



Relationships and Communication Policy

Spring 2026

At Sherborne St John C of E Primary School, our policies are designed to ensure that every child can **achieve** their full potential, **enjoy** their learning, and be **inspired** by their experiences. This policy is underpinned by our core Christian values of **Trust, Truth and Forgiveness**, which enable us to build a secure, loving and thriving environment for our entire school community.

In line with our vision, this policy seeks to:

- **Foster Trust:** Building strong relationships with one another and exploring our relationship with God.
- **Uphold Truth:** Inspiring integrity and the courage to stand up for what is right.
- **Practice Forgiveness:** Creating an environment of patience and understanding where we take responsibility for our choices and move forward together when things go wrong.

Rooted in the Christian faith and the teachings of the Bible, our school remains a caring community where every individual is safe in the knowledge that they are loved and valued by God.

Relationships and Communication Policy

At Sherborne St John, we believe that high-quality learning is rooted in high-quality relationships. This policy moves away from a traditional "behaviour management" model toward a **relational** approach. We recognize that behaviour is a form of communication, often reflecting a child's internal emotional state or unmet needs.

1. Trauma-Informed Response

Our school environment is designed to be a secure base for every child. A trauma-informed approach means we assume that any child may have experienced toxic stress or trauma, and we respond with empathy rather than punishment.

- **Regulate, Relate, Reason:** We first help the child **regulate** their nervous system (calm down), then **relate** by connecting with them through empathy, and only then **reason** to address the behaviour.
- **Safety and Predictability:** We minimise anxiety by maintaining clear, consistent routines and calm-assertive adult transitions.

2. Relational Management: Clear and Consistent Boundaries

Boundaries provide safety. While our approach is empathetic, it is not soft. We maintain high expectations through consistent, predictable boundaries that are applied with warmth.

- **The Scripted Approach:** Staff use calm, low-level scripts to address boundary-crossing. This reduces the shame response in children and prevents power struggles.



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- **Certainty over Severity:** We prioritise the *certainty* that a boundary will be reinforced over the *severity* of a sanction.
- **Positive Framing:** Instead of "Don't run," we say "Walk for safety." We focus on the behaviour we want to see.

3. Strategies to Support Emotional Regulation

We equip students with the vocabulary to communicate their internal states before they escalate into outward behaviour.

- **Daily Check-ins:** Every classroom uses an emotional check-in system (e.g., a lollypop stick pot or check in chart) during morning and afternoon registration.
- **Calm Corners:** Every classroom has a calm corner with access to resources that can be used to ensure regulation. This approach means that children are not excluded from the classroom which can heighten a feeling of being unwanted. There are calm areas available during break and lunchtime.
- **Teacher Response:** Teachers respond subtly to the data they receive from check ins ensuring that children have access to the strategies below:
- **Toolboxes:** Students are taught "tools" (breathing, movement, sensory breaks, use of calm corners) to help them to regulate.

4. Communication: Restorative Conversations

When boundaries are crossed or harm is caused, we use Restorative Practice to repair the relationship. This shifts the focus from "Who is to blame?" to "Who has been harmed and what do they need?"

When a child is ready to reason, staff facilitate a conversation/or reflection visually using these five questions: *(for some children this may be done through role play, puppets, comic strips or conversations)*

1. What happened? (To establish the facts)
2. What were you thinking/feeling at the time? (To explore the internal state)
3. What have you thought since? (To reflect on the impact)
4. Who has been affected and how? (To develop empathy)
5. What needs to happen to make things right? (To find a solution)

Staged Intervention: When Restoration is Not Yet Possible

We recognise that a **Restorative Conversation** requires the child to be in a "reflective" state. If a child remains in the dysregulated or is unable to engage, we use structured interventions to maintain safety and allow for regulation.

Structured Playtimes

For some pupils, the unstructured nature of the playground can be a trigger for dysregulation.



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- The Nurture Play Model: Instead of a traditional "loss of break," pupils may move to a Structured Playtime. This is a supervised, smaller environment with adult-led activities (e.g., board games, LEGO, or specific sporting roles).
- **The Goal:** This is not a punishment but a proactive measure to ensure the child experiences success during social times while they work on their regulation skills.

Time Out of Class (Regulated Withdrawal)

If a child is dysregulated during lessons teachers will employ a range of adaptive strategies. These may consist of: predictable transitions- using timers or visual reminders; movement breaks; time in the calm down corner; physical resources such as fidget aids; academic supports – worked examples.

If a pupil's behaviour is preventing the Quality of Education for the rest of the class, they may be asked to spend time in a designated "Regulation Space" or a partner classroom.

- **Regulation over Reflection:** The first 10–15 minutes are focused purely on calming the nervous system (e.g., sensory tools, drawing, or quiet reading).
- **Guided Work:** Once calm, the pupil completes their classwork in this quieter space to ensure no learning is lost.
- **The "Reset" Requirement:** A pupil only returns to their classroom once a successful (even if brief) restorative check-in has occurred with the teacher.

12. Transparent Communication with Parents

We believe in "no surprises." When things are not going well, we move toward a high-frequency communication model to support the family as well as the child.

