The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Behaviour and Relationships Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Behaviour and Relationships Policy	**Version**	V1
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Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Behaviour at The New Walk School is understood as communication. Our pupils' behaviour tells us about unmet needs, dysregulated nervous systems and histories of relational hurt — not about character or choice. PACE is the engine of this policy:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Our approach

The New Walk School operates a relational, trauma-informed approach to behaviour. We do not use shame, public sanction or punitive consequence systems. We do set clear, consistent expectations and we do hold pupils accountable for the impact of their actions — but we do this through connection, repair and explicit teaching, not through escalation.

Our model is informed by Dr Dan Hughes' PACE framework, by attachment theory, by the work of Dr Bruce Perry on regulation, and by current understanding of how trauma affects the developing brain. Staff understand that a pupil who appears non-compliant is often not regulated enough to comply, and that the first task of an adult is to help the pupil regulate, not to demand behaviour the pupil cannot yet produce.

4. Expectations of pupils

The New Walk School pupils are expected to:

- Be safe — keeping themselves, other pupils and staff safe in school and on visits.
- Be respectful — speaking to and about others in ways that recognise their dignity.
- Be ready — engaging with learning and with adult support to the best of their current capacity.

These three expectations are taught explicitly, modelled by adults, and revisited rather than enforced. We recognise that pupils who have experienced relational and educational trauma cannot meet expectations consistently from day one; our role is to scaffold, not to sanction, until they can.

5. The role of the adult

Every adult in the school is responsible for the relational climate. Adults are expected to:

- Greet every pupil by name each morning and notice their state of regulation.
- Use PACE in every interaction, particularly when a pupil is in distress.
- Co-regulate before correcting — calm voice, slowed pace, reduced demand, until the pupil is able to think.
- Repair after rupture: when a relationship has been strained by an incident, the adult initiates the reconnection rather than waiting for the pupil to apologise first.
- Be curious about behaviour — what was happening in the body, in the room, in the relationship before the behaviour appeared?

6. Responding to incidents

When behaviour falls outside our expectations, staff respond using a graduated relational sequence:

- Notice and name — the adult names what they are seeing in the pupil's body and feelings, not the behaviour itself in the first instance.
- Co-regulate — the adult offers presence, a regulating activity, a quiet space, a movement break or sensory input as appropriate.

- Reflect — once the pupil is regulated, the adult and pupil think together about what happened, what was underneath it, and what could be different next time.
- Repair — the pupil is supported to make amends in a way that is meaningful and developmentally appropriate. This may include restorative conversation, replacing damaged property, writing a letter, or simply rejoining the group calmly.

7. Use of consequences

Consequences at The New Walk School are educational and proportionate, not punitive. They include reflection time with a trusted adult, a structured restorative meeting, completion of unfinished work in a quieter setting, and — where damage has occurred — supported repair. Consequences are recorded in the pupil's log so that patterns can be identified and the underlying needs addressed.

8. Physical intervention

Physical intervention is only used as a last resort, where there is an immediate risk of significant harm to the pupil, to another person, or — exceptionally — to property where the damage would itself create a risk. All staff trained in physical intervention follow a recognised, trauma-informed approach (such as Team-Teach or equivalent), and every use of physical intervention is recorded, debriefed with the pupil, communicated to parents and reviewed by the Headteacher. Full detail is set out in the Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy.

9. Suspensions and exclusions

Permanent exclusion is an extremely rare last resort and is only used where allowing the pupil to remain at the school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others. Fixed-term suspensions are used sparingly and always followed by a re-integration meeting that is restorative in tone. Full detail is set out in the Suspensions and Exclusions Policy.

10. Bullying, harmful sexual behaviour and discriminatory behaviour

All forms of bullying, harmful sexual behaviour and discriminatory behaviour are addressed under the Anti-Bullying Policy and the Safeguarding Policy. The relational approach in this policy does not replace the safeguarding response where one is required.

11. Pupils with SEND and reasonable adjustments

In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice, the school makes reasonable adjustments to behaviour expectations and consequences for pupils with SEND. This is not a lowering of standards; it is a recognition that consistent expectations require differentiated support.

12. Recording, monitoring and review

All significant behaviour incidents are recorded on the school's incident log. The Headteacher reviews patterns at least half-termly and reports to the Directors. The DSL reviews all incidents for safeguarding implications.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.