
BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT & MANAGEMENT POLICY (Principles)

Version Number: 1

Date Approved: Sep 2025

Responsible Person: CEO

Approved By: SSA Board

Next Review Date: Sep 2027

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Duty of Care	2
3. Legislation	3
4. Related Policies	3
5. Understanding Student Behaviour	3
6. The Role of the School: Fostering a Therapeutic Environment.....	4
7. Essential Elements to Ensure Positive Management of Student Behaviour	5
8. Behaviour Support Resources for Schools.....	7
9. Definitions	7
10. Related Resources.....	8

1. Introduction

The Studio Schools of Australia's (SSA) vision is to empower and equip Indigenous students to lead their own advancement and to take a valuable and meaningful place in their own communities and within Australia, in a new holistic, model of schooling on country for the secondary years.

This Behaviour Management Policy (Principles and Approach) is grounded in these values and is committed to fostering a safe, supportive, and predictable learning environment for all students and staff. It recognises that challenging behaviours are often complex and may be rooted in underlying factors such as experiences of trauma, mental health difficulties, or struggles with addiction.

Therefore, this policy adopts a therapeutic, trauma-informed, and addiction-aware approach to behaviour management. It does not condone unacceptable behaviour yet seeks so far as possible to move away from purely punitive or exclusionary responses towards strategies that seek to understand the root causes of behaviour, promote healing, build essential skills, and support student well-being and recovery. SSA believes that by addressing the underlying needs, we can empower students to develop positive coping mechanisms and thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

The standards listed under School Registration *Standard 12 – Management of Students' Behaviour* are:

- 12.1 *All students receive positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour and are given opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and with staff members and volunteers.*
- 12.2 *The school explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment as defined and provides clear guidance to all members of the school community about what forms of behaviour management, discipline or punishment are permitted.*
- 12.3 *The administration of permitted forms of behaviour management, discipline or punishment conforms to the rules of procedural fairness and non-discrimination.*

SSA explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment. Please see relevant definitions in the Definitions section of this policy.

2. Duty of Care

School authorities, schools and teachers owe a duty of care to their students. This duty arises from the nature of the relationship and exists whenever and wherever the student is in their care.

The notion of reasonable care extends to ensuring that the school provides a safe environment for all students and includes the development and implementation of processes for the effective and therapeutic management of student behaviour, taking into account potential impacts of trauma and addiction.

Recognising the significance of adverse behaviours for all students in the school community, SSA also notes that – regardless of what may be going on for a particular student – behaviours that cause harm to others in the community cannot be tolerated and must be actively and immediately managed to ensure the whole community is healthy and strong.

3. Legislation

The school's Behaviour Management Policy operates within the framework of relevant state and national legislation. This includes, but is not limited to, legislation concerning student discipline, disability discrimination, child protection, privacy, and confidentiality. The school will ensure that its policies and practices are compliant with current legal requirements, including those related to non-discrimination and the prohibition of harmful practices.

The list below is some of the legislation that impose these types of duties and obligations upon a Schools:

- [Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 \(WA\)](#)
- [School Education Act 1999 \(WA\)](#)
- [School Education Regulations 2000 \(WA\)](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 \(WA\)](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996 \(WA\)](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Commonwealth\)](#)
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 1984 \(WA\)](#)
- [State Records Act 2000 \(WA\)](#)

4. Related Policies

Listed below are school policies that include information on student management:

- Child Protection Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Complaints & Grievances Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Student Attendance Policy
- Student Code of Conduct

5. Understanding Student Behaviour

The following behavioural principles or assumptions are central to our trauma-informed and addiction-aware approach:

- **Behaviour is Learned and Communicates Needs:** Behaviour is learned through interactions with the environment and significant others. Challenging behaviour is often a form of communication, expressing unmet needs, distress, or a lack of essential skills. Understanding the function of the behaviour is key to providing effective support.
- **Trauma Impacts Brain Development and Behaviour:** Experiences of trauma can significantly impact brain development, particularly areas responsible for emotional regulation, impulse control, and executive functioning. This can manifest as difficulty concentrating, heightened reactivity, withdrawal, aggression, or other challenging behaviours. These behaviours are often adaptive responses developed to survive difficult circumstances, not intentional defiance. Our approach shifts from asking "what's wrong with the student?" to considering "what's happened to the student?"
- **Addiction is a Health and Behavioural Issue:** Substance use and addiction, particularly during adolescence when the brain is still developing, can profoundly affect behaviour, academic performance, and overall well-being. Addiction is viewed as a health issue requiring support, intervention, and access to treatment, not solely as a disciplinary

matter. Challenging behaviours related to substance use require a therapeutic response focused on safety, assessment, and connection to appropriate services.

