

# The behaviour policy and trauma informed practice

The standard of behaviour of pupils across schools in BANES is very good. Headteachers consulted in the publication of this document reported that in general they felt their behaviour policy was highly effective for 95% of the pupils in their schools. This document and the “Behaviour Toolkit” aims to support schools with the 5% of young people for whom showing positive learning behaviours regularly is challenging.

It is important that, for this small subsection of pupils, their behaviour is viewed as an unmet need. 22% of all permanently excluded pupils in BANES go on to receive an EHCP post exclusion. The primary SEND need stated is regularly SEMH. Reports from alternative provision providers within BANES show that a vast majority of pupils who are permanently excluded have experienced adversity and trauma and many also have speech and language difficulties.

Although the SEND code of practice indicates that not all behaviour is SEND, schools should initiate the graduated response when negative behaviour is persistent, and the young person is receiving support above and beyond reasonable adjustments. It is important that where a young person consistently exhibits negative learning behaviours their support is delivered through the lens of SEND by all members of staff.

There are a range of informative and very useful documents produced by the government and the education endowment foundation that are included in the appendices of this document, that should be read in conjunction with this advice.

BANES has a close working relationship with many of the government’s behaviour hub schools around the country. It is apparent in all of the behaviour hub schools that there is not a one size fits all approach that can set as the benchmark for outstanding practice when it comes to supporting pupils in developing positive learning behaviours. Each of the hub schools has developed behaviour practice and policy that accurately identifies, and meets, the needs of the pupils and the wider community.

Most schools in BANES choose to use an approach to supporting positive behaviour that falls somewhere on a spectrum between behaviourist approaches and relational approaches. Schools with a more behaviourist approach focus on the consistency and structure of a sanction system, whereas schools with a relational approach focus more on opportunities for staff to develop positive relationships with young people in order to avoid poor behaviour.

There is a wealth of evidence available to support both relational and behaviourist practice in schools. It is **essential** however that schools who choose to take a behaviourist approach deliver and administer their systems in a trauma informed manner. Where this is not achieved there can be catastrophic implications for pupil behaviour.

The one thing that all of the behaviour hub schools have in common is that the behaviour policy is consistently applied. Pupils in these schools understand exactly what the expectations are. This consistency reducing anxiety for both pupils and staff.

Behaviour hub schools are keen to state however that a consistently applied policy does not mean the same thing for each pupil. Where the best practice occurs, the policy is consistently applied to individual pupils considering reasonable adjustments that **MUST** be made to meet their individual needs. This is particularly important for neurodivergent young people and young people who have experienced trauma.

Some schools across BANES report viewing behaviour as a “teachable moment”. In these incidences school leaders recognise that for 95% of young people a sanction will work, and it is likely that the behaviour will not be exhibited again. However, for a smaller proportion of young people a sanction alone will make little difference and the behaviour will be repeated. For these pupils it is vital that schools provide a learning opportunity to support the young person alongside the sanction.

This is achieved in a variety of ways across the county and mirrors some of the outstanding practice used in the national behaviour hubs. For the smaller sub section of pupils struggling to exhibit positive learning behaviour regularly, schools are offering additional learning opportunities through after school “courses” aimed at targeting the needs of groups of pupils.

One school in Worcestershire report running courses of 6 hour long sessions, after school, over a period of one term, for groups of pupils focused on addressing the causes of the behaviours exhibited but also giving young people an understanding of the implications of their behaviours on themselves, other pupils and the community. These courses focus on bullying, swearing, disrupting lesson and smoking. Feedback from the school shows improved attitude to learning and fewer behaviour incidences.

Schools that operate “ready to learn” systems should place as much emphasis as possible in their behaviour policy on the support the young person will receive if they do have to leave the classroom. It is now widely accepted that isolation or withdrawal rooms should aim to increase the amount of a support a young person receives. Experience has shown that decreasing the amount of support a young person receives whilst dysregulated often has a negative impact on the young person and can lead to negative cycles of thinking and behaviour and long periods outside of the mainstream classroom.

Some of the best practice highlighted in the Timpson Review of 2019 shows that schools where young people exhibited outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning have their school behaviour policies formatted in very similar ways.

Best practice suggests that each school’s behaviour policy should closely reference the values and ethos of the school. The values of ethos of the school are often central to the code of conduct and the behavioural expectations of the pupils.

