



The Key Service

Relational Practice and Behaviour Policy

September 2026/27

Monitored by: Dawn Neale – Intervention Manager
Review due: September 2028

The Key is committed to welcoming all pupils into an understanding, supportive and emotionally safe environment where positive relationships are the foundation for personal growth and successful learning.

At The Key, pupils' needs are recognised regardless of how they are communicated. We understand that all behaviour is a form of communication and that children may communicate distress, anxiety, unmet needs or dysregulation through their behaviour. We seek to understand the reasons behind behaviour rather than simply react to it.

As part of our admissions process, we carefully consider the presenting behaviours of individual pupils in order to understand underlying needs and experiences. For each pupil, we plan strategically to make reasonable adjustments, reduce barriers to learning and create conditions in which they can feel safe, regulated and successful.

Our approach is underpinned by trauma-informed, attachment-aware and Protective Behaviours principles. We recognise that children learn and behave best when they feel emotionally and physically safe. Through consistent relationships, co-regulation and explicit teaching, we support pupils to develop an understanding of their emotions, recognise when they feel safe or unsafe and identify trusted adults who can help them.

Adults at The Key understand their role as co-regulators and use relational approaches, including PACE, restorative practice and Protective Behaviours, to support pupils in developing self-regulation, resilience and positive behaviour choices.

Intentions

- To foster the belief that all behaviour is communication and not a reflection of the individual child.
- To create an environment where every pupil feels emotionally and physically safe.
- To embed Protective Behaviours principles across the setting, helping pupils understand their right to feel safe at all times.
- To encourage pupils to recognise emotions, body signals and triggers that may affect their behaviour.
- To teach pupils how to seek support from trusted adults when they feel unsafe, worried or overwhelmed.
- To recognise, model and teach what positive behaviour, healthy relationships and respectful interactions look like.
- To promote personal growth, self-esteem, resilience and self-discipline
- To teach appropriate behaviour through positive intervention, reflection and restorative approaches.
- To develop pupils' ability to regulate emotions, solve problems and repair relationships.

Aims

- To provide a safe, comfortable, nurturing and caring environment where everyone's needs are understood and respected.
- To ensure all children are treated fairly, shown respect and supported to develop positive relationships.
- To provide clear expectations, routines and boundaries which promote emotional and physical safety.
- To provide a consistent, calm and relational approach in which all adults take responsibility for behaviour and follow up incidents personally.
- To help children understand the link between feelings, behaviours and consequences.
- To support pupils in recognising early warning signs in their body and using strategies to regulate themselves.
- To use restorative and relational approaches in response to behaviour, avoiding punitive practices wherever possible.
- To ensure all adults use consistent language which promotes safety, regulation and positive behaviour.
- To develop pupils' confidence in identifying trusted adults and building support networks.
- To prepare pupils for successful reintegration into school and the wider community.

All staff will

- Meet and greet pupils at the start of every day
- Give all pupil's 'a fresh start' at the beginning of every lesson
- Make reasonable adjustments to meet individual pupil's needs
- Model positive behaviours and positive relationships
- Recognise and reward pupil's efforts and achievements
- Always redirect pupil's behaviour by referring to our 'Key rules'

All parents will

- Work in partnership with the pupil's home school and The Key, to ensure consistent messages are given about expected behaviours
- Support The Keys rules and policies
- Inform The Key staff about any issues at home that might affect a child's learning or behaviour

A consistent approach

Protective Behaviours and Relational Practice

Protective Behaviours is not taught solely through PSHE lessons. It is embedded throughout all aspects of life at The Key.

Pupils learn Protective Behaviours through:

- Daily interactions with trusted adults.
- Emotional check-ins and regulation activities.
- Group and individual interventions.
- Restorative conversations.
- Therapeutic and nurture-based approaches.
- PSHE and curriculum learning.
- Play, social times and community visits.
- Reflection following incidents and conflict.

Adults model Protective Behaviours language throughout the day, helping pupils to:

- Recognise feelings and body sensations.
- Understand that all feelings are okay.
- Recognise when they feel safe or unsafe.
- Identify trusted adults who can help.
- Develop strategies to maintain their emotional and physical safety.
- Build healthy relationships based on trust, respect and boundaries.

