



Riverbank Academy

Behaviour for Learning Policy

Riverbank Academy is an outstanding broad-spectrum special school for students aged 11-19 within the Sidney Stringer Multi-Academy Trust.

Through our policies and practice we aim to help all Riverbank students uphold the schools core values of being Motivated, Creative and Caring.

Date: September 2025

Review: September 2026

Rationale

Riverbank Academy is committed to creating an environment where exemplary behaviour is at the heart of productive learning. Everyone is expected to maintain the highest standards of personal conduct. Our behaviour policy echoes our core values with a supporting emphasis on respectful relationships:

Our core values are:

- Caring
- Creativity
- Motivation

Aims of the policy:

- To create a culture of exceptionally good behaviour: for learning, for community for life
- To ensure that all students are treated fairly, show respect and promote good relationships.
- To build a community which values kindness, care, good humour, good temper, obedience and empathy for others.
- To promote community cohesion through exceptional relationships.
- To ensure that excellent behaviour is a minimum expectation for all.

Objectives of the policy:

- To outline the roles and responsibilities of the school community (covered in **Section 1**).
- To provide a clear set of principles and guidelines that support the individual needs and behaviour of students (covered in **Section 2**).
- To provide a clear overview on the stages in which behaviour is carefully supported and managed (covered in **Section 3**).
- To outline the context, methods and support provided for students with exceptional behaviour needs (covered in **Section 4**).

Section 1: Roles and responsibilities of the school community

1.1 Our Whole Staff Team

All school staff will work together to implement the Behaviour for Learning Policy, using a consistent approach and acting as positive role models. All staff will have a view that excellent behaviour is a minimum expectation for all and the definition of “excellent” is contextualised alongside individual needs.

1.2 Governors

The Governing Body will ensure that there is a Behaviour for Learning Policy in place and review its implementation and impact annually.

1.3 Headteacher/Assistant Headteacher (Behaviour)

The Headteacher will oversee the implementation of the Behaviour for Learning Policy, evaluate its success periodically with staff, and report to Governors at least annually on its implementation. The Headteacher / Assistant Headteacher is responsible for monitoring behaviour on a daily and half termly basis by reviewing the schools Bromcom record.

1.4 Deputy Headteachers (SENCO's)/Assistant Headteacher (Behaviour)

The Deputy Headteachers and Assistant Headteacher, for Behaviour are responsible for working alongside agencies to support students in crisis and where there are complex and layered needs.

1.5 Senior Leadership Team/Pastoral Leaders

Members of the Senior Leadership Team will ensure that:

- The Behaviour for Learning Policy is active in all areas of school life
- Staff are supported in implementing strategies to support pupils.
- Positive Behaviour Plans or Sensory Plans are in place for pupils needing extra support.
- Training is offered and up to date for all staff.

Section 2 - Principles and guidelines that support the individual needs and positive behaviour of students:



2.1 Relationships

Our relationships with each other help us to model good behaviours and “social norms” at all times to our students.

2.2 Staff and Student Relationships:

The quality of our relationships with our students is crucial. Each adult is a significant adult for our students. To foster successful, enabling relationships we need to:

- ☐ Actively build trust and rapport with all children and young people.
- ☐ Encourage and acknowledge positive actions and behaviours, and record these on Bromcom(see appendix 1)
- ☐ Show all students you believe in them. Treat them with respect, using clear and simple communication they can understand.
- ☐ We treat students with dignity and respect at all times by communicating carefully and clearly in a way that is accessible and appropriate.
- ☐ We consider the function of the behaviour; why the student is behaving in this way and what needs does it serve?
- ☐ We identify the strengths of the student and where possible, identify these with the student and build on it. If a student is not able to do this, we advocate for the student within the team or professional group.
- ☐ Guide our students with calm and consistent boundaries.
- ☐ We seek support from wider professional networks to problem-solve behaviour that challenge.

2.3 Relationships with Parents and Carers:

The quality of our relationships with parents and carers is central. It is important to work jointly and plan with parents and carers to ensure consistency in our approaches between home and school. Positive behaviour plans are co-created with parents, the team around the child and regularly reviewed. This includes and any form of restrictive physical intervention used to keep a child or young person safe during their school day.