Reporting Incidents

While we celebrate the successes, we are equally transparent about challenges:

- **Early Notification:** If a child has required time out of class or has been involved in a significant incident, parents will be notified via a phone call or a brief face-to-face chat at the end of the day.
- **The Collaborative Tone:** We report these incidents not to report the child, but to ask: "*We noticed [Child's Name] struggled with [Trigger] today; have you noticed anything similar at home we can learn from?*"
- **Behaviour Support Meetings:** If incidents become frequent, we will invite parents to a formal meeting to co-create an Individual Behaviour Management Plan (IBMP). This ensures that the boundaries at home and school are aligned, providing the child with a consistent map to follow.

5. Staff Commitment and Professionalism



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As a learning organization, our staff are the primary models of effective communication.

- **Co-Regulation:** Staff recognise that their own emotional state affects the child. We practice self-regulation to ensure we respond to incidents with a calm, neutral presence.
- **Professional Development:** All staff receive ongoing training in relational skills and EEF-informed strategies for social and emotional learning.
- **Parental Communication:** We view parents as partners. Communication regarding behaviour is framed around "How can we support [Child's Name] together?" rather than simply reporting negative incidents.

6. Discriminatory Behaviour and Protected Characteristics

In line with the **Equality Act 2010** and our Christian values of dignity and respect, discriminatory behaviour is treated with the utmost seriousness. This includes any conduct related to the nine protected characteristics (e.g., race, religion, disability, or gender identity).

- **Zero-Tolerance Approach:** While we use a restorative model, we are clear that discriminatory language or banter is never acceptable. It is recorded as a specific category of incident to track trends and ensure a safe environment for all.
- **Educational Response:** We aim to not just reprimand; we educate. Following a discriminatory incident, the restorative process will specifically include learning about the impact of that language/behaviour on the individual and the wider community.
- **Hampshire Reporting:** Significant incidents of a racist or homophobic nature are reported to the Local Authority in accordance with Hampshire's monitoring requirements.

7. Extreme Behaviour Incidents

Unacceptable Behaviour

We do not tolerate:

- Physical abuse (for example spitting, biting, kicking, punching and scratching)
- Verbal abuse (for example name calling, swearing or foul language and shouting)
- Rudeness (for example refusal to obey an adult or behaving in a way that disrupts learning, obscene gestures, answering back, uncooperativeness, open defiance)
- Destructiveness (for example deliberately causing damage to school or other people's property)
- Prejudicial behaviour (for example making someone feel uncomfortable because of their colour, gender, sexuality or indeed any difference that may be taken as a cause for discriminatory behaviour)



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Sanctions:

Students usually respond to relational strategies and then behaviour can be managed by praise. A child who behaves inappropriately needs support and we deal with this by investing time with the child in order to discover what problem he/she is trying to solve. When a sanction needs to be used the consequence should be:

- related to the disruptive behaviour
- reasonable
- respectful
- teach the child something

Where a sanction needs to be used it is very important to repair the relationship with the child to enable the child to have a fresh start. Parents will be informed when appropriate.

Sanctions may include:

- a verbal reprimand
- a written reflection – if appropriate
- loss of privileges – for instance the loss of a prized responsibility
- natural, restorative consequences, such as tidying a classroom
- regular check ins with senior leaders

Sanctions to be used when classroom strategies have been exhausted

1. The class teacher will inform the Headteacher and Inclusion Lead/SENCO and invite the student's parents/carers into school to discuss the ongoing problems. The class teacher will advise the parents/carers of further strategies that encourage home-school support and keep parents/carers informed regarding the progress being made.
2. If no progress has been made over the course of time, the Headteacher or Inclusion Lead/SENCO will also attend the meeting. Further strategies will be devised, which requires reporting of behaviour to the Headteacher and parents/carers each day. The Inclusion Lead/SENCO will closely monitor progress in consultation with the class teacher.
3. The Headteacher, Inclusion Lead/SENCO and Class Teacher will monitor and review the situation regularly.

Further Measures

If procedures are not supporting the child and their behaviour is not improving, other professionals employed by the Local Education Authority may be involved. The Educational Psychologist or Primary Behaviour Service may be asked to advise. Behaviour targets will be set and reviewed in discussion with the parents.

Documentation and Records

The class teacher will note recurring incidents of poor behaviour on CPOMS. A behaviour plan may be implemented.

On the advice of the Inclusion Lead/SENCO a behaviour diary may be kept and Individual Behaviour Management Plan set in motion. The Headteacher must be kept informed.



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Outside agencies may be contacted by the Headteacher or the Inclusion Lead may be authorised to do this e.g. Primary Behaviour Support, Educational Psychologist, in consultation with Parents/Carers.

The Headteacher is empowered to suspend a child for a day or more if their behaviour is extreme. (The Governors will be informed). If a child is suspended the procedure will be in line with Hampshire and DfE guidelines. **(See SSJ Suspension and Exclusion Policy)**

8. Bullying

At Sherborne St John, we define bullying as the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can be physical, verbal, or psychological, including cyber-bullying.

