**Strides Mentoring Ltd – Behaviour Policy**

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| **This policy has been adopted by the Management Team on:** | **August 2025** |
| **Signed:** | **Alex Breeze & Sian Breeze** |
| **Next review due:** | **August 2026** |

At Strides, we recognise that behaviour is a form of communication. We aim to approach behaviour with curiosity and we seek to understand what children are trying to tell us.

We also recognise that in some circumstances, this behaviour can manifest as ‘challenging’.

**What is behaviour?**

Behaviour can be described as challenging if ‘if it puts children or those around them (such as their carer) at risk or leads to a poorer quality of life’ (NHS UK).

Strides’ ethos is to continue to support children who demonstrate challenging behaviours wherever possible with the support of positive behaviour support plans and other interventions.

We also recognise that as a mentoring service, we have a duty to ensure that all children are kept safe and free from harm, and we have a duty of care to ensure all attendees and feel safe and comfortable on our site and in our care. Our behaviour policy is trauma informed and tries to advocate for and protect all children and adults in our care.

**Trauma informed Behaviour Approach and rationale**

 It is important to acknowledge the physical, neurological and behavioural impact of trauma.

**What is trauma?**

Trauma may be defined as repeated cycles of stressful events and the inefficient turning on or off of stress responses. Activating this state of heightened stress response is a survival strategy but for those who have experienced long-term or multiple trauma, it may become their way of being. This can clearly impact on behavioural functioning in academic settings.

Children and young people who have experienced trauma are also much more likely than others to experience ‘toxic shame’.

**What is toxic shame**?

Toxic shame can be defined as an overwhelming and relentless sense of unworthiness, inadequacy, and self-disgust (Bomber, 2007; Taransaud, 2011).

Children and young people who experience toxic shame are likely to find any form of discipline challenging, and may:

• Misinterpret well-intentioned or constructive feedback as being a personal attack

against them

• Ruminate over/find it difficult to move on from discipline

• Find public discipline or praise difficult to tolerate (and demonstrate this through

behaviour that challenges)

• Appear to ‘hold a grudge’ quickly

• Recreate the chaos they have experienced in their early life

• Need more time to calm down following an episode of distress, compared to

children who do not experience toxic shame.

Although behaviourist approaches (e.g. points systems, detentions, reward systems) can work for some children & young people, they are not successful with all. This is especially true for those who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) – traumatic life experiences that occur before the age of 18.

For CYP who have experienced trauma and loss, including vulnerable groups such as children in care (CiC), children at the edge of the care system, and children previously in care (PiC), behaviourist approaches can often re-traumatise them and do not teach them how to express their emotions in a more appropriate manner

**Our Approach**

Research on attachment and trauma strongly indicates that a relational rather than behavioural framework is more effective in supporting children and young people’s behaviour (Bergin and Bergin, 2009; Cozolino, 2013).

Below is a summary of research relating to the impact and effectiveness of relational approaches:

• Close and supportive relationships with teachers have demonstrated the potential to mitigate the risk of negative outcomes for children who may otherwise have difficulty succeeding in school (Driscoll & Pianta, 2010).

• Attachment influences students’ school success. Secure attachment is associated with higher grades and standardised test scores compared to insecure attachment. Secure attachment is also associated with greater emotional regulation, social competence, and willingness to take on challenges, and with lower levels of ADHD, each of which in turn is associated with higher achievement (Bergin and Bergin 2009).

• When teachers think empathically, and not punitively, about misbehaving students, they cultivate better relationships and help reduce discipline problems (Okonofua et al., 2015).

• Secure, nurturing environments and stimulating, engaging experiences support the development of neuronal networks – they help to build brains. Empathetic, supportive attachments and relationships are essential to optimize brain development as ‘the attunement of emotional states is essential for the developing brain to acquire the capacity to organize itself more autonomously as the child matures’ (Siegel, 2012).

At Strides, staff should always aim to use language and communication with children that promotes a positive behavioural response.

**Language we will avoid:**

• Language that reinforces staff control, for example ‘enforce’, ‘punishment’,

‘isolation’, ‘naughty corner’, ‘removal’, ‘rule’, ‘power’, ‘control’, ‘confiscate’, and

‘impose’

• Language that places negative judgement on a child or young person or their

behaviour, including ‘attention seeking’, ‘malicious’, ‘choice’, ‘poor behaviour’,

‘misbehaviour’, ‘manipulative’, ‘naughty’, ‘immoral’

• Language that reinforces negative gender stereotypes, such as ‘naughty boy’, or

‘bossy girl’.

Language that can be particularly helpful:

• Language that promotes trauma informed approaches and acknowledges the need

behind a behaviour, for example ‘emotionally dysregulated’, ‘what is the function

behind this behaviour?’, ‘attention needing’, ‘feeling unsafe’, ‘presenting as

distressed’, ‘requiring co-regulation support’

Approaches that draw on trauma and attachment theory tend to advocate separating

the child or young person from any behaviour that challenges. This can be achieved

through the language used to describe the child and their behaviour, for example:

• ‘Attention seeking’ could be considered to describe the surface-level behaviour,

but not the underlying need. Instead, ‘attachment needing’ might reframe the

behaviour as being the function of an unmet need

• ‘Manipulative’ is another word that describes the surface-level behaviour and has

negative connotations within society. Instead, phrases such as ‘trying to find a way

to have their needs met’ or ‘feeling insecure in their relationships with others’ might

be more appropriate.

• Using externalising language around behaviour that challenges and separating

the child from their behaviour, e.g. ‘The expectations are that we…, so we need

to…’ (rather than saying ‘you need to’).