2.4 Relationships with Professionals:

It is important to ensure we are working collaboratively with other therapists and professionals working with students to ensure their input into planning and strategies e.g. speech and language therapist, occupational therapists or CAMHS. It is also the class team’s responsibility to share any needed information or strategies with other teams to ensure consistency in strategies and enabling students to regulate and managing their behaviour in different contexts, lessons and environments.

2.5 Rules

Class Rules to support positive behaviour should be:

- Two basic rules are applied in all areas of the school community:
 1. Safe hands, safe feet
 2. Kind words
- Few in number
- Where developmentally appropriate, agreed with learners.
- Communicated in a way that the learners can understand, including visual cues, social stories etc.
- Stated in the positive – things we are going to do.
- Regularly referred to by class team.
- Appropriate to the activity/lesson and in the developmental range of the learners.

2.6 Routines

- All classes should have a daily pattern that supports consistent class/lesson/activity routines to support our learners to understand expectations and the order in which events occur.
- Routines help manage anxiety to mentally and physically prepare students for their day.
- Routines help students learn how to self-regulate, engage with learning/activities and manage their behaviours positively.
- Routines should be explicitly taught – without assuming students already know them.
- All staff should teach routines for all activities through modelling and consistency. The more consistency there is over routines, the easier it is for our learners.
- Routines should also be evident as part of good teaching and learning.
- Class teams should reflect on how they support learners to adapt to changes to routines and how they prepare them for changes, as this is an important life skill.
- Changes to routines should be practiced using appropriate visual resources to allow our learners to learn that changes can be managed in a positive manner.

2.7 Communication

Behaviour that challenges is often the result of a breakdown in communication. To support a learner that has become dysregulated, or in distress, we should aim to understand the function of the behaviour e.g. what is causing the learner to become distressed. Class teams need to consider the following and how it can impact on our learners' ability to regulate and manage their behaviour positively:

- ☐ That our children and young people often need time to process information.
- ☐ Some of our children and young people have difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication (body language).
- ☐ Difficulties in understanding facial expression and tone of voice.
- ☐ Difficulty with understanding, or consistently remembering social rules and conventions.
- ☐ Difficulty in understanding their own emotions and how to tell an adult what they are feeling.
- ☐ Difficulty in understanding other people's emotions.
- ☐ Difficulty predicting what will/could happen next - this can cause anxiety
- ☐ Lack awareness of danger.
- ☐ Needs to be prepared for changes and transitions.
- ☐ Difficulty in coping in new or unfamiliar situations.
- ☐ Difficulty with managing social expectations and/or interactions with peers including friendships and bullying

2.7 a Class teams should use visual resources and other appropriate tools (such as Makaton, Communication books & Boards) to support communication

- ☐ Visuals are permanent – spoken words disappear.
- ☐ Visuals allow time for language processing.
- ☐ Visuals prepare students for transitions allowing them to feel less anxious and self-regulate better.
- ☐ Visuals help build independence, confidence and self-esteem.
- ☐ Visuals are transferable between environments and people e.g. between home and school, or when going on trips or visits off-site.
- ☐ Visuals are helpful when children or young people have become dysregulated as it replaces verbal communication and social interaction which in times of distress can hinder de-escalation.
- ☐ Visuals reduce anxiety which impacts on self-regulation and positive behaviour.

2.8 Safe and Structured Environments

2.8a Physical organisation of the school

As a generic/broad spectrum school we have a wide range of needs which reflects in the levels, frequencies and types of behaviours. From September 2021, Riverbank Academy's building has been redesigned to support the increasing diverse range and complexity of needs.

2.8b The main school building typically supports the majority of students in school include those requiring medical competencies.

2.8c The Navigator Suite is a new extension attached to our current building for students with complex and severe autism. This facility includes four individual classrooms with three separate play areas, a soft play centre.

2.8d The Navigator Suite was designed with support from clinical psychologists, ASC specialists and School Improvement Partners.

2.8e Organisation of Classrooms

- To support the sensory and processing needs of students ALL classrooms should be tidy, organised and free from clutter that can distract students.
- Resources should be organised in cupboards and/or stored in boxes that are the same colour (either blue or green).
- Displays should reflect work that gives students a sense of recognition, praise, belonging and self-esteem.
- The layout of the classroom should reflect and support individual needs and social dynamics of the group in relation to their interactions for learning.

