



# Relationships Policy

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## **Introduction**

This policy outlines the principles and strategies we use to promote positive behaviour and healthy relationships within The Meadows Academy, a special academy for children aged 11–16 with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs. Our approach is trauma-informed and considers the unique challenges faced by children with autism, ADHD, and other neurodevelopmental conditions.

This policy supplements the overarching Horizons Trust Behaviour Policy, providing additional guidance tailored to the needs of pupils at The Meadows Academy.

## **Policy Objectives:**

This policy aims to:

- Provide guidance to staff, parents, carers, governors, and stakeholders on how to support pupils to self-regulate, manage their behaviour, and feel safe so they are ready to learn.
- Establish a shared framework for understanding behaviour in the context of complex learning needs.
- Promote a holistic, inclusive model for supporting self-regulation and behavioural development.
- Ground our approach in evidence-based practice and current research.

This policy is informed by guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), including:

- Behaviour and Discipline in Schools
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation at School
- The Equality Act 2010
- Use of Reasonable Force in Schools
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School

It also aligns with the SEND Code of Practice.

## Key Beliefs and Principles

At The Meadows Academy, we believe that:

- **Our pupils want to behave well.**
- **Behaviour is a form of communication.** Pupils must be supported to express their needs safely and appropriately using their preferred communication systems.
- **Pupils thrive when their needs are understood and met.** This enables them to self-regulate and engage positively with learning.
- **Behavioural development is a learning process.** Like academic learning, it requires time, repetition, and support.
- **A personalised approach is essential.** We must consider sensory, emotional, and communication needs, pain thresholds, and levels of stimulation and engagement.
- **Mistakes are part of learning.** Pupils are at different developmental stages and require patience, guidance, and consistent support.
- **All adults can learn strategies** to support pupils in improving their behaviour.

We adopt a whole-person, trauma-informed approach, recognising that behaviours which challenge often arise from unmet needs or past experiences. Pupils may require both positive support and, in some cases, restrictive interventions. These must be:

- Legally and ethically justified
- Absolutely necessary to prevent serious harm
- The least restrictive option available

## Staff Responsibilities

All staff at The Meadows Academy support pupils by:

- Reflecting on the quality of relationships with pupils and colleagues.
- Continuously improving the quality of provision through reflective practice.
- Collaborating with parents, carers, and professionals to understand individual needs.
- Planning and implementing scaffolding strategies to support self-regulation.
- Observing and analysing emotional and behavioural data to inform personalised interventions.
- Working in partnership with external professionals, including:
  - ✓ Occupational Therapists
  - ✓ Speech and Language Therapists
  - ✓ Cognitive Behaviour Therapists
  - ✓ CAMHS and other mental health services
- Providing safe spaces and opportunities for pupils to practise and develop self-regulation skills.

## **Supporting Staff Wellbeing and Resilience**

We recognise that supporting pupils with SEMH needs can be emotionally demanding. Staff are encouraged to reflect on the underlying causes of behaviour and respond in a non-judgemental, supportive way—even in challenging situations.

To support staff wellbeing, we offer:

- Peer support and mentoring
- Access to lead professionals, including:
  - Attachment Lead
  - Mental Health First Aiders
  - Teacher Mentors
- Reflective practice sessions
- Ongoing professional development through coaching, training, and collaborative learning

This commitment to staff development ensures that all adults are equipped to meet the complex needs of our pupils with confidence and compassion.

## Success at The Meadows Academy

At The Meadows Academy, we believe that every student has the potential to succeed. Our shared vision of success is built around five core pillars:



Safe – Making choices that keep ourselves and others safe.



Healthy – Looking after our physical and emotional wellbeing.



Attend – Being present, punctual, and ready to learn.



Progress – Striving for personal and academic growth.



Employable – Developing the skills and attitudes needed for future success.

These five pillars form the foundation of our unwritten social contract and underpin the behaviour agreement that every student commits to upon joining our school community.

