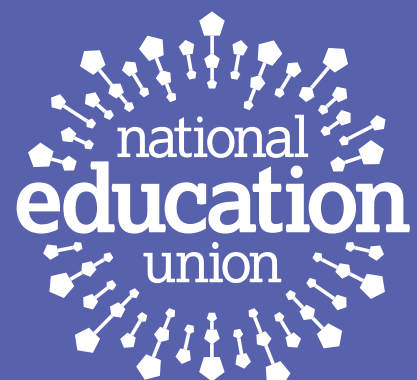


Reviewing your behaviour policy after Covid

How to support positive
learning behaviours

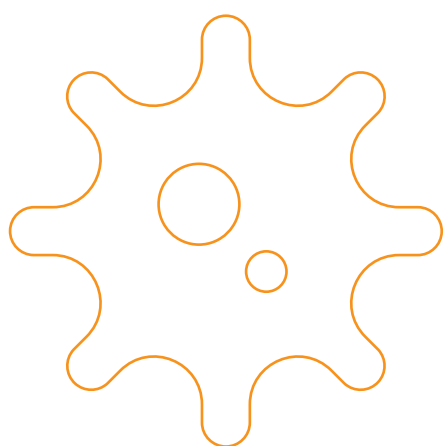


Creating a behaviour policy that staff have confidence in

Schools face additional challenges with their behaviour policies after the Covid lockdowns because learning gaps, more mental health issues and time out of school has impacted on many pupils.

Supporting positive behaviour and supporting social and emotional skills is a challenging part of professional practice. Staff need time to talk about the behaviour policy; collaborate with colleagues; and refer students with specific needs for extra help.

There may be more young people at risk of exclusion and children and young people with challenging behaviour need more support than normal. The pressure to catch up can create unrealistic expectations for students. Reviewing individual education plans for students at risk of exclusion or disaffection is vital and SENCOs will need more time and support from senior leadership teams (SLT).



Review your policy

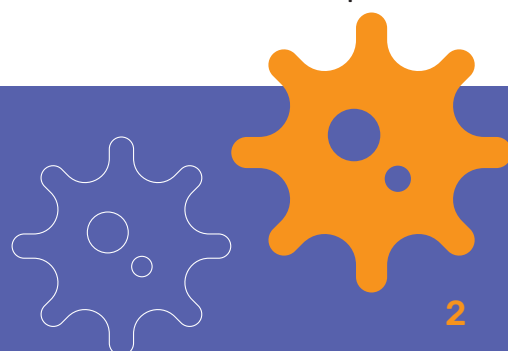
The SLT should check whether staff feel confident about the behaviour policy and how to draw down extra support for students. Can staff ask for help, share ideas and admit difficulties with a particular year group?

Consistency and coherence around behaviour are the key to having a successful whole school behaviour policy which works for the entire school community. See [Education Endowment Foundation's \(EEF\) Improving Behaviour in Schools report](#)

We think the behaviour policy needs to be reviewed because of Covid. Discuss:

- Are all staff trained, including support staff/SMSAs and all who interact with children?
- Is there a sense of shared responsibility among staff and students linked to the school's values?
- Are those in the wider school community –beyond SLT and teachers– clear about the policy and their role?
- Are staff facing more challenging behaviours because of the learning gaps and disruption to learning? When can this be discussed and strategies on wellbeing and motivation be shaped?
- Is it clear how staff can access support for individual pupils? Do staff feel backed up?

The Recovery Hub [Planning for behaviour as schools reopen more widely](#) blog outlines aspects of behaviour management versus behaviour leadership and explores the R9 model for behaviour leadership.



A focus on wellbeing as part of supporting positive behaviour

Thinking about how to create a sense of belonging for students in schools can help foster an environment in which pupil behaviour improves over time.

The NEU collaborated with UCL IOE to produce the report **Place and Belonging in School: why it matters today** which includes case studies and a literature review showing the strong links between wellbeing and behaviour outcomes. The case studies explore how these schools have created a sense of belonging among pupils which has in turn led to:

- improvements in behaviour
- reduction in exclusions
- improved academic outcomes
- retention of staff

Read the case studies and full report [here](#) and see if the thinking about the concept of belonging may be useful in creating a sense of belonging and positive engagement and positive engagement in your school/college.