2.8f Safe Space Environments

- At Riverbank Academy, some students are allocated a safe space as part of their positive behaviour plan.
- The identified space is used to support self-regulation with a member of staff supporting.
- The space may be used for fulfilling a sensory need, to calm or support in a crisis.
- No safe spaces at Riverbank Academy have restricted access. There are no zips or flaps on tents or locks on doors that prevent a student from leaving a classroom/safe space. This ensures student liberties are respected at all times.

2.9 Supporting Sensory and Processing Needs

Sensory processing difficulties can impact on our learners' ability to self-regulate and manage their behaviour. Sensory processing is the ability to register, discriminate, adapt and respond appropriately, both physically and emotionally to sensory input from the environment. Class teams should ensure that they:

- Speak/sign clearly, slowly and calmly, and give pupils time to respond.
- Sensory processing patterns should inform suitable learning environment adjustments and support understanding pupils' actions.
- Ensure learners' sensory needs are supported through embedding sensory diets and movement breaks into their daily class routine, and ensure they have access to sensory equipment that support self-regulation (chewy's, fidget toys, adapted seating, vibrating pillows, temperature of learner etc.).
- Teach learners to recognise when they are becoming dysregulated (using the Zones of Regulation) (label emotions and feelings) so they are able to learn to ask for a break or an appropriate self-regulatory strategy to support them in regulating better.
- Take social demands of working with other learners into account.
- Monitor physical and emotional well-being of pupils and recognise signals of being distressed, unwell, in pain or upset.

Section 3. Supporting & Reporting

3.1 On Call

Riverbank Academy operates an "on call" system to ensure that every lesson is covered by a member of staff with the responsibility to be "on call". The on-call duty involves walking around the school site, being a visible presence, developing positive relationships, capturing students' achievement and providing support if requested by a member of staff. The aim of this system is to ensure all students are happy and safe with quick and effective interventions.

3.2 Bullying, Child on Child Abuse and Racism - Including Cyber Bullying, Prejudice-Based and Discriminatory

Bullying, child on child abuse and racism is not tolerated under any circumstances. Any such behaviour is to be reported to the appropriate Senior Leader through Bromcom. These incidents to be reported to parents who will be involved in any sanctions, where appropriate. The same procedures will be followed for any incidences of Cyber Bullying, where pupils have strayed beyond the schools e-safety guidelines guidance. More information on anti-bullying handling is available in our anti-bullying Policy.

3.3 Attendance

Non-attendance and punctuality is followed up daily and weekly by a member of the senior leadership team as outlined in our attendance policy.

3.4 Searching and Confiscating

Riverbank Academy follows the DfE (2018) guidance on **searching and confiscating** items which is detailed in our Searching and Confiscation Policy.

3.5 Suspensions and Exclusion

Any decision to exclude a pupil, whether fixed-term or permanent, must strictly adhere to the following statutory grounds and decision-making principles:

Criteria:

Serious or Persistent Breach: The behavior must constitute a significant violation of the school's behaviour policy. This includes, but is not limited to, actions such as physical assault, verbal abuse, or bringing a prohibited item/weapon to school.

Harm to the School Community: Allowing the pupil to remain in school must pose a clear and documented risk of serious harm to the education or welfare of the pupil themselves, other pupils, or staff members.

Procedural Principles

Last Resort: Exclusion must only be used as a measure of last resort after all other reasonable and documented interventions, supports, and strategies have demonstrably failed to modify the concerning behaviour.

Exhausted Alternatives: The policy and decision-making records must clearly document the range of support strategies and sanctions tried prior to the exclusion decision (e.g., detentions, internal exclusions, therapeutic interventions, pastoral support plans, etc.).

Lawful, Reasonable, Fair, and Proportionate: The decision-making process must strictly adhere to all relevant legal guidance. The exclusion itself must be a fair and proportionate response to the severity and context of the behaviour.

Supporting Evidence: The school must maintain robust evidence to support the exclusion decision. This evidence must include an individualised risk assessment detailing the likelihood and severity of the harmful behaviour, potential triggers, and any mitigating factors.

Consideration of Contributing Factors: The school must actively consider and document any factors that may have contributed to the behaviour, such as specific SEND needs, mental health issues, bullying, or a significant change in the pupil's wellbeing.

Pupil's Voice: The pupil must be given the opportunity to have their views heard, with the process and communication adapted to take into account their age, understanding, and communication needs. The pupil must be informed of how their views were considered in the decision.

