Overley Hall School

OVERLEY HALL SCHOOL

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT POLICY

Approved by:	SAS Board, Headteacher
Date reviewed	**04.09.2026**
Next review date	**03.09.2027**

Behaviour Support Policy

1.0 Rationale

1.1 Overley Hall School supports children and young people with a wide range of complex and interconnected needs, including autism, learning disabilities, attachment-related needs, communication differences and sensory processing differences. Many pupils require highly individualised support and may experience elevated levels of anxiety when faced with unfamiliar situations, environmental demands or barriers to communication.

1.2 Differences in communication, emotional regulation, sensory processing and social understanding can impact how pupils experience and respond to the world around them. At times, feelings of anxiety, frustration or distress may be expressed through behaviours that communicate an unmet need, a difficulty in coping, or a need for additional support, understanding and reassurance. Our approach seeks to understand the underlying reasons for these behaviours and provide proactive, therapeutic support that promotes wellbeing, regulation and positive outcomes.

1.3 The school recognises that behaviour is a form of communication and is often an expression of an unmet need, emotional difficulty or attempt to cope with overwhelming experiences. Understanding the function of behaviour enables staff to respond in ways that reduce anxiety, build trust and promote positive outcomes. A consistent, relational and therapeutic approach is therefore essential to ensure that pupils feel safe, understood, respected and supported.

1.4 Our children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. They are treated with dignity and respect at all times, and the development of positive behaviour and self-regulation is a key focus for all pupils. This is achieved through collaborative working with parents, carers and other professionals, alongside a shared commitment to understanding each pupil’s individual needs and strengths. Staff work within the relevant legal framework and fully understand their duty of care.

1.5 The development of positive relationships is integral to supporting each child and young person. Through trusting relationships, pupils are more able to accept support, engage in meaningful experiences and participate positively in all aspects of life at Overley Hall, enabling them to achieve their full potential.

1.6 This Behaviour Policy is set within the context of Overley Hall's Mission Statement, aims and values, and should be read alongside the Special Educational Needs Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and other relevant school policies. Where behaviour involves child-on-child abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, online abuse, misogyny-related behaviour, discriminatory behaviour or any other safeguarding concern, staff must follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and immediately refer concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Such incidents must not be treated solely as behaviour matters.

1.7 Overley Hall is committed to providing a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes the emotional wellbeing and mental health of all pupils.

2.0 Aims

2.1 The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote a positive, inclusive, nurturing and safe environment for all pupils and staff, underpinned by high expectations of behaviour.
- Create an ethos of mutual respect in which all children, young people and staff feel valued, respected and supported.
- Promote the rights, dignity, individuality and wellbeing of every pupil.
- Support pupils to develop emotional regulation, communication skills, social understanding and positive behaviour.
- Recognise and assess factors that may contribute to anxiety, distress or behaviours that challenge, including individual triggers and unmet needs.
- Reduce anxiety and behaviours that challenge through proactive, therapeutic, relational and nurturing approaches.

- Support children and young people to understand their behaviour and, where appropriate, recognise its impact on themselves and others.
- Encourage and develop pupils' ability to self-regulate and make positive behavioural choices.
- Ensure unconditional positive regard for all pupils, accepting their individual presentations and responding with empathy, compassion and a non-confrontational approach.
- Provide consistent, fair and proportionate behaviour support that is understood and applied across the school.
- Promote and support pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Work collaboratively with families, carers, therapists, key workers and other professionals to meet each pupil's individual needs through a solution-focused and planned approach.
- Ensure all responses to behaviour are lawful, safeguard pupil welfare and reflect the school's duty of care.
- Provide clear guidance, positive strategies and individualised support plans that enable pupils to engage successfully in school life and achieve their full potential.

3.0 Legislation & Statutory Requirements

This policy is written in line with current legislation, statutory guidance and recognised best practice, including:

1. Behaviour in Schools (DfE 2024)
2. Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance (DfE July 2026)*
3. Searching, Screening and Confiscation (DfE 2022)
4. Use of Reasonable Force in Schools (DfE)
5. Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention (DfE)
6. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)
7. Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026)
8. Equality Act 2010
9. SEND Code of Practice (2015)

10. Human Rights Act 1998
11. Mental Capacity Act 2005 (where applicable for post-16 learners)
12. Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR
13. RSHE Statutory Guidance
14. Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

As an independent special school, Overley Hall School is not directly subject to the statutory Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance. However, the school voluntarily adopts the principles and expectations of the DfE Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance (July 2026) as best practice when considering removal, placement review, suspension-equivalent measures, or decisions that may impact a pupil's access to education. Decisions will always take account of duties under the Equality Act 2010, SEND legislation and safeguarding requirements.