As the research found, intentional whole-school practice can help create a climate of welcome and belonging in school. *“Belonging’ is that sense of being somewhere you can be confident that you will fit in and be safe in your identity: a feeling of being at home in a place.”*

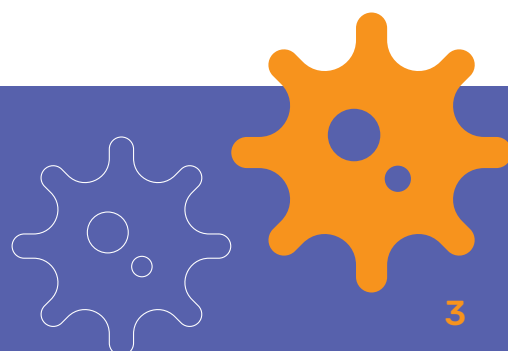
Responding to higher levels of social and emotional needs in your student population

Some of the new elements of behaviour policies relate to Covid security, for example mask wearing and movement around the school.

Now is a good time to look again at the policies in schools in the context of this recovery phase of education and ensuring expectations of students and staff are realistic and manageable.

Ask your SLT for opportunities to talk as year groups or subject departments about these challenges:

- How school routines will impact on pupils, particularly those with SEND, for whom blended learning at home might have been more accessible and successful?
- Which students need individual plans or extra small group work or individual help because of learning or pastoral needs?
- What has been learned about new ways to work with families/carers and share information which you might want to continue?
- Has cutting breaktimes or shortening lunchtime had an impact on pupils’ behaviour or on friendships and peer relations? Could more outdoor learning be planned? Is more physical activity needed to counteract the effects of lockdown?



- Do staff know how to access extra support, both within school and externally, for pupils finding school or learning challenging, following the lockdown period?
- Should you boost the focus on play and creative activities to support pupil behaviour?

You will need to think about the context for your school, given your student population.

In some schools, the primary issue is a perception that SLT do not support staff on pupil behaviour. In other schools, there may be concerns about isolation rooms and punitive sanctions which do not address underlying welfare issues. It may be that you want more time to have information shared with you which is relevant to a student.

Building strong relationships with students

Literature reviews by the EEF remind us about the prime importance of quality relationships in school.

Knowing and understanding your pupils is really important and if it feels like other activities in your school required by SLT are making this difficult, then you and colleagues need to talk about this.

Practical strategies to know and understand your pupils and their influences can include:

- Supportive relationships/ understanding pupils
 - › Can you plan a two-minute

conversation with key pupils regularly?

- › What can you do to get to know the names of pupils quickly?
- › What transition information can you draw upon?

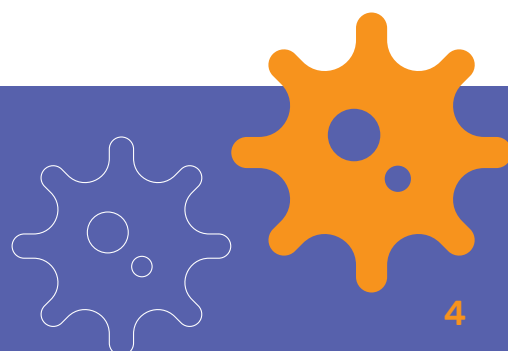
There is also a benefit to the quality of relationships if the following is in place:

- Consistent staffing
- Effective communication between adults
- Information sought and shared by school/pupils/parents
 - › Primary – role of class staff in knowing children
 - › Special – class staff/therapy support knowing children
 - › Secondary – Consider how the role of the form tutor can be more effective?

Factors which affect how children and young people behave

There are systemic patterns of inequality in society including poverty, racism, disablism, sexism and LGBT+ inequality.

Across the country Black students, working class students and SEND students are over-represented in school exclusions. There are national steps that the Government needs to take around funding, mental health support, a flexible curriculum and smaller class sizes. There are also factors which the school can control as it thinks about culture, expectations and inclusion.



Think about what might affect pupil behaviour and what action is needed to address this.

