



The Ropemakers' Academy

PART OF THE BECKMEAD TRUST



Name of Policy	Behaviour Policy
Policy Level	School
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Signature	Simon Hawthorne
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1. Introduction and General Principles

The Ropemakers' Academy is a Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) school and part of The Beckmead Trust. Our behaviour policy is designed to deliver exceptional education and support for traumatised children and young people identified as having social, emotional and/or mental health needs.

Promoting good behaviour requires the set up and maintenance of a learning environment which allows staff and parents to support pupils with ASD, SEMH, challenging behaviour and other SEN vulnerabilities to manage their feelings and their behaviour effectively. Our young people often come with experiences of insecure attachments to caregivers, traumas such as domestic violence, bereavement and histories of rejection and exclusion. The school uses an approach that understands their behaviour in the context of these factors and uses strategies that work therapeutically with their difficulties to help them realise their full potential.

The school's ethos is aligned with the four key values of The Beckmead Trust:

1. A sense of feeling loved, cared for and valued at all times: We provide this by demonstrating unconditional positive regard, meaning we respect and accept all pupils without judgement or evaluation. Our actions are born out of empathy, compassion and care, focusing on purpose, not power.
2. The opportunity to flourish: We strive to equip pupils to live virtuously, aspire to and acquire good life chances and choices. This links to the 'Doing Good' aspect of wellbeing, which is about having a purpose and feeling like you are good at something or helping others.
3. An understanding and experience of social justice: We model and build systems to promote and maintain fairness, equality, and democracy. This involves actively listening to the views of everyone in our community.
4. A feeling of belonging within our community: We extend opportunities for our pupils to experience safety and security within a sense of family. We embed a holistic social pedagogy approach towards children's experiential learning.

Core Therapeutic Principles and Approach:

- Brain State Shift and Wellbeing: We recognize that the brain's main job is to keep us safe. Many students are more familiar with a state of "fight or flight" or being constantly on guard from perceived threat. Our goal is to help children become more familiar with feelings like being carefree, happy, relaxed, calm, and still.
- Teaching Behaviour: Staff are committed to teaching pupils how to make choices about their behaviour—to choose behaviour that works for them and those around them—because pupils with autism do not automatically understand rules and boundaries incidentally.
- Nurturing Relationships: This involves caring, consistent, empathic, non-retaliatory and bounded relationships between staff and pupils.
- Self-Regulation: Students are taught how to self-regulate by using specifically taught relaxation and calming techniques, how to monitor their levels of anxiety, and how to return to being 'Just Right' during times of raised levels of anxiety.

- Emotional/Social Age: We recognize that pupils may have early-years needs (e.g., play) that are unmet and provide support appropriate to their emotional/social age rather than their calendar age.
- Positive Identity: We maintain a positive approach with a focus on praising and rewarding good behaviour, recognising strengths, and helping pupils develop an improved perception of themselves.
- Consistency: Staff must work consistently and in a joined-up way throughout the school.

2. Understanding Our Pupils' Needs

It is critical that we understand the meaning behind our pupils' behaviour and recognize the link between emotional wellbeing/mental health/neurodevelopmental conditions and behaviour. Challenging behaviours can be communications of distress, symptoms of conditions such as PTSD, ASD, SEMH, or ADHD, or evidence of attachment difficulties.

Typical behaviours that staff must understand in context include:

- Insecure attachment behaviours: Clinginess, defiant independence, mistrust of adults, and ambivalence (clinginess combined with rejecting behaviours).
- Lack of awareness or tolerance of external boundaries, leading to risk-taking behaviours, impulsivity, inability to manage emotions, and oppositional defiance.
- Inability to tolerate difficult feelings—projecting them into others through challenging behaviour to achieve temporary relief.
- Extreme online behaviour due to their poor executive functioning and struggles to think through the consequence of their actions. Harmful online behaviours are addressed using guidance from both the e-safety policy and this behaviour policy.
- Hyper-vigilance—always on the look out for threat, and hypersensitivity to insult or perceived threat.
- Intense fear of failure and inability to take healthy risks in learning.
- Splitting people into “good” and “bad” people, and often changing who is perceived as “good” and who is perceived as “bad”.

It is important that we do not retaliate against these behaviours; we must separate the child from the behaviour.