4.0 Behaviour Principles and Practice

Overley Hall School adopts a relational, therapeutic and needs-led approach to behaviour. Behaviour is understood as a form of communication, often reflecting unmet need, anxiety, sensory differences, difficulties with emotional regulation or challenges in understanding and responding to the world around them. While punitive approaches are not necessarily intended to shame individuals, they can, in some circumstances, result in feelings of shame, embarrassment or reduced self-worth. This is particularly important to consider for children and young people with additional needs, where such approaches may inadvertently impact emotional wellbeing, relationships and engagement. For this reason, supportive, restorative and relational approaches are often more effective in promoting understanding, accountability and positive long-term outcomes.

The school recognises that some behaviours may indicate underlying safeguarding concerns rather than solely unmet need. Where behaviour may be linked to abuse, neglect, child-on-child abuse, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, criminal exploitation, online harms, radicalisation or other safeguarding risks, staff must follow safeguarding procedures and seek guidance from the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

Staff adopt a PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) approach, originally developed as part of Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), to develop safe, trusting and supportive relationships with pupils. Through PACE, staff seek to understand the meaning behind behaviour, respond with empathy and curiosity, and create opportunities for mutual-regulation, connection and emotional growth. This relational approach helps pupils feel understood, valued and supported, particularly during times of distress or dysregulation.

To promote positive behaviour and wellbeing, the school will:

- Provide positive activities and learning opportunities that are tailored to each pupil's individual needs, strengths, interests, aspirations and developmental stage.
- Plan meaningful educational and care-based experiences that develop life skills, independence and future opportunities.
- Ensure that any medical, physical or emotional factors that may contribute to behaviour are identified and appropriately addressed.
- Use individualised strategies informed by pupils' preferences, therapeutic needs, specialist recommendations, learning styles and personal views.
- Maintain accurate pupil profiles that identify what helps each pupil feel calm and successful, including preferred activities, motivators, dislikes and known triggers.
- Promote consistency through clear routines, predictable structures and shared approaches across education, care and therapy teams.
- Use positive reinforcement, recognition, celebration and rewarding activities to encourage engagement, achievement and personal development.
- Communicate in ways that pupils can understand, including verbal communication, gestures, Makaton, symbols, pictures, visual supports and a range of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems.
- Set individual targets and implement strategies recommended by specialist professionals, including Clinical Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists.
- Assess and understand individual needs effectively so that proactive and preventative support can be implemented.

- Model positive attitudes, behaviours and relationships through staff practice and, where appropriate, peer role-modelling.
- Provide high-quality resources, facilities and staffing arrangements that support pupils' learning, wellbeing and regulation.
- Maintain effective communication and partnership working with parents, carers and relevant professionals.
- Deliver ongoing training and professional development to ensure staff have the knowledge and skills required to support pupils effectively.
- Use a Total Communication approach throughout the school environment.
- Promote collaborative working through multidisciplinary and cross-team meetings involving education, care, therapy and leadership staff.
- Ensure all pupils have opportunities to express their views and influence decisions that affect them through approaches such as Talking Mats, School Council meetings, debriefs, Zones of Regulation activities, reflection sessions, questionnaires and advocacy support.
- Maintain an open-door culture in which staff, pupils and families can seek advice, support and guidance.
- Support pupils to learn from experiences through restorative conversations, debriefs, social stories, comic strip conversations and other reflective approaches.
- Reduce anxiety by providing familiar routines, repetition of key life skills, structured opportunities for success and support for developing problem-solving and independence skills.

The school uses restorative approaches, natural and logical consequences where appropriate, and individualised behaviour support strategies. All responses to behaviour are:

- Proportionate to the circumstances.
- Consistent across staff and settings.
- Adapted where necessary as reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
- Focused on learning, regulation, relationship repair and positive future outcomes.

Where consequences are used, they will:

- Be clearly explained in a manner that the pupil can understand.
- Support reflection, learning and future positive behaviour.
- Be relevant, reasonable and linked to the situation wherever possible.
- Never remove a pupil’s fundamental rights, including access to safety, dignity, food, healthcare, emotional support or education.