- Positive and negative influences on pupils in and out of school need to be taken into consideration by staff
- Can school actions mitigate negative influences outside school before they lead to behaviour problems?
- Use an approach like the Establish-Maintain-Restore method of engaging with students to foster good behaviour (See case study on p.10 in EEF report)
- Share information appropriately about the factors which affect student's mental health. Talk to the staff group about the risk factors and protective factors/measures schools can take to support pupils (table on p.11 of EEF report)

Protective factors (what schools can do)

Ask the SLT for the opportunity to work collectively and create opportunities to audit which of these are operating well in your setting (or need further consideration):

- Clear policies on behaviour and responding robustly to bullying and encouraging reporting
- Open door policy for children to raise problems
- Whole school approach to promoting good mental health
- Good pupil/staff relationships
- Positive peer influences

- Positive friendships
- Effective safeguarding
- Effective 'early help' process to intervene early
- Effective multi-agency working
- Appropriate procedures to ensure staff are confident to raise concerns about policies and processes and know action and support will follow
- Challenge racism, sexism, disablism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia actively and consistently.

Classroom management strategies and teaching learning behaviours

Responding to challenging or disruptive behaviour can be difficult and staff need regular CPD.

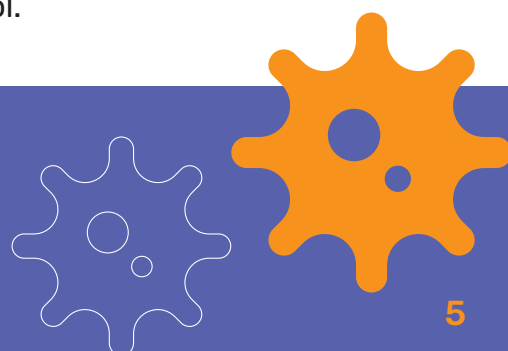
Effective training for classroom management involves school staff:

- Reflecting on their own approach
- Being supported to try a new approach
- Reviewing progress over time

Encouraging growth mindset in pupils is beneficial and involves:

- Believe all your pupils will achieve and improve (own growth mindset)
- Praise a pupil's effort rather than the person, end result or piece of work
- Avoid praising intelligence or talent, instead praise pupil endeavour/effort

For this approach to bear fruit, it needs to be embodied in all practice across the school.



The general climate for learning can be improved by the explicit teaching of learning behaviours.

What do we mean by learning behaviours?

A learning behaviour is a behaviour that is necessary for a person to learn effectively in the group setting of the classroom (Ellis and Todd, 2018). Improving learning behaviours (rather than just managing poor behaviour) can improve academic achievement and cognitive ability.

Behavioural habits and routines are key, with high expectations from all staff.

- Can pupils remind you of the rules?
- How will you greet pupils at the door?
- What will they do when they first enter your classroom?
- Can you spot pupils doing the right thing and those going above and beyond and praise them?

Children who are intrinsically motivated will perform better than those relying on extrinsic motivations.

Emotional learning behaviours:

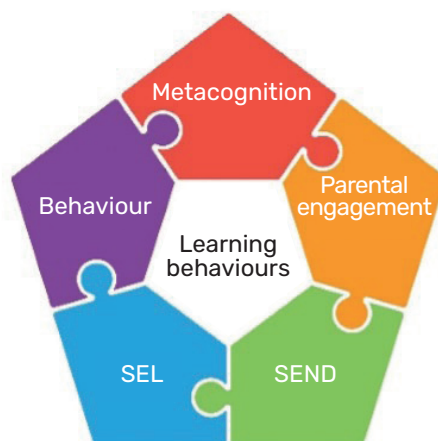
Inner voice, mental wellbeing, dealing with setbacks, self-esteem, self-worth, confidence

Social learning behaviours:

Pupil relationship with teacher, pupil relationship with peers, collaborative learning, bullying

Cognitive learning behaviours:

Motivation, growth mindset, working memory/cognitive load, modelling, communication



Effective learning behaviours take place when all the pieces of the puzzle connect.

Remember:

- A classroom needs a clear rewards system – linked to learning behaviours
- Some students need a more tailored approach to behaviour – for some this may be because they have a special educational need, for others it could be adverse childhood experiences (ACE)¹ or trauma-related. Knowing the pupils as individuals is key to a tailored approach.
- Different behaviour approaches in the classroom work for different staff/people – if a method is not working for you talk to colleagues and trial something else.