3. Environment and Routines

Environment

- Effective Classroom Management: This must be displayed by all members of staff, ensuring class staff are aware of all planning.
- Classroom Rules: In the first week of each term, students discuss and identify school and class rules. This is reviewed weekly in the PSHE session. Class rules should emphasise “do’s” rather than “don’ts”.

- Visual Supports: Effective visual labels ensure the environment is clearly signposted. Visuals include: Individual work stations, social stories, Reward tokens, and a Learning Board detailing the 4-part lesson structure: Warm up, Listening, Activity, Check.
- IEP Targets: Progress against the targets should be commented on informally on a daily basis and formally at least three times each half term.
- Sensory Needs: All staff are trained in managing sensory input difficulties. The Occupational Therapist carries out ongoing training and individual assessments to advise staff on suitable strategies for activity breaks or sensory input required.
- Nurture Area: The classroom includes clearly defined work areas and a nurture area—a comfortable area where pupils eat breakfast, engage in play/recreational activities, are prepared for the day, and reflect at the end of the day.
- Physical Space Management: Classrooms should be clean, tidy and orderly. To proactively minimize physical escalation, staff should ensure there are minimal throwable objects within a child's reach.

Routines and Daily Transitions

Transitions are flash-points for challenging behaviour due to anxiety.

- Preparation: Use the beginning of the day to prepare pupils for the day ahead and inform them of any changes to their usual routine.
- Concrete Endings: Close the lesson/activity in a concrete way—summing up achievements—and warning pupils that a break or change is due.
- Transfer of Attachment: When a lesson change involves a change of teacher, TAs aid the transfer of attachment by communicating concerns and successes from the first lesson in front of pupils to show a visible transfer of care.
- End of Day: Use the end of the day to go over the day and prepare for the following day, reassuring pupils of staff availability tomorrow.

4. Promoting Social and Emotional Development and Wellbeing Practices

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is embedded throughout the whole day.

Providing Good Attachments

Staff provide secure attachments by: Being consistent, patient and dependable; Tuning into their needs; Empathising with and understanding their feelings; and Containing their distress/rage by managing our own behavioural responses, not retaliating. We demonstrate unconditional acceptance of the child—disapproving of behaviours, never the child as a person.

Communicating and Understanding Feelings (Signals)

Pupils are encouraged to communicate appropriately about their feelings instead of acting them out.

- Feelings as Signals: Staff teach that feelings are signals from the body and brain, and that when a pupil feels sad or cross, it is not a bad thing. Staff help pupils feel their feelings so they can understand them better and learn what they are trying to tell you.
- Modelling: Staff model talking about our own feelings and emotional reactions.
- Verbalising: Staff verbalise thoughts about a child's emotional state—wondering aloud (“I'm wondering if you're upset because....”).
- Language: The school uses a common language, in line with OT advice, to describe feelings: high, low or just right.

Ways We Practice Feeling Good (Wellbeing Activities)

These activities move the brain away from the "fight or flight" response:

1. Play Time: When pupils immerse in play, they become carefree and forget the seriousness of life, which helps them become familiar with feeling joyful and playful. Play is vital for development and teaches boundaries and rules. Pupils may need supported solitary play before moving onto parallel play and finally social play.
2. Calm Crafts: Mindful crafts such as colouring and making involve calming activities that do not challenge the brain but give enough focus to keep the mind occupied. This allows the pupil to feel calm and still.
3. Relaxation and Meditation: Guiding children into a state of complete and deep relaxation is the exact opposite of fight or flight. This practice gives them an opportunity to be completely free of worry and chaos, learning what it feels like to be truly calm and regulated.

5. Managing Behaviour and Intervention

Expectations, Language, and Choices

- Adult Role: The adults are in charge of themselves and the children. We combine friendliness and warmth with being the adult and boundaried.
- Language: When referring to unacceptable actions, staff should use “stop” preceded by the student's name, but may say ‘No’ in relation to unacceptable actions (e.g. “the rule is No hitting”).
- Choice System: Staff always give the student a choice by linking the expectation with the action and the consequence. One choice will be educationally, socially and physically advantageous, while the other is less desirable. The tone of voice used when offering choices will be neutral and assertive.
- Objective Reflection: After a consequence takes place, the question is posed: “Did that work for you?”. Staff then ask: “What would have worked?”. This promotes objective, non-judgemental reflection. Repetition is crucial, as pupils with language disorder may need things repeated up to 1,000 times.

De-escalation and Pathways Intervention

The school has an emphasis on prevention rather than reaction.