5.0 Use of Removal, Suspension and Placement Review

Overley Hall School aims to avoid exclusion wherever possible, recognising the complex needs of its pupils.

Whilst not directly bound by the DfE Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance (July 2026), Overley Hall School adopts the principles and expectations of the guidance as recognised best practice. Any decision involving removal from education, placement review, suspension-equivalent arrangements or serious disciplinary measures will be considered alongside the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010, SEND legislation and safeguarding requirements.

In exceptional circumstances where safety or suitability is a concern:

- Decisions will be based on a clear risk assessment
- Actions will be lawful, necessary and proportionate
- A formal multi-agency review will take place

The school prioritises:

- Early intervention
- Reasonable adjustments
- External professional support

Where placement breakdown is a risk:

- A structured review process is initiated

- Parents, carers, local authority and professionals are involved

The safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff remain paramount.

6.0 Restrictive Practice and Physical Intervention

The school is committed to minimising the use of restrictive practices.
Physical intervention will only be used:

- As a last resort
- For the shortest time possible
- To prevent harm to the pupil or others, or serious disruption presenting risk

All interventions must be:

- Necessary
- Proportionate
- Reasonable in the circumstances
- The least restrictive option available

Behaviour Support Tools and Strategies

Overley Hall School uses a range of proactive, therapeutic and evidence-informed strategies to promote positive behaviour, emotional wellbeing and self-regulation. Strategies are individualised and based on each pupil's assessed needs, strengths, preferences and aspirations.

Regulation and Emotional Support

Staff support pupils to regulate their emotions and reduce anxiety through:

- Flexible and responsive approaches that allow time and space for processing, preparation and regulation.
- Access to sensory, movement and wellbeing activities, including physical exercise, walks, sensory interventions and preferred interests.

- Adjustments to routines, expectations and environments to reduce stress and support engagement.
- Low-arousal approaches, reduced demands and appropriate pacing of activities.
- Co-regulation strategies, distraction techniques, changes of activity and support from familiar adults when required.
- Opportunities for reflection, restorative conversations and individualised debrief processes following incidents or periods of dysregulation.

Positive Reinforcement and Motivation

Positive behaviour is encouraged through:

- Consistent praise, encouragement and recognition of effort and achievement.
- Celebration of successes through displays, awards, certificates and community recognition.
- Individualised rewards and motivating activities chosen in partnership with pupils.
- A focus on reinforcing positive behaviour, engagement and personal progress.
- Opportunities for pupils to experience success, build confidence and develop self-esteem.

Communication and Relationship-Based Support

The school adopts a Total Communication approach and ensures that:

- Communication methods are adapted to meet individual needs, including speech, Makaton, visual supports, symbols and AAC systems.
- Positive and trusting relationships are developed between pupils and staff.
- Pupils are given sufficient processing time and opportunities to express their views and preferences.
- One-page profiles, communication passports and Positive Support Plans provide guidance on effective support strategies and communication approaches.

- Positive and trusting relationships are developed between pupils and staff through relational approaches, including PACE-informed practice.

Environmental Support

Learning, living and recreational environments are adapted to promote wellbeing and positive behaviour. These may include:

- Small-group learning and personalised support.
- Low-arousal environments and structured routines.
- Access to specialist sensory and therapeutic spaces.
- Adaptations to classrooms, family rooms and residential environments based on individual need.
- High staffing levels and appropriate supervision to ensure safety and support.

Specialist Resources

Pupils may access a range of specialist facilities and environments including:

- Sensory rooms and sensory integration spaces.
- Outdoor learning environments, including Forest School.
- Sensory and horticultural gardens.
- Sports and recreational facilities.
- Therapeutic and leisure spaces that support wellbeing, engagement and personal development.

Assessment, Monitoring and Review

Positive behaviour support is informed by ongoing assessment, monitoring and review. This includes:

- Recording and analysing incidents, positive events and significant achievements.
- Functional assessment of behaviour, including the identification of triggers, patterns and underlying needs.
- Positive Support Plans that are regularly reviewed and updated.

- SMART targets linked to self-regulation, personal development, life skills and EHCP outcomes.
- Transition planning to support successful movement between settings, activities and life stages.
- Regular multidisciplinary reviews involving education, care, therapy teams and families.

