Rebuilding Confidence. Restoring Futures.

Behaviour Policy

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The Sage School

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Policy Statement

At The Sage School, we believe that all pupils have the right to learn and thrive in a safe, respectful, predictable and supportive environment.

Our behaviour approach is relational, trauma-informed and grounded in the PACE model: Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. PACE is a way of being with pupils rather than a rewards-and-sanctions programme. It is intended to help adults build safety, connection and trust so that pupils are more able to regulate, reflect, learn and repair relationships.

We recognise that behaviour can communicate emotion, need, stress, uncertainty or an unmet need. We therefore seek to understand behaviour without excusing poor behaviour. Adults remain responsible for maintaining clear, consistent boundaries while communicating that the pupil is accepted and valued.

The school combines high expectations with compassionate practice. Safety, safeguarding, learning and the rights of others remain central. PACE does not remove boundaries or consequences; it changes the manner in which adults understand, communicate and respond to them.

We recognise that many of our pupils' experience anxiety, trauma, or mental health challenges that affect their ability to regulate emotions and behaviour. Therefore, our approach focuses on understanding, consistency, and compassion – ensuring pupils feel like they belong and build the confidence to express themselves and grow.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Create a calm, safe, predictable and nurturing environment where pupils feel valued, understood and able to learn.
- Build secure, trusting relationships between pupils and adults.
- Use PACE consistently across the school as the foundation for everyday interactions and responses to behaviour.
- Support pupils to develop emotional regulation, self-awareness, resilience, problem-solving and repair skills.
- Maintain clear, proportionate and consistent boundaries that protect learning, safety and dignity.
- Understand the function and meaning of behaviour and identify patterns, triggers and unmet needs.
- Reduce shame, confrontation and unnecessary escalation while responding firmly to unacceptable behaviour.
- Work collaboratively with pupils, parents/carers and relevant professionals.
- Make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND, disability, medical needs or other identified needs.
- Minimise the need for restrictive or exclusionary measures.

Principles and Approach

Our behaviour approach is built on the following principles:

- Relationships before reaction – the adult seeks connection and safety before correction wherever possible.
- PACE before punishment – adults use Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy as their default relational stance.
- Acceptance is not approval – feelings, thoughts and experiences can be accepted without accepting unsafe, harmful or inappropriate behaviour.
- Boundaries are kind and clear – adults can be warm, curious and empathic while still saying no and holding expectations.
- Behaviour is communication – behaviour is considered alongside context, developmental stage, SEND, trauma, relationships and environmental factors.
- Regulation before reasoning – when a pupil is highly dysregulated, adults prioritise safety and co-regulation before expecting reflection or problem-solving.
- Repair over shame – incidents are used as opportunities to restore relationships, learn and practise alternatives.
- Consistency with flexibility – the same principles apply to everyone, while strategies and reasonable adjustments are individualised.
- Least intrusive response – adults use the least restrictive and least confrontational response that is safe and effective.
- Pupil voice matters – pupils are involved in understanding their behaviour, identifying what helps and reviewing support.

We believe that positive behaviour is most effectively supported through strong relationships and a predictable, caring environment.

PACE at The Sage School

PACE was developed by clinical psychologist Dr Dan Hughes and is used in educational settings as a relational and trauma-informed approach. It stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. PACE is particularly relevant to pupils who may have experienced trauma, disrupted attachment or difficulties with emotional regulation, while remaining useful as a whole-school relational approach.

Our staff understand PACE as an attitude and way of communicating, not a script. Different elements will be appropriate at different times. Playfulness, for example, may help with low-level tension but is not appropriate when a pupil is acutely distressed. Our staff know the pupils, read the situation and adapt their approach.

Playfulness

Adults use warmth, lightness, appropriate humour and a relaxed tone to communicate that the relationship is safe and that difficulties do not threaten the relationship. Playfulness must never ridicule, embarrass or minimise a pupil's distress.

Acceptance

Adults accept the pupil's inner experience without judgement. Acceptance means recognising that a feeling, fear, wish or perception is real for the pupil; it does not mean agreeing with their account or accepting unsafe behaviour. The adult separates the pupil from the behaviour: the behaviour may need to change, while the pupil remains valued and accepted.

Curiosity

Adults seek to understand rather than assume. They wonder about what may have happened, what the pupil may be communicating and what need may sit underneath the

behaviour. Staff should avoid accusatory 'why' questions during dysregulation and use tentative language such as 'I wonder if...', 'Could it be...' or 'Help me understand...'.

Empathy

Adults communicate that they understand the pupil's emotional experience and will stay alongside them through difficulty. Empathy is not simply reassurance or fixing the problem; it involves recognising and sharing the emotional significance of the experience while maintaining safe boundaries.

