

POLICY **BEHAVIOUR**

This behaviour policy outlines our commitment to acceptance and understanding of autism and other forms of neurodivergence, emphasising the importance of empathy, respect, and positive relationships.



Accepting Behaviour Behaviour Policy

Introduction

Accepting Behaviour is committed to creating an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all individuals, recognising and celebrating the diversity of neurodivergent children/young people. This behaviour policy outlines our commitment to acceptance and understanding of autism and other forms of neurodivergence, emphasising the importance of empathy, respect, and positive relationships.

Acceptance-Based Support

- We recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and must always be understood within the context of the child or young person's experiences, needs, environment, emotional wellbeing, and neurodevelopmental profile.
- Many of the students accessing our provision have experienced significant levels of anxiety, trauma, school-related distress, exclusion, unmet needs, sensory overwhelm, or repeated failure within traditional educational systems. As a result, behaviours that may traditionally be viewed as "challenging" are often understood within our provision as indicators of distress, dysregulation, fear, unmet need, communication difficulty, or a need for safety and connection.
- Accepting Behaviour does not promote behaviour management approaches that are based primarily on control, consequences, or compliance. We recognise that for many neurodivergent and vulnerable students, highly directive or pressure-based approaches may increase anxiety, damage trust, and reduce engagement.
- Our approach is grounded in acceptance-based support, relational practice, emotional safety, and professional curiosity. We aim to understand why a child may be struggling rather than simply focusing on stopping behaviours.
- This does not mean that unsafe behaviour is ignored or that boundaries do not exist. Safeguarding, safety, respect, and the well-being of all students and staff remain central at all times. However, responses focus on co-regulation,

understanding, risk reduction, relationship-building, and supportive interventions rather than punitive consequences.

- We recognise that progress may look different for different students. For some children and young people, progress may initially involve:

- feeling emotionally safe
- reducing anxiety
- tolerating environments
- developing trust with adults
- increasing communication
- engaging for short periods
- expressing needs safely

At Accepting Behaviour, we believe that sustainable engagement and meaningful progress are most likely to occur when children and young people feel accepted, understood, psychologically safe, and supported without fear of rejection or consequence.

Core Principles

1. Respect and Dignity

- We treat all individuals with respect and dignity, acknowledging the unique perspectives and experiences of neurodivergent individuals.
- Language and actions within our community must reflect an understanding and appreciation of neurodivergent traits, avoiding stigma or negative labelling.

2. Empathy and Understanding

- We strive to understand the experiences and needs of neurodivergent individuals through active listening and empathy.
- Training and resources will be provided to all staff to foster greater awareness and understanding of autism and neurodivergence.

3. Individuality and Strengths

- We recognise and celebrate the unique strengths and talents of neurodivergent individuals.
- Our approach focuses on individual potential, supporting each person's growth and development in ways that align with their strengths and interests.

4. Positive Relationships

- Building positive, trusting relationships is fundamental. We prioritise connection and communication, creating a safe space for all individuals to express themselves.
- Collaborative partnerships with families, caregivers, and neurodivergent individuals are essential to our approach, ensuring their voices are heard and respected.

5. Flexibility and Adaptability

- We are committed to creating flexible and adaptable environments that accommodate the diverse needs of neurodivergent individuals.
- Our practices are designed to be inclusive, removing barriers and providing appropriate support to facilitate participation and engagement.

6. Empowerment and Autonomy

- We empower neurodivergent individuals to make choices and have control over their own lives.
- Encouraging self-advocacy and providing opportunities for autonomy are key aspects of our approach.

7. Emotional and Psychological Safety

- Ensuring emotional and psychological safety is a priority. We provide a supportive environment where neurodivergent individuals feel valued and understood.
- We actively work to reduce anxiety and stress by fostering a calm and predictable environment.

Implementation

1. Training and Professional Development

- All staff will receive ongoing training on autism and neurodivergence, focusing on acceptance, understanding, and supportive practices.
- Professional development opportunities will be provided to enhance skills in creating inclusive and empathetic environments.

