

# Elm Court School



## Implementing the Behaviour Policy – Staff Guidance

### INTRODUCTION

Many of the students attending Elm Court School present challenging behaviour. This occurs as a result of their special educational needs, specifically Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) or Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Staff need to constantly update their knowledge and understanding in respect of the special educational needs catered for by the school. This may involve, for example, formal training, reading educational journals and research, attending courses and feeding back, staff conferencing, obtaining advice from external professionals and staff problem-solving workshops.

Many of the inappropriate behaviours are learned responses to stress or perceived threat. For example, when a student with poor literacy skills is pressed to complete some written work, the learned response may be oppositional and result in the student walking out of the classroom. This behaviour allows the student to mask his/her poor literacy skills and maintain his/her standing within the peer group. Maintaining one's position within the peer group is a biological prerogative for young people and staff need to be constantly aware that their actions may threaten students' social position and provoke conflict, which could have been avoided.

We believe it is the responsibility of all staff to strive to understand why specific behaviours occur and address them in ways that allow students to learn and, over time, modify their behaviour.

## **STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT**

This section sets out how we translate our philosophy and values into our everyday work with young people. We believe that, through our actions, we can have a real and lasting impact on improving the life chances of all our students. We believe that all staff have a duty to:

- Promote a positive, caring, safe and secure learning environment
- Ensure that teaching and interventions are effective and meet the needs of our students
- Ensure that each student is treated as an individual and receives an appropriate level of pastoral and academic support
- Set clear expectations of student behaviour
- Actively promote positive behaviour and respect

This section is set out in four parts:

- Our image
- Our interaction with students
- Our approach
- Our actions

## OUR IMAGE

<b>What we say and do</b>	<b>The impact on our students</b>
Our dress code is smart casual, although we may dress differently on occasions, such as PE. Ties for male staff are optional but encouraged. Caps, hoods, hats and jeans are unacceptable.	They will experience positive role models and be more respectful of staff
We always expect students to address us in a polite manner	They will be helped to understand that they need to behave in an appropriate manner in the context they are in.
In the presence of young people we always address colleagues in a polite manner	They will see staff modelling desired respectful behaviour.

## OUR INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS

What we say and do	The impact on our students
We model appropriate behaviour at all times, thereby demonstrating courtesy and our moral values.	Appropriate behaviour is constantly demonstrated to students by all adults, who model <b><i>Do as I do</i></b> and not <b><i>Do as I say</i></b>
We always treat students, colleagues and visitors (including parents/carers) with respect.	They will routinely experience adults behaving in a respectful manner, which will reinforce positive interactions.
We set and maintain clear boundaries and expectations of students.	All students will understand the boundaries and expectations, which will prepare them for the future.
Our instructions to students are always clear and concise.	Students will know exactly what is expected of them and are not exposed to confusion.
We routinely focus on the positive and use praise whenever appropriate.	Students will be more motivated and engaged.
We work together to enforce school and classroom rules and routines in a consistent manner.	Students will experience fair and consistent treatment. There are no “mixed messages”.
All staff have a responsibility to understand the needs of each student. We will always strive to share appropriate information on students and seek out information if it has not been given.	Students will experience a consistent approach from all staff and be more able to engage with learning.
We will ensure that we are fully aware of the targets for each student, with whom we work. All staff will be involved in reinforcing targets routinely with students.	Students are more likely to improve their behaviour and learning as all staff will be reinforcing their priority targets at all times.
All staff will explicitly communicate high expectations to students and their parents/carers.	Students’ negative stereotypes will be challenged and help them to achieve their potential.
All staff will set a good example by arriving at school, lessons and duties on time.	Students will consistently experience modeling of desired behaviours.
We will aim to always be positive and enthusiastic.	Students are more likely to respond in a positive way and with enthusiasm.

## OUR APPROACH

<b>What we say and do</b>	<b>The impact on our students</b>
We will motivate and inspire students to achieve through a stimulating and appropriate curriculum, the use of enrichment activities, creative use of ICT, and appropriate rewards for meeting academic and behavioural targets.	Staff are likely to have improved relationships with students, who will be more able to engage with and are more likely to achieve in the learning environment.
As a staff team, we are committed to listening to students, both as individuals and a student body.	This will result in students feeling more valued and better understood, which will have a positive effect on their behaviour.
We are committed to ensuring that all of our lessons and interventions are well-planned and matched to students' needs and are sufficiently flexible to meet unforeseen circumstances.	This will lead to improved outcomes for students, both academically and socially. It will also contribute to improved relationships between students and staff.
For inappropriate behaviour, we apply our hierarchy of consequences in a fair and consistent way.	This will enable students to reflect on their behaviour, the consequences and choices, and lead to positive change.
We are aware of the negative impact of boredom during unstructured times and are committed to planning and facilitating a range of activities appropriate for all students, during break and lunch times.	When students are engaged in positive activities, they are less likely to find themselves in situations that trigger inappropriate behaviour.
We ensure that we have assessed the potential risk for each student and have plans in place for dealing with anticipated difficulties, both in lessons, during unstructured times and off-site.	Students will be able to see that they are treated in a fair, reliable and consistent way and that staff show tolerance towards them but not their behaviour.
We help students to cope with and learn from failure by providing a safe secure learning environment.	Students, who have a history of failure, can begin to understand that an important element of learning is through mistakes.

