# Barnstaple Relational (Behaviour) Policy

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| **Approved by:** | Penny Harris (Director)<br>Jane Cox (Director) | **Date:** 1st September 2026 |
| **Last reviewed on:** | 1st July 2026 | |
| **Next review due by:** | 1st September 2027 | |

All policies are generated and reviewed with an awareness of equality and diversity in relation to students, staff and visitors. All policies are generated and reviewed placing safeguarding and wellbeing at the heart of all that we do.

1. **Aims**

- To ensure On Track staff recognise that behaviour is a form of communication and/or unmet need
- To develop relationships with secure attachments to positively support students socially, emotionally and academically
- To be responsive to students' additional needs using their EHCPs, relational support plan, Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, and a trauma informed approach
- To understand On Track's ethos, Mantra and school systems to support student's needs whilst giving clear and consistent boundaries

2. **Legislation and Statutory Requirements**

This policy is based on:

- The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, 2014 (DfE)
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations, 2014
- The Equality Act, 2010
- Supporting students with Medical Conditions at School, 2014 (DfE)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation, Advice for Schools, 2022 (DfE)
- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools, 2016 (DfE)
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, 2021 (DfE)

## 3. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Incident and Information Reporting Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Suspension Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Staff Development Policy
- Staff Recruitment Policy

## 4. Principles

- Our relational behaviour policy will recognise attachment theory, PACE, a trauma informed approach and the Thrive approach.
- Provide students with a sense of success and positive achievement and improvement which will support them in feeling more able to make positive choices and confidently manage their own behaviour
- Meet the emotional and educational needs of students
- Raise the self-esteem and confidence of students




**5. Roles and Responsibilities**

The Directors:

- Responsible for monitoring this behaviour policy's effectiveness and holding the Head Teachers to account for its implementation.

Head Teacher:

- Responsible for reviewing and approving this behaviour policy. The Head Teacher will ensure that the school environment encourages positive behaviour, that staff deal effectively with unwanted behaviour in the best interests of the student, and monitor how staff implement this policy.

All school staff are responsible for:

- Building and maintaining positive professional relationships with all students
- Modelling calm and professional behaviour at all times
- Treating students with tolerance and respect
- Managing students in relation to their individual differences and relational support plans
- Referring to the On Track Mantra
- Recording all behaviours and reporting on our MIS
- Informing SLT of escalating behaviours that pose a risk to others
- Editing the behaviour support plans accordingly

All school staff follow a comprehensive induction programme to ensure they have read, understand and will implement all relevant school policies including this policy, the Staff Code of Conduct and those relating to Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Key teams are responsible for:

- Supporting students to regularly reflect on their behaviour
- Liaising with home when necessary
- Monitoring behaviour concerns and requesting a TAC meeting if appropriate
- Completing chronologies
- Praising students for going over and above and complete success forms
- Ensuring that lessons are prepared and engaging to limit unwanted behaviour from students

Senior Leadership are responsible for:

- Being a visible presence around the school
- Holding teachers to account for following the behaviour policy
- Regularly sharing good practice
- Using data to target and assess where behaviour changes need to take place
- Regularly reviewing provision for learners who are regularly flagged with behaviour concerns
- Supporting staff to ensure consistent practice across the school

**6. Individual Behaviour Support Planning**

Each student has a Behavioural Risk Assessment which is started before they start at the school and includes information from previous school/s and professionals. This individual behavioural risk assessment is edited over time to include any new findings and observations.

The Behavioural Risk Assessment directly informs the Relational Support Plan which includes:

- The student's positive characteristics, strengths and interests
- The student's specific behaviours that are planned for
- Triggers that are known to bring about behaviours
- Warning clues
- Early interventions
- Active interventions
- Specific planning issues
- Interventions which should be avoided
- How students can help themselves to reduce difficulty/risk

- How success will be measured
- Key staff to be involved
- Further staff training required

This plan, and the proactive and reactive strategies are reviewed regularly in light of incidents of unwanted behaviour and successes. Staff apply a level of flexibility in accordance with the needs of the student and their own dynamic with the student on any given day. Staff recognise that a reduction in the frequency or intensity of unwanted behaviour is an improvement and indicates progress for an individual student.

