

# Learning to Manage Myself

(Also known as Behaviour Policy)



## West Rise Primary School



**WEST RISE**

**September 2025**

## Introduction

It is widely accepted that for children to learn and perform at their best and to form and sustain positive friendships and relationships with others, children need to acquire the skills to manage themselves and their behaviour. We all experience a greater sense of security when boundaries and expectations are clear and consistent. As such, a clear policy is imperative - not to punish, but to create a predictable environment in which both students and staff can work and learn.

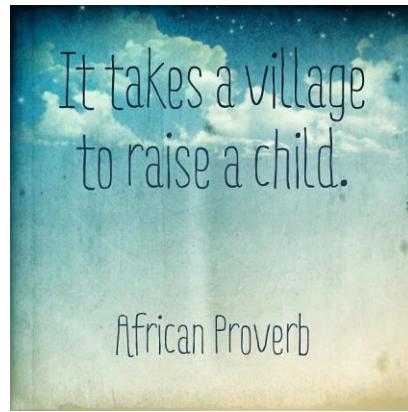
Founded on evidence-based research (See Appendix 1), this policy aims to show how our approach to 'behaviour management' is one of a 'power with', as opposed to a more traditional 'power over' paradigm. This approach is supported by a compassionate, empathetic and mindful response to a child who is perhaps making the wrong choices in how they are learning to manage themselves. It also serves to ensure that all members of the school community work to the school vision, aims and content of this policy.

The underpinning knowledge of evidence-based neuroscience and attachment awareness, enables all adults at West Rise to skilfully work with children to ensure best behaviour, with all adults recognising the vital importance of building secure and positive relationships with children, seeking to understand their unique personality and disposition.

At West Rise Community Primary School, we believe that:

- Children are motivated when they are happy, successful, encouraged, praised and given positive reinforcement
- Children need a positive image of themselves in order to be successful and give of their best
- Children develop personal and social skills through learning with and alongside others
- Children will give of their best when they feel understood and included
- Children need a secure base and secure relationships they can depend on
- Children's wellbeing is essential to their ability to thrive and perform well at school
- Children should be given the opportunity to independently manage their behaviour by being given reflective spaces in the classroom in order to calm and refocus.
- Children and staff have the right to learn in a safe environment in which they can learn and reach their full potential.

It is the responsibility of every adult to support a child in their learning journey throughout school. Whilst a child is allocated to a class, a specific teacher and teaching team (including INAs), it is the responsibility of all adults at school to support the development of a child's behaviour no matter which class they are in - '***It takes a village...***'



## **Purpose & Aims**

We aim for our school to be a safe, caring and happy place – the safety of every child is our key priority and an important consideration in this policy. We strive to create an atmosphere that is conducive to best learning in that it is calm, organised and respectful. Where the ethos of mindfulness and wellbeing are at the forefront of learning and behaviour development.

We aim to encourage and actively teach children to be kind, respectful and safe - to be polite and responsible at all times, learning about their own personal responsibility as a human to be the best they can be.

We aim to develop confident and self-aware children who adopt enhanced socially appropriate behaviour, and in doing so are able to access best learning for themselves and promote best learning for others.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all stakeholders are fully aware of expectations in managing behaviour and the role that each person plays within this.

## **The Role of the Governing Body**

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring the safety of every child, and alongside Senior Leadership, for leading the quality of behaviour and safety at school. The Governors, in consultation with the head and staff, have agreed this policy.

## **The Role of the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team**

The quality of leadership provided by the Headteacher and Senior leadership team is crucial to our school's success in promoting best behaviour. The Headteacher takes the lead in defining the vision and aims of the school and creates the conditions for high standards, consistency and fairness, as well as ensuring that this policy has been written in accordance with the most up to date guidance from the DfE.

The Headteacher and members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) ensure that this policy is shared with and fully understood by all staff and by new members of staff during the induction process. They also ensure that regular training and support is given, especially where children may need additional support.

The Senior Leadership Team and Pastoral Team have a key responsibility in working with children who are not able to easily access classroom behaviour management strategies and perhaps show more extreme behaviours. When this is the case, it is important that all members of the school community understand the unique and very skilful way that an individual child is managed. This is because behind the support of key children who are displaying emotionally dysregulated or attention / connection needing behaviour, there will be a sophisticated neuroscience-based programme in place, with the ultimate aim of supporting a child to self-regulate and return swiftly back into class, and able to access learning. Surrounding this is also likely to be a therapeutic programme based on need.

### **The role of the Teachers and Support Staff**

All adults in school have an important responsibility to model high standards of behaviour and self-regulation in both their dealings with children and with each other. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to use their knowledge of neuroscience, attachment awareness and best practice generally to support individual children in developing prosocial behaviour.