PACE in practice

- Connect before correct, where safety allows.
- Lower the emotional temperature through calm voice, pace, posture and proximity.
- Name and validate feelings without endorsing harmful actions.
- Wonder rather than accuse.
- Offer manageable choices and clear boundaries.
- Use co-regulation before expecting independent regulation.
- Return to reflection and repair once the pupil is regulated.
- Maintain the relationship after an incident so that the pupil experiences repair rather than rejection.

Promoting Positive Behaviour

Positive behaviour is promoted through relationships, predictable routines, explicit teaching and opportunities for success.

Classroom Practice:

- Predictable routines and clearly taught expectations.
- Warm welcomes and purposeful relational connection.
- Calm, respectful communication and visual supports where required.
- Appropriate movement, sensory and regulation opportunities.
- Low-arousal approaches and early identification of dysregulation.
- Tasks and environments adapted to pupils' developmental and individual needs.
- Adults modelling PACE and emotional regulation.

Recognition and Encouragement:

Rather than traditional rewards, recognition is authentic and meaningful:

- Specific, authentic recognition of effort, progress and repair.
- Positive communication with families.
- Celebration of contribution, responsibility and growth.
- Opportunities for leadership, choice and meaningful participation.
- Recognition that is relational rather than dependent on external rewards.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body:

- Approve and review the Behaviour Policy annually and following significant changes in guidance or practice.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the school's behaviour culture and the impact on pupils.
- Ensure the policy is consistent with legal and regulatory requirements.
- Support the Headteacher in developing a safe, inclusive and relational school culture.

Headteacher:

- Lead implementation of the PACE-informed behaviour culture.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate training, coaching and supervision.
- Ensure behaviour expectations and boundaries are clear and consistently applied.
- Monitor behaviour, safeguarding and exclusion data and identify patterns.
- Ensure individual needs and reasonable adjustments are considered.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

- Model PACEful practice and support staff in difficult situations.
- Lead reflective debriefs following significant incidents.
- Support consistent implementation across classrooms and social times.
- Monitor patterns, triggers and the effectiveness of interventions.

Teaching and Support Staff:

- Build warm, respectful and trusting relationships.
- Use PACE as the default relational approach.
- Maintain clear boundaries and respond consistently to unsafe or harmful behaviour.
- Use co-regulation and de-escalation strategies.
- Record and report significant incidents accurately and promptly.
- Reflect on their own contribution and seek support when needed.

Pastoral and Wellbeing Team:

- Provide additional emotional and relational support.

- Support regulation, coping and repair.
- Coordinate individual support and risk-management planning.
- Work with families and external professionals where appropriate.
- Ensure pupil voice informs support and review.

Pupils:

- Treat others with kindness and respect.
- Engage with school expectations and support others' right to learn and feel safe.
- Use agreed strategies to seek help when struggling.
- Take part in reflection, repair and restorative conversations when able.

Parents and Carers:

- Work collaboratively with the school.
- Share relevant information that may affect a pupil's presentation or regulation.
- Engage in reviews and support agreed strategies.
- Reinforce relational and restorative messages at home where appropriate.

Understanding Behaviour as Communication

The school recognises that behaviour can be an expression of:

- Unmet emotional, social, sensory or communication needs;
- Anxiety, fear, shame, trauma or overwhelm;
- Frustration, uncertainty or perceived loss of control;
- Communication or processing difficulties;
- Environmental demands or relationship stress;
- Difficulties with emotional regulation or impulse control.

This does not mean that every behaviour has a single underlying cause, nor does it remove responsibility for safety. Adults will consider what happened before, during and after an incident, what the pupil may have been communicating, and what changes may reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Regulation, Co-regulation and De-escalation

A pupil who is highly dysregulated may not be able to access reasoning, reflection or problem-solving in the same way as when calm. Staff will therefore prioritise safety and co-regulation before expecting compliance, explanation or restorative discussion.

Adults will:

- Use a calm, steady voice and reduce unnecessary language.
- Give physical and emotional space where safe.
- Reduce audience, demands and sensory stimulation where possible.
- Offer simple choices and a clear next step.
- Use agreed regulation spaces, trusted adults and individual strategies.
- Not argue, threaten, shame, crowd or repeatedly question a dysregulated pupil.
- Seek additional support where risk is increasing.

Once the pupil is regulated, staff will support reflection, learning and repair. The timing and format of this conversation will be adapted to the pupil.

Managing Challenging Behaviour

When behaviour disrupts learning, relationships or safety, staff will follow a graduated response.