**7. Positive Relational Management Strategies**

Meeting the need of the students

We know that students learn best when their basic needs are met. To support this, we provide breakfast and lunch for all students. We also create a safe and supportive environment where students feel valued and part of the On Track community. Through positive relationships with key staff, students receive the support they need to feel secure, develop confidence, and be ready to learn. This approach reflects Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), which highlights the importance of meeting both physical and emotional needs before effective learning can take place. Appendix 3

To support students who are finding it difficult to engage with the On Track Mantra, we offer an off-site programme (Offsite Plus) designed to help them build positive relationships with staff. The programme runs for three weeks and focuses on developing trust, improving interactions, and increasing students' readiness to learn when they return to the main site.

THRIVE and Zones of Regulation

The Thrive Approach: This approach draws on insights in attachment theory, child development and neuroscience to provide a way of working with children and young people that supports optimal social and emotional development and helps them re-engage with life and learning. We base our emotional development planning and delivery on the Thrive Programme. Each student completes a Thrive assessment each term which provides targets for emotional development. This feeds into the Thrive Programme planning, lesson delivery and intervention work for each student.

The Zones of Regulation Framework: This approach is a systematic, cognitive-behavioural approach used to teach us how to regulate our feelings, energy and sensory needs in order to meet the demands of situations around us and to be socially successful.

Trauma informed approach

We understand that children need emotional connection with adults and peers where they feel safe, cared for and known. Traumatised children can often end up behaving in ways that are familiar to them, where their subconscious is replicating the early and frightening relational experiences they had. (Betsy de Thiery, 2017)

Key staff will be aware of any Adverse Childhood Experiences their students may have had and will implement protective factors.




Regulation

To help our students to regulate we use the Thrive approach VRF's (Vital Relational Functions) as follows:

**Attune - Match the child's energy using your body, face and voice. E.g. "**Oh wow! I can see your face is red and your fists are clenched."

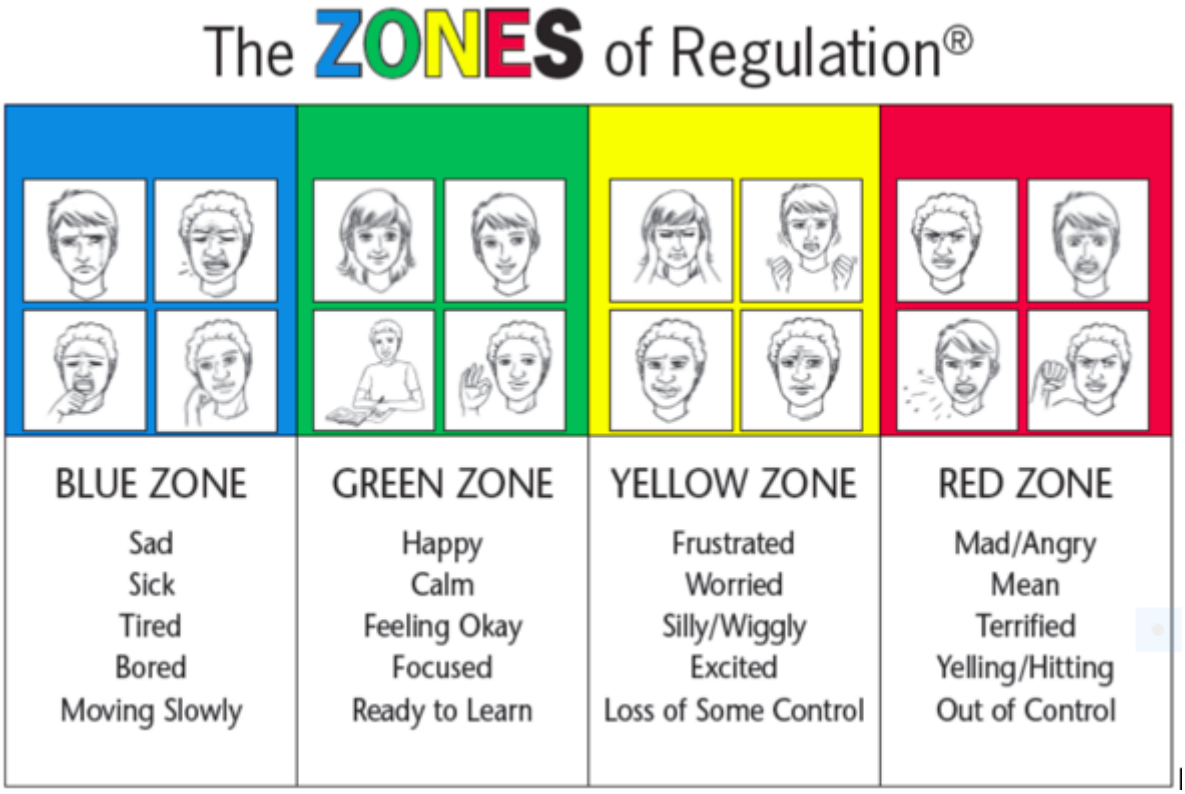
**Validate - Let the child know it's OK to have the feeling. E.g.** "I'm wondering if/ imagining that/ noticing that you might be feeling sad/ cross/ frightened/ excited. If that had happened to me, I would feel that way too"

