Low Hill Nursery School

Behaviour Policy

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Rationale

We believe that all members of Low Hill Nursery School are entitled to a calm, purposeful and nurturing environment where high-quality learning can take place. Children should feel valued and respected, learn from mistakes and be supported to develop the skills they need to manage emotions, relationships and behaviour.

Low Hill Nursery School is proud to be a wellbeing school. We aim to provide a safe, trusting and non-judgemental environment for children and families. We recognise that behaviour is communication and that young children often need adults to help them understand feelings, regulate emotions, communicate needs and learn safer or more socially appropriate ways to respond.

Adults in school share responsibility for creating consistent, inclusive and developmentally appropriate approaches to behaviour. We seek to understand what lies behind behaviour. Our approach is based on connection, co-regulation, positive relationships, clear boundaries and the teaching of skills.

Legal and Guidance Framework

This policy should be read in the context of the following legislation and statutory or departmental guidance, as applicable to Low Hill Nursery School as a local-authority-maintained nursery school:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including the governing body's and headteacher's duties relating to behaviour.
- Education Act 2002, including the school's duty to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare.
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty to avoid discrimination and make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.
- Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance.
- DfE Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, effective from 1 April 2026.
- DfE statutory guidance on suspension and permanent exclusion, updated July 2026.

Aims

- To support children to feel safe, secure, valued and included.
- To prevent unsafe or unwanted behaviour where possible and teach appropriate alternative skills.
- To develop positive dispositions for learning, relationships and emotional wellbeing.
- To provide calm, predictable and consistent adult responses.
- To understand the function, trigger or unmet need that may sit behind behaviour.
- To ensure behaviour support is inclusive and takes account of development, SEND, disability, communication, sensory and medical needs.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers and relevant professionals.
- To use restrictive intervention only where lawful, necessary and proportionate, with a strong emphasis on prevention and de-escalation.

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing body provides strategic oversight and ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements for behaviour, safeguarding, equality and SEND. The Headteacher is responsible for

establishing and implementing the school's behaviour arrangements and ensuring staff understand this policy.

The SENCO/Inclusion Leadership Team supports staff to identify underlying needs, plan reasonable adjustments and coordinate individualised support where required. All staff are responsible for modelling calm and respectful behaviour, following agreed plans consistently, recording concerns appropriately and seeking support when behaviour may indicate safeguarding, SEND, medical or other unmet needs.

Parents and carers are important partners. The school will communicate openly, listen to family knowledge and seek consistency between home and school wherever this is helpful. Children's views, preferences and communication will be considered in ways appropriate to their age and development.

What Influences Behaviour?

Behaviour is influenced by many factors. Staff consider the whole child and avoid assuming that behaviour is deliberate or personal.

- Attachment and relationships
- Trauma and adverse experiences
- Experiences and adult role models
- Reinforcement and learned responses
- Learning difficulties and developmental stage
- Communication needs
- SEND and disability
- Sensory processing needs
- Medical needs, pain, hunger, tiredness or illness
- Environmental demands and transitions

All behaviour carries a message. Staff ask: What is the behaviour communicating? What happened before it? What is the child trying to gain, avoid, express or regulate?

Planning for Positive Behaviour

When behaviour is causing concern, staff gather information rather than jumping immediately to a consequence. They observe, talk with colleagues and parents/carers, consider the child's communication and developmental level, check for medical or sensory explanations, identify patterns and teach positive replacement skills.

Low Hill Nursery School uses the STAR model:

- Setting - environmental factors outside the immediate trigger, for example group size, noise, hunger, tiredness or changes in routine.
- Triggers - what happened immediately before the behaviour.
- Actions - the observable behaviour of the child and others.
- Results - what happened as a result, including social, sensory, material or escape/avoidance outcomes.

Positive and unwanted behaviour may be recorded using STAR where this will help staff understand patterns. Children with more complex or persistent needs may have a Positive Behaviour Support Plan or Individual Behaviour Plan, developed with parents/carers and, where appropriate, other professionals.

Strategies

Distract and divert: Know the child's motivators and interests and use them proactively to redirect attention from unsafe or unwanted behaviour.

Model desirable behaviour: Adults consistently model the behaviour and communication they want children to learn, breaking skills into manageable steps.

Define the behaviour positively: Tell children what to do rather than only what to stop doing, for example 'feet on the floor' or 'gentle hands'.

Set developmentally appropriate limits: Expectations are simple, achievable and consistent. Adults offer limited choices where helpful, use visual support and avoid unrealistic demands.

Use clear endings and routines: Adults prepare children for transitions and endings using visual cues, objects of reference, timers, now-and-next supports or other communication systems appropriate to the child.

Connection before correction: Adults join children in regulation, remain calm, acknowledge feelings and support the child to regain emotional control before expecting reflection or problem-solving.

Adjust communication: Staff use signs, symbols, objects, visual supports, reduced language, slower pace, appropriate volume and communication systems such as Makaton or ALDs where relevant.