Professional Collaboration and Continuous Improvement

Effective behaviour support is strengthened through:

- Close partnership working with parents, carers and external professionals.
- Consultation with specialist services when additional expertise is required.
- Ongoing staff training, supervision, coaching and reflective practice.
- Regular multidisciplinary meetings to ensure consistency of approach.
- Continuous evaluation of practice to improve outcomes for pupils and maintain high standards of support.

Supporting Transitions

Overley Hall recognises that transitions, whether small changes within the day (micro transitions) or significant life events (macro transitions), can be a source of anxiety for many children and young people. Due to the complex needs of our pupils, changes to routines, environments, people, expectations or activities can be particularly challenging and may impact on emotional wellbeing, regulation and behaviour.

For this reason, transition planning is an integral part of the support provided at Overley Hall School. Careful consideration is given to preparing children and young people for change in ways that reduce anxiety, build confidence and promote successful outcomes.

When a child or young person joins Overley Hall School, an individualised transition plan is developed in partnership with the child, family, previous setting and relevant professionals. The transition process is introduced gradually and at a pace

appropriate to the individual, enabling them to become familiar with new people, routines and environments in a supportive and structured way.

Similarly, when a child or young person moves between classes, residential areas, key stages or leaves Overley Hall, transition planning is undertaken to ensure continuity of support and minimise potential barriers to success. This may include visits, visual supports, social stories, transition books, phased introductions, enhanced communication and multidisciplinary planning.

The views and needs of the child or young person, their family and relevant professionals are central to the planning process. Therapists, education staff, care staff and families work collaboratively to identify potential areas of difficulty and implement strategies to support a positive transition experience. Progress is regularly reviewed and plans adapted where necessary.

Whilst change can be challenging, developing resilience, flexibility and independence is an important part of personal growth. Overley Hall therefore seeks to support children and young people to gradually experience and manage change through carefully planned opportunities that are matched to their individual level of understanding and readiness. Appropriate scaffolding, preparation and support are provided to maximise the likelihood of success and reduce anxiety before, during and after periods of transition.

When planning transitions, careful consideration is given to the individual needs of each child or young person. This includes assessing factors such as the timing of the transition, the physical environment, the number of people involved, noise levels, sensory demands and the learner's current emotional state and anxiety levels. Wherever possible, transitions are planned to take place at times and in environments that minimise stress and maximise opportunities for success. Staff may use visual supports, advance preparation, familiar adults, reduced group sizes, quieter routes or additional processing time to help pupils feel safe, regulated and confident throughout the transition process. These reasonable adjustments help to reduce anxiety and ensure that transitions are experienced as positively and successfully as possible.

Use of Physical Presence and Environmental Controls

Staff may, where necessary, use proportionate physical presence (for example standing in a doorway or managing physical space) to prevent immediate harm or serious disruption. Such actions must be reasonable, necessary and for the shortest time possible. They must not be used as a routine behaviour management strategy or to enforce compliance. All such actions will be subject to professional judgement, recorded where appropriate, and reviewed in line with safeguarding and human rights principles.

Staff must always:

- Prioritise de-escalation strategies before any physical intervention, unless there is an immediate risk of harm
- Consider the individual needs of the pupil, including SEND, trauma and communication needs
- Ensure that any restriction of movement is justified by risk and is time-limited
- Be aware that preventing a pupil from leaving a space may constitute a restriction of liberty and must therefore be lawful, proportionate and necessary

The school prohibits any intervention that:

- Intentionally causes pain
- Restricts breathing
- Degrades or humiliates
- Is used as a form of punishment

All incidents of physical intervention or significant restriction of movement:

- Are recorded promptly and accurately
- Are reviewed by senior leaders
- Inform future planning to reduce recurrence

Responding to Behaviour

Overley Hall recognises that behaviours that challenge are often a reflection of unmet need, heightened anxiety, sensory overload, communication difficulties or challenges with emotional regulation. Staff seek to understand the underlying function of behaviour and respond in ways that maintain safety, preserve dignity and support positive outcomes.

The school acknowledges the definition of challenging behaviour as:

"Behaviour of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit or deny access to the use of ordinary community facilities."

(Emerson, 1995)

All pupils have an individual Behaviour Support Plan or Positive Support Plan (PSP) that outlines their strengths, needs, known triggers, early warning signs, preferred communication methods and agreed support strategies. These plans are developed collaboratively with education, care and therapy staff, alongside parents, carers, social workers and other relevant professionals where appropriate.

