

Seva Education



Behaviour and Relationships Policy

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Seva Special School & College: Behaviour & Relationships Policy

1. INTRODUCTION & GENERAL PRINCIPLES

At Seva our children and young adults arrive to us with a range of highly complex diagnosed and undiagnosed needs and may have experienced a range of other traumas in their life for instance: insecure attachments, domestic violence, histories of rejection, exclusion, break down in professional relationships with trusted adults. The school uses an approach that understands the pupils' behaviour in the context of these factors and helps them realise their full potential by using strategies that work appropriately, taking into account their cognitive level and associated needs.

This includes:

- A nurturing approach that involves caring, consistent, empathic, non-retaliatory and boundaried relationships between staff and pupils.
- Recognising that pupils may have early-year's needs (e.g. need to learn how to play/form friendships) that are unmet and need to be provided before they can progress. This may mean providing support which is appropriate to their emotional/social age rather than their chronological age.
- Having clearly communicated expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- Developing pupils' abilities to understand and communicate their emotions.
- A positive approach with a focus on praising and rewarding good behaviour, recognising and developing strengths and abilities and helping pupils to develop an improved perception of themselves.
- Ensuring that pupils always feel wanted and supported despite their behaviour – firm expectations around behaviour.
- Acting as appropriate role models for our pupils.
- Being aware of our own verbal and body language as well as our emotional reactions to the pupils and how we respond to them.
- Being responsible about seeking support when needed.
- Providing good attachments for our pupils whilst being sensitive to and supporting relationships between parents/carers and their children.
- Providing opportunities for specialist therapeutic input where needed.
- Providing opportunities for pupils to demonstrate maturity and responsibility as they progress through Seva school.

2. UNDERSTANDING OUR PUPILS' NEEDS

It is important that we understand the meaning behind our pupils' behaviour if we are going to be able to support their difficulties. Our pupils' behavioural challenges can be caused by a wide range or combination of complex issues such as communication difficulties, anxiety, diagnosed/undiagnosed need, by lack of development due to attachment difficulties with parents/carers and also by them developing protective behaviours that have helped them cope with situations in their previous educational settings. Typical behaviours might include:

- Insecure attachment behaviours – clinginess, defiant independence, mistrust of adults, ambivalence (clinginess combined with rejecting behaviours).
- Lack of awareness or tolerance of external boundaries and lack of development of internal boundaries: risk-taking behaviours, impulsivity, inability to manage emotions, inability to think ahead and predict consequences, oppositional defiance, inability to understand or communicate about their feelings.
- Inability to tolerate difficult feelings – project them onto others through challenging behaviour to achieve temporary relief.
- Lack of empathy for others.
- Intense envy of their peers.
- Feelings of low self-esteem, critical of self, unable to recognise achievements.
- Intense fear of failure, inability to take healthy risks (e.g. in learning).
- A rigid need to control born out of anxiety of the unknown.
- Hyper-vigilance – always on the lookout for threat, hypersensitivity to insult or perceived threat.
- Inability to tolerate themselves as what they may describe as “good” or “bad” in the same person.

These behaviours can be frustrating and distressing when we are exposed to them daily but it is important that we see them in the context of our pupils' backgrounds and that we do not retaliate against them, i.e. we separate the child from the behaviour. These behaviours are not fixed and given the right kind of support within nurturing relationships, our pupils can make significant and lasting progress.

3. ENVIRONMENT

The classroom is clearly defined to include a work/learning area. At Seva this extends out to other areas within all of our buildings. For example, library areas, outside areas, playgrounds.

Classrooms and the school/college are clean, tidy and orderly and pupils encouraged to respect all rooms and areas, and their contents. To facilitate attachment to the class, a

sense of belonging and pride in the class can be encouraged by, for example:

- Agreeing a themed name for the class.
- Examples of pupils' learning on display on the walls.
- Pictures of class trips.
- Giving pupils class jobs and responsibilities.