- **Behaviour Can Be Taught and Changed:** When viewed as a skill-deficit, challenging behaviours highlight areas where students need support to develop lagging skills (e.g., emotional regulation, coping skills, problem-solving, communication). Our focus is on teaching and reinforcing positive behaviours and providing students with the tools they need to manage their emotions and navigate social situations effectively.
- **Individual, Environmental, and Situational Factors Matter:** Behaviour is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including identified disabilities, specific learning needs, home environment, safety concerns, mental health difficulties, and disengagement from learning. A comprehensive understanding of these factors is essential for planning appropriate and individualised support.

By adopting this perspective, staff are encouraged to look beyond the surface of challenging behaviours and seek to understand the underlying causes and unmet needs, particularly in the context of potential trauma or addiction.

6. The Role of the School: Fostering a Therapeutic Environment

Schools must be a place that provides a safe school environment conducive to a positive learning environment for both students and staff. Creating a therapeutic school environment is fundamental to supporting students who have experienced trauma or are struggling with addiction.

Schools are expected to implement strategies to build a positive school culture that fosters caring and respectful relationships between students and adults working and volunteering in the school. Such strategies should aim to create a safe, predictable, and supportive teaching and learning community that promotes student wellbeing, values diversity, and is recovery-oriented, where seeking help is destigmatised and supported.

There are various roles within a school community that contribute to a positive school culture, with the management of student behaviour being a part of the bigger picture of student wellbeing.

Staff at the school should:

- Be fully aware of all details of the school's Behaviour Management Policy, including its therapeutic, trauma-informed, and addiction-aware principles.
- Understand the roles and responsibilities of staff in implementing the Behaviour Management Policy with empathy, compassion, and a focus on understanding underlying needs.
- Follow the school's process, procedure and protocol when managing behaviour, prioritising de-escalation and therapeutic interventions.
- Understand current research and practices in student management, particularly in students with backgrounds of trauma, substance use, ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), and other known neurodevelopmental disorders.
- Collaborate with other staff, including well-being support teams, for additional strategies and support, particularly for students with complex needs.
- Collaborate with parents and caregivers to ensure there is clear communication and a consistent, supportive approach between home and school.
- Provide a positive classroom environment that builds respectful relationships, promotes psychological safety, and is predictable and structured.

- Actively engage in the teaching of behavioural expectations and essential social-emotional skills.
- Be mindful of their own well-being and engage in self-care practices to manage secondary trauma.

Parents and elders in the school community should:

- Be aware of the school's Student Code of Conduct and the school's therapeutic approach to behaviour management, understanding their role in supporting this approach.
- Have access to the Code and this policy.
- Be part of building a positive school culture that fosters caring and respectful relationships.
- Provide relevant information to the school if circumstances change for their child, particularly concerning experiences of trauma or potential substance use issues, knowing this information will be used to inform supportive interventions.
- Collaborate with staff to ensure that their child can be provided with the best support needed, working together to implement consistent strategies.

Students in the school community should:

- Understand the standards and expectations of their conduct and behaviour as stated in the school's Student Code of Conduct, presented in a clear and age-appropriate manner.
- Be aware of the procedure if these standards and expectations are not met, understanding that the focus will be on support and skill-building rather than solely on punishment.
- Build positive relationships with peers and staff that reflects respect and assists in building a positive school culture.
- Feel safe and supported to seek help from staff or other trusted adults if they are struggling with difficult emotions, experiences of trauma, or substance use.

7. Essential Elements to Ensure Positive Management of Student Behaviour

The school is responsible for ensuring that effective policies and processes are put in place to support positive student behaviour in line with the school's ethos and values.

To successfully achieve this, the school includes the following elements, grounded in a therapeutic, trauma-informed, and addiction-aware approach:

- A whole school approach is critical to success, with all staff understanding and implementing the principles of this policy consistently.
- Comprehensive and regular professional learning for all staff on trauma-informed practices, understanding addiction, de-escalation techniques, and social-emotional learning.
- Staff are proactive in nature, focusing on building positive relationships, teaching expected behaviours, and creating a safe environment to prevent challenging behaviours from escalating.
- Students develop respectful and positive relationships with peers and staff, built on trust, empathy, and understanding.
- Encourage students to be reflective in their behaviour and wellbeing, helping them to understand the impact of their actions and develop self-awareness.