Reinforce wanted behaviour: Adults notice and specifically acknowledge appropriate behaviour and effort. Praise is genuine, proportionate and sensitive to children who may not enjoy public attention.

Change the environment: Staff reduce avoidable barriers such as noise, crowding, sensory overload, excessive waiting, unclear routines or inaccessible communication. Environments are organised to increase opportunities for success.

Time In, Not Time Out

Low Hill Nursery School does not use isolation or 'time out' as a routine punishment. When a child is dysregulated, an adult remains available and supports co-regulation. A quieter or lower-stimulation space may be offered when this meets the child's needs, but it should be supportive rather than punitive and should not amount to seclusion.

Adults remember the child's developmental level of understanding. Reflection takes place only when the child is regulated and able to engage meaningfully.

SEND, Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

The school recognises that behaviour may be connected to SEND, disability, communication differences, sensory processing, developmental stage, trauma, medical needs or other unmet needs. Staff will consider whether a child requires additional assessment, support or reasonable adjustments and will involve the SENCO/Inclusion Leadership Team where appropriate.

The same behaviour may have a different meaning or require a different response for different children. Expectations and support will therefore be individualised where necessary. Reasonable adjustments may include changes to communication, routines, sensory demands, staffing, environment, transitions or teaching approaches.

A child will not be sanctioned for behaviour arising from disability without appropriate consideration of the Equality Act 2010, the child's individual circumstances and any reasonable adjustments that may be required.

Safeguarding

A new, unusual or escalating pattern of behaviour can be an indicator of distress, abuse, neglect, exploitation or another safeguarding concern. Staff must remain professionally curious and must not treat a safeguarding concern solely as a behaviour issue.

Where staff have a safeguarding concern, they must follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report the concern through the school's safeguarding procedures without delay.

Bullying, Prejudice and Discriminatory Behaviour

Low Hill Nursery School promotes respectful relationships and challenges hurtful, prejudicial and discriminatory behaviour. Because our pupils are very young, staff consider children's developmental understanding and avoid automatically labelling developmentally immature behaviour as bullying. Repeated or targeted behaviour is nevertheless taken seriously and supported appropriately.

Incidents relating to protected characteristics, prejudice or discrimination are responded to, recorded and escalated in line with school procedures. This section should be read alongside the school's Anti-Bullying, Equality and Safeguarding policies.

Positive Handling, Restrictive Intervention and Reasonable Force

Low Hill Nursery School prioritises prevention, environmental adaptation, communication, de-escalation and co-regulation. Physical intervention is not used as a punishment or to cause pain, humiliation or distress.

In accordance with the EYFS, physical intervention may be used to avert immediate danger of personal injury to any person, including the child, or to manage a child's behaviour where absolutely necessary. School staff may also use reasonable force where the law permits. Any use of force must be reasonable, necessary and proportionate to the circumstances and use the minimum force required for the shortest practicable time.

When considering restrictive intervention, staff take account of the child's age, development, SEND, disability, medical needs, communication, sensory profile and any known trauma or vulnerability. Reasonable adjustments and individual plans are used where appropriate.

Planned restrictive interventions for an individual child must be supported by an appropriate risk assessment and plan, developed with parents/carers and relevant professionals where necessary. Staff expected to use specialist techniques must have appropriate training and competence.

Seclusion is not used as a behaviour sanction. Any exceptional situation in which a child is prevented from leaving a space must be treated with the seriousness required by current DfE restrictive-intervention guidance and safeguarding procedures.

Every occasion of physical intervention involving an EYFS child will be recorded and parents/carers informed on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable. Significant incidents involving force will also be recorded and reported in accordance with current statutory requirements and school procedures. Records should state the context, action taken, duration where relevant, injury or distress, follow-up and any learning or changes required.

Following a significant incident, staff consider the wellbeing of the child and others involved, offer appropriate support, review triggers and preventative strategies, and amend the child's plan or risk assessment where necessary.

Communication with Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will be informed when their child has been hurt, has hurt another child, or where there has been a significant behaviour incident. Where appropriate, staff will discuss patterns of behaviour and agree supportive strategies with families. Information about other children will remain confidential.

Where a child's behaviour requires an individual plan, parents/carers will be involved in its development and review. The school will seek to understand family views while retaining responsibility for safe and lawful practice in school.

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

Suspension or permanent exclusion is expected to be extremely rare in a nursery setting. Where it is considered, the Headteacher will act in accordance with current statutory DfE guidance and the law applying to maintained schools, including pupils below compulsory school age.

The school will consider the child's age, SEND, disability, safeguarding circumstances and whether reasonable adjustments or additional support are required. Permanent exclusion will only be used where the statutory test is met. Low Hill Nursery School will not use informal or unofficial exclusions, such as asking a parent to keep a child at home as a way of managing behaviour outside the lawful suspension/exclusion process.

Recording, Monitoring and Review

Behaviour records are used proportionately to support understanding, safeguarding, planning and review. Significant incidents, physical interventions and agreed behaviour-support records are documented through the school's systems, including CPOMS where appropriate.