**Contain - be alongside as a helpful, supportive adult**. **E.g.** "I can see this is tricky for you and I will keep you safe." Break things down into manageable chunks. E.g., "First, we will….."

**Regulate - Soothe or stimulate the child back to social engagement**. **E.g.** "Let's breathe together until you feel calmer."

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel"*

*(Maya Angelou, 2015)*




We encourage our staff to adopt the PACE approach and monitor through the Zones of Regulation. PACE stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. This approach was developed by Dan Hughes more than 20 years ago as a central part of attachment-focused family therapy. The aim is to help support adults in building safe, trusting and meaningful relationships with children and young people who have experienced trauma. Play is a crucial part of relationship building as repeated positive play experiences help to build connections in the brain. (See Appendix 1)

Use of sensory breaks

If a student needs time to calm down, they may choose to remain in the building in a safe space under staff supervision. If a student would benefit from time away from a situation or from the school environment, a member of staff may accompany them to a safe location outside the building to provide space and a change of scenery. Some students may also be offered a short, supervised walk of up to ten minutes to help them regulate. This will only take place with parental consent and following an appropriate risk assessment.

Parental / carer support and contact

We aim to work in partnership with families to help students develop self-regulation skills and make safe, positive choices. The Head Teacher and school staff maintain regular communication with parents and carers, ensuring they are fully informed and involved in their child's education. We also offer family Thrive interventions and provide support through our Parent Liaison Officer, who works closely with families to promote positive outcomes for students.

Multi-agency support and contact

The school works with a range of outside agencies to support students whose behaviour may be affected by additional needs or circumstances. If a student's behaviour changes significantly, or if concerns increase, the school may arrange a multi-agency meeting. This meeting will bring together everyone involved in supporting the student to discuss concerns, share information, and agree the best way forward. Where appropriate, an Early Help Assessment may also be considered to help coordinate support for the student and their family.

**8. Overcoming Barriers**

Smoking, vaping and mobile phones

Students are expected to ensure their phones are turned off and kept locked away for the entire school day from 9:15am to 2:30pm. Where appropriate students will be asked to be searched if a mobile phone is suspected to be on their person.

- **Locker System:** Lockers are available on site for students to securely store their mobile phones and personal belongings. Locker keys will be kept in secure lock boxes on site. This system is already in place and is currently used by some students.
- Lockable pouches will also be available for students who prefer to keep their phones with them. **All student mobile phones must be secured in either a locker or a lockable pouch. These are the only permitted storage options.**
- Breaks and lunchtimes: Mobile phones are only permitted for use during break times or lunchtimes by 6th form students offsite and must be locked away after each offsite break.

- Emergency contact: If a student needs to contact home, they should do so through the school office.

Similarly, if a parent/carer needs to reach their child in an emergency, please call the main reception on 01271 372269. All school staff have access to school phones while offsite. Although they will be kept out of sight, they are available for safety purposes.search

What happens if the policy is broken?

Should a student be found to be using a mobile phone, staff will ask the student to lock their phone in a locker.

- 1st Occurrence: On the following day the student will attend an offsite "re-set day" with a member of staff. They will complete their school work and take part in structured support focused on understanding behaviour choices and developing strategies to manage without their mobile phone.

- Subsequent consecutive occurrences: Rather than a fixed term suspension, students will be provided with learning through Google Classroom for one day. This allows the student to continue their education while reinforcing the expectations of the policy. During this time, parental support will be essential. If engagement with Google Classroom is not supported, parents/carers will be required to attend a formal meeting with the school before the student is able to return.