- Focus on early intervention by identifying students who may be at risk due to trauma, mental health challenges, or substance use and providing timely support.
- Implement strategies for recognising indicators and triggers that may result in challenging behaviours and developing proactive support plans.
- Develop clear procedures for the therapeutic management of ongoing or serious challenging behaviours, which may include a collaboratively developed and individualised support plan that addresses underlying needs and builds skills. This plan should involve relevant staff, parents/caregivers, and potentially external professionals.
- Aims to meet a student's needs and find alternative appropriate methods to have those needs met, rather than just suppressing the behaviour.
- Record keeping is essential to monitor progress of behaviour interventions and in assessing the effectiveness of positive management of student behaviour, focusing on observations related to underlying needs and the impact of support strategies.
- Implement universal screening for mental health and substance use where appropriate and connect students to relevant support services.
- Establish clear referral pathways to school-based and external mental health, trauma, and addiction support services.

Students need:

- Opportunities to develop appropriate behaviours, self-control, and resiliency through interactions with teachers and other staff and through the curriculum, particularly through explicit teaching of social-emotional skills.
- To be reinforced consistently in a manner which enhances their understanding of responsible social behaviour and motivates them to use newly acquired skills.

Principles that guide in the management of all student behaviour:

- Make the best interests of the child a primary consideration, focusing on their safety, well-being, and long-term development.
- Consider the safety and wellbeing of all school staff and all other members of the school community, implementing strategies that ensure a safe environment for everyone.
- Maintain cohesion of behaviour support for students across contexts and teachers, ensuring consistency in the therapeutic approach.
- Incorporate personalised adjustments based on student need, recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective, especially for students with complex needs.
- Build consistency in behaviour support in and out of school, through liaison with parent(s) and community services.
- Use the least restrictive alternative that will prevent or de-escalate student conduct or emotional states that risk harm to self or others, avoiding punitive and exclusionary measures wherever possible.
- Support the growth of self-regulation and peer-regulation and reduce the need for adult intervention by teaching students the skills to manage their own emotions and interactions.
- Employ strategies that are culturally, developmentally and psychologically appropriate, taking into account the student's background, age, and individual needs.
- Prioritise the "connect, then redirect" approach, focusing on establishing a connection with the student and de-escalating their emotional state before addressing the behaviour and providing guidance.

- Emphasise restorative practices to repair harm and rebuild relationships when challenging behaviours occur.

8. Behaviour Support Resources for Schools

The school will utilise a range of internal and external resources to support the implementation of this policy and to provide appropriate support to students and staff. This includes leveraging the expertise of internal staff and collaborating with external professionals and organisations specialising in trauma-informed care, mental health, and addiction.

More information on the following resources is available through AISWA and other relevant organisations:

- Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Framework implementation.
- Whole school interventions and behaviour policy/code of conduct development, aligning with trauma-informed and therapeutic principles.
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum implementation (e.g., PATHS Curriculum, Aussie Optimism, RULER).
- Team Teach - training in positive handling strategies (including physical restraint as a last resort, only when necessary to ensure safety) for responding to and managing challenging behaviours in a trauma-informed manner.
- PART – Predict, Assess, Respond to Challenging/Aggressive Behaviour, with an emphasis on understanding underlying causes and de-escalation.
- Professional Learning -AISWA and other providers offering training in trauma-informed practice, adolescent development, mental health, and addiction.
- Access to school counsellors, psychologists, and well-being support staff with expertise in trauma and mental health.
- Collaboration with external community mental health services, child protection agencies, and addiction support services.
- Utilisation of resources and guidelines from organisations such as the Australian Child and Adolescent Trauma, Loss and Grief Network (ACATLGN) and the National Centre for Excellence in Youth Substance Use.

The AISWA Inclusive Education Consultants can be contacted at ie@ais.wa.edu.au. and the AISWA Schools Psychology Service (ASPS) team can be contacted at asps@ais.wa.edu.au.

9. Definitions

This policy uses the following definitions, consistent with a trauma-informed and addiction-aware approach:

Addiction: A chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterised by compulsively seeking the substance of behaviour and use, despite harmful consequences. For the purpose of this policy, it is viewed as a health issue requiring support and intervention.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). Examples include experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home; and having a family member attempt or die by suicide. Also included are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with substance misuse, mental health problems, or parental separation/incarceration.

Bullying and harassment: Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online. SSA recognises that students who have experienced trauma may be more vulnerable to being bullied or may exhibit bullying behaviours as a result of their experiences. Interventions will be trauma-informed and address underlying causes.

10. Related Resources

- [Creating Child Safe Institutions](#) (Royal Commission)
- [Child Safe Organisations: National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) (Australian Human Rights Commission)
- [Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines](#) (WA Commissioner for Children and Young People)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub - Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#) (Australian Government)
- [Bullying No Way](#) (Australian Government)