Formal Notification: The exclusion notice must be provided to parents/carers in writing and must clearly detail:

- * The specific reasons for the exclusion.
- * The duration of the exclusion (for fixed-term exclusions).
- * The right to make representations to the Governing Board and the procedure for doing so.

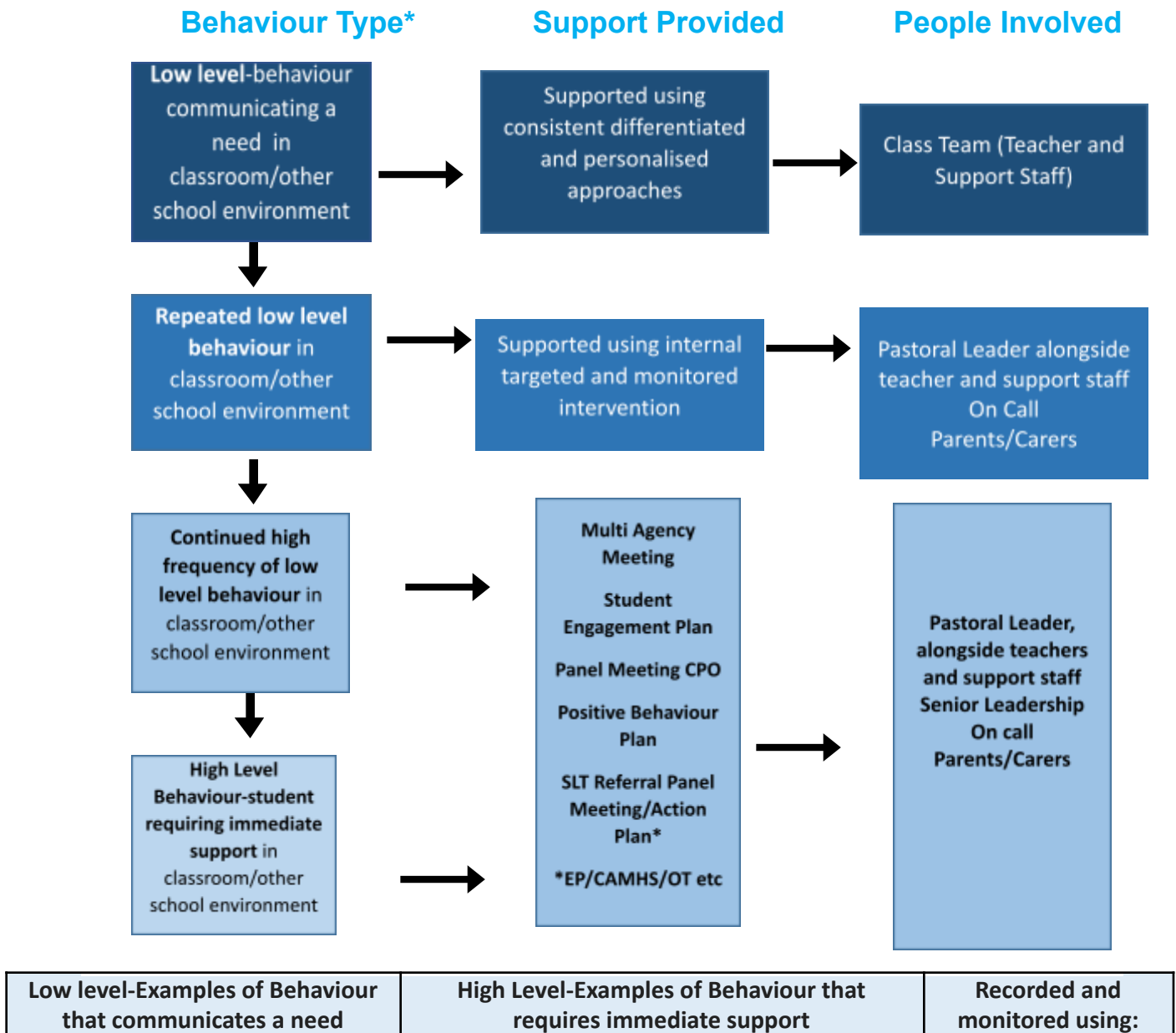
For some pupils it might be necessary to support them outside of their normal classroom on a 1-1 basis when there has been an incident. Where this happens, parents will be informed and this time will be used restoratively.