## Recognising Positive Behaviour

We actively celebrate and reinforce positive behaviour through daily interactions and structured systems. Students are regularly acknowledged for:

- Taking responsibility for their actions.
- Reflecting with staff after incidents to learn from challenges.
- Showing respect to everyone and everything in our school.
- Being open-minded and accepting of others' beliefs and backgrounds.
- Demonstrating courage by trying new things, even when they feel difficult.

## Dojo Points System

To support and encourage positive behaviour, we use the Dojo Points System in every lesson. Students can earn up to five points per lesson, one for each of the five success pillars (S-H-A-P-E). Points are recorded by teachers at the end of each lesson and shared daily with students and staff.

- Maximum points per week: 120 (excluding Friday Period 5, which is enrichment).
- Points are used to reflect on effort, progress, and behaviour.
- Weekly totals (Friday–Thursday) determine access to enrichment activities and privileges.
- Top-ranking students choose their Friday rewards first, promoting motivation and fairness.



**ClassDojo**

## Rewards

At our school, we recognize the importance of intrinsic motivation in encouraging positive behaviour. However, we also understand the value of extrinsic rewards in reinforcing good choices. Our rewards system is designed to support and celebrate positive behaviour through a variety of short-term, weekly, and termly incentives.

**Short-Term Rewards** - Students may earn 'Meadows Money' at any time for making positive choices, being kind or helpful, or working extra hard. This currency can be spent at the tuck shop during break time.



**Weekly Rewards** - Each week, students participate in an enrichment lesson during Lesson 5 on Fridays. Students with the highest Dojo points receive first choice of enrichment activities. All students participate, but those with more points have more options to choose from.

Enrichment activities include:

- Nintendo Switch Club
- Football Team
- Cooking
- Art
- Warhammer Club
- Remote Control Car Club

Additional activities are added throughout the year based on student voice. This time also provides students with supported social interaction, especially important for those who live far from their school friends.

**Termly Rewards** - Termly rewards trips are organized for students based on their effort and attendance. Previous trips have included visits to the Dog's Trust, the beach, the cinema, ice skating, bowling, and arcades.

**Positive Communication** - To ensure parents are aware of their child's positive progress, regular phone calls home are made to celebrate student success.

## **Trauma-Informed Approach**

A trauma-informed approach acknowledges the widespread impact of trauma on individuals and emphasizes creating an environment where students feel safe, supported, and understood. We are a member of the Attachment Research Community (ARC) and all staff have regular training updates on attachment and trauma informed practice. All staff are included in this training from reception through to kitchen staff and cleaners.

## **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

ACEs refer to stressful or traumatic events experienced during childhood, such as abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. These experiences can significantly impact brain development and increase the risk of behavioural, emotional, and mental health issues. Understanding ACEs helps us provide appropriate support and interventions for our students.

## Maslow's hierarchy of need

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can significantly impact students' behaviour and their overall experience in education and school settings.



Here's how each level interacts with education:

- Physiological Needs:** Students must have their basic needs met to focus on learning. Hunger, lack of sleep, or poor health can hinder their ability to concentrate and perform well in school. We provide nutritious meals, food and drinks at break time, and free access to drinks during the day. We individualise eating times for some pupils due to medication timings. All pupils have access to healthcare through our onsite first aiders. We have safe spaces in the academy for children to relax and have a little nap if they need to.
- Safety Needs:** A safe and secure school environment is crucial for effective learning. When students feel safe from bullying, violence, and other threats, they can focus better on learning. We actively promote a positive and inclusive culture, provide clear rules and procedures, and ensure physical and emotional safety to create an environment where pupils can thrive.
- Love and Belongingness Needs:** Social connections and a sense of belonging are essential for students' emotional well-being. Positive relationships with peers, teachers, and school staff foster a supportive learning environment. We plan activities to develop social cohesion and build our social capital; these include full day events such as Christmas day or Children in Need. Our tutor group system ensures all children are part of an academy family unit.



- **Esteem Needs:** Recognition and respect are vital for building students' self-esteem. We provide opportunities for students to achieve and be acknowledged for their accomplishments. Positive feedback, awards, and leadership roles boost students' confidence and motivate them to do well.
- **Self-Actualization Needs:** We encourage pupils to explore their interests, set personal goals, and pursue their passions to help them develop a sense of purpose and fulfilment.