As adults, it is our responsibility to:

- Create a positive climate which enables best behaviour and learning, with positive noticing being at the heart of all we do
- Ensure a smooth transition when welcoming a new class, with rules, routines and expectations being clearly explained and modelled
- Value each child as an individual and hold the highest expectations of each individual to behave beautifully
- Use our understanding of neuroscience for learning to offer children a positive mirror of behaviour and approach
- Understand the potential underlying reasons for a child's behaviour
- Ensure that children understand that they must take responsibility for their behaviour and work to put this right
- Provide a safe and effective learning environment, with predictable routines and structures in place
- React calmly to behaviour

- Not publicly shame or embarrass children – address them in private
- Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and an understanding of the needs of self and others
- Ensure fair treatment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability and disability
- Defuse, connect and repair when things have gone wrong – connection before correction
- Speak to Parents / Carers in a timely manner when behaviour escalates

### **The Role of Parents**

Children need parental encouragement and support to make best progress in school. A positive partnership with parents is crucial in building trust and mutual respect, and in developing a common approach to behaviour expectations and strategies for dealing with behavioural challenge.

Parental participation in all aspects of school life is encouraged and for this policy to be effective, parents are asked to co-operate with the school in matters of how we deal with poor behaviour in school. To this end the Home/School agreement is shared with all new entrants and their parents/carers.

Parents are informed of our Behaviour Policy in a variety of ways, including our website. Where behaviour is causing concern parents will be informed at an early stage and given the opportunity to meet, talk and plan. Parents are notified immediately when serious incidents occur in order for strategies to be agreed and put in place.

### **The Curriculum and Learning**

We believe that our Wellbeing curriculum and tailored learning contribute to best development of behaviour. Through planning for the needs of individual pupils, the active involvement of pupils in their own learning and structured feedback, the ‘disaffection’ which can lie at the root of poor behaviour can be avoided.

In the EYFS and Key Stage One, children are taught to exhibit Wise Old Owl Behaviours, linked to Growth Mindset– good listening, best behaviour, full focus and trying their best. As the children move into Key Stage Two, they fully explore the school values linked to our Wellbeing First ‘roots’ curriculum, all designed to ensure that children develop into well rounded and considerate young people and adults.

For further information please see our *Learning and Teaching Policy*

## **Classroom Management**

At West Rise, we believe the learning environment is the starting point to ensure best behaviour at school. By creating the very best environment for parents, staff and children to thrive in, we enable adults and children alike the very best opportunity to be the best they can be. Providing beautiful, calm and neuro friendly learning environments instils an implicit 'way' of behaving, which we call the 'art gallery' effect.

The classroom environment gives clear and consistent messages to children about the extent to which their efforts are valued and at the same time, in a non-verbal way, lays the expectation for best behaviour – the quality of atmosphere and ethos is essential.

Relationships between teacher and children, strategies for encouraging best behaviour, furniture arrangements, access to resources and classroom displays all have a bearing on the way children behave.

High level organisation and a clutter free environment are essential to best behaviour, as is the teacher's persona in the room, ability to structure situations and manage time, so that there is an ongoing sense of calmness, togetherness and order.

We aim to ensure that:

- Classrooms are clutter free and are arranged to develop independence and personal initiative
- Furniture is arranged to provide an environment conducive to on task behaviour
- Materials and resources are arranged to aid accessibility and reduce uncertainty and disruption
- Displays are created to develop self-esteem through demonstrating the value of every child's contribution and reinforce behavioural expectations
- The classroom presents as a welcoming environment that speaks of best learning
- Teaching methods encourage enthusiasm and active participation for all
- Children are encouraged to work and play in co-operation with others
- Praise is used to encourage good behaviour as well as good work.
- Designated reflective spaces are available in each classroom, resourced with appropriate objects to enable a child to calm and self-regulate.

It is expected that most behaviour will be managed within the classroom by the class teacher. However, if a situation arises where one child, or indeed any child is repeatedly requiring the teacher to stop teaching and intervene at the expense of other children's learning, then it is only right that the management of this behaviour is passed onto the SLT / Pastoral team, the details of which are outlined later in this policy.

## School Expectations

Expectations and procedures will:

- Be kept to a necessary minimum
- Be part of an agreed class charter
- Be based on the very simple rules of '**Kind, Respectful, Safe**', underpinned by an understanding that, '**at West Rise we do as we are told**' so we can keep you safe and learning well.
- Be consistently applied and enforced
- Promote the idea that every member of the school has a responsibility to get on with learning and that every child has the same right to get on with their learning, whether this is on the playground or the classroom
- Be adapted for children where appropriate

## Rewards

At West Rise we reward children's positive learning behaviour, as well as pro-social behaviour in a variety of ways.

