain can be very difficult, particularly for children and for those who have experienced **trauma.**

In these cases, professional help may be required, but here are some useful tips for what we can all do to help ourselves to become better at 'keeping the lid on':

- **Exercise**. Exercise does not have to be planned or extensive. Jump up and down on the spot. Do some quick yoga poses. Go for a walk or ride a bike if you are able.
- **Deep breathing**: Breathe in slowly and deeply from your tummy, and breathe out slowly, imagining all your worry and anxiety leaving your body as you exhale. Sometimes counting while breathing in and out can further calm your mind.
- **Imagine a comfortable, calm and safe place**. Imagine yourself in a safe and comfortable place. Feel the safety of it. Put yourself there and try to experience the sounds and sensations of the place.
- **Counting Awareness**. Look outside and count the things you see. You can count the trees, the stop signs, the bushes, even the cars on the road.
- **Laugh and talk with a friend.**

Exploring motives and intentions

- *I wonder if...*
- *Could it be that...*
- *I'm thinking there might be another reason for that. What do you think?*
- *I wonder what was happening for you when...*
- *Do you think it might have been because...?*
- *I wonder if there was something you needed at that moment.*

Encouraging reflection

- *Help me understand what was going on for you.*
- *What do you think was making that feel important at the time?*
- *Looking back, what do you think was happening there?*
- *What was your plan when you did that?*
- *What were you hoping would happen?*

Broadening perspective

- *I can see how it looked from your point of view. I wonder how it might have looked from theirs.*
- *I hear that you were feeling ____. I wonder what ____ might have been feeling too.*
- *Is it possible that there is another way of looking at what happened?*
- *I wonder if there might be more than one explanation for that.*

Supporting mentalisation

- *I can see you were upset. I wonder what your feelings were trying to tell you.*
- *I wonder what was happening inside for you at that moment.*
- *Sometimes when children do that, they're feeling ____. I wonder if that fits for you.*
- *I wonder what need you were trying to meet.*
- *Could your feelings have been making it harder to think clearly then?*

Maintaining curiosity and connection

- *Let's think about this together.*
- *I'm not sure exactly what was happening, but I'd like to understand.*
- *You might be right, and I wonder if there could be another part to the story too.*
- *That's one possibility. I wonder what else could have been going on.*
- *Let's be curious about what happened rather than trying to decide who was right or wrong.*

Example progression

1. **Acknowledge perspective:** *"It sounds like you felt really cross when Sam took the ball."*
2. **Open dialogue:** *"I wonder if you thought he was doing it on purpose?"*

3. **Explore alternatives:** *"Could it be that Sam was excited and wasn't thinking about how that would feel for you?"*
4. **Reflect together:** *"What do you think now that we've talked it through?"*

These stems help adults remain curious, avoid assumptions, and support children to develop reflection, perspective-taking and understanding of their own and others' mental states.

Appendix 5- How to support saying sorry

1	Say **what** you are sorry for	" I am sorry for….."
2	Say **why** it was wrong	"it was wrong because…"
3	Accept **responsibility** for what happened	" I know I was wrong in what I said/did "
4	Ask **how** to make amends	"How can we make this better"
5	**Commit** to not doing it again	"Moving forward/now I promise to…."
6	Ask for **forgiveness**	"Will you accept my apology?"
7	**Acknowledge and say thank you** for the conversation	"Thank you for hearing me out"

These are NOT apologies

I'm sorry you feel that way	Im sorry but….
I'm sorry you misinterpreted what I said	But what about the time you….
You misunderstood what I meant	It was your fault that I ….

https://sueatkinsparentingcoach.com/2021/05/why-saying-sorry-doesnt-always-teach-your-children-anything/

Appendix 6 - Positive/Relational Support Plan

Childs voice:	**Class:** **Year group:** **Date of BSP:** **Date of Review :**	**Parent signature:** **Staff involved daily:** **Other staff:**
I am good at: •	**This is what I am working on**: •	
I like: •	**I don't like:** •	
Rewards I like:	**Red card behaviours will mean**: •	
Expected behaviours	**Red card behaviours**	
Support strategies for example, (Time out cushion, Counting to ten when angry, taking time away from the group)	**Desired outcomes**	

Review Date	Adjustments to BSP (list below with date)

Present at review Review of BSP No. _	
What has worked well	What has not worked well
Additional involvement	General comment.

Appendix 6 – EEF research: Improving behaviour in schools

Education Endowment Foundation

IMPROVING BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOLS

Summary of recommendations

Sections are colour coded for ease of reference:

Proactive

Reactive

1 Know and understand your pupils and their influences

- Pupil behaviour has multiple influences, some of which teachers can manage directly
- Understanding a pupil's context will inform effective responses to misbehaviour
- Every pupil should have a supportive relationship with a member of school staff

2 Teach learning behaviours alongside managing misbehaviour

- Teaching learning behaviours will reduce the need to manage misbehaviour
- Teachers can provide the conditions for learning behaviours to develop by ensuring pupils can access the curriculum, engage with lesson content and participate in their learning
- Teachers should encourage pupils to be self-reflective of their own behaviours

3 Use classroom management strategies to support good classroom behaviour

- Effective classroom management can reduce challenging behaviour, pupil disengagement, bullying and aggression
- Improving classroom management usually involves intensive training with teachers reflecting on their classroom management, trying a new approach and reviewing their progress over time
- Reward systems can be effective when part of a broader classroom management strategy

4 Use simple approaches as part of your regular routine

- Some strategies that don't require complex pedagogical changes have been shown to be promising
- Breakfast clubs, use of specific behaviour-related praise and working with parents can all support good behaviour
- School leaders should ensure the school behaviour policy is clear and consistently applied

5 Use targeted approaches to meet the needs of individuals in your school

- Universal behaviour systems are unlikely to meet the needs of all your students
- For pupils with more challenging behaviour, the approach should be adapted to individual needs
- Teachers should be trained in specific strategies if supporting pupils with high behaviour needs

Implementation

6 Consistency is key

- Consistency and coherence at a whole-school level are paramount
- Whole-school changes usually take longer to embed than individually tailored or single-classroom approaches
- However, behaviour programmes are more likely to have an impact on attainment outcomes if implemented at a whole-school level

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eef.li/behaviour

Stem sentences