Leaders monitor patterns, including repeated incidents, injuries, restrictive interventions and any concerns relating to SEND, safeguarding or protected characteristics. Plans are reviewed when strategies are not effective, circumstances change, or an incident indicates that further assessment or support is required.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance or the needs of the school change.

Updated: October 2026

Next review: October 2027

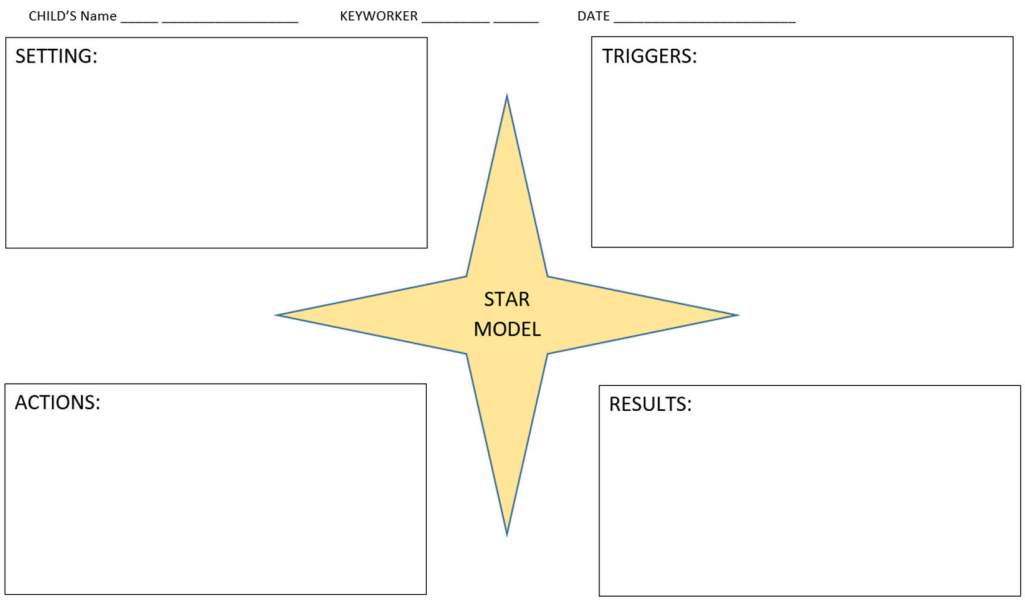
Related School Policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- SEND / Inclusion Policy and SEND Information Report
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equality information/objectives and relevant equality policies
- Medical Needs Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy

Appendix 1 - STAR Behaviour Record

Use this record when structured observation will help staff understand the function, pattern or context of behaviour. Record positive as well as unwanted behaviour where useful.

Setting	Triggers	Actions	Results
Environmental or personal context, e.g. noise, group size, hunger, tiredness, routine change.	What happened immediately before?	What did the child and others do? Be specific and observable.	What happened afterwards? Consider attention, sensory outcome, access to items/activity, escape/avoidance and emotional response.



Appendix 2 - Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP)

Child's name:	Date of birth:

Person completing plan:	Date plan started:

People involved in plan:	Review date:

Aim of the plan

Set specific, meaningful and achievable outcomes. Focus on increasing safety, communication, regulation and participation rather than simply suppressing behaviour.

About the Child

Likes, dislikes, strengths, interests, motivators, what helps the child feel safe and what the child is good at.

Communication and Skills

How the child communicates, including receptive and expressive communication, signs/symbols/objects, ALDs, Makaton or other systems. Record skills already present and skills to teach as alternatives to behaviour.

Description of behaviour	Likely function/message	Known setting events	Known triggers

Staged Support Strategies

1. Proactive strategies - helping me feel safe, calm and ready

What we might see	How we should act

2. Early signs of dysregulation - secondary prevention

What we might see	How we should act

3. Distress or crisis - reactive strategies

What we might see	How we should act

4. Recovery and post-crisis support

What we might see	How we should act

Evaluation of Effectiveness

Date/Time	Context	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
		Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:
		Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:
		Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:
		Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:
		Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:
		Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:	Yes / No Comments:

Appendix 3 - Individual Behaviour Plan

Child's name: _____

Date started: _____ Date of birth: _____

Behaviour/purpose/message of behaviour: _____

Aim of Individual Behaviour Plan: _____

Child's strengths: _____

This plan should be shared with parents/carers and reviewed at an agreed frequency appropriate to the child's needs.

Rewards / motivators	Triggers / things to avoid
Signs of stress / dysregulation	Successful strategies
Environmental modifications / preventative measures	Other relevant information

Signed (parent/carer): _____ Date: _____

Signed (teacher/practitioner): _____ Date: _____

Review date: _____

Reference Framework

This policy has been updated with reference to current Department for Education requirements and guidance in force in England at October 2026, including the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers (effective 1 September 2026), Behaviour in Schools guidance, Restrictive interventions including the use of reasonable force in schools (effective 1 April 2026), Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, and statutory guidance on suspension and permanent exclusion updated July 2026.