

Behaviour Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to

- Articulate our understanding of behaviour as it relates to autistic children and young people with significant support needs.
- Create a positive culture that promotes the development of social communication and emotional regulation skills, ensuring that all pupils/learners can learn in a calm, safe and supportive environment.
- Provide clear guidance to class teams, parents and carers, governors, and other stakeholders about:
 - how we proactively promote positive behaviour whereby we support our learners to regulate, meet underlying needs, and feel safe and ready to learn, ensuring a consistent, whole-setting approach; and
 - how we respond to behaviours that present a risk of harm to self, others, or property, ensuring safe, consistent, and supportive practices across the setting.

2. The Statutory guidance

This policy is based on legislation and advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on: [Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff 2024](#)

- [Searching, screening and confiscation: advice for schools 2022](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units](#)
- [Use of reasonable force in schools](#)
- [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Code of Practice](#)
- [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#)

In addition, this policy is based on:

- Schedule 1 of the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#); paragraph 7 outlines a school's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, paragraph 9 requires the school to have a written behaviour policy, and paragraph 10 requires the school to have an anti-bullying strategy
- [DfE guidance](#), which explains that academies should publish their behaviour policy and anti-bullying strategy

3. Policy statement

This behaviour policy reflects AaA(ST)'s insight and understanding of the complex needs of our pupils and learners and how this contributes to their ability to self-regulate and get their needs safety and effectively met so they can engage with their learning and contribute to a calm, safe and supportive environment that enables others to learn. It is based on our understanding that:

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- Our pupils/ learners want to contribute positively to school/ college life.
- With the right support, they can regulate and engage positively in their learning
- Mistakes are part of the learning process. We identify gaps in understanding and development so we can provide timely, targeted support to help pupils/ learners build the skills needed to self-regulate and access learning.
- Behaviour is a means of communication, and we must ensure that pupils/ learners are supported to communicate their needs safely and appropriately.

These insights lead us to avoid the use of sanctions and, instead, focus on meeting needs and providing pupils/ learners with the knowledge and skills needed to access their learning in a safe and supportive environment that enables all pupils/ learners to feel safe and engage meaningfully with education.

4. Key principles

4.1 Understanding behaviour through an autism lens.

At AaA(ST), we believe that understanding behaviour through an autism lens is essential to creating inclusive, respectful, and effective learning environments. Autistic pupils and learners experience the world in ways that differ from neurotypical peers, including how they process sensory input, communicate, regulate emotions, and navigate social interactions. These differences can influence behaviour in ways that are often misunderstood or misinterpreted.

By viewing behaviour through an autism lens, and in taking into account a pupil/learner's cognitive development, we avoid mislabelling neurodivergent traits and enable staff to build strong, attuned relationships with pupils/ learners built on trust and mutual respect.

4.2 Promoting positive behaviour:

Our strategies for promoting positive behaviour are designed to meet the diverse needs of our autistic pupils and learners. These strategies are not applied uniformly to all pupils/ learners; they are used responsively, based on individual profiles, preferences, and needs.

All staff access learning and development that enables them to use a broad range of autism-informed strategies and to apply them flexibly and intentionally. These may include:

4.2.1. Emotional Regulation

- Using concrete tools such as body maps, visuals, and sensory check-ins to help learners identify and communicate internal states.
- Recognising early signs of dysregulation and responding with co-regulation strategies before expecting independent regulation.
- Validating non-typical emotional expressions (e.g., stimming, scripting) and creating space for preferred modes of emotional expression.
- Teaching coping strategies through modelling, repetition, and access to sensory tools and movement breaks.

4.2.2. Sensory Support and Environmental Design

- Collaboratively developing sensory profiles with families and the team around the learner.
- Providing proactive access to sensory supports and maintaining capable environments.
- Respecting sensory needs without requiring masking or suppression and offering alternatives to distressing stimuli.

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- Structuring sensory diets and breaks tailored to individual profiles, with consistent routines to support predictability.

4.2.3. *Communication and Language*

- Respecting all communication preferences, including non-speaking modes such as AAC, visuals, sign, and typing.
- Avoiding pressure to speak and supporting autonomy in communication choices.
- Using simplified, concrete language and allowing extended processing time.
- Teaching abstract language and social meanings explicitly using visuals, comic strip conversations, and social stories.

4.2.4. *Cognitive Support and Learning Access*

- Breaking tasks into achievable steps and using visual supports such as timers, task strips, and checklists.
- Reducing verbal load and pairing spoken instructions with visuals.
- Supporting executive functioning through structured routines, backward chaining, and interest-based task starters.
- Celebrating effort and modelling flexible thinking using visual examples and flowcharts.