3.7 Staff Development and CPD

- All new staff access our bespoke online course that focuses on our 6 pillars of behaviour. This training enables staff to understand our policy and how to implement the policy.
- The expectation is that all new **staff complete this online course BEFORE they start to work at Riverbank Academy.**
- There is an online quiz at the end of the online course - a 100% pass is needed and a certificate automatically issued via email.
- Staff also access an online course on our culture, vision and values (which follows the same expectations and process as above).
- Staff are trained to level 2 Team teach and this is monitored by a senior leader so that renewal dates are achieved
- There is a whole staff CPD to support communication/behaviour is carefully and deliberately planned into the school calendar.
- Staff work with external professionals, such as CCLDT, SALT, EPs, Clinical Psychologists to support individual needs.
- Leaders have a strong network of schools to visit to explore best practice in other settings and share more widely in our own setting.

Stages of Support for Behaviour

The diagram below outlines the stages we adopt to support a student's behaviour. All behaviours (low or high level), are recorded centrally on Bromcom and all staff are responsible for recording behaviour.



➤ Seeking Attention or connection, by pulling at staff, making sounds. ➤ Dropping to the floor, or making distressed sounds-communicating a need	☐ Risk to self/others/environment -any actions that cause harm ☐ Bullying, Child on Child Abuse ☐ Racist incident Inappropriate language	
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Section 4: Supporting Students with Exceptional Behaviours

4.1 Positive Behaviour Plans

Students with behaviours that frequently present a risk to themselves, others or the environment have a positive behaviour plan which is written by the Assistant Head (Behaviour) and class teacher and shared with parents/carers. We expect all staff to read and understand these plans. Positive behaviour plans, risk assess behaviour and support the schools culture of happy, safe and caring. Detailed information on positive handling is available in our Care and Control Policy.

4.2 Contingent Touch

Contingent touch may be used appropriately e.g. pat on shoulder in a public place, in the appropriate context.

4.3 Holding

Holding may be used appropriately; by this we mean providing physical direction similar to contingent touch but more directive in nature e.g. the learner is guided away by hand/arm/around shoulder (using Team Teach practices). Learners with complex sensory needs may also request squeezing or deep pressure. This will be documented in sensory profiles and form part of their sensory diets.

4.4 Personalised Planning

Some learners need very specific and detailed planning, which could include a shortened day, off-site education or home-based learning. When significant adaptations are made to a learner's school day, we always plan jointly with the parents and carers, the Multi Agency Support Team, the Local Education Authority and external agencies.

4.5 Multi Agency (Team Around the Child)

For Multi Agency Working, we work in partnership with a variety of services which includes The Children's Disability Team, Occupational Therapist, The Prevention Through Learning Team, Children and Mental Health Service (CAHMS), Educational Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist,

family GP, Dental practice, Reach/Vibes, Compass, The Youth Service and other professionals to support and develop excellent behaviour in our students.

4.6 Monitoring

We need consistent behaviour management throughout the school, appropriately adapted to the age/ability of the learner; this is partly achieved via weekly monitoring and reflection with the senior team and pastoral leaders. All instances of behaviour that challenge should be recorded on Bromcom.

4.7 Class Team Wellbeing, Reflection and Development

Where a class team has experienced exceptional behaviours that challenge, it is important that there is an allocated time to meet as a class team to reflect, support each other and move forwards with positivity and a clearly defined strategy to support the student.

As part of this meeting staff should discuss three questions and a short report written and copied over to Bromcom (Suggested questions Appendix 2)

1. What happened (what, where, when, who, why/triggers)?
2. How did the situation impact on the team and how can the team move forwards positively?

As part of question 2 the following should be considered:

- ☐ Are there any recognised changes in **relationships** between the student and others?
 - ☐ Should a **rule/s** be introduced, simplified for the student? What is the one thing we want the student to do?" Keep the focus simple.
 - ☐ What is the student's **routine** – is this working, does this need to change?
 - ☐ Is the student communicating their wants and needs and does the student have the **communication** aids to do this?
 - ☐ Does the **environment** help the student regulate, is it structured, calm and consistent?
 - ☐ How is the child responding emotionally and physically to the sensory input of teaching and the environment? Can resources be adapted to support **sensory processing**?
3. Is further support needed (referral to pastoral leader)?