Absconding

If a student absconds from the school, or from a staff member while offsite, the student will be followed at a reasonable distance so as not to provoke the student to run (putting themselves in a less safe situation) but that enables the staff member to retain sight of the student at all times. If the student is out of sight for more than ten minutes the staff member will contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team at school. If the staff member does not have sight of the student for ten minutes, the student's home will also be contacted to make the parents/carers aware and the pupil will be reported as missing to the police unless alternative arrangements are indicated within the pupil's own behaviour support plan. Parents/carers will be asked to make contact with the student if possible, and to phone school back.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Our school is committed to creating a safe, inclusive environment where all students feel respected, valued, and supported. Bullying in any form is not tolerated. Students involved in three incidents of child-on-child bullying within the same week will take part in a one-day off-site intervention focused on helping them understand the impact of their behaviour and develop more positive ways of interacting with others. If a student requires a second anti-bullying intervention within the same half-term, they will attend a further day off-site. Their parents or carers will also be invited into school for a formal meeting to discuss the concerns and agree a plan to support positive behaviour moving forward. This approach promotes accountability, education, and partnership with families to address bullying effectively and foster a culture of kindness and respect.

**9. Post Incident Support**

We recognise that, following a behavioural incident, students and staff may need time and space to feel calm and ready to reflect. An appropriate member of staff, or the Head Teacher, will discuss the incident with the student once they have regulated sufficiently, ensuring that the conversation does not lead to a re-escalation. We also recognise that other students may witness incidents that they find upsetting. Where needed, these students will be offered appropriate support. As part of the post-incident process, the student's views will be listened to and considered to help inform understanding, decision-making, and future support.




**10. Behaviour Tracking**

Each student's behavioural progress is monitored to help us understand current patterns of behaviour, evaluate the impact of interventions, and identify areas of improvement. This information also supports staff in developing effective and consistent approaches to meeting individual needs. The school uses robust systems to record, track, and monitor behaviour through student chronologies and the school Management Information System (MIS). This information helps staff celebrate progress and make informed decisions, including the selection of the weekly "Student of the Week" award.

All students have the opportunity to take part in a relational day with key staff on three occasions throughout the year, providing dedicated time to build positive relationships, reflect on progress, and celebrate achievements.

**11. Finding the Positives**

This school prioritises rewarding positive behaviour as opposed to sanctioning unwanted behaviour. Consequences for unwanted or inappropriate behaviour will be personalised for each student but may include:

- Restorative action
- Tutor meeting
- Meeting with the Head Teacher
- Invoices for damage to property
- Temporary change to timetable/ offsite plus
- Phone call or meeting with parents/carers and other professionals
- Exclusion (see separate school policy)

Where appropriate our school staff will make sparing use of verbal reprimands using a non-aggressive and advisory tone, addressing the behaviour and not the person. Our staff will use private, rather than public reprimands whenever possible.

**12. Restrictive Physical Intervention**

School staff are all trained in safety intervention ensuring that we operate within the principles of Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) and according to DfE guidance.

In extreme circumstances, and where there is no other choice, restrictive physical interventions may be used by trained staff members, as follows:

- Restrictive physical intervention should be an absolute last resort
- Restrictive physical intervention will only be used when necessary and to keep people safe
- The least restrictive form of physical intervention will always be used and used for the shortest time possible for staff to gain control of the situation and eliminate the immediate risk of injury.
- All incidents involving restrictive physical intervention will be recorded and logged
- Post-incident support will be offered to the student and staff members involved in restrictive physical interventions
- Parents/carers will always be informed when a restrictive physical intervention has taken place
- Where relevant, social workers, Youth Offending Team or other involved professionals will be informed
- Each student's Relational Support Plan should be reviewed and updated if necessary following the use of restrictive intervention
- Under no circumstances should a student be struck or handled. Corporal punishment is illegal in all circumstances.

## 13. Searches

Safeguarding and the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in relation to searching a student. There must be a balance between:

- The need to safeguard all students by confiscating harmful, illegal, or unwanted items, and
- The safeguarding needs and wellbeing of students suspected of possessing these items

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) sets out the statutory duty of all staff to make sure that they make decisions in the best interests of the child. This applies to decisions to search students and confiscate items. There should be vigilance about possible biases affecting the decision to search a student and consideration that all students have a right to expect a reasonable level of personal privacy, under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Any 'interference' with this right by our school must be justified and proportionate.