4. ROUTINES AND DAILY TRANSITIONS

Our pupils find transitions anxiety-provoking and these times are flash-points for challenging behaviour. They need help to cope with daily transitions and we call these 'soft starts' to the day and 'soft finishes' before they leave on either private or public transport or make their way home independently. We:

- Use the beginning of the day to prepare pupils for the day ahead – let them know (or remind them) about any changes to their usual routine.
- Have clear visual displays of timetables which can be repeatedly referred to.
- Give pupils small, laminated copies of timetables to carry around if needed.
- Prepare them for ending an activity or lesson by warning them that a break or change is due (timers are useful for some pupils).
- Close the lesson/activity in a concrete way – sum up what has happened, achievements etc. and what will happen next time.
- Reassure pupils when an adult will see them again to remind them that they will still see them at some point soon.
- When a lesson change involves a member of staff, other staff can aid the transfer of attachment. This involves preparing pupils for the change and communicating to the incoming member of staff any concerns appropriately, and also any successes, from the lesson in front of pupils so they see a visible transfer of care.
- Praise pupils for making the right choices at the right times and who manage movement from one area to another and are in the right place at the right time.
- Make sure, when pupils leave a room, we remind them about coming back.
- Rehearse younger pupils through transitions. Predict as much as we can and eliminate the unknown. Tell pupils what will happen when they return.
- Use the end of the day to go over the day and prepare for the following day.
- Give advance warning of any changes to routine.
- Many pupils find leaving the security of school very difficult. Reassure them that you will be there for them tomorrow and are looking forward to seeing them but that it is now time to go home.

5. PROVIDING GOOD ATTACHMENTS

A secure attachment is essential for a child's psychological development. Many of our

pupils have not experienced this at home. If they experience secure attachments to caregivers at school, this can help them catch up on the development they have missed out on. This cannot and should not replace attachments to parents/carers but can be a vital “top up” if their full attachment needs have not been met at home.

Staff can provide secure attachments to pupils by:

- Being consistent, patient and dependable.
- Giving clear expectations and being predictable in our responses and reactions
- Tuning into their needs – noticing when they are hungry, upset, tired etc. and demonstrating care through your responses.
- Getting to know the pupil and what they need from your relationship with them. Empathising with and understanding their feelings.
- Addressing their distress – trying to understand the reasons for challenging behaviour and figure out solutions for the pupil, not retaliating through our reactions, managing our own behavioural responses to challenging behaviour.
- Demonstrating unconditional acceptance of the pupil – disapproving of behaviours, never the pupil as a person (e.g. “what you said was really rude”, not “you are so rude”).
- Accepting that our relationships with pupils is often one-way to start with – not expecting much back from them.

Knowledge of the pupil’s background can help us build good attachments with them. When we understand what they’ve been through, this can help us put their behaviours into context. When you start to work with a pupil, reading their file, personalised learning plan, and speaking to other professionals with experience of the child, e.g. class teachers/therapists, can help understanding of them as a person.

6. PROMOTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our pupils come to our school/college to learn about social skills and emotions as well as academic learning and it is important that we provide opportunities for this. Certain times are focal points for this learning, e.g. sift starts/finishes, assembly, break and lunch time, PSHE/RSE. However, social and emotional learning needs to be embedded throughout the whole day and as part of all lessons.

Activities for practising social skills and learning about emotions:

- Story-reading and storytelling.
- Circle/tutor time.
- Drama/roleplay.
- Group musical activities.

- Sport and games.
- Group art activities.
- Discussing films and stories in the news.
- Action songs and rhymes encouraging the pupils to focus on the teacher.
- Memory games both auditory and visual.
- Speaking and listening activities.
- Time for conflict resolution and facilitating apologies after incidents (this may not always be appropriate and may be some time after an incident).