## OUR ACTIONS

<b>What we say and do</b>	<b>The impact on our students</b>
Every member of staff always intervenes when s/he sees inappropriate behaviour. If the intervention involves helping a colleague, we always do this in a sensitive and supportive manner.	Students are less likely to experience being out of control and begin to understand that their behaviour can be improved through skilful and co-ordinated staff responses.
We always challenge inappropriate behaviour but we are never critical of the person.	Students are less likely to have negative previous experience with adults reinforced. This will have a positive impact on their self esteem.
All staff recognise the importance of taking a sincere interest in the lives of our students.	This will enable staff to build positive, professional relationships with students, which will contribute to their overall achievement.
All staff ensure that they are professional and positive in their dealings with students and their families.	This will enable students and their families to engage with staff and work positively together.

## **EFFECTIVE WHOLE SCHOOL RESPONSES TO IMPROVING STUDENT BEHAVIOUR**

**The following are indicators of best practice<sup>1</sup> in managing and improving behaviour in schools:**

- Consistent experience of good teaching promotes good behaviour
- It is vital to teach students how to behave
- Good behaviour has to be modelled by staff at all times
- Prevention rather than punishment is central
- Most routine discipline problems should be dealt with by teachers themselves
- There must be clear expectations of behaviour and a consistent approach to behaviour management
- There should be a consistent and agreed range of classroom management and behaviour strategies
- Senior staff should be highly visible at key times of the day
- It is important for schools to collect and use data on students' behaviour and learning to plan groupings and target support
- Support for staff experiencing difficulties with student behaviour is vital
- Staff development in relation to managing behaviour must be a regular feature of the school's continuing professional development programme

**At a classroom level, it is important that the teacher:**

- Is in class before the students, wherever possible
- Sets the tone from the beginning by welcoming students
- Has starter activities to minimise unproductive time
- Has a method for gaining whole class attention
- Ensures that lessons have a positive beginning with a clear outline of the lesson and expected outcomes
- Plans a stimulating curriculum accessible to all
- Has high expectations of learning and behaviour
- Reinforces positive behaviour (*catching them being good*)
- Has a seating plan, when appropriate
- Develops clear taught routines for everything from entry to exit
- Has established clear boundaries and expectations
- Uses a hierarchy of rewards and consequences that follow the school's Behaviour Policy

In order to provide students with appropriate support to meet their learning and behavioural needs, it is vital that teachers share their planning with teaching assistants and take time to discuss their respective roles in lessons.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Learning Behaviour*. 2005 and 2009. DfES

## **STAFF SKILLS**

Staff need to be constantly aware of how their language and actions can influence students' behaviour – both positively and negatively.

When working with students, staff need to act in a calm, professional manner at all times and never resort to confrontational or hostile behaviour. Young people, who exhibit challenging behaviour often transfer their negative emotions to adults. It is helpful when staff understand this process of transference and can use their own emotions to understand what might be troubling the student. For example, if a student's response results in a member of staff feeling angry, frustrated and useless (or deskilled), it is likely that the young person will be experiencing these same feelings. The member of staff is then well placed to take action, which will reduce these feelings the student is experiencing and consequently, defuse potential conflict.

It is unhelpful if staff behave in a passive or hostile manner. Both of these behaviours are likely to elicit negative responses from students. It is helpful if staff act assertively at all times in their dealings with students.

### **Assertive adult behaviour ensures that staff:**

- Identify clear boundaries
- Actively communicate their expectations for both learning and behaviour
- Are fair and consistent
- Listen to students
- Value students' opinions
- Model desired behaviour
- Are able to maintain relationships and defuse potentially difficult situations through the use of humour
- Consistently praise achievement and effort

### **Student responses to assertive adults are more likely to be positive because:**

- They understand the boundaries and as a result, feel safe and secure
- They feel valued and respected
- They develop trusting relationships with staff
- They are not frightened of passing opinions or making mistakes

### **Assertive adults are aware of the impact that their words, tone of voice and body language have on students' behaviour. When giving directions to students, they:**

- Use the student's name
- State what they want
- State why they want it
- State when they want it
- Finish with *Thank You*

For example: *I need you to sit on that table (WHAT) so that you can get on with your work (WHY) now (WHEN). Thank you.*

**When correcting inappropriate behaviour, they:**

- Intervene early
- Are as specific as possible in the way they describe the students behaviour
- Remember that it is the behaviour that they are critical of and not the student
- Have a belief that students are capable of changing their behaviour
- Use a “matter of fact” voice and maintain positive body language
- Understand the need to develop a range of scripts to use in difficult circumstances
- Use empathetic statements (e.g. *This may be difficult for you ....*)
- Recognise and reward positives (e.g. *Thanks for listening to me ....*)

## BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

This section sets out a range of behaviour management strategies in classrooms and during unstructured times. Abraham Maslow said, *If the only tool you have is a hammer, you treat everything like a nail*. Staff need to be aware of the importance of having a repertoire of strategies and that, different strategies are likely to be required in different circumstances. In addition, some students may not respond positively to some strategies and others will need to be used. It is important that staff share their knowledge about which strategies are effective with specific students and those that would be best avoided. It is detailed knowledge of individual students that will inform what strategies are likely to be most effective in specific circumstances.

