

RELATIONSHIP & REGULATION POLICY

This policy constitutes the schools' 'behaviour policy' for the purposes of paragraph 9 of the independent school standards.

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Policy Statement

This policy constitutes the school's behaviour policy in line with Independent School Standards. It should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Use of Reasonable Force and Physical Intervention Policy

At Orange Tree School, we take a relational, therapeutic, and neurodiversity-affirming approach to behaviour. We understand that behaviour is a form of communication and prioritise safety, regulation, and relationships in all responses.

This policy reflects the voice of our school community, including pupils, families, and staff, and outlines how we work together to support pupils to feel safe, understood, and able to thrive.

Purpose

At Orange Tree School, we actively collaborate with pupils and continuously seek to improve our provision in response to their needs and experiences.

This policy outlines how Orange Tree School supports pupils' emotional regulation through relationships and engagement with learning. It reflects our therapeutic, strengths-based approach to supporting neurodivergent pupils and ensures that all staff respond consistently and compassionately to pupils' needs.

Our aim is to create a learning environment where pupils feel safe, respected, and able to develop the skills needed to regulate emotions, build relationships, and engage positively in education.

By building on pupils' strengths and interests, and using evidence-informed strategies within a person-centred framework, we support pupils to:

- Develop Self-Regulation
- Strengthen Resilience
- Build Confidence and Self-Esteem
- Develop Positive Relationships
- Access Learning Successfully

Core Beliefs

At Orange Tree School, we believe that pupil behaviour — particularly moments of dysregulation — communicates an unmet emotional, sensory, social, or environmental need. Staff respond by prioritising safety, regulation, and understanding while maintaining clear expectations and supportive boundaries.

We believe therapeutic learning should be grounded in a positive, non-deficit understanding of neurodiversity. Empathy, curiosity, and understanding guide our responses to pupils' needs and experiences.

We recognise that pupils may experience barriers to learning, communication, fluctuating capacity, and emotional regulation. At times, these challenges may present as dysregulation or behaviour that signals an unmet need. Rather than viewing these responses as deliberate misbehaviour, we seek to understand their underlying causes and provide appropriate support, including adjustments to demands, environmental factors, and the provision of alternative options.

Our approach is guided by the following principles and built on trust and understanding:

- **We Believe Safety Comes First:** Emotional and sensory regulation are prioritised, so pupils feel secure. A regulated learner is better able to access learning.
- **We Believe in High Expectations with High Support:** We do not lower expectations for learning. Instead, we provide high levels of support and adapt environments, approaches, and demands so that all pupils can access learning and experience success. Many pupils join Orange Tree School following challenging experiences in previous educational settings. We aim to rebuild confidence in learning by providing an environment where pupils feel understood, valued, and able to succeed academically and socially while respecting their individual neurodivergent profiles.
- **We Believe in Whole-Person Support:** We consider pupils' cognitive, emotional, sensory, and social needs through a holistic model of support.
- **We Believe in Strength-Based Practice:** Learning builds on pupils' interests, talents, and preferred ways of learning.
- **We Believe Support Must Be Individualised:** Provision is flexible and responsive, recognising that one approach does not suit every learner.
- **We Believe Relationships Are Central:** Trusting, consistent relationships between pupils, educators, and therapists are fundamental to engagement, emotional security, and development.
- **We Believe in Co-Regulation and Collaboration:** Adults play a key role in supporting pupils to regulate their emotions through calm, consistent interactions. Pupils' voices, perspectives, and experiences are valued, and we work collaboratively with them to shape support and continually improve our provision.

What Pupils Can Expect

At Orange Tree School, pupils can expect an environment built on positive relationships, trust, and respectful social interactions. Staff work consistently to create a community where pupils feel understood, valued, and supported in their learning and wellbeing.

We recognise that change and uncertainty can be challenging for many pupils. Staff support pupils through transitions and changes in a thoughtful and predictable way, taking individual needs into account.

Preparation, clear communication, and supportive relationships help pupils feel secure and confident when navigating change.

Orange Tree School provides predictable routines alongside flexibility to meet individual needs. Our environment is designed to support regulation, wellbeing, and engagement.

As a sensory-aware school, our low-arousal environment includes:

- Neutral Colours and Calm Learning Spaces
- Small Teaching Groups
- Access to Quiet Areas for Regulation
- Access to Outdoor Spaces for Movement and Sensory Regulation

These features support pupils to feel calm and safe, enabling them to develop confidence and strategies for managing challenges.