## Recognising Positive Behaviours

### 1) Individual recognition



## Golden Certificates

Golden certificates will be awarded to children who show 'Kind, Respectful, Safe' behaviour and our wider school values consistently. Each child will receive this award throughout the course of the school year.

Certificates will be awarded in a Friday assembly (KS1 and KS2), one child per class, with their parents invited to attend and celebrate their success. The child's name will be then be displayed on the 'Wall of Wow' in the hall for all to see.

Children in the EYFS will have a class assembly with the teacher, with a photo being sent to

‘Wise Old Owl Chair’ each day for demonstrating positive learning behaviours.

## Golden Glimmer Postcards



Golden Glimmer postcards will be sent home ‘ad hoc’ throughout the school year to recognise children’s effort and attitude. These can be awarded by any adult in the school.

## 2) Collaborative class recognition



Children will work together to be rewarded for positive classroom behaviours, using the language of ‘Kind, Respectful, Safe’.

“I can see you being so respectful and working hard.”

“You are lining up so sensibly keeping everyone safe.”

“Wow, you are sharing so well, how kind.”

“I can see you working hard to be a Wise Old Owl”

**EYFS** – Children learn the true value of a reward by being able to physically put a star in the jar. Children are able to watch the jar fill with good choices and are able to understand the concept of reaching a goal – a full jar – and working together to do so, earning a reward.

**Key Stage 1 & 2** - Collated on Class Dojo, children will be awarded Dojos until they reach their collective target.

At the end of the week, if the class has collaboratively reached the target set by the teacher (a full star jar or a set number of Dojos), they will have ‘Choosing Time’ at 2:30 on Friday (or

other appropriate time timetable allowing). All children will be included in this, as at some point, they will have contributed to achieving this target.

Stars and class Dojos will also be handed out at breaks and lunchtimes by lunchtime staff in the form of pocket token Dojos, which children can 'cash in' once back in class.

### **3) Whole school, around school recognition**



SLT will give embossed golden stickers to children around school who are going over and beyond to be Kind, Respectful, Safe. The golden stickers indicate that the children will be able to put a leaf with their name on, onto our 'Wow!' recognition tree that will 'grow' in the KS1 and KS2 halls. This is a big deal! If a staff member sees a golden sticker on a child, they will encourage them to share how they have been Kind, Respectful, Safe. Parents will be aware of this too as the golden stickers will be worn home.

### **Supporting Negative Behaviours**

*\*Please note that the Nursery is included in this policy but has its own procedures and strategies in place appropriate to the age of the children in their care, which are underpinned by the same values and aims.*

### **Consequences**

The word 'discipline' originates from the latin word 'disciplina', which means 'instruction', and derives from the root 'discere', which means 'to learn'. The word 'discipulus', which means, 'disciple or pupil', also stems from this word. So, in a very fundamental sense, 'DISCIPLINE' means to teach, not punish a pupil. This sits at the heart of our approach to managing poor behaviour at school.

Behaviour is a form of communication. The change in terminology in the 2014 Code of Practice of Special Educational Needs (SEN) - which replaces the Behaviour and Social Difficulties (BESD) with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties – helps to promote a shift towards viewing behaviour as a communication of an emotional need (whether conscious or unconscious), and responding accordingly.

**At West Rise, we recognise that children will make mistakes and this is all part of them learning to become a well-rounded and considerate young people and adults. Below we outline how we deal with these learning opportunities:**

We believe that there are natural consequences that coexist for negative behaviours and these are more meaningful than punitive sanctions – if you get something wrong, you simply need to put it right. These include:

- If you break something or waste resources, you will repair or work to replace it
- If you disrupt learning for others, you will be moved to sit on your own or with another adult
- If you **continue** to disrupt learning you will be removed to another class – you may also need to payback lost learning time as well. **Record on Arbor.**
- If you do not complete your work, you will finish it in your break time
- If you are unkind to someone, you will say sorry, say why you are sorry and make sure they are ok
- If you accidentally hurt someone, you will say sorry and take them to first aid if necessary. **Recorded on Meditracker.**
- If you emotionally or physically hurt someone with intent, you will say sorry, and you will lose privileges (e.g. missing outside time, missing lunchtime football, not being able to represent the school at sporting events – this is not an exhaustive list)  
**Recorded on Arbor and reported to parents.**
- If you are rude to an adult, you will say sorry and offer help to make amends (e.g. helping tidy equipment, jobs around the classroom or school)

Any of the above behaviours done with **intent** will be **recorded on Arbor**.