Appendix 1

At Riverbank, every positive interaction is an opportunity for celebration, and every achievement is a reason for recognition. By reinforcing these moments with praise, we help students develop confidence and a sense of belonging, strengthening our community one connection at a time

Caring	We celebrate students who show kindness and empathy towards others and their environment. Example - A student uses a gentle touch or comforting words with a peer who is upset, or a student helps clean up a spill without being asked.
Creative	We celebrate students who show innovative thinking and problem-solving. Example - A student uses their body language and gestures to act out a story or express an idea, or a student makes up a new game with their peers, creating their own rules and goals
Motivated	We celebrate students who show determination and a desire to try their best. Example - A student works on a puzzle they find challenging for a sustained period of time, even if they need a few prompts or breaks, or they show enthusiasm for starting a new task.
Effort and Perseverance	We celebrate the hard work students put in, no matter the outcome. Example - A student tries to use a new utensil multiple times even when it's difficult, or they re-attempt a task with a positive attitude.
Wow moments	We celebrate spontaneous and significant breakthroughs that demonstrate a new skill or a big leap in personal growth. Example - A student correctly identifies and names a new emotion they are feeling, a concept they have been working on for a while.
Positive communication	We celebrate students who use positive ways to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs. Example - A student uses their communication board to indicate what they want for lunch, or they use a calming strategy instead of shouting when they are frustrated.
Sensory regulation and awareness	We celebrate students who recognise and manage their own sensory need to feel calm and ready to learn. Example - A student recognises they are feeling overwhelmed by a sound and puts on ear defenders without being prompted
Independence	We celebrate students who take initiative to do things for themselves. Example - A student prepares their own snack or gets their own materials for an activity without needing help, or they follow a sequence on their own
Transitioning	We celebrate students who move between activities or locations with increasing confidence.

	Example - A student uses a transition object or a countdown timer to prepare for a change in activity, or they calmly move to a new location with the group when a fire alarm drill happens.
Community contributor	We celebrate students who actively help our school community as a whole. Example - A student helping a staff member tidy up the classroom, participating in a school-wide event like a fundraiser, or taking part in jobs around the school.

Appendix 2

Top 10 questions to aid productive thinking for supporting positive behaviours in school: <u>Understanding the 'Why'</u>	
1	What's the student's motivation or purpose for this behaviour? Think about what the student is trying to communicate or achieve. Is it attention-seeking, an escape from a task, a need for sensory input, or a way to get a tangible item?
2	What does the student need that they aren't getting? This question helps us focus on a student's unmet needs. It could be a need for more structure, a different type of communication support, or a calmer sensory environment.
3	What happened right before the behaviour occurred? Identifying any precursors is key. This helps us see if a specific trigger—like a change in routine, a new person, or a loud noise—is causing the behaviour.
4	What's happening right after the behaviour? This helps us identify the consequences. Is the student getting what they wanted? This helps us see if we are accidentally reinforcing the unwanted behaviour.
5	How can we provide a different way for the student to communicate their needs? For non-verbal students, this is crucial. Consider alternative communication methods like Makaton, Communication books and boards, or assistive technology, signs, symbols, objects of reference.
6	How can we show the student we understand them? A student, verbal or not, needs to feel heard. This could be through a simple nod, a gesture, a picture card, or a calm tone of voice to show you acknowledge their communication attempt.
7	What small, specific changes can we make to the student's environment to support them? Could their seat be moved? Can we add a quiet corner? Can we use visual schedules to help them anticipate transitions?
8	What's a positive, replacement behaviour we can teach the student? Instead of focusing on negative behaviour, what is a new skill we can teach them that achieves the same purpose in a positive way?
9	Who else needs to be involved in this plan, and how will we communicate with them? Effective support requires a team. This includes parents, therapists, other teachers, and support staff. Consistent communication is vital for success.
10	How will we know if our plan is working? This is about setting measurable goals. We need a way to track the behaviour—is it happening less often? Is the student using their new communication tool? This helps us know when to adjust our approach.

Other policies for reference:

- Care and control Sept 2025
- Search and confiscate Sept 2025
- Anti-Bullying Sept 2025
- KCSIE Sept 2025
- *Positive environments where children can flourish* (Ofsted - October 2021)

This policy has been written and developed by our Riverbank staff team.

Some Sections of this policy have also been adapted and rewritten from: Swiss Cottage Special School, Research and Development Centre (Camden)

Website Link Viewer Only

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CD-c3CeGjINWHrUcm4qTKBlf2indae0sjPX8XY4p9f8/edit?usp=sharing>