



Behaviour Policy

1. Purpose:

Our specialist schools and colleges are designed to meet the needs of autistic children and young people. We know that for many of our pupils/learners communication and sensory differences and unmet mental health needs can lead to some form of behaviours of distress at some point during a typical school /college day, week, month, or year.

For some autistic pupils/learners peer misunderstanding can quickly escalate into behaviour of distress or behaviour that might cause distress to others.

This policy seeks to provide staff and other key stakeholders with clear guidelines as to how behaviour is understood and how behaviours of distress are managed in our schools and colleges. A shared understanding and a consistent approach amongst all staff are essential to upholding our values, ensuring our pupils/learners feel safe and to providing the best possible support for them. The attitudes, perceptions and values of the staff working with our pupils/learners will have a significant effect on the incidence of behaviours of distress and the effectiveness of how they are managed.

Our Ambitious Approach underpins all our thinking and practice. It is an approach to education created by Ambitious about Autism to support autistic children and young people. It has been developed to provide high-quality education whilst affording dignity, respect, and compassion, in all aspects of our provision, including the consideration of mental health and wellbeing. The Ambitious Approach is based upon a person's indisputable rights to be:

- Treated with dignity and compassion
- Valued
- Listened to
- Supported to have the best quality of life possible
- Empowered to make choices and decide on how they want to live their life.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Physical Intervention policy
- Serious Incident Reporting policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Adult at Risk Safeguarding and Protection policy and procedure
- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and procedure
- Risk Assessment policy
- Exclusion policy
- Debriefing policy
- Whistleblowing policy

This policy takes account of [guidance](#) published by Department of Education in February 2024.

2. Scope:

Policy Owner	Director of Education	Review Date:	July 2025
Policy No.	121	Version No.	2.0

3. What is meant by behaviours of distress?

Within our schools and college 'behaviours of distress' typically fall within the following categories:

- Self-harm (e.g. head banging, biting)
- Harm to others (e.g. hitting, pushing, punching, scratching, biting, throwing)
- Damage to property (e.g. smashing equipment, ripping displays, forceful opening of doors)
- Vocalisation (e.g. swearing, screaming, shouting)
- Sexualised behaviour (e.g. masturbation or inappropriate touching)
- Pica (e.g. eating non-edible items)

These behaviours are considered to signal distress when they are of an intensity, frequency or duration as to impact on the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the young person or those around them.

4. Causes of behaviours of distress:

Behaviours of distress can often be perceived as a 'problem' to be treated or stopped. This is not the case in our settings. Behaviours of distress in our settings are nearly always a response to adverse environmental circumstances and serve a function.

Behaviours of distress are **not** likely to occur when a young person:

- Understands what is happening and is understood by those around them;
- Is doing things that they have chosen to do or with people that they have chosen to be with;
- Is healthy and not in pain or discomfort;
- Is with others with whom they have positive relationships;
- Feels comfortable and safe in the environment; and
- Is meaningfully engaged.

Therefore, when behaviours of distress arise, young people are not to be blamed or punished for their behaviour; instead, we must consider:

- How the behaviour is serving a function for the individual; and
- What the behaviour is

Policy Owner	Director of Education	Review Date:	July 2025
Policy No.	121	Version No.	2.0

Policy Owner

Director of Education

Review Date:

July 2025

are believed to be. Proactive intervention strategies are laid out alongside the skills that should be taught to enable non-harmful behaviour and behaviour that will support quality of life. The plans also include strategies for managing/reacting to the behaviour of distress when it occurs.

Policy Owner	Director of Education	Review Date:	July 2025
Policy No.	121	Version No.	2.0