## PACE Model

We use the PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy) model to build and maintain positive relationships with our students. All staff are trained in using PACE and use it to help pupils feel safe and supported. PACE involves:

- **Playfulness:** Using a light-hearted and engaging approach to create a joyful atmosphere.
- **Acceptance:** Accepting students' feelings and experiences without judgment.
- **Curiosity:** Showing genuine interest in understanding students' perspectives and experiences.
- **Empathy:** Demonstrating understanding and compassion for students' emotions and challenges.



# Attachment Theory

Attachment theory highlights the importance of secure relationships in promoting healthy emotional and social development. By understanding attachment patterns, we can provide support that fosters secure attachments, helping students feel safe, valued, and connected.

For children with disordered attachment, we implement the following strategies:

## 1. Consistent and Predictable Interactions

- Establishing a routine that provides stability and predictability.
- Consistently responding to students' needs in a reliable and supportive manner.

## 2. Building Trust

- Demonstrating patience and understanding as students learn to trust.
- Avoiding sudden changes or surprises that may trigger anxiety.

## 3. Emotional Support

- Providing a safe space for students to express their emotions.
- Offering validation and understanding of their feelings and experiences.

## 4. Social Skills Development

- Encouraging positive peer interactions and modelling appropriate social behaviours.
- Facilitating group activities that promote cooperation and teamwork.

## 5. Individualised Support Plans

- Developing personalised plans that address the unique needs of each student with disordered attachment.
- Collaborating with mental health professionals to provide comprehensive support.

# Restorative Practice

Restorative practice is an approach that focuses on repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than simply punishing negative behaviour. It emphasises accountability, empathy, and collaboration in resolving conflicts and fostering a sense of community.

In our Academy, we use restorative practice by:

## 1. Encouraging Open Dialogue

- Providing opportunities for students to express their feelings and perspectives.
- Facilitating conversations that promote understanding and empathy between students and staff.

## 2. Focusing on Repairing Harm

- Helping students understand the impact of their actions on others.
- Supporting students in taking responsibility for their behaviour and making amends.

## 3. Building a Supportive Community

- Encouraging collaboration and mutual support among students and staff.
- Creating a culture of respect, inclusion, and shared responsibility.

## 4. Restorative Circles

- Using restorative circles as a structured approach to address conflicts and build relationships.
- Providing a safe space for students to share their experiences and work together to find solutions.

## Implementation Strategies

### 1. Creating a Safe Environment

- Establishing clear, consistent, and predictable routines.
- Using positive reinforcement to encourage desired behaviours.
- Providing a physically and emotionally safe space for students.

### 2. Building Strong Relationships

- Developing trust and rapport with students through consistent, respectful, and empathetic interactions.
- Using the PACE model to guide our communication and relationship-building efforts.

### 3. Understanding and Responding to Behaviour

- Recognizing that challenging behaviours often stem from unmet needs or past trauma.
- Using a trauma-informed lens to interpret and respond to behaviours.
- Implementing individualized support plans that address students' specific needs and triggers.

### 4. Promoting Emotional Regulation

- Teaching and modelling coping strategies and self-regulation techniques.
- Providing opportunities for students to practice mindfulness and relaxation exercises.
- Offering regular check-ins and support from trained staff members.

### 5. Supporting Social Skills Development

- Encouraging positive peer interactions and teamwork.
- Facilitating social skills groups and activities.
- Providing guidance and feedback on appropriate social behaviours.

## Monitoring and Review

We will regularly review and update this policy to ensure it remains effective and responsive to the needs of our students. Feedback from staff, students, and families will be considered in the review process.

## Conclusion

Our behaviour and relationships policy aims to create a nurturing and supportive environment where all students can thrive. By adopting a trauma-informed approach and utilizing the PACE model, attachment theory, and restorative practice, we strive to foster positive behaviour, healthy relationships, and overall well-being.