Play is vital in children's development and teaches them about their emotional and social world. Children use play in the early years to rehearse for real life. It is essential that our children have the opportunity for directed and spontaneous play as part of their personal and social development. Age-appropriate play is just as important for older pupils who may have missed out on early years opportunities for play and will have missed out on this kind of learning as a result. Boundaries and rules are important in play and these need to be explicit with reminders where necessary. Play opportunities need to be matched to pupils' level of development - pupils may need to engage in supported solitary play before moving on to parallel play (play in the company with others but without much interaction) and finally social play. Sometimes this play, coupled with a need for a break from learning because of their cognitive load, needs to be taken. Across the school and college we refer to these as 'Learning Breaks'.

Please note – 'play-fighting' does not constitute constructive play and we do not allow or encourage play-fighting, either between pupils or adults and pupils.

Communicating about feelings. Pupils need to be encouraged to communicate appropriately about their feelings instead of acting out their feelings through challenging behaviour. We can support them in this in a number of ways:

- Modelling – talking about our own feelings and emotional reactions.
- This is particularly important for all staff, especially male staff, to help overcome gender stereotyping around boys not talking about their feelings and/or mental health.
- Praising pupils whenever they manage to tell you about their feelings.
- Verbalising your thoughts about a child's emotional state (this is communicating their feelings for them before they're able to do this themselves) – wondering aloud ("I'm wondering if you're upset because....").
- Providing opportunities for emotional communication – ask about their weekend etc.
- Make it safe for children to talk about their feelings – normalise their feelings by letting them know that we all have these feelings ("I'm not surprised you're upset, most children get upset when....").

- Empathise with their feelings – this helps them feel understood and when we feel understood it encourages further communication.

Because many of our pupils social, emotional and behavioural difficulties stem from past experiences and/or home and social experiences, it is helpful to provide pupils with opportunities to talk about their personal lives but without prying or being intrusive. Use open questions such as “how was your weekend?” If a pupil discusses a difficult personal issue with you, praise them for the communication and let them know it will help you help them. Reassure them they can talk with you again about it if they want to and identify other sources of support (e.g. SaLT therapist).

7. MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

Expectations and boundaries

The pupils and young adults need to know that there are clear expectations and boundaries. They will feel safe when they recognise that we are all working together for them, that the boundaries hold them secure and that the adults are in charge of themselves and the pupils. Class rules should be clearly displayed and should emphasise “do’s” rather than “don’ts”. Pupils, particularly verbal pupils, should be involved in deciding the rules.

Abusive language and disrespect is unacceptable and pupils need to be given the appropriate language and strategies to use. They need to be reminded of the school ethos of respect for yourself and others and dealing with each other in an acceptable manner. If abusive and disrespectful language is not challenged, it becomes accepted and allows for a climate of conflict and hostility to develop. If a child has become extremely distressed and is out of control and requiring physical intervention, the language used may be regarded somewhat differently. At Seva our physical intervention is based around Team Teach approaches. At these times it may be more helpful to ignore any verbal abuse and not to respond to it until the child has gained some level of calm. It is likely that there are other behaviours that need to be addressed at this point and the language is not a priority.

Be in the right place at the right time. This is an important management tool. Children should be taught to always ask before leaving a room and should only visit the place stated. Younger children, or children who are known to abscond, should always be accompanied or discreetly monitored by an adult. Older pupils should be given opportunities to prove they can be trusted.

Self-Awareness / Managing Ourselves

It is important that we act as role models for our pupils. This means containing our own

emotional reactions to situations and modelling behaviours that we hope our pupils can achieve. Managing behaviour is firstly dependent on the climate created by the adults within the classroom and then within the school/college:

- Use respectful verbal and body language when addressing pupils.
- Make positive eye contact, if appropriate, and address children with confidence.
- Address children by name and be clear in your message to them.
- Never use swearing or discuss inappropriate subjects in the presence of pupils.
- Don't shout or use aggressive body language.
- Remain calm but confident even (*especially*) when faced with challenging behaviour. We can be authoritative and firm, without being aggressive.
- If you are finding a situation too challenging to remain in control, ask for support or for someone else to take over – recognise when you are no longer helping the situation.
- Model positive communication with other staff in front of pupils.
- Communicate honestly and openly with the pupils and each other.
- Be careful with humour – avoid humour containing playful threats of aggression – often misinterpreted by the child as real aggression.
- Avoid using banter with pupils and discourage the use of pupils using any negative physical contact between themselves e.g. pushing/fighting if they are frustrated.