¹ Young Minds. **Adversity and Trauma-Informed Practice: A short guide for professionals working on the frontline**

Use simple approaches as part of your regular routine

Little or no cost approaches that schools can try include:

- Start the day with a breakfast club (because the evidence shows this improves attendance and classroom behaviour overall)
- Greet each student positively at the door (successful transitions into the classroom help students with behaviour for learning)
- Give specific behaviour-related praise throughout the lesson (5:1 ratio of positive to negative reactions—study showed this increased on-task behaviour in primary of up to 12 minutes per hour)
- Look at ways to enhance teacher-student relationships

Planning support for students at risk of exclusion or who face risk factors

Staff must have the right to safety and respect in their workplace.

Individual students with social, emotional or behavioural needs require tailored support, and staff need pastoral systems and referral pathways which feel supportive.

In 2019, the NEU commissioned the EPI report Unexplained Pupil Exits from Schools. It confirmed that the key characteristics of pupils who were permanently excluded from school were race, special educational needs and poverty.

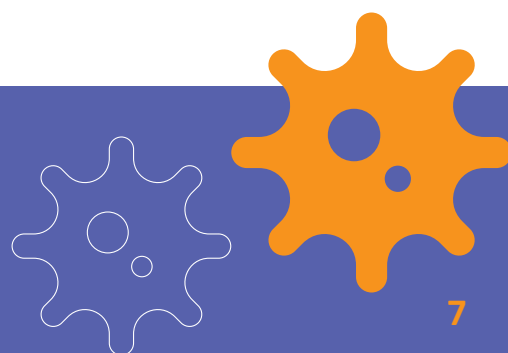
As part of the thinking around the effectiveness of your school behaviour policy and its link to pupil wellbeing, you should consider these factors:

- Are disproportionate numbers of Black pupils receiving behaviour sanctions or being excluded permanently or for fixed-term periods? What is the experience of Black students in your school? Is racist bullying and language challenged proactively?
- Could behaviour leading to exclusions be related to undiagnosed SEND? What can be changed to ensure SEND is being recognised and assessed in a timely manner? When pupils need an IEP review and personalised plans, do staff know how to request?
- Could a pupil's home circumstances be impacting their behaviour in school? Do you know enough about how children on FSM experience the school day? Have you considered poverty-proofing audits?
- Use the NEU [Turning the Page on Poverty](#) resource.

Does a zero tolerance approach work?

Do zero tolerance behaviour policies work?

Although there can be no dispute that schools must do all they can to ensure the safety of learning environments, serious questions have arisen about the use of so called “zero tolerance” policies and procedures to achieve the aim of positive behaviour for learning, and a positive climate for staff and students.



Most of the reviews of the available literature found that, despite a 20-year history of implementation of “zero tolerance”, there are surprisingly few studies that could directly test the assumptions of a “zero tolerance” approach to school discipline². The available data tends to contradict those assumptions that tough sanctions generate taking better responsibility for positive behaviour. More importantly, zero tolerance policies may negatively affect the relationships which underpin effective learning and have been found to boost the school-to-prison pipeline in studies in the UK and USA³. The zero tolerance approaches appear to conflict with current best knowledge concerning adolescent development and the effects of trauma on young people.

The goal must be to maintain school safety while maximising student opportunity to learn, and so the NEU advises that there are better alternatives than a zero tolerance approach⁴.

An alternative to zero tolerance?

Zero Tolerance systems of sanctions have had a highly negative and exclusionary impact on Black students and on students with SEND and on FSM.

The notion of deterring future misbehaviour is central to the philosophy of zero tolerance but – rather than reducing the likelihood of disruption – research reviews do not show that using exclusions solves issues around high rates of misbehaviour.

Although there is an assumption that removing students who violate the rules will create a school climate more conducive to learning for those who remain, data on a number of indicators of school climate have shown the opposite effect, which is that schools with higher rates of school exclusions appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate⁵.

Used inappropriately, sanction driven behaviour policies may exacerbate both the normative challenges of early adolescence and the mismatch between the young person’s developmental stage and the structure of secondary schools. Young people under the age of 15 display psychological immaturity in at least four areas, including: poor resistance to peer influence; attitudes towards perception of risk; future orientation; and impulse control.