- Connect – use a calm PACEful approach and establish safety.
- Understand – consider context, communication, triggers and unmet need.
- Set the boundary – state clearly and briefly what needs to stop or change.
- Support regulation – offer time, space, co-regulation and appropriate choices.
- Protect – take proportionate action to maintain safety for the pupil and others.
- Repair – once regulated, support reflection, accountability and restoration.
- Review – record significant incidents and identify patterns or changes needed.

The school's first priority is always to prevent the need for restrictive intervention. Staff will use PACE, relationship-based practice, environmental adjustments, co-regulation and de-escalation wherever possible.

Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions

Reasonable force will only ever be considered when it is genuinely needed to prevent harm, serious disruption or another circumstance permitted by law, and when the risk cannot be safely managed through less restrictive means. The amount of force used must be reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances and no more than is necessary to achieve the immediate safety objective.

Where there is time to do so safely, staff will use PACEful interaction, verbal de-escalation, space, reduced demands, choices, distraction, co-regulation and other less restrictive strategies first.

Force must never be used as a punishment, to humiliate or intimidate a pupil, or simply because a pupil is refusing to comply.

When considering whether force is necessary, staff will consider the immediate risk and the pupil's individual circumstances, including SEND, disability, medical needs, communication needs and known vulnerabilities. Individual risk assessments and support plans will inform practice where available, but will not prevent staff taking proportionate action in an unforeseen emergency.

Where reasonable force or another restrictive intervention is used, the incident will be recorded and reported in accordance with current statutory requirements and school procedures. Parents/carers will be informed as required. The incident will be reviewed to understand what led to the intervention, whether earlier preventative or de-escalation strategies could have reduced the risk, and whether the pupil's individual support or risk-management plan needs to change.

The school will apply the current DfE guidance in force at the time, including the guidance on restrictive interventions and reasonable force. All staff will complete an accredited Certificate in the Use of Restrictive Interventions.

Behaviour Support Plans

Some pupils will require a Personalised Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP), risk-management plan or other individualised support.

Plans should be co-created where possible with:

- The pupil;
- Parents/carers;
- Key staff and pastoral staff;
- SENDCo and other relevant school staff;
- External professionals where appropriate.

Plans should identify:

- Strengths, interests and relational preferences;
- Known triggers and contexts;
- Early signs of dysregulation;
- What helps the pupil feel safe and regulated;
- PACEful strategies and preferred language;
- Reasonable adjustments;
- Preventative strategies;
- Responses to escalating behaviour;
- Crisis and safety procedures;
- Post-incident repair and recovery;
- Review arrangements and success measures.

Consequences, Boundaries and Restorative Actions

The school maintains clear consequences and boundaries because pupils and staff have a right to safety, learning and respectful relationships. Consequences are proportionate, predictable, educational and relational.

A consequence is not intended to shame, reject or emotionally punish a pupil. Staff should remain PACEful while holding the boundary.

Consequences may include:

- Reflective discussion or restorative meeting;
- Repair or reparation for damage or harm;
- Temporary loss of an identified privilege where proportionate and meaningful;
- Temporary supervised removal from an activity to restore safety and regulation;
- Parent/carer involvement in resolution planning;
- Additional support, monitoring or review of an individual plan;
- Supported relational time with SLT;
- Suspension where required by circumstances and lawful procedures.

Suspensions are not used as a substitute for understanding need or planning support. They remain available where necessary to maintain safety and the integrity of the school environment and will be managed in accordance with statutory requirements.

Pupil Voice and Participation

Pupils are active participants in their behaviour support. Staff will seek pupils' views about what helps them regulate, what makes situations harder and how relationships can be repaired through:

- Pupil voice in PBSPs and reviews;
- Surveys, discussions and feedback;
- Co-created classroom expectations;
- Individual check-ins and reflective conversations;
- Opportunities to identify trusted adults and preferred regulation strategies.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

The school recognises parents and carers as important partners in understanding and supporting behaviour.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Communicate concerns early and share relevant contextual information.
- Share successful strategies and known triggers.
- Participate in support-plans and review meetings where appropriate.
- Work with the school on restorative or resolution planning.
- Celebrate progress, repair and positive change.

The school will communicate significant concerns and work with families in a respectful manner. Where a pupil's behaviour is understood differently by home and school, the focus will remain on curiosity, shared understanding and the pupil's safety and progress.

Banned and Prohibited Items

To maintain a safe, secure, and supportive environment, certain items are strictly prohibited on school premises or during off-site activities.

Prohibited by Law:

The following items are illegal to bring onto school grounds:

- Knives or weapons of any kind (including penknives, blades, or sharp instruments not required for learning).
- Firearms, imitation guns, or projectile devices.
- Alcohol.
- Illegal drugs or controlled substances.
- Psychoactive substances (“legal highs”).
- Stolen items.
- Tobacco, vapes, or smoking paraphernalia.
- Fireworks, matches, or lighters.
- Pornographic or explicit materials.