We need to be clear that we are the adults and it is our job to educate the pupils and look after them when they are in our care, teaching them how to behave appropriately. We take charge and although the children are to be included in decision making and in particular in devising their own behaviour targets if needed, it must be clear to them that the adults look after them. This does not mean that we can't be friendly and warm with the children (professional friend), but that we always combine this with being adult and boundaried. This requires particular skills with older pupils where this needs to be balanced with allowing them more opportunities for being responsible and independent as they get older. The way we do this mirrors how a good parent gradually renegotiates boundaries with a teenager while still remaining the parent.

Dealing with challenging behaviour.

The school/college has an emphasis on prevention rather than reaction. All the elements of our practice should be contributing towards prevention of challenging behaviour arising. When challenging behaviour does arise, the emphasis is on de-escalation.

De-escalation strategies:

- Firstly speak quietly and privately if possible to the child.
- Remark on a time when they have successfully changed a response.

- Pick out their strengths and remind them.
- Remember their individual targets and highlight the rewards.
- Offer alternative strategies-these are listed in their Personalised Learning Plans
- Use time-out or moving to another area in the school/college.
- Reiterate your commitment to supporting them and desire to help them.
- Avoid shouting or raising your voice, be aware of your body language and giving the pupil space.
- Use diversion, change the activity to remove pressure.
- Wonder aloud about the feelings behind the behaviour – empathise with the feelings.
- Don't use threats of sanctions.
- Remind of rewards/distractions/interests.
- Listen to what the child is trying to tell you (if the child says “go away and leave me alone”, if it is safe to do so, move a distance away but where you can still see them).
- Don't stand over them.
- Ask for help from another adult if you feel the pupil might be better helped by someone else.
- If other adults are managing a situation determine if you need to offer any support, or if the situation is under control.

8. PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

Physical Intervention is used where deemed appropriate by all professionals employed at Seva. Physical Intervention (PI), based on Team Teach principles, may be used in a variety of contexts. For instance, to guide a pupil to the right place, to avoid a situation from happening, to keep a pupil or other pupils and staff safe from perceived harm.

Where possible the pupil should be given a warning prior to a physical intervention. All Seva staff are trained in appropriate levels of PI, when to intervene and use them, and all staff are familiar with the policy.

The following points need to be adhered to by all staff:

Physical intervention may be used to prevent injury being caused to any person, including the child themselves, damage to property, engagement in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school or among any of its pupils. The number of staff involved should be the minimum necessary to safeguard the child and others.

The force used must be the minimum necessary to deal with the harm that needs to be prevented, i.e. it must be reasonable in the circumstances. Other staff who are near, or

who see the situation, are expected to check with other staff to offer support if needed.

All children have an Education, Health and Care Plan, a Personalised Learning Plan, and a Risk Assessment Form, which outlines considerations for that child in relation to physical intervention. These are updated on a termly basis.

Staff need to follow the system of reporting verbal headline information of the PI on the day of the event to the Executive Headteacher, or other senior leader, and then recording the physical intervention incident by logging it on CPOMS once all of the facts have been established.

The incident report form needs to be filled in on CPOMS ideally before staff leave at the end of the day, but at the latest the end of the next day on returning to work when everybody is present and has had the opportunity to communicate about what led up to the event, the event itself and then the action taken that resulted in the PI. All parties should agree with the PI report facts and if there is any disagreement with the facts then this needs to be noted in the account with a reason as to why and who disagrees. This is for transparency of information.

All staff involved must read through the report form and agree it before logging it on CPOMS as one incident. This avoids any confusion at a later stage about events and avoids potential allegations being made against staff.

During the time of the PI if a member of staff has a concern about a hold/or any form of physical contact/ or if they see any PI being undertaken that in their perception needs addressing then that member of staff who has the concern should speak directly at the time to that other member of staff. This is to offer support, guidance and re-correction.