• Using internalising language around behaviour that meets school expectations or

can be celebrated, and showing warmth towards the child or young person, e.g.

‘You were very thoughtful when you… so you did brilliantly at showing me our ‘be

kind’ expectation’.

**Strides promotes the following points when managing challenging behaviour in children:**

* Restorative conversations between the child or young person and a key attachment figure within the setting, at a point where the child or young person is calm enough to reflect on triggers, thoughts, feelings and what might help in the future.
* Using a relational approach to behaviour management. A relational approach is one in which staff “are aware of and explicitly focus on the quality of their interactions with students to develop classroom communities that promote academic, social, and emotional growth” (Reeves & Le Mare, 2017)

**We will take the following actions when an incident of challenging behaviour occurs on site:**

* All of our staff will positive behaviour support training and we will ensure that PBS plans are implemented for all children with a history of challenging behaviour.
* Staff will be responsible for completing ‘ABC’s’ for incidents of challenging behaviour that occur on site and will be responsible for reporting the incident to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Sian Breeze) and documenting the incident on LearnTrek.
* The DSL (Sian Breeze) or the DDSL (Alex Breeze) will aim to complete functional assessments for children who require this, involving and working alongside parents and carers where appropriate. Past schools and provisions will also be consulted, alongside external agencies who support the child and their family.
* Behaviour plans will be reviewed regularly by staff (termly minimum, or whenever a new incident occurs).
* Risk assessments and plans will be updated after any significant new incident.
* Every working day, staff will meet to debrief and discuss any significant incidents and new plans will be discussed collaboratively.
* Staff will aim to use a preventative approach to challenging behaviour and should consider any necessary adaptions to support or the environment which could be implemented.

**Exclusion**

In very rare circumstances, Strides recognises that exclusion may be the only option for the child. This would only be considered where a child’s behaviour continues to put themselves or others at significant risk of harm, or where Strides does not feel that they can safely or adequately meet a child’s needs.

When exclusion is unavoidable, staff at Strides will ensure that the following steps are taken to minimise creating additional trauma for the young person :

* Staff will ensure that the young person and their parents/carers are made aware of what is happening at all stages of the exclusion process. This may involve continued contact with the young person directly, if this is deemed to be appropriate.
* Staff will endeavour to use Restorative Practice to structure reintegration meetings and reduce blame. Holding a restorative group for staff involved in supporting the child or young person.
* Strides will endeavour to keep the child or young person’s (and their family’s) voice at the heart of each step of the process.

**Bullying**

Young people who attend Strides may encounter bullying. It is vital that staff are aware of this potential, given the cumulative effect of negative experiences that any one young person may suffer.

We recognise that:

• Bullying causes real distress and affects a person’s health and development .

• In some instances, bullying can cause significant harm

• All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse

• Everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of bullying (including online) and putting a stop to bullying.

**Strides is clear that we will not tolerate young people in our care being bullied.**

We will seek to prevent bullying by:

**•** Developing rules which set out how everyone involved in our organisation is expected to behave, in face to face contact and online and within and outside of our activities.

• Holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children/ young people and families who use our organisation about bullying and how to prevent it.

• Communicate group members’ responsibilities to look after one another and uphold the Strides principles ensuring we are;

1. Practicing skills such as listening to each other
2. Respecting the fact that we are all different
3. Making sure that everyone has the opportunity to make connections/friends
4. Dealing with problems in a positive way
5. Using student and parent voice to assess the effectiveness of our anti-bullying measures.

**Responding to Bullying:**

When a pupil reports bullying or staff observe incidents of bullying, staff will:

• Find a place where the student will not be interrupted.

• Tell the pupil we are worried about them/ask them to tell us about the bullying.

• Listen in a non-judgmental way.

• Tell them that no-one should have to experience bullying.

• Tell them that the school will help them stop the bullying.

• Encourage them to agree to the incident being formally logged as an incident of bullying.

• Ensure their safety immediately after the incident and thereafter.

• Seek support from the senior school staff.

**Staff will then seek to address the incident with the children involved.**

**This will be reviewed on an individual basis and the incident will be carefully considered using a trauma informed approach:**

* Staff may seek to intervene and reconcile the children involved if this feels safe and appropriate for all parties.
* Staff will speak to and notify parents of all incidents of bullying. This includes all of the children involved.
* Restorative justice principles may be implemented as discussed above.
* Review of risks will be undertaken and a decision will be made about management of the child or children involved on Strides premises.
* If the bullying is deemed to pose a significant risk of harm and distress to others and/or the child involved in the bullying incident is unwilling or unlikely to stop bullying behaviour, Strides will consider excluding the child from the premises, upholding the principles of exclusions as discussed above. At all stages of the process, the child and their parents/carers will be informed.

**Reasonable Force**

Though staff will always avoid using physical intervention wherever possible, there may be occasions when staff are required to physically restrain or redirect pupils.

* This will only take place when staff believe that there is a risk to a child significantly injuring themselves or another child or adult.
* If this event is to occur, staff are directed to use the minimal amount of physical force necessary and to avoid excessive force.
* Staff will be required to make reasonable adjustments to the implementation of reasonable force for students with additional needs.
* Staff should be aware of children who have additional needs and behaviour plans should be devised and implemented to avoid the necessity for staff intervention in order to protect the child from experiencing distress and harm.

Where any restraint or reasonable force is used on a child, the incident should be recorded and the following points identified:

• pupil’s behaviour and level of risk presented at the time of the incident;

• degree of force used;

• effect on the pupil or member of staff; and

• the child’s age.

* Documentation of any staff or pupil injury should be recorded
* Debriefs should be implemented for all pupils and staff involved in any incident where force is implemented.