2. Inclusive Policies and Practices

- Organisational policies will reflect our commitment to acceptance and inclusion, ensuring that all procedures and practices are neurodivergent-friendly.
- Policies will be regularly reviewed to incorporate the latest research and best practices for supporting neurodivergent individuals.

3. **Community Engagement**

- We will engage with the broader community to raise awareness and promote acceptance of neurodivergence.
- Collaborative efforts with neurodivergent advocacy groups and organisations will help inform and guide our practices.

4. **Feedback and Continuous Improvement**

- Feedback from neurodivergent individuals, their families, and caregivers is crucial. We will establish channels for regular input and dialogue.
- Continuous improvement will be driven by the experiences and insights of those we support, ensuring our approach remains responsive and effective.

Behavioural issues

We see challenging behaviour often misunderstood as bad behaviour, when it **is a form of communication indicating an unmet need**. Here are several reasons why we view challenging behaviour as an expression of unmet needs rather than bad behaviour:

1. **Expression of Discomfort or Pain:**

- Individuals, especially those with difficulty communicating verbally, may exhibit challenging behaviour indicating physical discomfort or pain. This behaviour is how they seek relief or attention to address the issue.

2. **Sensory Overload:**

- Neurodivergent individuals, such as autistic children, often experience sensory sensitivities. Challenging behaviour can be a response to sensory overload, where the environment is too stimulating or overwhelming.

3. **Communication Barriers:**

- When individuals lack the verbal or social skills to express their needs or feelings, they may resort to challenging communication behaviour. This behaviour becomes their language to convey what they cannot articulate.

4. Emotional Regulation:

- Difficulties in regulating emotions can lead to challenging behaviour. For some, expressing frustration, anxiety, or sadness through behaviour is the only way they know how to cope with intense emotions.

5. Seeking Attention or Interaction:

- Some behaviours are a means of seeking social interaction or attention. When individuals feel ignored or isolated, they might display challenging behaviours when engaging with others, even if the attention they receive is negative.

6. Avoidance of Demands:

- Challenging behaviour can be a way to avoid tasks or situations perceived as difficult, stressful, or unpleasant. This is particularly relevant for individuals with demand avoidance.

7. Need for Control:

- Individuals may exhibit challenging behaviour to gain a sense of control over their environment or circumstances. This need for control can stem from feeling powerless or anxious.

8. Lack of Understanding or Clarity:

- When instructions or expectations are unclear or not understood, challenging behaviour may occur as a response to confusion or frustration. This highlights the need for clear, consistent communication.

9. Routine and Predictability:

- Many individuals, especially those on the autism spectrum, thrive on routine and predictability. Disruptions or changes to their routine can lead to challenging behaviour as a response to the stress of unpredictability.

10. Seeking Sensory Input:

- Some challenging behaviours are a way to seek sensory input. For example, repetitive movements or vocalisations can be self-soothing or fulfilling sensory needs.

11. Unmet Emotional Needs:

- Challenging behaviour can reflect deeper emotional needs, such as the need for security, love, and acceptance. Addressing these emotional needs can help reduce the occurrence of such behaviours.

12. Frustration with Communication:

- When individuals cannot effectively communicate their thoughts, needs, or desires, they may become frustrated and act out. This behaviour is a signal that their communication methods are not being understood or acknowledged.

Positive Handling, De-escalation and Restrictive Practice

Our Approach

We are committed to an acceptance-based approach to behaviour support. We recognise behaviour as a form of communication and seek to understand the individual, their needs, emotions, environment, sensory experiences and circumstances rather than simply attempting to stop or control behaviour.

Our approach is based on positive relationships, dignity, respect, co-regulation, prevention and de-escalation.

We do not use physical restraint as a behaviour-management strategy, a means of gaining compliance, or a response to behaviour that staff find challenging.

Our expectation is that staff use proactive support and de-escalation wherever reasonably possible.

Prevention and Risk Assessment

All visits and activities are appropriately risk assessed. Risk assessment should consider the individual, the environment, planned activities and any known factors that could increase distress or risk.

Where possible, staff should identify potential triggers and make reasonable adjustments before difficulties arise.