Positive Support Plans are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective and responsive to the changing needs of the child or young person. Progress, wellbeing and behaviour support strategies are discussed through a range of review processes, including Annual Reviews, Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, multidisciplinary meetings and other pupil-centred review forums.

Creating Positive Learning Environments

All staff are responsible for promoting positive behaviour, emotional wellbeing and a culture of respect throughout the school. Staff achieve this by creating environments that are safe, predictable, engaging and responsive to individual needs.

Staff will:

- Develop positive, trusting and respectful relationships with pupils.
- Create learning environments that are stimulating, supportive and accessible.
- Establish clear, consistent routines and expectations that promote feelings of safety and predictability.
- Communicate expectations in ways that pupils can understand, using visual supports, symbols, AAC systems, modelling and other appropriate communication methods.
- Recognise and reinforce positive behaviour, effort, progress and achievement.
- Use praise, encouragement and positive reinforcement to promote engagement and self-esteem.
- Identify and respond proactively to early signs of anxiety, distress or dysregulation.
- Provide opportunities for regulation, movement, sensory support and emotional wellbeing throughout the day.
- Support pupils to repair relationships and reflect on experiences through restorative and therapeutic approaches where appropriate.
- Ensure each day and learning experience begins with positive opportunities for success, recognising that pupils benefit from a fresh start and consistent support.

Through these approaches, Overley Hall seeks to create an environment in which pupils feel valued, understood and empowered to develop the skills they need to regulate their emotions, communicate effectively and achieve their full potential.

6.1 Restriction of Liberty and Mechanical Intervention

6.2 The school recognises that some practices may constitute restriction or deprivation of liberty.
All practice is carried out in accordance with:

- Human Rights Act 1998 (Articles 3, 5 and 8)
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 (where applicable)
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), where applicable

- Any future statutory replacement framework relating to deprivation of liberty, implemented through national legislation and guidance

The school will seek legal and professional advice where deprivation of liberty considerations arise and will ensure that all practice reflects the current statutory framework in force at the time.

6.3 Any restriction must be:

- Lawful
- Necessary
- Proportionate
- The least restrictive option available

6.4 Mechanical interventions (e.g. harnesses, helmets or supportive equipment) will only be used:

- Where there is a clearly evidenced risk of harm
- Following a documented risk assessment
- With parental and professional involvement

6.5 All use of mechanical intervention will include:

- A documented rationale
- Ongoing monitoring
- A plan to reduce or remove the restriction over time

6.6 Where deprivation of liberty may occur, the appropriate legal processes will be followed in partnership with the placing authority.

7.0 Human Rights and Dignity

7.1 All practice at Overley Hall is underpinned by the Human Rights Act 1998. This includes:

- Article 3 – freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment
- Article 5 – right to liberty
- Article 8 – right to private and family life

7.2 All interventions must:

- Preserve dignity
- Respect the individual
- Be proportionate to the level of risk

7.3 The school promotes a culture in which pupils feel safe, respected and valued.

8.0 Recording, Monitoring and Data Protection

8.1 All behaviour incidents are recorded in accordance with:

- UK GDPR
- Data Protection Act 2018

8.2 Records are:

- Accurate and factual
- Stored securely
- Accessed only by authorised staff

8.3 Behaviour data is used to:

- Identify patterns and triggers
- Inform planning and intervention
- Monitor equality and potential disproportionality

8.4 Information is shared appropriately with parents, carers and professionals in line with safeguarding and legal requirements.

8.5 Behaviour, welfare and safeguarding data may be reviewed collectively where appropriate to identify emerging risks, patterns of child-on-child abuse, bullying, harassment, prejudice-based incidents, discriminatory behaviour, online harms or other safeguarding concerns. Information will be shared with safeguarding personnel in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant data protection legislation.

9.0 Monitoring and Review

9.1 The Headteacher and governing body will review this policy regularly to ensure compliance with legislation and effectiveness of implementation.
Behaviour data will be analysed to ensure that:

- Practice remains fair and equitable
- No group is disproportionately affected
- Interventions are effective and reducing risk

10.0 Final Statement

This policy reflects a commitment to:

- Safeguarding and wellbeing
- Legal compliance
- Positive and therapeutic behaviour support
- Respect for human rights and dignity
- It ensures that all pupils are supported to achieve their potential within a safe, consistent and nurturing environment