- De-escalation Strategies: Speak quietly and privately; remark on past successes; wonder aloud about the feelings behind the behaviour—empathise; use diversion; and avoid shouting, be aware of your body language and giving the child space. Avoid threats of sanctions until all other strategies have been used.
- Pathways Intervention: When "student support" is called, the student is given time and space away from the initial trigger. A 15-minute turnaround time is given for the student to regulate. If the student regulates but isn't ready to return to class, they are offered to do their work in a separate workspace, mirroring the class structure.
- Proactive Planning: Teachers work with the Pathways team to proactively set up time and support to meet student needs to try to prevent reactive call outs. This involves utilizing student risk assessments and Pupil Information Passports to avoid hotspots and apply specific de-escalation strategies tailored to individual needs.

Rewards and Sanctions

The emphasis should be on rewarding good behaviour.

- Inclusive Rewards: Reward systems must be clear, easy-to-understand, and inclusive. The threshold for achieving a reward needs to be realistic. A rolling reward system can be preferable to a weekly one.
- Sanctions: Sanctions need to be applied sensibly and wherever possible include a reparation activity. Wherever possible, avoid escalating incremental sanctions as this can become too anxiety-provoking.
- Earned Rewards: Never take away an earned reward as a sanction.
- Serious Consequences: Dangerous behaviour may lead to discussion with adults, repairing damage, and internal exclusion. If it holds a potential threat to the well being of others this can lead to fixed term exclusion. A Wilful violent attack on member of staff or another child will result in an agreed fixed term exclusion.

Post-Incident Repair and Reflection

This is a critical, often-overlooked step.

- Restorative Conversation: Staff are trained in using an adapted restorative justice session which uses a visual to prompt reflection. When the pupil is calm, staff ask restorative questions: What happened? Who was affected? What can we do to make things right? What can we do differently next time?.
- Relationship Repair: Using a restorative approach shows students that we don't hold grudges or use punishment, directly challenging the negative perceptions they may have.
- Debriefing: Following a significant incident, a follow-up conversation should be held to facilitate reflection, learning, and to support pupil and staff wellbeing. This conversation should ideally be facilitated by a staff member who was not involved in the incident.

6. Definitions and Unacceptable Behaviour

Misbehaviour and Serious Misbehaviour

Misbehaviour includes low-level disruption, non-completion of work, poor attitude, and inappropriate dress/uniform.

Serious misbehaviour includes repeated breaches of rules, any form of bullying, Sexual violence (such as rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault) or Sexual harassment (unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including online harassment and sharing of nude or semi-nude images).

Prohibited/Banned Items

These items will be confiscated and will not be returned to the pupil. Prohibited items include:

- Knives or weapons. The carrying and use of offensive weapons, especially knives, is a security threat that schools must address.
- Alcohol, Illegal drugs, Stolen items, Tobacco, E-cigarettes or vapes, Fireworks, and Pornographic images.
- Any article a staff member reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil).

Interpretation of Dangerous Objects (Non-Exhaustive Examples): Any ordinary item used to cause injury, hurt, or damage will be classified as a dangerous article, justifying intervention and confiscation. Examples include:

- Shoes or boots, if used to kick or thrown at others.
- Belts, if removed and used to strike or threaten others.
- Water bottles or flasks, if thrown or used to strike others.

7. Physical Intervention (Reasonable Force)

The use of reasonable force and other restrictive interventions must be aligned with the school's legal duties, including the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Principles of Reasonable Force

Reasonable force is Physical contact by a member of staff on a pupil to control or restrain their actions/movements, using no more force than is necessary for the least amount of time.

- Last Resort: PI should only be used as a last resort. The school proactively minimizes the need to use reasonable force through early support, prevention and de-escalation strategies.
- Justification: Force is used only to prevent a pupil from hurting themselves or others, committing an offence, damaging property, or doing something that prejudices discipline.
- Duration: Staff must use the minimum necessary force. Staff must release the pupil and discontinue the intervention as soon as it is safe to do so.

- Trust Policy Limit: Staff who conduct a physical hold on a child should only 'hold' a child for a maximum of ten minutes.
- Unacceptable Force: Staff must never use force on a pupil for the purpose of punishment. Pupils should not be deliberately restrained in a way that affects their airway, breathing or circulation.
- Staff Training: All Ropemakers' Academy staff are fully trained in appropriate PI—specifically PRICE training (Protecting Rights in a Caring Environment).