Across BANES schools consistently set out the behaviours they would like pupils to exhibit but should consider including in their policies how these behaviours will be explicitly taught. Schools in BANES also consistently outline the sanctions that pupils receive at various stages of their behaviour protocol.

Schools should consider including how they support young people at each stage of their behaviour policy. For example, many behaviour hub schools include in their policies not only a description of the behaviour exhibited and the allocated appropriate sanction that goes with it but also the support and intervention the young person will receive to prevent the behaviour occurring in the future. Schools should also make it clear in their behaviour policy at which point the graduated approach will be initiated to support pupils with behaviour. At this point assess, plan, do, review cycles should start.

It is recognised as outstanding practice for schools to highlight in their behaviour policies how restorative conversations and practice will play a key part in maintaining positive teacher pupil relationships.

Many of these supporting strategies are outlined in the various sections of the toolkit.

Many schools choose to incorporate into their behaviour policies how they intend to support young people through key transition phases. This is particularly important in BANES where the rate of permanent exclusion increases between key stages two and three and key stages three and four.

## Behaviour and a trauma informed approach

It is of utmost importance that all young people in BANES experience an education system which minimises disruption to learning but maximises the inclusive nature of our schools. Managing this dichotomy is a challenge for all school leaders.

The evidence to support use of a trauma informed approach is unequivocal. Changes in society and the impact of COVID make the arguments for a trauma informed approach stronger now than ever before.

It is important when implementing a trauma informed approach that schools read this advice in conjunction with the BANES trauma informed policy.

It is important to remember that a trauma informed approach does not mean a move away from firm boundaries and appropriate sanctions. Young people will all benefit from a system where expectations and rules are made clear to them. A trauma informed approach does however mean that these boundaries are enforced taking into consideration the contextual situation of each young person and their individual needs.

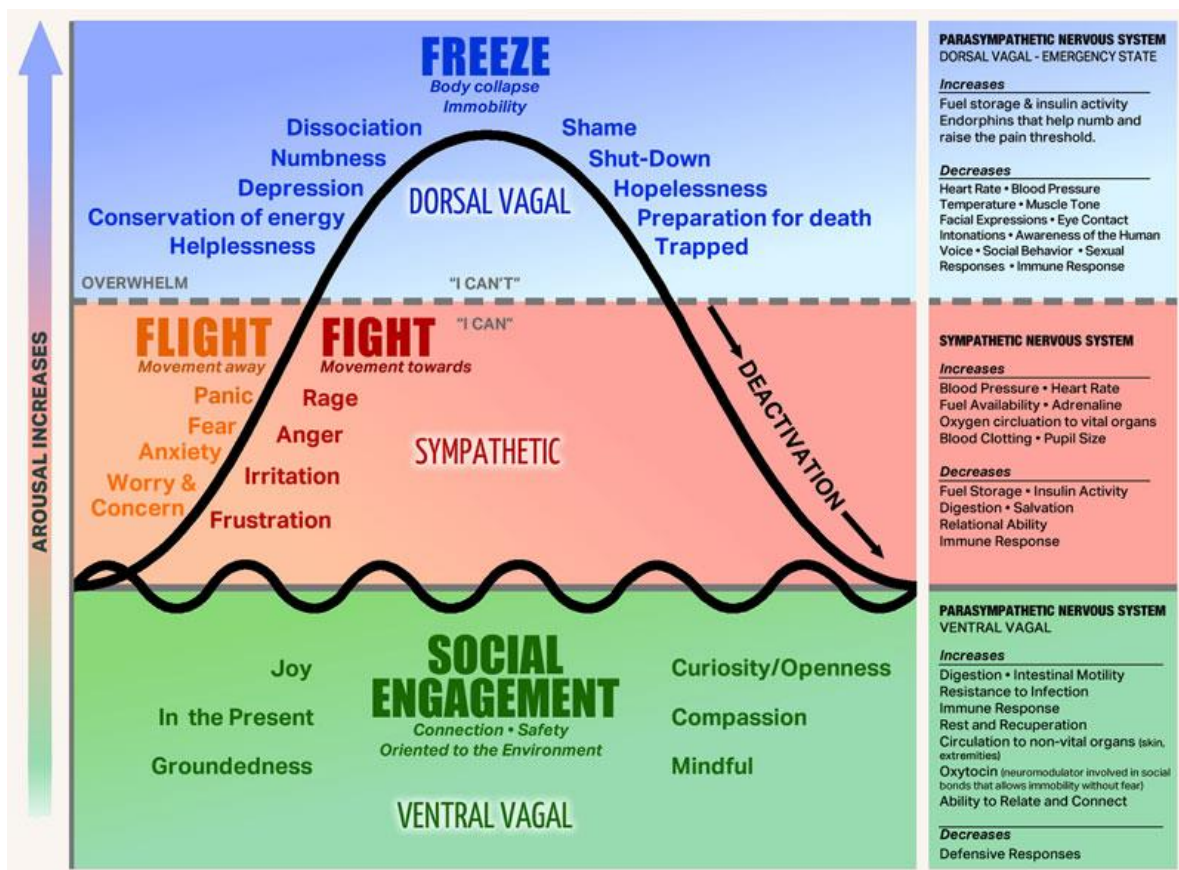
A trauma informed approach by its very nature allows adults and young people to develop professional trusting relationships. In these situations where young people feel cared for long term potentiation of learning is improved. Scientific studies have proven that neuro synaptic dopamine release occurs as a result of positive relationships. This dopamine is also responsible for improved long-term potentiation allowing new schema to be formed and learning to occur.