This is very important to avoid any false allegations/ interpretations of events towards staff, and also provides staff with confidence that another member of staff who has a different viewpoint is expected to make that known at an early stage of events.

A follow up, at an appropriate time, with the child is important, along with informing the parent after the PI has taken place.

During a PI, avoid attempting to discuss in detail the incident – the child will be too distressed to think about it and it may further escalate behaviour. The time for that is later when the child has calmed down. Focus any talking on trying to de-escalate the child and help them calm.

Verbalise your belief in their ability to calm down and turn the situation around. Verbalise your commitment to continue to support them (“I’m here to help you” etc). Don’t retaliate to verbal abuse from the pupil. As a general rule, keep dialogue to a minimum during a

physical restraint and resist telling the child to 'calm down'.

Where possible "timeout" is given for staff and a child following a "hold". Senior members of staff offer a de-brief after a PI.

9. REWARDS AND CONSEQUENCES

Rewards

Clear rewards and consequences are essential for pupils, but the emphasis should always be on rewarding good behaviour choices. Our pupils come to our school/college often with a perception of themselves as "bad/naughty" and it is often easy for them to fit into a cycle of behaving badly and being given consequences from which they can see no hope of escaping. A clear, easy-to-understand and consistent reward system is essential in helping pupils notice and celebrate their own successes and build a different perception of themselves. At Seva we use the term 'Achievement Points'. Achievement Points earn rewards.

Our reward system incorporates the following elements:

- Pupils with special needs often find waiting difficult so rewards may be given at different times.
- In addition to daily rewards, pupils may need opportunities to gain rewards on an even shorter basis e.g. lesson by lesson.
- Targets for rewards are realistic considering the pupils' needs.
- Rewards that are earned must be given when they are expected. If not, the child's trust in adults will not be allowed to develop.
- Rewards are rarely taken away or delayed as this can impact on motivation.
- Opportunities are provided for public celebration of success (e.g. special mentions; assemblies).
- Small successes get noticed and are rewarded/celebrated.

Consequences

Debriefing incidents with pupils is essential in helping them to reflect on the consequences of their actions and understand the sequence of events involved. Our pupils act impulsively on their feelings without thinking. We need to help introduce a pause for thought in the sequence so that they can manage their reactions better.

- Consequences need to be applied sensibly and make sense to the child. They should, where possible, be included in the course of the day.
- Avoid escalating incremental consequences, e.g. the constant removal of minutes off break time, as this can become too anxiety-provoking for our pupils, leading to

hopelessness and sabotage.

- Wherever possible, include a reparation activity as part of the consequence e.g. comic strip conversation/social story.
- Consequences should be as consistent as possible throughout the school, but we recognise that they also need to be tailored, to a certain extent, to individual needs.
- For some children and classes, they operate a 'class reward time' system whereby children are rewarded for good achievements and good choices by receiving a short period of in school/class activity reward as agreed with their class teacher. These can vary and are determined on a class-by-class basis.
- Consequences must not be used as threats in the hope of managing the behaviour.
- Involve the child in choosing the consequence where possible.
- Consequences for very serious behaviour incidents should not be given out by an individual staff team member on the spot without consultation with a senior leader.

To improve consistency of applying consequences to all children and young adults throughout the school/college, the below bullet points offer a working framework with behaviour points. There is a more detailed framework available in the appendix at the end of this policy.

- Low level disruption: child may work apart from classmates or payback time out of break/lunchtime (the whole playtime must not be taken away).
- Medium level disruption: paying back time from break/lunchtime or removed to another class.
- Low and medium level disruption: Receive a conferencing session from a staff member because of unwanted behaviour. A child will undergo a 'reparation' session or activity. This is called a 'restorative conversation'.
- Any high-level disruption/behavior/violation of school behaviour expectations may result, after discussion with the Executive Head Teacher, in an agreed fixed term internal or external exclusion.