### **Phase One (EYFS & KS1)**

The Wise Old Owl is displayed on the board as a reminder for the children of expected behaviour using positive and non-directed reinforcement of the rules. Children who do not display Wise Old Owl behaviours are politely asked to behave, are reminded of expected behaviour and are given a chance to put it right, just like a Wise Old Owl, the school's symbol for having a Growth Mindset and learning from our mistakes. It is hoped a child will listen and correct their behaviour. However, if a child does not correct their behaviour, then **Phase Two** of the behaviour policy comes into action.

### **Phase One (KS2)**

1) Positive reinforcement to those children who are doing the right thing - “*Well done to everyone who is showing respect by listening. Well done Laura! Well done Helen!*”

2) Non-directed correction - *"I can hear a voice; I think it is coming from over there."*  
*"I hope everyone is using kind words and hands."*

Teachers may decide it is necessary to speak to parents at this point so that work can be done together to support the child in making pro-social behaviour choices.

### **Phase Two (EYFS, KS1 & KS2)**

If the child continues to show behaviours that are not 'Kind, Respectful, Safe', and this is impacting on the teacher's ability to continue teaching the class, then personal stronger verbal reminders of expected behaviour and linked natural consequences will be used. The teacher can chose to offer the chance for the child to access a reflective area in the classroom or in shared area with an adult, in order to try to self-regulate using the resources provided. **This does not need to be recorded on Arbor.**

### **Phase Three (EYFS, KS1 & KS2)**

If the supportive measures have not been successful, the child will be placed in a different class to regulate and correct their behaviour and complete their work. The child should be invited back to their class at an appropriate time. **This is recorded on Arbor** in order to build a picture around a child's behaviour and help to identify possible triggers. Parents will be notified at this point so we can work in collaboration to support the child in making pro-social behaviour choices.

### **Phase Four**

If none of the above strategies work and the child continues to disrupt learning with negative behaviour, this will be escalated to be dealt with by a member of the Pastoral or Leadership Team.

- 1) The child will be accompanied to the office where they will remain with their learning and will be returned to class when they have regulated and the class and teacher are ready to receive them back.
- 2) When there is persistent challenging behaviour or an act of harm with intent (but not limited to these examples) it may be necessary to remove a child from their classroom for a period of time – this will be called an internal suspension. The child would complete their learning with a Senior Leader.

Parents will be informed and **these behaviours will be logged on Arbor.**

### **Unsafe and Dangerous Behaviours**

A number of staff have Team Teach (positive handling) training to support children displaying unsafe and dangerous behaviours. Using Team Teach methods is always the last

resort. De-escalation is always the first strategy used. When a child has had to be positively handled this is **recorded on MyConcern**.

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in schools to use reasonable force to safeguard children. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children.

'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is needed'. Members of staff have the power to use reasonable force to prevent pupils committing an offence, injuring themselves or others, or damaging property and to maintain good order and discipline at the school or among pupils. (Behaviour in Schools February 2024, DfE)

If a child is consistently needing to have time to self-regulate or is receiving sustained amounts of support, the child may need a bespoke approach to behaviour management. A collaborative approach will be taken with the class team, pastoral support team and the leadership team to determine this and will be shared with parents.

***It is an essential part of our policy that we will not punish whole groups of children for the misdemeanour of individuals. The whole class will be encouraged to support individuals who are experiencing difficulties with behaviour and seek to understand the root cause.***

### **Lunchtime Provision**

Lunchtime is by nature a more free and social time but is still an important learning time therefore, 'Kind, Respectful, Safe' behaviour is expected. We provide both active and calm zones with a variety of activities, which the children are free to access during these times. To enable our Mid-day Supervisory Assistants (MSAs) to manage behaviour at lunchtimes successfully, it is important that behavioural expectations and management are consistent across all times of the day. It is also important that they receive effective communication from teachers about individual behavioural needs.

For positive behaviour, Dojos (Stars in EYFS) will be handed out by staff in the form of pocket token Dojos, which children can 'cash in' once back in class.

Negative behaviours are dealt with in the following ways:

- 1) Verbal reminder to be 'Kind, Respectful, Safe'
- 2) To stand with an adult for a few minutes to correct their behaviour
- 3) If unable to correct their behaviour, they may be removed from the playground to a reflective area in the school building.
- 4) If displaying unsafe or dangerous behaviour, children will be removed from the playground.

We know some children really struggle with unstructured times and therefore find it difficult to be successful outside. For these children we provide an alternative provision inside, which is reviewed regularly.

### **Extreme or Violent Behaviour**

In the very rare event of a serious incident, where behaviour is extreme, in that it is purposeful act of violence rather than as a result of an immature physical reaction, a Senior Leader is to be called for immediately. The knowledge of the individual child, an understanding of evidence-based neuroscience and the context of the outburst is crucial in dealing with dysregulated 'kick-offs'. These events will be recorded on Arbor.