Schools may wish to include how they implement trauma informed practice in their behaviour policy. Specifically, how relationships between staff and young people are formed and sustained.

Many schools nationally chose to include in their behaviour policy the principles of nurture, which are as follows.

1. Childrens learning is understood developmentally
2. The classroom offers a safe base
3. The importance of nurture for the development of well being
4. Language is a vital means of communication
5. All behaviour is communication
6. The importance of transition in children's lives.

The work of Stephen Porges on Polyvagal Theory is very current and provides excellent insight into the physical responses to trauma and should be investigated by all schools.



## Key steps to becoming a trauma informed school

- As many staff as possible should attend trauma informed training. This can be delivered in BANES through the BANES Virtual school, educational psychology team and also through the BANES violence reduction unit.
- Review the school's behaviour policy to ensure that it is trauma informed and sets out the support pupils will receive alongside the sanctions. BANES Virtual school offer a trauma informed audit which schools can utilise to review policy and procedure.
- Schools should consider how they collect information about the trauma a young person has experienced. Central to the success of this will be development of open avenues for disclosure both from pupils and parents as well as close working relationships with feeder establishments, social care, PCSO's and health care professionals.
- Inform staff of the trauma that young people have experienced. It is not possible to be truly trauma informed without all staff being informed of the trauma a young person has experienced. Schools will need to consider how much information they choose to share with staff and how this is achieved. Some schools choose to use Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) trackers to support with this. In other schools' information is shared through the normal provision mapping systems used by the school to share information about strategies to support SEND pupils or through pupil passports.
- Key to becoming trauma informed is educating pupils on trauma, the effects and repercussions. This can be done through assemblies, tutor time or the schools PSHE, RSE, Citizenship or British Values curriculum. Schools should ensure that trauma education is documented in curriculum planning. Schools should also educate pupils on the pathways of support, available through school and externally, which are open to support them. Schools should understand that in the educating process pupils may become aware that they have experienced trauma and support systems should be highlighted to all young people.
- Schools should consider use of assessment (many examples of which are outlined in the mental health section of the toolkit) as a means of benchmarking young people's mental health and attitude to learning. This should form a graduated approach. For example, some schools have used school wide the mood and feelings long scale questionnaire in tutor groups. From this further assessment and intervention through use of Thrive or Boxall programs can be used to support young people who have been highlighted as needing increased support. A full list of SEMH interventions can be found in the SEMH section of the toolkit.
- Where in school interventions are not successful, at the earliest opportunity schools should consider the BANES specialist referral list or early help APP for external support.
- In the event of exclusion schools should refer to the BANES exclusion checklist.

- Trauma informed schools UK will work with schools and certify them as being a trauma informed school.

## Appendices

Schools should refer to the guidance produced by the government on improving behaviour in schools. [https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-absence-and-exclusions-team/revise-school-behaviour-and-exclusion-guidance/supporting\\_documents/Behaviour%20in%20schools%20%20advice%20for%20headteachers%20and%20school%20staff.pdf](https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-absence-and-exclusions-team/revise-school-behaviour-and-exclusion-guidance/supporting_documents/Behaviour%20in%20schools%20%20advice%20for%20headteachers%20and%20school%20staff.pdf)