What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.

Types of bullying

Bullying can take different forms. It could include:

- physical bullying: hitting, slapping or pushing someone
- verbal bullying: name calling, gossiping or threatening someone
- non-verbal abuse: hand signs or text messages
- emotional abuse: threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- exclusion: ignoring or isolating someone
- undermining, constant criticism or spreading rumours
- controlling or manipulating someone
- making silent, hoax or abusive calls

The following types of bullying are also hate crime:

- racial, sexual, transphobic or homophobic bullying
- bullying someone because they have a disability.

Signs of bullying

No single sign will indicate for certain that a child is being bullied, but the following may be indicators:

- belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- physical injuries, such as unexplained bruises
- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- not doing as well at school
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to whoever's bullying them)
- being nervous, losing confidence, or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- problems with eating or sleeping
- bullying others.

Effects of bullying



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The effects of bullying can last into adulthood. At its worst, bullying has driven children and young people to self-harm and even suicide.

Children who are bullied:

- may develop mental health problems like depression and anxiety
- may have fewer friendships
- may not be accepted by their peers
- may be wary and suspicious of others
- may have problems adjusting to school, and don't do as well.

All children who are affected by bullying can suffer harm – whether they are bullied, they bully others or they witness bullying.

Our Prevention Strategy

Guided by our relational approach, we aim to build a culture where bullying cannot thrive:

- **The Upstander Culture:** Through collective worship and PSHE, we teach pupils that doing nothing is not an option. We empower the silent majority to report concerns safely.
- **Curriculum Links:** We use our PSHE curriculum to explore the impact of social exclusion and the difference between falling out and bullying.
- **Safe Spaces:** Designated Worry Boxes and daily Emotional Check-ins allow pupils to flag concerns even if they are not yet ready to speak aloud.

Bullying Allegations

Every report of bullying will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated, usually by the Class Teacher, Deputy Headteacher and/or Headteacher. When the school decides that an incident of bullying has occurred, a rigorous process will be followed, as outlined below:

Stage	Action	Responsibility
1. Immediate Safety	Ensure all parties are safe and separated if necessary.	Staff Member
2. Investigation	Listen to all parties separately. We use a Restorative Inquiry (e.g., "What has been happening?") rather than aggressive interrogation.	Class Teacher / SLT



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Stage	Action	Responsibility
3. Documentation	Record the incident on the school's tracking system, categorising the type (e.g., verbal, physical, cyber) and any protected characteristics involved.	Class Teacher
4. Parental Contact	Parents of both the victim and the perpetrator are informed. We explain the steps being taken to resolve the issue.	SLT / Headteacher
5. The Resolution	We use a Restorative Meeting if appropriate. If the victim does not feel safe, we use mediation to communicate needs and agree on boundaries.	SLT/Headteacher
6. Monitoring	A "Check-in" period (usually 2-4 weeks) follows to ensure the bullying hasn't resumed and that the victim feels secure.	Class Teacher in collaboration with parents

Escalation and Sanctions

While we are a restorative school, bullying is a serious breach of our Relationship Policy.

- **Tiered Response:** If bullying behaviour persists after restorative intervention, formal sanctions will be applied, ranging from loss of social time to suspension, in line with DfE and Hampshire guidelines.
- **External Support:** If bullying involves criminal activity (such as harassment or illegal online content), we will consult with our local Police Liaison Officer or Hampshire's Inclusion Support Service.

9. Celebrating Success: Recognition and Rewards

At Sherborne St John, we believe that "what you focus on, you get more of." Our reward system is designed to celebrate not just academic achievement, but the **relational and character strengths** of our pupils.

Saint Points

- **The House Connection:** Pupils earn Saint Points for demonstrating our core values, showing 'Great Learning' (linked to Rosenshine's principles), or showing exceptional kindness.



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- **Collective Effort:** These points feed into a weekly House Total, fostering a sense of belonging and healthy team spirit.

Celebration Assembly

- **Weekly Recognition:** Every Friday, we gather for our Celebration Assembly. Teachers nominate pupils for specific awards (Star of the Week or Excellent Effort Awards)
- **Termly Recognition:** Every term children who have shown the school values to an exceptional level are recognised.
- **Certificates:** These tangible rewards are presented in front of the whole school community to validate the hard work and positive choices made by the pupils.
- **Postcards Home:** Staff are encouraged to send positive postcards or make praise calls to ensure that good news travels home quickly.

9. Expectations of Parents and Carers

A child's success is a three-way partnership between the school, the child, and the home. We ask that our parents support our Relational approach.

- **Support for Boundaries:** We ask parents to support the school's boundaries. If a parent has a concern about a specific consequence or incident, we ask that this is discussed privately with the school rather than on social media or in front of the child.
- **Communication of Needs:** Parents should inform the school of any changes at home (e.g., bereavement, sleep issues, or stress) that might affect a child's emotional regulation. This allows us to provide a proactive trauma-informed response.
- **Model the Policy:** We expect parents to model the same respectful communication and calm-assertive tone that we expect from our pupils when interacting with staff and other members of the community.