Neuroscience tells us that if patterns of misbehaviour become established, we need to help break the pattern and offer new strategies for dealing with tricky emotions. The Senior Leaders will keep an awareness of emerging behaviour patterns for individual children as well as across school trends. They will work collaboratively with teachers if a bespoke behaviour plan is required and parents will be informed.

A behaviour plan may include:

- Using evidence-based neuroscience to create new messages through positive psychology, e.g. red, amber, green charts, teaching about the brain, affirmation cards, enhanced personal wellbeing books – basically what is needed for a child to break and renew their behaviour pattern
- Developing children's individual understanding of their own behaviour risk factors that are influenced by their own behavioural challenge e.g., child who has a tendency to anger is shown strategies for grounding and appropriate response, the child who has hyper energy is shown awareness of the effects of food, the child who needs to run off their energy and switch environments – essentially breaking a pattern, switching the energy and applying opposite to the behaviour shown and the emotion felt
- Positive time out with adult, in a quiet place e.g, Relax kids / Yoga / MindUP / Headspace
- Carefully unpicking any underlying causes

Teachers will inform other staff of specific strategies used for particular children.

### **When Behaviour is 'Beyond'**

Where acute anti-social, disruptive or aggressive behaviour occurs we know that sanctions alone are ineffective, and as such, careful evaluation of the curriculum and provision on offer, classroom organisation and management, and whole school procedures take place to

eliminate any of these factors. Additional specialist help from outside agencies may be necessary and will be led by the Senior Leaders.

In seeking to ensure positive behaviour at school we look very carefully at the reasons why a child may be demonstrating challenging behaviour. We do, as appropriate, refer to our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

### **Exclusion**

At West Rise, we believe that exclusion in the form of a suspension or permanent exclusion can cause more psychological harm to a child than good. Crucially, children need to trust that an adult will not give up on them or reject them when they get things wrong, and sending them home is more likely to increase the desire to be at home than offer a warning. Therefore, most exclusions, if deemed necessary, will be of an internal nature. Home suspensions and exclusions from School would be the last resort. However, if all strategies have been exhausted and a child displays continued extreme, violent or aggressive behaviour or there is a need to physically or emotionally safeguard any individuals involved, suspensions and exclusion will sometimes be necessary. In this case, the DfE School Suspensions and Exclusions publication will be referred to.

If a pupil is at serious risk of permanent exclusion, the procedures as outlined by ESCC are referred to. We work closely with parents and outside agencies to provide appropriately for those children who find school challenging in the extreme.

For the vast majority of children, exclusion will never be necessary as other strategies at school help children to learn to manage their behaviour.

### **Child on Child Abuse (Bullying)**

We recognise and acknowledge that bullying is harmful and has serious consequences for children's wellbeing and learning if it is not dealt with effectively. All incidents will be thoroughly investigated and all parents will be informed. Incidents will be recorded on MyConcern. *Please see Appendix C of our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for further information*

### **Prejudiced Based and Discriminatory Incidents including Racial and Sexual Harassment**

As with bullying we take incidents of prejudice based and discriminatory incidents very seriously and it is simply not tolerated. All incidents will be thoroughly investigated and all parents will be informed. Incidents will be recorded on MyConcern. A first incident, depending on the context may be used as a teaching point, further incidents or cases of clear racial abuse will lead to suspension.

*Please see Appendix C of our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Equalities policies for further information.*

## **Searching and Confiscating**

In the exceptional cases where we need to carry out a search of a child or indeed confiscate anything from a child the DFE publication/advice on searching and screening needs to be referred to.

The Headteacher reserves the right to suspend or exclude a pupil if there are significant grounds not explicitly covered by this policy. In cases where there are no direct witnesses to an incident, the Headteacher may make a decision based on the balance of probabilities. Such decisions will not be taken in isolation but will be made in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

## **Appendix 1 – Negative Behaviour Flowchart**

### **Natural consequences**

<b>If you...</b>	<b>You will...</b>	<b>Action</b>
break something or waste resources	repair or work to replace it	
disrupt learning for others	moved to sit on your own or with another adult	
<b>continue</b> to disrupt learning you will be removed to another class	payback lost learning time as well	Record on Arbor
do not complete your work	finish it in your break time	
are unkind to someone	say sorry, say why you are sorry and make sure they are ok	
accidentally hurt someone	say sorry and take them to first aid if necessary	Record on Meditracker
emotionally or physically hurt someone with intent	say sorry, and you will lose privileges (e.g. missing outside time, missing lunchtime football, not being able to represent the school at sporting events – this is not an exhaustive list)	Record on Arbor and reported to parents
If you are rude to an adult	say sorry and offer help to make amends (e.g. helping tidy equipment, jobs around the classroom or school).	