Pupils can also expect:

- Consistent and Predictable Adult Responses, which support emotional safety and help build trust.
- Opportunities to Develop Social Understanding and Relationships through supported interactions, collaborative learning, and structured social opportunities.

Pupils are explicitly taught emotional regulation and coping strategies. Visual supports, scaffolding, and multimodal teaching approaches are used to enhance understanding and reduce cognitive load.

Dysregulation is understood as communication of need rather than a deliberate attempt to disrupt learning. Staff respond with curiosity, empathy, and support.

Through this approach, we aim to create a safe, supportive learning environment where pupils feel secure, valued, and able to develop the confidence and skills needed to succeed both academically and socially.

Boundaries

At Orange Tree School, clear and predictable boundaries support pupils to feel safe and understand expectations. Boundaries help create an environment where everyone can learn, feel respected, and experience a sense of security.

We recognise that pupils have individual needs and capacities, and staff respond in a flexible and personalised way. We aim to provide pupils with the support they need in the moment, helping them regulate, reflect, and re-engage with learning.

While our approach is supportive and responsive, safety is always a priority. All members of the school community have the right to feel safe and treated with dignity and respect.

Some expectations are non-negotiable, particularly where safety is concerned. This includes behaviours that may place the pupil or others at risk, including unsafe physical behaviours. In these situations, staff act promptly to maintain safety while responding with calm, supportive, and proportionate approaches.

At Orange Tree School we believe boundaries are:

- Rooted in the school's values and principles
- Developmentally appropriate
- Communicated in accessible ways, including visual supports, objects of reference, and social stories
- Phrased positively, focusing on expected behaviour
- Consistently reinforced by staff
- Adapted where necessary to meet individual needs

Boundaries are revisited regularly to support understanding and reinforce expectations.

Where appropriate, pupils may also receive support through the school's therapeutic provision, helping them develop greater understanding of their emotions, behaviours, and relationships in a safe and supportive way.

Through clear expectations, respectful relationships, and personalised support, we aim to help pupils develop increasing independence, self-awareness, and responsibility over time.

Routines

Consistent routines are essential in supporting emotional regulation, reducing anxiety, and promoting engagement with learning. At Orange Tree School, routines help pupils feel safe by providing predictability while remaining flexible enough to respond to individual needs.

Routines support pupils to:

- Understand expectations
- Manage transitions
- Prepare mentally and emotionally for learning
- Reduce uncertainty and anxiety

Staff explicitly teach routines and do not assume prior understanding. Clear modelling, repetition, and visual supports help pupils develop familiarity and confidence in daily structures.

To support consistency across the school:

- Classrooms are calm, organised, and low-arousal
- Lesson slides communicate structure and expectations
- Each lesson begins with a “Do Now” activity to support calm transitions into learning
- Equipment is provided to reduce cognitive load
- Self-advocacy boards enable pupils to communicate needs, preferences, and emotions

Staff also support pupils in adapting to changes in routine through preparation, clear communication, and visual supports. Where possible, changes are anticipated and explained in advance to reduce anxiety and help pupils feel secure.

Predictable routines also support co-regulation, enabling staff to provide consistent guidance and reassurance that helps pupils feel emotionally safe and ready to engage with learning.

Through predictable routines and supportive preparation, pupils are better able to regulate their emotions, engage with learning, and develop increasing independence over time.

Regulation Support for Our Learners

Orange Tree School uses the Regulate – Relate – Reflect framework to support pupils during moments of dysregulation.

Regulate

The first priority is supporting pupils to reach a calm and regulated state.

Dysregulation may occur due to emotional overwhelm, sensory overload, anxiety, or communication difficulty. Staff respond by prioritising co-regulation and emotional safety.

Strategies may include:

- Reduced language
- Movement breaks
- Sensory supports
- Quiet spaces
- Supportive adult presence

At this stage, demands may be temporarily reduced to help pupils feel safe and supported.

Relate

Positive relationships are central to effective support.

Staff approach dysregulation with curiosity rather than judgement and work alongside pupils to understand underlying needs. Adults provide clear guidance and supportive choices appropriate to the pupil's developmental level.

Processing time is always provided so pupils can regulate emotions and make decisions.

Reflect

Reflection occurs once pupils are calm and able to engage meaningfully.

Staff support pupils to explore:

- What happened
- How they were feeling
- How others may have felt
- What support may help next time

Restorative responses are linked to learning and relationship repair rather than punishment.

This approach helps pupils develop self-awareness, responsibility, and emotional understanding.

Language of Choice

Staff use the language of choice to support pupils in developing independence, responsibility, and decision-making skills.