Statutory Recording and Reporting

The school must have procedures in place for recording and reporting each significant incident where a member of staff uses force on a pupil. This applies even if the intervention is part of a Behaviour Support Plan.

Recording Requirements (Internal Log): Incidents must be recorded by the staff member(s) involved as soon as practicable after the event. At The Ropemakers' Academy, the incident report form needs to be filled in before staff leave their shift.

The record must include, as a minimum:

- Names of the pupil and staff directly involved.
- Relevant needs or circumstances, including the pupil's SEN status code.
- Time, date, location, and approximate length of time the intervention was used.
- Brief account of the incident, including what led up to it, triggers, de-escalation strategies used, what type of reasonable force was applied, the degree of force, and details of physical injuries sustained.
- Brief account of why the use of force was assessed as necessary.
- Any post-incident support.

Internal Data Protocol: If a PI is necessary the aim is one physical intervention per incident. Furthermore, staff must not link physical interventions to another students CPOMS records, as this duplicates and skews data.

Reporting to Parents/Carers (Statutory Guidance): Parents/carers must be informed of each significant incident as soon as practicable after the incident. The report should include the time, date, location, type/degree of force, injuries, and why the force was necessary. Best practice includes inviting parents to have a follow-up discussion to review triggers and support plans.

8. Searching, Screening, and Confiscation

- Prioritizing Safeguarding: All staff have a duty to consider the best interests of pupils, including the pupil being searched, and balance the need to confiscate harmful items against the pupil's right to personal privacy, under Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998.
- Power to Search: Head teachers and authorised staff have a statutory power to search a pupil's outer clothing, pockets, and possessions if they have reasonable grounds to suspect the pupil has a prohibited item. 'Outer clothing' includes shoes or boots.

- Force in Searching: A member of staff can use such force as is reasonable to search for legally prohibited items.
- Confiscation: Any prohibited items found, including weaponized ordinary articles (e.g. shoes/boots, belts, water bottles), will be confiscated and returned once discussed with parents/carers.
- Informing the DSL: The staff member who carried out the search should inform the DSL without delay if they believe the search has revealed a safeguarding risk.

9. Consideration for Pupils with SEND and Transitions

Responding to Misbehaviour from Pupils with SEND

- Legal Duties: The school must take reasonable steps to avoid substantial disadvantage to a disabled pupil.
- Triggers: We recognize that triggers may include pain, sensory overload, unfamiliar situations, or feelings of fear and anxiety. Pupils who find verbal communication challenging may express their needs through actions.
- Prevention: The school utilizes staff who know individual pupils well to help identify and manage risk such as trigger points. Preventative measures include adjusting seating, providing movement breaks, and using separation spaces (sensory zones or nurture rooms) where pupils can regulate their emotions.
- Adapting Sanctions: When considering a sanction, the school must assess if the pupil was unable to understand the rule, act differently, or was likely to behave aggressively due to their SEND. If so, sanctioning the pupil may be unlawful, and reasonable adjustments must be made.
- Unidentified Needs: The SENCO will evaluate a pupil who exhibits challenging behaviour to determine if underlying needs are not currently being met.

Supporting Major Transitions

Our pupils often find major transitions (e.g., changes in staff, changing class, or leaving school) difficult due to histories of loss.

- Advance Warning: Staff must give advance warning, wherever possible at least 4 weeks.
- Concrete Transfer: Staff must demonstrate a concrete transfer of attachment where handover between staff is involved, discussing successes and areas to work on in a meeting with the child.
- Memory: Staff encourage the idea of memory to help them cope with loss (e.g., creating a photo album).

10. Monitoring and Reviewing Arrangements

The Governing Body and Proprietor must regularly review and interrogate data on reasonable force and other restrictive interventions.

- Data Collection: The school will collect data on behavioural incidents, removal from the classroom, attendance, suspensions, and incidents of searching/confiscation.
- Analysis: The data will be analysed every [insert timeframe] by [insert name and role]. Analysis must be undertaken from a variety of perspectives, including by age group, individual staff member, and by protected characteristic.
- Disproportionate Use: This analysis is used to identify any disproportionate use of reasonable force and/or other restrictive interventions in relation to pupils who share protected characteristics, have SEN, or other vulnerabilities. The school will use these results to ensure it is meeting its duties under the Equality Act 2010.