A student will only be searched if there is a good reason to, considering that it could infringe upon their wellbeing and rights in several different ways. For example:

- Loss of privacy when clothes, bags or possessions are searched
- Loss of a sense of security, if they feel they are being monitored and searched without reason
- Impact on a student's dignity or reputation if they are searched or suspected of possessing prohibited items

Confiscation of items should be treated as a safeguarding issue. Children in possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons should be considered vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. Paragraph 20 of KCSIE highlights the need to be alert to the potential risks of children who are:

- Showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour
- In challenging family circumstances, such as drug and alcohol misuse
- Misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- Children in possession of drugs, alcohol or weapons should be considered vulnerable

A search can play a vital role in identifying students who may benefit from Early Help or a referral to the local authority children's social care services. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) should make an immediate referral if they find evidence that a child is at risk of harm.

<u>Who can carry out a search and when</u>

Only the Head Teacher, and members of staff authorised by the Head Teacher, have the power to search a student for a prohibited or banned item. They can do this if:

- The student agrees to the search, or
- The authorised staff member has 'reasonable grounds' to suspect that the student may have a prohibited or banned item (see the next section for definitions of these)

Under law:

- The person carrying out the search must be the same sex as the student being searched
- There must be another member of staff present as a witness to the search

The only exception to this is if:

- The searcher reasonably believes that there is a risk of serious harm being caused to a person if a search isn't carried out urgently, and
- It is not reasonably practical to summon another member of staff (to carry out the search or act as a witness) within the time available

When an authorised staff member conducts a search without a witness, they should immediately report it to another member of staff, and make sure that a record is kept.

The member of staff witnessing the search must also be the same sex as the student being searched if this is reasonably practicable (paragraph 6(d) of section 550ZB of the Education Act 1996).

What you can search for

SLT and authorised staff members can search a student for:

- Any items with the student's informed consent
- Prohibited or banned items, with or without the student's consent

Prohibited items are:

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco and cigarette papers
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images

Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to:

- Commit an offence
- Cause personal injury (including the student) or damage to property

How to carry out a search

The SLT or authorised staff member should:

- Make an assessment of how urgent the search is, and consider the risk to other students and staff
- Explain to the student why they are being searched, how and where the search will happen, and give them the opportunity to ask questions about it
- Always seek the student's cooperation

If a student refuses to cooperate, the authorised member of staff should first consider why this is, and act proportionally. It may be that the student:

- Is in possession of a prohibited or banned item
- Doesn't understand your instructions or what a search will involve
- Has had a previous distressing experience of being searched

If the student still refuses to cooperate, and there is no evidence that a search is needed urgently, the student should be supervised somewhere away from other students. The Head Teacher should assess whether it's necessary to use reasonable force to conduct the search. This should only be considered if this would prevent the student from harming themselves or others.

The student should only be searched in an appropriate location that offers privacy from other students.

Authorised staff can search a student's pockets and require students to remove outer clothing, meaning clothes that are not worn directly next to the skin or over underwear. Outer clothing also includes:

- Hats
- Scarves
- Shoes or boots

Students cannot be asked to take off any further items of clothing.

Authorised staff can search bags in the presence of the student and another member of staff (except in cases where there's a risk of harm and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff (see section above on who can conduct a search for more detail). A metal detector may be used in a search.

School staff are not allowed to carry out strip searches, including the Head Teacher and authorised staff. Only police who have been asked to come to the school may decide whether this type of search is necessary and carry it out. The police can only carry out a search if they:

- Think this is necessary to remove an item related to a criminal offence, and
- Reasonably consider the student might have concealed such an item

The police should be called into school as a last resort and the best interest of the child should be considered first.

Before the police are called:

- Ensure all other approaches have been exhausted
- Carefully weigh up the risks to the student's mental and physical wellbeing with the need to conduct a search

Where reasonably possible, parents should be informed that a strip search will happen (and should always be informed after it has been carried out)

There must be an 'appropriate adult' present during the police search. This is a person whose role is to safeguard the rights and welfare of children who are suspected of a criminal offence, by ensuring they are treated fairly and are able to participate effectively.