- 1) Wise Old Owl teaching (EYFS/KS1) and non-directed correction (KS2)  

- 2) Directed personal reminders – moved within the classroom  

- 3) Placed in a different class - **recorded on Arbor and parents notified**  

- 4) SLT/Pastoral support requested – internal suspension **recorded on Arbor and parents notified**

Any behaviour that **intentionally** causes emotional or physical harm is **recorded on Arbor**.

## **Appendix 2**

**Please see below the evidence-based research underpinning this policy, as well the publication 'Know me to Teach Me' by Louise Bomber**

**Adopting a Positive Mental Health Approach to Behaviour Management in Schools by Louise Muller (MSc Mental Health and Wellbeing in Education)**

### **Introduction and Context**

It is widely accepted that the behaviour of pupils is synonymous with learning outcomes and that school success hinges not only academic prowess and intellectual ability, but also on social competencies such as the ability to self-regulate, the capacity to forge positive relationships and the capability to sustain effective interactions with both peers and adults alike. Without these pro-social skills, as well as additional vital learning skills such as; effective cognitive functioning, conscientiousness, focus, attention, and willingness to learn, children can be set on a trajectory towards what Dishion and Snyder (2004) describe as lifelong 'chronic problem behaviours', but worse than that when combined with negative life experiences, can potentially predict an individual's propensity for developing future mental health conditions (Hunt, Slack & Berger, 2017; Iachini, Petiwala & DeHart, 2016). Therefore, schools hold a pivotal role in a child's future success, and the adults within it the responsibility for this.

The predominant psychological model informing contemporary behaviour management in schools is Behaviourism. A frequently used and most common Behaviourist framework is the ABC (Antecedent event – Behaviour response – Consequence) model of behaviour management (Bull & Solity, 1987; Cameron, 2001), frequently teamed with an assertive discipline model, which is authoritarian in its approach and often based on disproportionate punishment and coercion. Cameron (2001) highlights several problems that these kinds of behavioural models can perpetuate, including their inability to acknowledge the underlying, often complex emotional reasons behind a child's presenting behaviours, and inconsistency in application. Cameron also argues how behaviour management approaches that are based on behaviourism models are hindered in their effectiveness due to their overly adult - directed approach, not allowing children to adapt or correct their behaviour.

With MH&W being more recently thrust to the forefront of education, due to the government Green Paper (Transforming children and young people's mental health provision, 2017), schools are rightly responding with the introduction and implementation of proactive and preventative programmes and curriculums based on positive psychology education practices (Seligman, 2009). However, unfortunately and for a variety of complex reasons, many schools continue to turn to a more reactionary, 'power over' model for managing behaviour, often forgetting or neglecting to look 'behind' a child's problematic behaviour, especially when under stress, reverting to coercion and manipulation when dealing with the disruptive behaviour (Alderman & Green, 2011).

Using research from the fields of psychology, education and neuroscience, this report aims to discuss how by educating school staff on the potential reasons why children behave the way they do, why teachers sometimes respond the way they do, and how by changing our responses to this behaviour in a 'power with', as opposed to a 'power over' paradigm and supported by a mindful approach, school staff can positively affect the current and future MH&W the children in their care. It will also show how a teacher's own MH&W can be positively affected by this change of approach and will identify how these findings can and should be used to inform behaviour management policies in schools.

### **Teacher Wellbeing as an essential component of a school's behaviour management policy**

Teachers who are socially and emotionally competent and mentally well set the climate and tone of their classroom, not only by developing and supporting encouraging relationships between pupils, but also in the way they manage and interact with the children in their class. According to Jennings and Greenberg (2009), by acting as role models for respectful and appropriate communication, especially when dealing with high tension and stressful situations such as a child

displaying inappropriate behaviours, teachers who operate with compassion, empathy, calm, non-judgment and an awareness of the emotional and biological motivation behind a pupil's behaviour are better able to help the child learn to manage their behaviour, rather than resorting to punitive or coercive tactics. However, uninformed or 'burned out' teachers who are emotionally wired and exhausted can very often revert to these reactive tactics that do not model self-regulation and potentially contribute to a self-perpetuating, toxic and harmful classroom environment, especially for those who are already vulnerable to mental health problems (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2007).

Staff who work in schools are frequently exposed to emotionally arousing situations through the demanding behaviour of children in their care, and as the role involves the responsibility and care of a class, they have limited options in being able to step away from a situation in order to defuse their own heightened emotions or have the space to manage their own self-regulation when a given situation provokes a strong emotional reaction (Carson, Templin & Weiss, 2006; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). And, although teachers ultimately understand the importance of staying in emotional control and do their best to keep their feelings hidden from the children in their care (Carson & Templin, 2007; Sutton, 2007; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), this is often ineffective as a human's sympathetic nervous system is set to identify potentially emotionally threatening situations and the most hyper vigilant children would already unknowingly have started creating biochemically charged reactions to react to the situation (Van Horn, 2011).