Our Relational Approach to Behaviour

When behaviours occur, our first response is curiosity rather than judgement.

We seek to understand:

- What is the child communicating?
- What need is currently unmet?
- What has happened to the child rather than what is wrong with the child?
- How can we restore a sense of safety and connection?

- Consequences and restorative conversations are used as opportunities for learning, reflection and relationship repair rather than punishment.
- All pupils are given opportunities to reflect, repair relationships and move forward with dignity. Every day is a fresh start.

The 3 Key rules

We recognise that clear structure of predictable outcomes have the best impact on behaviour. Our principle sets out the rules, relentless routines and visible consistencies that all children and staff follow. Good behaviour is recognised sincerely rather than just rewarded. Children are **praised publicly** and **reminded in private**.

“When people talk about behaviour, they obsessively search for the instant solution. Some peddle magic dust or ‘behaviour systems’ that glisten yet quickly fade. Others relentlessly scream for a bigger stick to beat children down with. Both extremes harbour an irresistible idea that there is a short cut to changing behaviour. They sell the lie that you can provoke sustained behavioural change in others without doing much hard work yourself. The truth is that there is no alternative to the hard work: building relationships with those who would rather not, resetting expectations with those who trample them, being relentlessly positive and sustaining a poker face when confronted with challenging behaviour.”

Paul Dix, Pivotal Education

The Key has 3 simple rules ‘**Be Willing, Be Respectful and Be Safe**’ which can be applied to a variety of situations and are taught and modelled explicitly.

We also understand that for some children following our behaviour expectations are beyond their developmental level. In this case, these children will have bespoke positive intervention plans which may include rewards to reinforce positive behaviour.

The Key Rules	The Key Consistencies	The Key Recognitions
1. Be Willing 2. Be Respectful 3. Be Safe	1. Daily meet and greet 2. Persistently recognising children doing the right thing 3. Early identification & intervention of behaviour 4. Praising in public (PIP), Reminding in private (RIP) 5. Consistent language and use of PACE approach	1. Recognition boards 2. Stickers & Certificates 3. Phone call/text home 4. Verbal praise 5. Class Rewards 6. Show work to another adult 7. The Key star of the week

	6. Accompanying children to the gate at the end of every day	8. Recognition in assembly
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Stepped Boundaries

REMINDER	I noticed you chose to (noticed behaviour) I can see you are..... (validate emotion) This is a REMINDER that we need to be (Willing, Respectful, Safe) You now have the chance to make a better choice Thank in advance Example – ‘I’ve noticed that you are finding this difficult and can see that you are frustrated. Remember you can be successful if you are willing to have a go. Let’s have a go together to get this done. Thanks for trying.
WARNING	I noticed you chose to (noticed behaviour) This is the second time I have spoken to you. Shall we step outside to chat about how you are feeling If you continue to choose to (reference rule being broken, EG not be safe) you will leave me no choice but to ask you to, (work at another table / go to the quiet area etc) (learner’s name), Do you remember when (model of previous good behaviour)? That is the behavior I expect from you. Think carefully. I know that you can make good choices Thank you for listening / I’m glad we had this conversation Example - ‘I have noticed you are still not ready to do your work. You’ve been reminded of the school rule of being Willing. You have now chosen to catch up with your work at playtime. Do you remember that yesterday you started your work straight away and got it finished? That is what I need to see today. Thank you for listening.’
TIME OUT	You are (noticed behaviour) which means you are (reference rule) Example – You are throwing objects which means you are not being safe. You need to.....(Go to quiet space - sensory room, reflection room, outside) ‘I will come and speak to you in two minutes’ or ‘I will come with you’ Example – ‘You are swearing at others’. You are breaking the Key rule of being respectful. You have now chosen to go and sit in the quiet area. I will come and speak to you in two minutes. Thank you for listening.’ As soon as the pupil is showing signs or bring ready, they are reintroduced to the classroom with support of an adult – this must always take place before the lesson ends. *DO NOT describe child’s behaviour to other adults in front of the child*