Instead of zero tolerance, the NEU recommends that schools:

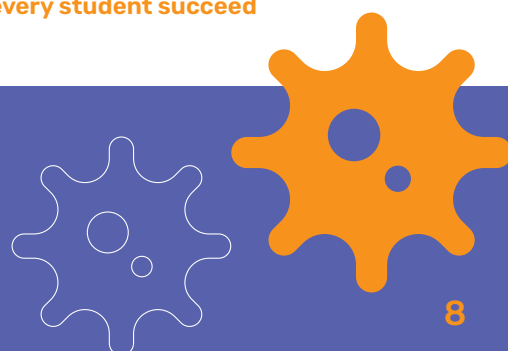
- Reserve serious sanctions for the more serious and disruptive behaviours
- Replace one size fits all strategies with graduated systems of responses, wherein consequences are geared to the seriousness of incidents
- Implement preventative measures that can improve school climate and the sense of school community and belongingness

² [apa.org/pubs/info/reports/zero-tolerance.pdf](https://www.apa.org/pubs/info/reports/zero-tolerance.pdf)

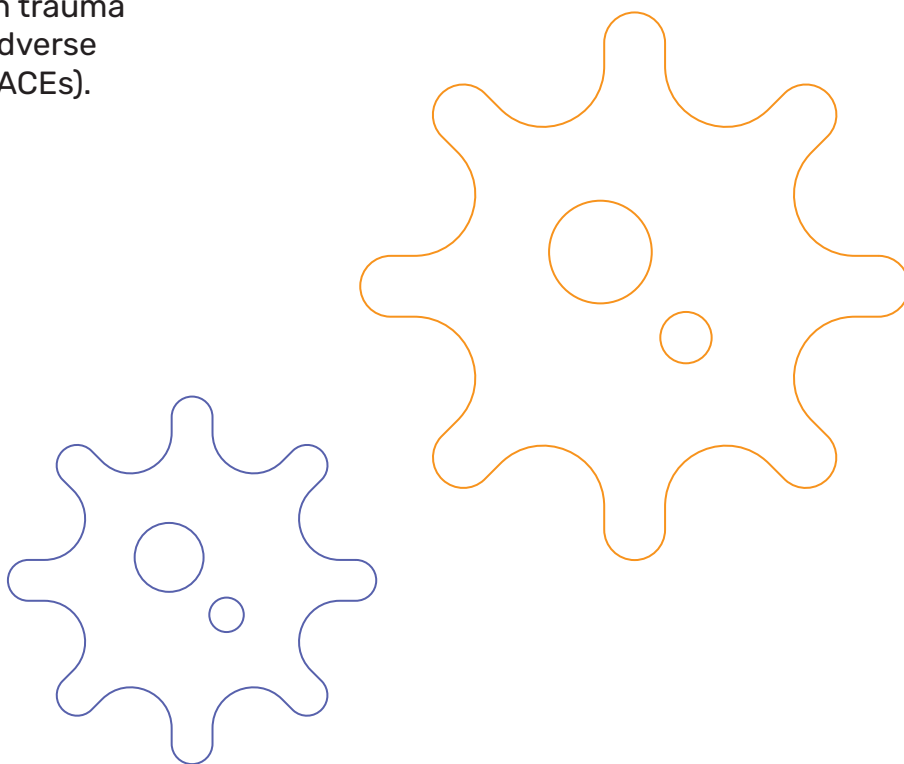
³ Riley, K Professor, (2019) Creating a Sense of Place and Belonging in School, UCL/IOE/NEU

⁴ Adams, J. M. (2013). **Schools promoting ‘trauma-informed’ teaching to reach troubled students**

⁵ Crisis Prevention Institute: **How trauma-informed schools help every student succeed**



- Seek to reconnect alienated young people and re-establish the school bond for students at risk of behaviour problems or violence, using programmes like restorative justice⁶
- Develop a planned continuum of effective alternatives for those students whose behaviour threatens the discipline or safety at school
- Improve collaboration and communication between schools, parents, youth offending teams, and mental health professionals in order to develop early intervention and alternatives to isolation rooms and zero tolerance
- Invest in CPD for staff on trauma informed practice and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).