By offering staff the knowledge, skills and opportunities to research, practise and develop skills and practices to support their own emotional wellbeing, including self-regulation, there is potentially also a reciprocal value to placing teacher wellbeing at the heart of any behaviour policy as improvements in classroom climate may support a teacher's enjoyment of the role, support their own feelings of effectiveness, thus creating a positive feedback loop which may help to prevent teacher burnout. It is therefore vital that teachers' MH&W underpins any behaviour management policy.

### **Educating teachers to look 'behind' the behaviour**

'Although teachers are not therapists, they often find themselves acting as front-line trauma-workers for young people who do not have access to clinical care' (Brunzell, Waters & Stokes, 2015). This is a significant responsibility for teachers, many of whom have just entered the profession with minimum life experience or an experience that has not exposed them to significant adversity in their lives, in some cases meaning they are potentially unable to identify with the lives of those in their care (Brown, 2003).

Research indicates that as many as 68% of children have or will have experienced at least some form of traumatic event during their school years (Pappano, 2013), a view echoed by the research of Van Der Kolk (2014), who states that 'many children who attend school have or will experience some type of trauma that may impact cognition, behaviour, and relationships'. The American Psychological Association (APA; 2015) describes trauma as 'an emotional response to a terrible event'. Although, at first consideration this may lead us to consider events physically witnessed by a child, in this day and age we cannot discount the trauma that can be caused by what children see, hear and engage with in the media and via computer games, including school shootings, terrorism, and sexual violence, often all at their fingertips via handheld devices. There is an evidence based correlation between these events (also referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)) and future physical and mental health problems in later life (Felitti, 1998). Grouped into three overarching categories of abuse, neglect and household dysfunction, the effects of these challenges can manifest themselves in the classroom in several ways, including behavioural challenge, aggression, depression, anxiety or withdrawal and delayed cognitive development (Lansford et al., 2002; Veltman & Browne, 2001). Research in the field of neuroscience has underlined the correlation between the brain being the central system linking neurobiological and psychosocial development (DeGregorio & McLean, 2013; Pechtel & Pizzagalli, 2011; Kearney, Wechsler, Kaur, & Lemos-Miller, 2010), with the orbitofrontal cortex identified as the part of the brain that is most powerfully involved in the management and regulation of emotion. Thankfully, Allan Schore's research findings (2003) detected that it is also the part of the brain that is most 'plastic' or amenable to change, identifying that more than any part of the brain the orbitofrontal cortex retains the neuroplasticity capacity of early development, even into adulthood (p.265), suggesting that emotion management can be re-programmed given the right conditions and approach. Alongside this are evidence based approaches demonstrating the importance of breaking the cycle of trauma by considering the question, "What happened to you?" instead of "what is wrong with you?" (SAMHSA, 2012), again suggestive of the potential for improvement. Without significant training about what affects normal socio-emotional and neurobiological development and how children's lives are impacted by the experiences, teachers could potentially and unknowingly cause further harm and distress to a child in their care. Therefore, teacher education on trauma informed practices are also essential in the development of any behaviour management policy.

### **The Importance of Securely Attached Relationships**

Crucial to the success for potential neural re-programming is the need for children to be supported by adults who are willing to ‘co-regulate’ with them when their emotions overtake their capacity to self-regulate. This can be done by sharing our calm with the child, not joining (or indeed adding to) their chaos (Knost, 2013). Referred to by Perry (2011) as the “agents of change”, relationships are essential when working with all children, but especially those who are offering challenge. Further research in this area suggests that attached relationships in the school setting are fostered when a child experiences nurturing relationships (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006; Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004), developed in a positive, safe and caring whole school approach (Shaw, 2007; Shochet, Smyth & Homel, 2007). For a child to feel safe and in a place where they are able to trust, they need to know that all adults will treat them in the same way. Zwarych (2004) describes well attached, safe and secure pupil teacher relationships as giving the child a sense of ownership, belonging, bonding and connectedness associated with all members of the school community, especially with prominent figures in the school. Therefore, consistency of message and approach is key, modelled by all, including the Senior Leadership in all aspects of relationship, and at every level.