Intervention by adults must always begin at the least intrusive approach in order to minimise hostility and resentment and allow students to exercise control of their behaviour.

Behaviour management begins with the member of staff leading or supervising a lesson or activity, including non-structured times. This allows the adults concerned to exercise their authority and gain the respect of students. ***Inappropriate referral to senior members of staff serves only to deskill practitioners and make them over-reliant on external support.***

### **The range of behaviour management strategies include:**

- Giving students “the look”
- Stating or showing disapproval
- Redirecting to the task in hand
- Giving clear choices to maximise students’ responsibility and where appropriate, making the consequences clear through choice
- Pausing ... after calling a student’s name to gain attention... before continuing
- Using privately understood signals – these often have the desired effect without drawing the attention of other students
- Distraction and diversion (e.g. *Are those trainers new?*) – this often has the effect of preventing an impending conflict situation
- Use of humour (*A sense of humour is the most vital characteristic of the skilful handler of discipline problems* – Redl, 1939);
- Partial agreement (e.g. *I understand you feel the need to have your mobile phone in school .... but the school rule is ....*) – This shows empathy with the students’ situation but emphasises that the behaviour is undesired
- The “when ... then” condition (e.g. *Of course you can do the practical work – when you have finished your plan*) – that is to say, when the student has finished what is expected then s/he can move on to the more attractive activity
- Take-up time, which involves directing a student to do something and then turning and walking away – this give a very powerful message of expectation and is rarely unsuccessful

- Rule reminders are particularly useful when classroom rules have been negotiated with students
- Where appropriate, use tactical ignoring ... you can follow it up later and in a place that is less public – challenging a student's inappropriate behaviour is always more effective if done privately. It also prevents you from being distracted from what you are trying to do and allows **you** to choose when and how to follow up.
- Directing the student to work aside from peers in room – it is always best to allow him/her the opportunity to return after say, five minutes, if the behaviour improves – this condition should be made explicit at the outset

## **TEACHING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR**

It is vital that staff actively teach students appropriate behaviour in school. This can be accomplished in both formal and informal ways.

Formal opportunities can include:

- Specific lessons in PSHE and during tutor time
- Targeted interventions, such as social skills group and anger management programmes

In addition, by selecting content carefully, the wider curriculum provides further excellent formal opportunities to address issues that impact on students' attitudes and behaviour, for example:

- Drama activities can explore problematic situations
- An English lesson could improve students' communication skills
- Art can be used to help pupils understand the impact of emotions and mood
- Humanities can provide opportunities to understand cultural differences and discuss the importance of tolerance
- PE can help students develop self-calming techniques
- Circle time type activities can encourage turn-taking

Staff should make full use of informal opportunities to challenge inappropriate behaviour teach acceptable alternative in their day-to-day contact with students.

For example by:

- Modelling appropriate behaviour at all times
- Always addressing inappropriate behaviour
- Always picking up on swearing and inappropriate language

## **SUPPORT FOR STAFF EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES**

It is important that staff experiencing difficulties with managing student behaviour are given appropriate support. At Elm Court School, this is provided informally by colleagues and formally by the school's inclusion and leadership teams.

Colleagues should be aware that sensitive support can make a huge difference to how colleagues cope with difficult behaviour. When giving support, we should always be mindful of:

- Ensuring that staff, particularly those new to the school or in changed roles, do not feel isolated
- The staff member's need to talk about the difficulties s/he are having and how they feel
- The importance of listening and demonstrating empathy and understanding

Practical informal support might involve:

- Providing support to deal with a specific incident
- Providing cover so that the member of staff can calm down
- Offering help with writing up an incident
- Offering advice
- Offering assistance with planning, if needed – especially new staff
- Offering the opportunity to informally mentor or shadow

More formal approaches offered by the Senior Leadership Team will involve, for example:

- Structured opportunities to talk through the difficulties
- Providing mentoring opportunities
- Arranging support with planning and/or curriculum development
- Facilitating involvement in training or other CPD activities

When staff are involved in a major incident, the school will offer structured de-brief sessions. These will always involve a member of the Senior Leadership Team and focus on providing professional support, finding a suitable resolution and preventing a re-occurrence. These meetings will be recorded in writing and a copy given to each participant. If any follow-up action is recommended as a result of these meetings, that will also be recorded.