We recognise that not all pupils are able to advocate for themselves independently. In these situations, staff provide additional scaffolding, modelling, and support to help pupils understand options and communicate their needs in accessible ways.

Using the language of choice:

- Promotes agency and autonomy
- Reduces power struggles
- Supports collaboration between pupils and adults
- Reinforces understanding of cause and effect

Where needed, choices are supported through visual aids, structured prompts, or guided support to ensure pupils can meaningfully participate.

Positive choices and effort are recognised through specific, descriptive praise, helping pupils understand what they have done well and reinforcing positive engagement with learning and relationships.

Over time, this approach supports pupils in developing greater self-awareness, confidence, and the ability to advocate for their needs.

Zones of Regulation

Green Zone – Ready to Learn

Pupils in the Green Zone are regulated and able to engage positively with learning.

This may include:

- Participating in lessons
- Completing tasks
- Listening and engaging with staff and peers

Pupils in the Green Zone are supported through positive reinforcement, descriptive praise, and recognition of effort.

Amber Zone – Needs Support

The Amber Zone indicates that a pupil may be experiencing early signs of dysregulation and may require additional support.

This may include:

- Difficulty focusing on tasks
- Appearing unsettled or distracted
- Avoiding learning tasks
- Showing signs of anxiety or overwhelm

Staff support pupils through:

- Reassurance and encouragement
- Processing time
- Movement breaks
- Sensory supports
- Scaffolded support for learning tasks

The aim is to help pupils regulate and re-engage with learning.

Red Zone – Regulation and Support

The Red Zone indicates that a pupil is experiencing significant dysregulation and may be unable to engage safely with learning at that time.

This may include:

- Emotional overwhelm
- Distress or withdrawal
- Inability to engage with tasks

At this stage pupils are supported to:

- Access a calm or quiet space
- Regulate with adult support
- Reduce demands temporarily

Once the pupil is calm and able to engage, staff support reflection and relationship repair where appropriate.

Restorative responses focus on learning and repair rather than punishment.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is central to the culture of Orange Tree School.

Staff recognise and reinforce behaviours that support learning, wellbeing, and positive relationships. Recognition focuses on effort, progress, and positive choices rather than competition or comparison.

Examples include:

- Descriptive praise
- Certificates recognising the Orange Tree Values
- Communication with families celebrating achievements
- Additional responsibilities
- Access to preferred activities
- Group rewards recognising collective success

Rewards are always linked explicitly to the school's values so pupils understand the behaviours being recognised.

Through this approach pupils develop:

- Confidence and self-esteem
- Intrinsic motivation
- A sense of belonging and responsibility within the school community

Restorative Responses

Orange Tree School does not use punishment or sanctions as a routine response to pupil behaviour. Instead, we use restorative responses that support learning, responsibility, and relationship repair.

We recognise that meaningful reflection can only take place when a pupil is emotionally regulated. Therefore, regulation is prioritised before any restorative or reflective conversations take place.

Even when behaviour presents challenges or safety concerns, staff respond in ways that maintain the pupil's dignity and prioritise the preservation of positive relationships.

Restorative responses are:

- Directly linked to the situation that occurred
- Proportionate and developmentally appropriate
- Delivered calmly and respectfully
- Focused on learning and repair rather than blame

Examples may include:

- Taking time to regulate in a calm space
- Reflective conversations with staff
- Restorative discussions with those affected (where agreed)
- Repairing or restoring relationships

The aim is always to support pupils to understand the impact of their actions, repair relationships where appropriate, and return to learning positively.

Reflection and Reparation

Reparation means repairing relationships and making positive changes following a difficulty or incident.

This process supports pupils to:

- Understand the impact of their actions
- Develop empathy and accountability
- Rebuild trust with others
- Reconnect with learning

Reparation may include:

- Reflective conversations
- Restorative discussions
- Guided reflection activities
- Apologies or repairing damaged property
- Support from the Pastoral Team

Reparation is personalised and developmentally appropriate. Pupils with complex needs are supported to engage in ways that are accessible to them.

Staff also reflect on their own responses and consider whether adjustments to support, communication, or the environment may help prevent future difficulties.

Roles and Responsibilities

Supporting regulation, relationships, and wellbeing is a shared responsibility across the school community.

Role of the Class Team

Form Tutors and Learning Support Assistants provide the day-to-day relational and emotional support for pupils.