4.2.5. *Social Interaction and Relationships*

- Teaching emotional literacy and social understanding using concrete visuals, video modelling, and role-play.
- Respecting preferences for solitude and offering low-pressure, interest-based social opportunities.
- Supporting authentic social engagement in all forms, including shared presence and shared scripting.
- Facilitating structured problem-solving and repair through emotion coaching and visual tools.

4.3 Responding to behaviours that present risk of harm

4.3.1 *Positive Behaviour Support Plans*

When a pupil/learner with a known history of engaging in behaviours that present risk of harm to self, others or property, joins a setting, a Risk Assessment for Behaviours of Distress (RACB) is undertaken (see appendix 1 for the template). Risk assessments are also undertaken following an incident where risk of harm, or actual harm, has arisen. Where this highlights risk(s) that need mitigating, a Positive Behaviour Support plan (PBS plan) is developed and implemented (see appendix 2 for the template).

PBS plans define the behaviour(s) presenting risk and detail the known or suspected causes/triggers. Proactive intervention strategies are outlined alongside the skills that should be taught to promote non-harmful behaviour and enhance quality of life. The plans also include strategies for managing and responding to risk behaviours when they occur. In every plan, the strategies to prevent the behaviour from occurring outweigh the strategies for reacting to it. As outlined in our Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy, the use of physical intervention will only be incorporated into behaviour support plans in instances where behaviours present an immediate and clear risk to keeping everyone safe.

All risk assessments and PBS plans are reviewed at least every six months, and more frequently if issues arise. PBS specialists and practitioners work with class teachers to create and review of PBS plans. Class teachers are responsible to monitoring that risk assessments

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and PBS plans for the pupils/learners in their class remain current. All risk assessments and Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) plans are reviewed at a minimum every six months, with additional reviews conducted as necessary in response Over time, and through regular review and revision, PBS plans are expected to reduce the occurrence of risk behaviours by addressing underlying needs and teaching alternative skills. As progress is made, the need for a formal PBS plan should diminish, reflecting the pupil's/learner's increased ability to self-regulate and access learning safely.

4.4 Staff Learning and Development

Our framework for supporting positive behaviour relies on high levels of autism specialist knowledge and skill across our staff teams. To ensure this, we have a competency framework that outlines the knowledge, skills, and attributes required to provide excellent autism education. This is supported by a structured learning and development framework that begins at induction and continues throughout each staff member's career at AaA(ST). All staff are expected to fully engage in ongoing professional development to deepen their understanding and refine their practice in line with our autism-informed approach.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Staff

- Are responsible for understanding and applying the policy
- Must implement systems that support proactive behaviour strategies and follow PBS plans, taking an active role in updating them where they are proving to be ineffective.

5.2 Learners/Pupils

- Are supported to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to behaviour and safety.
- Are encouraged to contribute to their PBS plans and communicate preferences for regulation and support.
- Should be provided with accessible information about behaviour expectations and support strategies.

5.3 Governors/Trustees

- The Education and Care Committee reviews and approves the Behaviour Policy annually.
- Governors receive and review regular updates on behaviour-related data, including incidents and exclusions to ensure accountability and safeguarding.

5.4 Managers / ELT / SMT

- Ensure the policy is embedded within the setting's culture and practice.
- Oversee staff training and development aligned with the autism-informed behaviour framework.
- Lead on quality assurance processes, including systematic audits of risk assessment and PBS plans to ensure they are current, accurate and implemented consistently. .

Monitor implementation through observation, supervision, and review of PBS plans and incident reports.

5. Other Key Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following other policies, which can be found on the AaA website, or requested:

- Physical Intervention policy

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- Serious Incident Reporting policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Adult at Risk Safeguarding and Protection policy and procedure
- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and procedure
- Risk Assessment policy
- Exclusion policy
- Debriefing policy
- Whistleblowing policy

6. Further details found in Appendix

The following additional details can be found in the appendices below:

- Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment of Behaviours of Distress Template
- Appendix 2 – Positive Support Plan Template
- Appendix 3 – Anti-bullying statement

7. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy shall be reviewed by the Director of Education and approved by the Education and Care Committee on annual basis.