REPAIR & RESTORE	Staff will identify the most appropriate time for a reflection, ensuring the pupil has returned to a calm state and is clear of the 'crisis' zone to avoid reescalation of behaviour. As always, referring to PIPs. What happened? What were you feeling at the time? How are you feeling now? How did this make other people feel? Who has been affected? What should we do to put things right? How can we do things differently? Remember it's not the severity of the sanction, it's the certainty that this follow up will take place that is important. Repair & restore is a vital element of a relational approach.
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Sanctions

Sanctions should

- Make it clear that unacceptable behaviour affects others and is taken seriously
- Not apply to a whole group or effect activities of other individuals
- Be consistently applied by all staff to help to ensure that children and staff feel supported and secure
- Be in proportion to the action

Sanctions should not

- Exclude pupils from curriculum opportunities and activities
- Be evident to other pupils
- Be carried over to the following day.

Language Around Behaviour and Safety

At The Key, we understand that a common and consistent use of language around behaviour is essential in creating clear boundaries to learn how to behave.

Language should

- Reflect the policy's scripted Responses
- Be specific and factual when describing behaviours observed
- Recognise, empathise, validate and label emotions
- Follow the PACE strategy
- Adults will use Protective Behaviours language to support pupils in recognising feelings, body signals and safety cues.
- Staff will regularly reinforce the message that we all have the right to feel safe all of the time and that we can talk with someone about anything even if it is awful or small.
- Staff will support pupils to identify trusted adults and safe ways to seek help.

Language should not

- Include descriptive phrases such as 'kicked off' or 'screaming fit', as this is unhelpful language that makes the details of the behaviour unclear.
- Be delivered in the presence of other pupils.

High Level Behaviours

At The Key we recognise that pupil's behaviour is their way of communicating emotion. We also understand that for many pupils that attend our setting, previous trauma and adverse childhood experiences have impacted on their ability to react in an age-appropriate way and to express their emotions safely.

Pupils who have displayed high level and dangerous behaviours will have a bespoke 'Positive Intervention Plan'.

Use of physical intervention or reasonable force, maybe used if a pupil is or is about to:

Do an injury to self/ others Cause significant damage to property Engage in behaviours that seriously disrupt good order and discipline Commit a criminal offense
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- Physical intervention or reasonable force will only be used as last resort.
- All staff at The Key are trained in Team Teach.
- The Key will record all serious behaviour incidents on CPOMS
- The Key will record any physical intervention in the TeamTeach bound book.

Pupil's **will not** be **excluded** from The Key. However, in extreme circumstances following a dangerous behaviour incident, there may be a need for a pupil to spend a short period of time away from The Key setting to allow for a review or risk assessment to ensure everyone's safety on return.

Extreme Circumstances

If a pupil's level of dysregulation is so extreme that there is a significant risk to themselves or others, an immediate dynamic risk assessment will be undertaken to ensure everyone's safety.

Very rarely, and only in extreme circumstances, a decision may be made to restrict a pupil's access to areas of The Keys setting. This may involve physically preventing the pupil from leaving the reflection room temporarily, by use of a closed door. This safety strategy will only be acted upon following consultation with SLT and parents, and will be detailed within the pupil's Positive Intervention Plan. This measure is only implemented to prevent further harm or damage from occurring which could lead to serious injury or serious consequences for the child.

The pupil will always be visually monitored by two members of staff. If, at any time, the pupil is at risk of self-harm, staff will enter the room and use physical intervention to keep the child safe. Following an incident, staff will update Positive Intervention Plans and discuss events as part of the daily debriefing. We will use every opportunity to learn from these extreme incidences to reduce the likelihood of them occurring again. Parents will always be informed through a phone call or meeting, and any positive handling will be recorded on Cpoms.

If staff have to hold a door closed to prevent harm to the child or others, an immediate meeting will be arranged with parents and the school to review the incident and intervention strategies. Holding a door closed and isolating a child must never be used as a planned response and must be avoided at all costs. Should such a measure prove unavoidable, there must be an urgent review of the pupil's support plan with both school and parents to ensure safer and more effective strategies are identified and implemented.