It is important that staff understand that in some circumstances it may be appropriate that there are no consequences. This may be particularly so if the young person would not be able to comprehend the link between the behaviour and the consequence.

10. POSITIVE TEACHING

To help boost self-esteem and change how our pupils view themselves, we need to constantly be on the lookout for small successes and to recognise and praise/reward these successes – '*Catch the children being good*'. It is important to remember that we need to notice behaviours that might seem ordinary but are significant for our children. It could be something as simple as a child saying hello back to you when you say hello to

them.

Keep language as positive and solution-focused as possible, e.g. focus on what behaviours you want, not the behaviours you don't want.

11. DIFFERENTIATING AND ADAPTING LESSONS

The way lesson content is taught needs to be adapted to meet the special needs of our pupils.

This depends on individual needs but can include:

- “Chunking” work into manageable small amounts.
- Getting pupils actively involved in learning rather than being passive recipients.
- Using kinaesthetic learning whereby pupils are physically moving as part of their learning (particularly for hyperactive pupils).
- Adapting how we communicate so pupils can understand.
- Picking up on pupils' individual interests and adapting lesson content to include these.

If lessons are not adapted appropriately, pupils may struggle to understand or engage with what is being taught which can lead to challenging behaviour or absenteeism as well as affecting their learning.

12. SUPPORTING MAJOR TRANSITIONS

Our pupils often have histories of loss and abrupt confusing endings. They find major transitions such as changes in staff or changing class hard to cope with and will need support.

Strategies that can help include:

- Wherever possible give advance warning, at least 4 weeks.
- Support the child emotionally during the preparation – reassure any anxieties, provide opportunities to ask questions.
- Where a staff change is involved, give the child a chance to build a relationship with the new staff member before the handover takes place.
- Encourage the idea of memory to help them cope with the loss involved.
- At the end of academic year, create a photo album with pupils celebrating memories of experiences from that year.
- Demonstrate a concrete transfer of attachment where handover between staff is involved.
- Have a meeting with current staff, new staff and child and discuss successes, areas

to work on etc

- When leaving school, be honest with pupils. This is a real ending, you won't be coming back.
- Express your pleasure at having worked with them, let them know you'll remember them, perhaps leave a concrete reminder of you such as a card.

Our pupils use all sorts of defenses to protect themselves against the pain of loss involved in these transitions and we need to understand those defenses. They can include denying any feelings of sadness, pretending not to care, trashing relationships before they end and projecting their feelings of anger/sadness into us through their behaviour.

13. SUPPORTING NON-ATTENDERS

Some pupils may be persistently absent from school. Sometimes this is partly an expression of natural adolescence in that they are absorbed in peer group activities outside of school and want to separate from the adult-imposed world. Often it is connected to their diagnosed/undiagnosed needs e.g. anxiety about the future / depression, lack of motivation, drug addiction. Sometimes what we are offering them simply does not interest them sufficiently. We need to be mindful of these themes when tackling persistent absenteeism.

Strategies that can be used to support non-attenders include:

- Being proactive – not letting the situation worsen without any intervention.
- Reaching out to the pupil – phone, text or visit.
- Communicating with parents.
- Early Help
- Arranging a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting as soon as possible for other professionals, pupil, and family to devise a strategy. If the pupil does not attend, ensure views are incorporated somehow into the strategy and send a copy to the pupil.
- Home visits.
- Being positive and encouraging in all communications with the pupil.
- Not focusing on the absence, but the reasons behind it.
- Stressing ongoing support and availability for them (they may assume you don't want them back or have forgotten about them)
- If a non-attender manages to come to school, praise them enthusiastically and don't criticise them for the absence.
- Explore what helped them manage to come and how this could be developed.
- Be flexible with timetables – what are they interested in?
- Are they more likely to engage with a shorter timetable?

- However, balance this with constant change as this can appear inconsistent – give strategies time to work.
- Engage the family – help identify figures other than parents (Sibling? Grandparent? Family friend?) who can support the pupil come to school.
- Ensure pupil is being rewarded at home for attendance.
- Ensure regular communication with family.
- Identify specialist support that may help with underlying problems – therapy, drugs work etc.
- Working with the local borough attendance officer and national guidance around fixed penalty notices.