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Appendix 1

Risk Assessment of Behaviour Template

Pupil/Learner Name:	
Completed by:	
Date completed:	

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What are the behaviours	Overall risk rating (See matrix)	Who is at risk from the behaviours (Self, staff, visitor, pupils/learners, property).	Existing preventative measures	Existing/possible non-physical reactive measures	Risks which are not adequately controlled by existing measures

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Risk Matrix:

Likelihood of occurrence	Consequences		
	Low (1)	Medium (2)	High (3)
Unlikely (1) Occurs termly/or less often	2	3	4
Possible (2) Occurs monthly	3	4	5
Likely (3) Occurs daily/weekly	4	5	6

Low: No physical injury or damage to property; minor disruption; no lasting psychological harm

Medium: Includes physical injury requiring basic first aid within the school/ college; minor damage to property; or brief disruption to normal routines; temporary psychological harm or distress with full recovery expected

High: Includes physical injury requiring medical attention beyond basic first aid; extensive damage to or lengthy disruption to normal school routines; enduring psychological harm, trauma, or loss of function

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Risk Assessment of Physical Intervention (i.e. risks of intervening)

Physical Intervention	Significant hazards	Existing controls and risks that are not adequately controlled.	Action needed	Date action completed and by whom
	Proximity to learner, considering the known behaviours.	All staff working with the learner, trained in physical intervention techniques within this plan, with access to in-house instructors for advice and guidance.	Ongoing training of new staff, and refresher training and support for existing staff.	Ongoing
	Staff competencies and confidence.			

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Outcome/Interventions to be used in line with presenting behaviours:

Please ALWAYS refer to Positive Behaviour Support Plan

Record of Versions:

Proposed Review Date	Proposed Review Team	Actual Review Date	Actual Review Team

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Appendix 2

PSB Plan Template

Pupil/Learner:	Written by:	Date:
My situation:		
<i>Likes / potential reinforcers:</i>		
<i>Dislikes / potential triggers:</i>		

PROACTIVE PLAN	
Behaviour: What I do/say that gives you clues that I am happy/well- regulated	Support strategies: The things that you can do/say to help keep me happy and well-regulated

EARLY WARNING PLAN	
Behaviour: What I do /say that gives you clues that I am becoming distressed.	Support strategies: The things that you can/say to help stop a situation from escalating further and return to the proactive plan as soon as possible.

REACTIVE PLAN	
Behaviour : What I do/say or look like when I am distressed	Support strategies: The things that you can do/say to quickly manage the situation and prevent unnecessary distress, injury and destruction.

RECOVERY PLAN	
Behaviour: What I do/ say when I am becoming calmer	Support strategies The things that you can do. Say to help me become calm again

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LEARNING PLAN: The skills and/or replacement behaviours I need to learn

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Review Log		
Version	Date	Created by:
1		
		Updated by:
2		

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Appendix 3

Anti-Bullying Statement

Ambitious about Autism/Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all so that everyone can thrive and progress in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

We believe that:

- Bullying is undesirable and unacceptable
- Bullying is a problem to which solutions can be found
- Staff, parents and carers and learners should work together to protect vulnerable individuals from bullying and other forms of abuse
- All members of the setting will be listened to and taken seriously
- Everyone has the right to work and learn in an atmosphere where their safety is protected and where they are free from avoidable risks that could cause fear or harm.
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- All of us have the responsibility to ensure that we do not abuse or bully others
- Learners should talk to a trusted adult if they are worried about bullying and have a right to expect that their concerns will be listened to and treated seriously

Bullying is defined as the repetitive, intentional harming of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.

Bullying is, therefore:

- Deliberately hurtful
- Repeated, often over a period of time
- Difficult to defend against

Bullying can include:

TYPE OF BULLYING	DEFINITION
Emotional	Purposefully isolating, excluding, tormenting
Physical	Purposeful, persistent and targeted hitting, kicking, pushing, taking another's belongings, any use of violence
Prejudice-based and discriminatory, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Racial• Faith-based• Gendered (sexist)• Homophobic/biphobic• Transphobic Disability-based	Purposeful taunts, gestures, graffiti or physical abuse focused on a particular characteristic (e.g. gender, race, sexuality)

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TYPE OF BULLYING	DEFINITION
Sexual	Purposeful explicit sexual remarks, display of sexual material, sexual gestures, unwanted physical attention, comments about sexual reputation or performance, sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos (including pseudo-images, which are computer-generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video), or inappropriate touching
Direct or indirect verbal	Purposeful, persistent and target name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
Cyber-bullying	Purposeful bullying that takes place online, such as through social networking sites, messaging apps, gaming sites, devices or via images, audio, video, or written content generated by artificial intelligence (AI)

Prevention of bullying is a key element of our approach. Staff will talk about bullying and why it is wrong. They will use literature, workshops and targeted individual and whole group teaching to help pupils/learners understand what bullying is and the effect it can have. Staff will consistently and regularly talk about school / college values, working to embed these values into daily practice for all.

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