Research by Penner (2012) identified lack of time in an already crowded school timetable as a barrier to developing the necessary relationships to effect change. In training staff to understand that many behavioural problems emanate from attachment issues (Bowlby, 1988), staff should identify that it would be time well spent to provide children with as many opportunities as possible to develop positive, supportive adult relationships (Miller, 2011; Marzano, 2003). Crucially, children need to trust that an adult will not give up on them and have their best interests at heart. Patience is also an essential prerequisite to real change in a child’s established behaviour patterns. As stated by Matsumura et al. (2008), ‘students will flourish within boundaries knowing that they are safe and free to take risks and that they won’t be rejected when mistakes are made’. Positive, trusting and consistent relationships are therefore an essential ingredient of an effective pro-social behaviour management policy.

### **A Mindful Solution**

Emerging research indicates that Mindfulness practices have proven positive effects on aspects such as stress reduction, emotional regulation and positive socio-emotional behaviours, as well as the promotion of general wellbeing (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011). Research by the Dalai Lama and Ekman (2008) also suggests that by engaging in the breath, whilst focussing on internal reflection can promote feelings of compassion and psychological balance. Included in mindfulness are also the constructs of kindness and gratitude which in turn can also

strengthen more empathetic responses, especially in response to stressful or combative situations (Zelazo & Cunningham, 2007). Therefore, there is no doubt that teachers would benefit from practising mindfulness.

By virtue of their age and stage of development, young children often find it difficult to regulate their emotions and behaviours, especially those who have experienced any sort of trauma or adverse childhood experience (Felitti, 1998; Mersky, Janczewski & Topitzes, 2017; Crouch, Radcliff, Strompolis & Wilson, 2018). In their evidence based review, Waters et al. (2014) discussed the statistically significant effects of mindfulness practices in schools and concluded that they positively increased a child's success in school by increasing cognitive functioning and the child's ability to emotionally self-regulate.

In the same way as it would not be seen as best practice for a teacher to enter a class without a full knowledge and understanding of the academic subject they would be teaching, teachers would need to receive appropriate training and crucially experience mindfulness in order to deliver effective and safe mindfulness programmes. Therefore, as a result of the act of teaching mindfulness to children, teachers would also benefit from its positive effects and could use this strategically when dealing with highly stressful situations in the classroom, for example when managing difficult behaviour, thereby creating and role modelling the very self-regulative and socially and emotionally positive tone and classroom climate that should underpin any effective behaviour management approach. Therefore, mindfulness gives an opportunity for a teacher to not only model but benefit from its self-regulatory effects, as well as the potential to develop a more compassionate approach, which would be of optimum benefit to not only the staff member but to the children in the classroom, also and an integral part of any behaviour management policy.

## **Conclusion**

Even the name, 'Behaviour Management Policy' links to a top down and adult led, 'power over' paradigm that is outdated and ineffective, with adults being charged to 'manage' behaviour, rather than implicitly and explicitly teach it. Ironically, all too often schools misuse the term discipline, emphasising its definition 'to punish or penalise for the sake of enforcing obedience', rather than the definition that links to the true essence of education, which is 'to train or develop by instruction and exercise especially in self-control' (Merriam-Webster online dictionary). It is therefore neglectful for schools to continue with such an archaic approach to managing behaviour, and in line with the views of Bear (2014), would recommend that a rebrand to a 'Behaviour Development Policy' would be more fitting with the purposes of education, with a clear focus to individual growth as opposed to keeping students 'in order'.

At the core of all the alternative approaches to interventionist behaviour management is the philosophy that children should be treated in a humane way with respect and care, no matter what, especially for the youngest children in our school system. Walkley and Cox (2013) claim that a barrier to this approach for educators who believe in an exclusionary and discipline orientated behaviour management style, is the perception or indeed misperception that the approach is “being soft”. Gossen (2004) comments that schools still need to establish a ‘bottom line’, even within a positive, tolerant and accepting behaviour policy, which is upheld consistently so that staff feel safe and supported. However, it would be incongruent with the values of any school who have the wellbeing of a child at the heart of their policy to operate a Zero tolerance policy which has no regard for the underlying causes of a child’s actions (Alnaim, 2018). If punishment were an effective way of dealing with challenging behaviour there would be no need for this cycle to continue. Our prisons are full, and gang and knife crime is on the rise which is proof that the cycle does indeed continue in wider society. Therefore, punishment, though quick to deliver and able to produce rapid, often temporary suppression of a child’s behaviour (Magg, 2016) is an ineffective behaviour management tool.

A teacher’s ultimate job is to prepare a child for their future world and equip them with the intellectual, physical and emotional skills that are required to fully flourish as a human being (Keyes, 2002). Therefore, based on the evidence presented, it would be a recommendation that educators look at behaviour and discipline through the lens of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) and a more mindful, positive mental health approach to dealing with behaviour in schools, which would be of benefit to the MH&W staff and children alike.

**Grade Awarded: 80 Marks (Distinction) - Buckinghamshire New University**

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