It is easy to forget about absent pupils because they usually don't cause as much stress as the ones who do attend. However, this is often linked to their own personal narratives about being unimportant and easy to forget about so demonstrating to them consistently that you are thinking about them is an important first step. Above all, don't give up hope and be persistent. Seva has a separate attendance policy.

14. WORKING AS A TEAM

It is essential that pupils see us working together as a team. Many are at an emotional stage where they use “splitting” as an emotional defence to give them a sense of control over people. This involves splitting people into “good” people who are unrealistically idealised and “bad” people who are unrealistically demonised. To discourage this, adults need to demonstrate to pupils that they will not allow themselves to be split in this way.

Examples of how we do this include:

- Noticing when a colleague's authority is being undermined by a pupil and openly challenging this.
- Sharing information about behavioural incidents with colleagues in front of the pupil (in a way that isn't shaming and recognises any positives and opportunities for turning situations around).
- Ensuring that adults providing rewards, boundaries and consequences are not seen as 'good' or 'bad' adults in their role.
- Being consistent as a class team with rewards/consequences/rules.
- Not colluding with pupils, but referring back to the agreed working rules of the behaviour and relationships policy.

It is important that we all work together and share information as appropriate to ensure that we are providing effective joined-up care for our pupils.

15. WORKING WITH NETWORKS AND PARENTS / CARERS

The parents of our pupils are often struggling with their own past and present difficulties that impact on their day to day life. It is important that we build supportive relationships with parents so that there isn't an unhelpful split between school and home.

Parents may have had difficult experiences themselves of school and so may be anxious about forming a relationship with the school. We also can only do part of the job at school in terms of helping our pupils progress and it is important to help in whatever way we can to support the relationships between our pupils and their parents.

We can support parents in the following ways:

- Find out what is the best way to contact – phone? Email? Text?
- What's the best time to contact?
- How regular? (we would like it to be daily if possible).
- Needs to be regular enough to be of any use but not so that the parent feels overwhelmed.
- Ensure that positives are fed back as well as concerns (this is really important – parents do not want to only hear negative things about their child and we want to avoid the 'dread' of the school phone call.
- Mention at least one positive in every contact. Parents need to be given opportunities to praise their children.
- Model positive interactions with pupils in front of their parents.
- Model giving praise, being respectful, not shouting etc.
- Earn parents' trust by doing something concrete for them (e.g. find out about a play scheme).
- Be proactive – use home visits if a parent would prefer not to come to school, or use a Teams meeting.
- Ensure parents are informed promptly and effectively about school information, annual reviews, trips, incidents/consequences etc.
- Don't rely on parents reading letters or emails that are sent – follow up with a phone call if needed.
- Provide informal opportunities for parents to visit – opportunities for positive experiences with children at school – cooking, celebrations, visits.
- Parent workshops.

It is also important that we work professionally and in a joined-up way with pupils' professional networks. These networks can also often become split, particularly when there is a lot of concern around a child. It is easy for one member, often a social worker, to become criticised and blamed for things not being solved, and it is important to bear this in mind in meetings. The staff who work closest with the children should attend network meetings where possible and staff are encouraged to ask to attend.

Network meetings can become negative and hopeless in a way which is damaging for the child – we can help by looking for positives and possible solutions and not colluding with any splitting or unfair scapegoating within the network. It is important to put the child at the center of the decision-making process.

When sharing personal information about a pupil, be careful about what you share. It is important to balance the need to share information with the child's need for privacy.

16. Summary

It is important to remember why staff wanted to work at Seva and why parents wanted to send their child to our setting, especially after what may have been a difficult day.

As staff we have a shared passion and love for working with this group of children and young people. They are fun and they enrich our lives as much as we enrich theirs. We all learn from each other throughout our lives, and whilst working at Seva we are all on a shared educational journey, which includes working with the parents so there is a whole team around the child to support them.