The police officers conducting a strip search must be the same sex as the student. There must be at least two people present other than the student, including the 'appropriate adult'. The search may only take place without an appropriate adult if:

- It is an urgent case where there is risk of serious harm to the student or others, or

- The student explicitly states that they don't want an appropriate adult present for the search, and the appropriate adult agrees and signs a record of the student's decision

The appropriate adult should be the same sex as the student, unless they specifically request someone else. The role of the appropriate adult is to advocate for students' wellbeing at all times. A strip search can be highly distressing for the student, and for staff and other students affected.

The police cannot overrule this safeguarding duty, for example by requesting that the appropriate adult leave the room when they talk to the student.

Always put safeguarding at the centre when supporting the student, regardless of whether a prohibited item is found. The student should have an opportunity to express their views regarding the search.

If a prohibited item is found:

- Consider it a safeguarding matter as well as a police matter
- Involve relevant staff and treat the student as potentially vulnerable

If a prohibited item is not found:

- Take a safeguarding approach to supporting the student to cope with the experience of being searched
- Consider the wider issues that may have informed the decision to request a search in the first place

<u>How to record searches</u>

A record should be made on the school's MIS of:

- Any searches for prohibited items
- Any search conducted by police officers
- Record these whether or not any items were found.

The Head Teacher should look for any trends in the searches carried out and identify any possible risks that may require a safeguarding response.

<u>What you can confiscate</u>

Authorised staff members can confiscate any item they find that they have reasonable grounds for suspecting:

- Poses a risk to staff or students
- Is a prohibited or banned item
- Is evidence in relation to an offence

Authorised staff members will need to do different things with confiscated items, depending on what they are:

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| Controlled drugs, or substances you suspect are controlled drugs or could be harmful | Deliver to the police (or safely dispose of if there is a good reason to do so) |
| Alcohol | Retain or dispose of as appropriate |
| Tobacco or cigarette papers | Retain or dispose of as appropriate |

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| Fireworks | Retain or dispose of as appropriate |
| Stolen items | Deliver to the police, or return to the owner or dispose of (see the advice on page 18 of the DfE guidance) |
| Weapons or items which are evidence of a suspected offence | Deliver to the police as soon as possible |
| Items that have been (or are likely to be) used to commit an offence or cause injury or property damage | Deliver to the police return to the owner, retain or dispose of (see the advice on pages 18 and 19 of the DfE guidance) |
| Pornographic material | Dispose of (see the section below for guidance) |
| Pornographic material that you suspect constitutes a specific offence (i.e. it is extreme or an indecent image of a child) | Deliver to the police as soon as possible |

Searching and confiscating electronic devices

Authorised staff members may examine any data or files on an electronic device they have confiscated if they have good reason to do so, or grounds for reasonable suspicion that the device has (or could be used to):

- Cause harm
- Undermine the safe environment of the school or disrupt teaching
- Commit an offence

If inappropriate images, video, or other material, are discovered, they may be disposed of (see page 20 of the DfE's guidance for advice).

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that their possession is related to a specific illegal offense, the material must not be destroyed. Instead, the material, or device containing the material, should be handed over to the police as soon as possible.

If there is a suspicion that an indecent image or video of a child is on a device, avoid viewing it and never copy, share, or save it. The DfE's guidance on responding to pornographic image-sharing in education settings should be followed.

## 14. Review

In order to ensure that this policy is relevant, if you have any suggestions for additions or amendments please email directors@ontrackeducation.com

**Appendix 1: Dan Hughes' PACE Approach**

PACE refers to Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy.

**Playfulness** involves spontaneity, openness and exploration; have fun and share enjoyment with the student. Using playfulness can defuse tense situations and is useful in managing minor behaviours, as the student is less likely to respond with anger or defensiveness.

**Acceptance** involves unconditional positive regard for the student. Accept the student's inner experience without judgement and make sense of why the student is behaving in a certain way. Acceptance does not mean accepting negative behaviours, but accepting the reasons behind the behaviour. When necessary, criticise the behaviour, but not the student.

**Curiosity** involves wondering about the reasons behind the behaviours, rather than being angry. This shows the student that you care and helps them make sense of their behaviour, feelings and experiences. Use phrases like, "I wonder if you are feeling like this because…" to open up discussions with the student.