Prohibited by School Policy:

The following are also not permitted as they may cause distress, distraction, or risk:

- Energy drinks or excessive caffeine products.
- Aerosols or strong fragrances.
- Chewing gum unless part of a plan.
- Electronic devices (music players, gaming devices) unless part of a plan.
- Any item deliberately used to intimidate, cause harm, or disrupt learning.

Searching and Confiscation:

In line with DfE guidance (Searching, Screening and Confiscation, 2022):

- Staff may search pupils or their possessions with consent.
- The Headteacher or authorised staff may search without consent if there is reasonable suspicion that a pupil has a prohibited item.
- Any confiscated items will be handled sensitively and safely, with parental contact.

- Searches will always be conducted with dignity, with at least two staff present.

Supportive Approach:

Where possession appears linked to distress, curiosity, communication need or misunderstanding, the response will include a PACEful and restorative consideration of the underlying circumstances alongside any necessary safety response.

Mobile phones

The Sage School is a mobile phone-free environment by default in line with DfE statutory guidance. Pupils may bring a mobile phone to school where appropriate for journeys to and from school, but it must be stored securely and must not be accessed during the school day.

The expectation applies throughout the school day, including:

- lessons;
- movement between lessons and other parts of the school;
- breaktimes;
- lunchtimes.

Mobile phones and similar smart devices must not be used to make or receive calls or messages, access social media or the internet, take photographs or recordings, or otherwise communicate during the school day unless an agreed exception applies.

Exceptions and reasonable adjustments

An individual pupil may require access to a mobile phone or similar device because of disability, SEND, medical need, safeguarding circumstance or another identified individual need. Where necessary, the school will consider reasonable adjustments and individual adaptations. Any exception will be documented, limited to the agreed purpose and communicated to relevant staff.

Use outside the school day

Arrangements for residential activities, educational visits and other activities outside the normal school day will be communicated separately and will take account of safety, welfare, education and communication with families.

Misuse and response

Where a pupil breaches the mobile phone arrangements, staff will respond consistently and proportionately. This may include secure storage of the device and return in accordance with school arrangements. Repeated or serious misuse may lead to further proportionate

consequences and parental/carer involvement. Responses will remain PACEful and restorative while maintaining the boundary.

Searching for a mobile phone or similar device will be undertaken only where there are lawful and reasonable grounds and in accordance with current DfE searching, screening and confiscation guidance and school procedures.

Staff Training and Support

All staff will receive appropriate training and guidance on prevention, de-escalation, safeguarding and the lawful use of reasonable force/restrictive interventions. The school will not expect untrained staff to use physical intervention except where immediate action is necessary and lawful to protect a pupil or another person.

All staff will receive training and ongoing support in the principles and practical application of the school's PACE-informed approach.

- Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy.
- Trauma-informed and relational practice.
- Co-regulation, emotional regulation and low-arousal approaches.
- De-escalation and safe responses to challenging behaviour.
- SEND, reasonable adjustments and individualised support.
- Safeguarding and mental health awareness.
- Restorative and repair conversations.
- Searching, confiscation, mobile-phone expectations and relevant legal guidance.

Staff will have access to reflective supervision, coaching and debriefing after significant incidents. The school recognises that PACE is a practice that develops over time and that adults need space to reflect on what worked, what did not and what the pupil may have been communicating.

Monitoring, Recording, and Evaluation

- Significant behaviour incidents are recorded securely and accurately.
- Data is reviewed for patterns by pupil, time, location, context, behaviour and response.
- The school monitors the use of sanctions, restrictive interventions, suspensions and exclusions.
- Leaders consider whether patterns indicate unmet need, environmental factors, inconsistent practice or gaps in support.
- PBSPs and risk-management plans are reviewed in response to evidence.
- Pupil and parent/carer feedback informs evaluation.
- Termly reviews are reported to SLT and the Governing Body.
- Policy and staff practice are updated where evidence or guidance indicates a need for change.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The school will implement this policy consistently and in a way that respects the Equality Act 2010 and the individual needs of pupils.

No pupil will be discriminated against because of:

- disability;
- SEND;
- race, ethnicity or religion;
- sex, gender or sexuality;
- socio-economic background;
- other protected or relevant personal circumstances.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required. A PACE-informed approach supports this by requiring adults to understand the pupil's individual presentation rather than assuming that the same response will work for everyone.

Linked Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- SEND and Inclusion Policy
- Exclusion/Suspension procedures
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance
- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance
- DfE Mobile Phones in Schools statutory guidance