They:

- build trusting relationships with pupils
- model the Orange Tree Values
- support co-regulation during moments of dysregulation
- implement classroom routines and visual supports
- recognise and celebrate positive choices
- support reflection and immediate repair where appropriate
- record significant incidents using the ABC system
- communicate with the Pastoral Team and families
- Form Tutors hold pastoral oversight of their tutor group and act as a key point of contact for families.

Role of the Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team provides targeted support for pupils who require additional help with emotional regulation and wellbeing.

They:

- facilitate reflection and repair sessions
- support pupils during periods of dysregulation
- develop emotional regulation strategies
- analyse behaviour records to identify patterns
- work collaboratively with teaching staff and therapists
- liaise with external professionals where appropriate

Role of the Family Liaison Officer

The Family Liaison Officer supports strong partnerships between school and families.

They:

- maintain open communication with parents and carers
- share strategies to support pupils at home
- support reintegration following periods of difficulty
- coordinate communication with external agencies
- advocate for pupils and families

Bullying (Including Cyberbullying)

Orange Tree School is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all pupils. There is a separate anti bullying Policy.

Bullying behaviour, including cyberbullying, is not tolerated and will always be taken seriously.

All incidents of bullying must be recorded using the ABC reporting system and addressed promptly.

Where bullying occurs:

- pupils involved will be supported to understand the impact of their behaviour
- restorative conversations will take place
- parents or carers will be informed
- appropriate support will be provided to prevent recurrence

Pupils are also supported to develop digital literacy and online safety awareness.

Discriminatory Language and Conduct

Incidents involving discriminatory language or conduct — including racism, homophobia, sexism, transphobia, or discrimination related to disability or religion — are not acceptable within the school community.

All such incidents are taken seriously and recorded using the ABC reporting system.

While discriminatory language or conduct is not tolerated, responses are approached in a trauma-informed and therapeutic manner, ensuring that all pupils are treated with dignity and respect. Staff address these incidents with curiosity, care, and a commitment to learning, supporting pupils to understand the impact of their words or actions and develop greater awareness and empathy.

Staff will seek to understand the pupil's level of awareness and intent before drawing conclusions, recognising that pupils may not always fully understand the meaning or impact of language they have heard or repeated. Through calm, respectful conversations, staff help pupils reflect on what has been said, why it may be harmful, and how respectful language supports a safe and inclusive community.

We recognise that pupils may sometimes repeat language they have heard elsewhere or may not yet understand the impact of discriminatory language. In these situations, staff provide clear guidance, education, and supportive conversations to help pupils develop respectful understanding.

At the same time, the school community maintains clear expectations that all individuals are treated with dignity, inclusion, and respect.

Responses focus on:

- Education and understanding
- Restorative conversations
- Reflection and accountability
- Clear reinforcement of respectful expectations within the school community

Where necessary, safeguarding procedures may be followed.

This approach reflects the school's wider commitment to responding with curiosity, maintaining dignity, and supporting regulation before reflection, ensuring that learning and respectful relationships remain at the centre of our practice.

Recording Incidents – ABC System

Significant incidents are recorded using the ABC reporting system.

ABC stands for:

A – Antecedent

Events or triggers that occurred before the behaviour or dysregulation.

B – Behaviour

A clear and objective description of what occurred.

C – Consequence

The response from staff, including support strategies, reflection, and outcomes.

ABC recording helps staff:

- identify patterns and triggers
- understand behaviour as communication
- adapt support strategies
- ensure safeguarding and accountability.

Suspensions

Orange Tree School does not view suspension as a routine or effective response for pupils with SEND. We are committed to adapting provision to support pupils wherever possible.

In exceptional circumstances, a fixed-term suspension may be necessary to maintain safety.

Such circumstances may include:

- serious risk to the safety of pupils or staff
- possession of weapons
- serious safeguarding incidents
- significant property damage
- possession of prohibited substances

Any decision to suspend is made carefully and in line with statutory guidance.

Where suspension occurs, the aim is to:

- maintain safety
- allow time for reflection
- plan additional support
- support positive reintegration.

Safeguarding and Risk

Emotional distress, self-harm, or suicidal ideation are safeguarding concerns rather than behaviour issues and are managed in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

All concerns are reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed in partnership with families and relevant external agencies.

Each pupil has an individual risk assessment which is reviewed regularly.

Conclusion and Commitment

Orange Tree School is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where all pupils feel understood, respected, and able to thrive.

We believe that behaviour is communication and that strong relationships are at the heart of learning, wellbeing, and development.

Through consistent, compassionate practice and strong partnerships with families, we aim to support every pupil to develop the skills, confidence, and understanding they need for both school and life beyond.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required, to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of our pupils and aligned with best practice.