⁶ National Child Traumatic Stress Network. **Creating, supporting and sustaining trauma-informed schools: A system framework**

Further resources

The NEU guidance **Positive Behaviour Management** provides advice for classroom staff, trainee teachers and NQTs and highlights best practice for an inclusive classroom.

Place and belonging in school: why it matters today

See practical examples of how behaviour can be improved through the use of intentional whole school practice which creates a climate of welcome and belonging in school.

Look at the Education Endowment Foundation report **Improving Behaviour in Schools** which sets out key areas for consideration when looking at behaviour in your school.

Sexist stereotypes and sexual harassment affect every primary, secondary, alternative provision and special school. Use NEU resources to tackle these issues in your school.

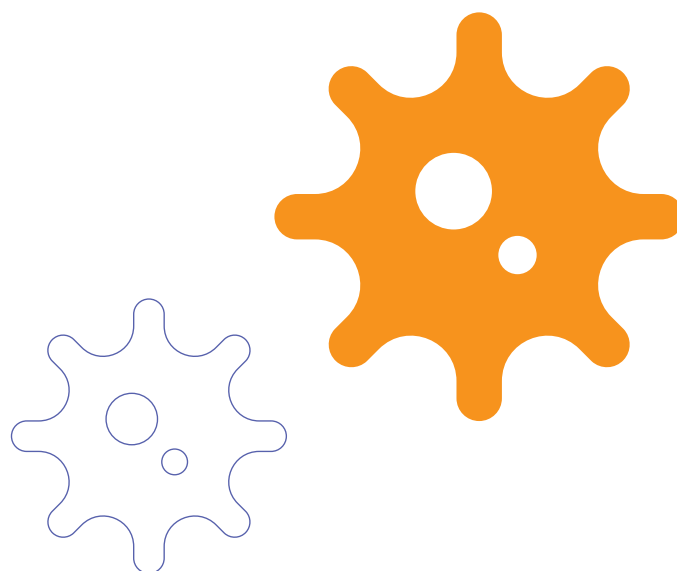
It's just everywhere – sexism in schools

Stereotypes stop you doing stuff

AGENDA resource - supporting children and young people to make positive relationships matter

If you have high numbers of students on FSM, please look at the NEU poverty proofing toolkit **Turning the page on poverty**

NEU violence against staff in schools advice



Whatever the ethnic breakdown of your school, it's important to challenge racism through education and respond appropriately, and to ensure a representative curriculum.

NEU anti-racist Framework

Lit in Colour website

Cargo classroom resources

Runnymede Trust school resources

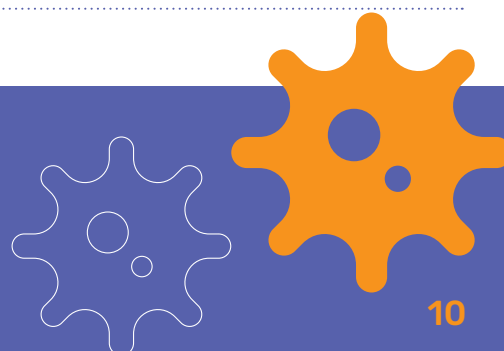
ourmigrationstory.org.uk

runnymedetrust.org/end-racism/about-the-campaign/resources/

Bullying can be reduced by incorporating positive representation across the curriculum through reading. See the NEU Breaking the Mould resources for early years settings and primary schools.

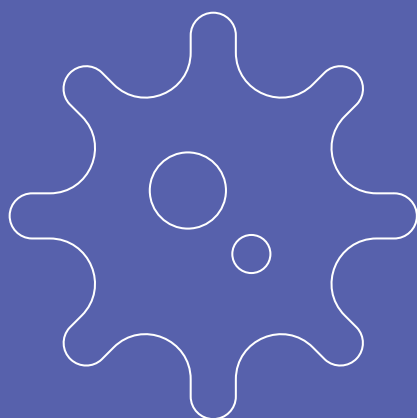
Every child, every family - Building LGBT+ equality through reading

The Full Story - Building disability equality through reading



Reviewing your behaviour policy after Covid

How to support positive
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