Planning may include:

- understanding the individual's preferred methods of communication;
- identifying known triggers, stressors and signs of increasing distress;
- recognising sensory and environmental needs;
- providing appropriate choices and opportunities for autonomy;
- identifying strategies known to help the individual regulate;
- considering environmental risks and safe spaces;
- ensuring staffing arrangements are appropriate for the assessed level of risk; and
- considering information provided by parents, carers and other professionals involved in the individual's support.

Risk assessments are dynamic documents and are reviewed when circumstances, needs or identified risks change.

De-escalation and Positive Support

When an individual becomes distressed or dysregulated, staff are expected to respond calmly and compassionately and to seek to reduce rather than escalate the situation.

Depending on the individual's needs and circumstances, this may include reducing demands, allowing additional processing time, offering space, reducing environmental stimulation, using calm and familiar communication, offering meaningful choices, acknowledging the person's feelings, and supporting them in moving to a safer or more comfortable environment.

Staff should avoid unnecessary confrontation, threats, punishment, shouting, coercion, power struggles or attempts to force compliance.

Where behaviour does not present an immediate danger, staff should continue to use de-escalation, environmental adjustment and supportive strategies rather than physical intervention.

Physical Intervention and Immediate Safety

Our service does not advocate restraint as a routine method of supporting behaviour.

There may, however, be exceptional circumstances in which an individual's actions create an immediate and serious risk of harm to themselves or another person.

In these circumstances, staff must first consider whether the danger can reasonably be managed through de-escalation, creating distance, removing hazards, changing the environment or moving other people to safety.

Any physical intervention must take place only where it is lawful, necessary, proportionate to the immediate risk, and the least restrictive reasonable response available.

The objective of any emergency intervention is safety, not compliance. It must end as soon as the immediate danger has passed and a less restrictive approach can be used safely.

Nothing within this policy requires a member of staff to place themselves or another person at unreasonable risk.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are important partners in developing effective support.

Where appropriate, we will work collaboratively with parents and carers to understand the individual's communication, preferences, triggers, successful regulation strategies and any relevant risks.

Parents and carers should be informed of significant incidents involving their child or the person they support, in accordance with safeguarding, confidentiality, and information-sharing requirements.

Where patterns of distress or risk emerge, the support plan and risk assessment should be reviewed with appropriate involvement from the individual, their parents or carers and relevant professionals.

Following an Incident

Any significant incident, including any incident involving physical intervention, must be appropriately recorded and reviewed in accordance with organisational procedures.

The review should not focus solely on what the individual did. Staff should consider what happened before, during and after the incident, including environmental factors, communication, demands, staff responses and whether anything could reasonably have been done differently.

The purpose of the review is to learn, reduce future distress, and strengthen preventive support.

Where appropriate, the individual should be supported after the incident in a way that reflects their communication needs and level of understanding. Staff wellbeing should also be considered following serious incidents.

Safeguarding, Law and Professional Responsibilities

All staff must work within applicable safeguarding requirements, organisational procedures and the law.

Our commitment to avoiding restrictive practice does not remove our responsibility to protect individuals from immediate harm. Equally, the existence of risk does not automatically justify physical intervention.

Our guiding principle is therefore:

Prevent where possible. Understand the person. Accept and support rather than control. De-escalate wherever reasonably possible. Use the least restrictive response necessary to maintain safety, and consider physical intervention only in exceptional circumstances where immediate safety requires it, and the intervention is lawful, necessary, and proportionate.

Conclusion

Viewing challenging behaviour as a form of communication rather than bad behaviour shifts our focus from consequence to understanding and support. It encourages staff to look beyond the behaviour and address the underlying needs, fostering a more compassionate and practical approach to managing and supporting individuals who exhibit these behaviours.

Our commitment to accepting and understanding autism and neurodivergence is foundational to our organisation's values. By fostering an environment of respect, empathy, and support, we aim to create a space where all individuals can thrive and be authentic.

Approval and Review.

This policy was approved by the managing directors Aaron Yorke and Jayne Yorke and is reviewed/updated yearly.

Date	Reviewed by Aaron Yorke (Managing Director)	Reviewed by Jayne Yorke (Managing Director)
August 2023 <i>Created</i>		
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