**Empathy** involves showing the student that you understand how difficult they are finding things and reassuring them that you want to help them manage this. Validate the student's emotional experience with phrases such as, "I know how difficult that must have been for you," and work together to find ways to support them.

For more information about the PACE approach, please refer to literature by Dan Hughes.

**Real example of PACE in action:**

A student is in a heightened state of anxiety, attempting to climb a fence and not following instructions to come down.

**Application of PACE:**

**Playfulness** – Use playful language to de-escalate the situation: "Goodness me, I really would rather you came down. The problem is that if you fall, I will have to fill out a lot of forms, and I'm a bit like you – I don't really like writing."

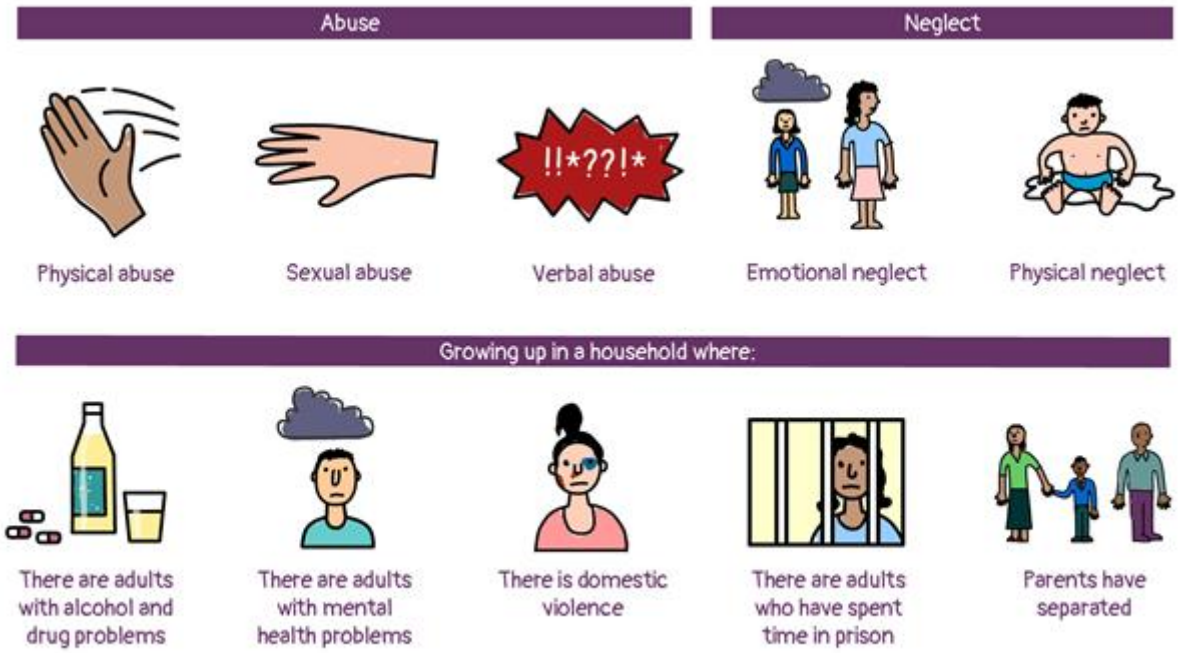
**Acceptance** – Recognise that the student is experiencing extreme anxiety as a result of a fallout with a friend and that this is a real experience for them. Communicate that you accept how they feel (e.g. "I can see that this has made you feel really upset"). Avoid saying things like, "Oh, it doesn't matter. Don't be upset about a silly fallout."

**Curiosity** – Enquire and check what the young person's emotional experience is: "I wonder if you're feeling angry because of what X just said?"

**Empathy** – Show that you understand how difficult they are finding things: "I understand that this must be really difficult for you. I know that when I am feeling upset, I just want to run away from everything."

Using PACE and a calm approach, the student's anxiety decreased and they came down from the fence. They went with an adult to the sensory room. Instead of imposing consequences, once the student was calm, a discussion was held about the dangers of climbing the fence. The student was able to reflect on their behaviour and think of alternative things they could do next time (e.g. go to the sensory room).

**Appendix 2: ACEs**




**Appendix 3: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)**

