Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL

Guidance for Schools and Community School Networks

"Working Together"
to Support Children, Young People & Staff
Promoting Positive Relationships

1. Background and Context

A Curriculum for Excellence (ACfE) aims to provide opportunities for every child and young person to become a successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen and effective contributor to Scottish society. These aims incorporate a broad range of outcomes, including 'learning how to learn' and the promotion of positive attitudes.

One of the strategies for promoting positive attitudes in schools and other educational settings is the development of a culture of constructive relationships based upon mutual respect, responsibility and tolerance within a supported learning environment.

ACfE aims to promote effective learning, both in and out of the classroom. Research demonstrates that there is a clear link between effective teaching, learning and the promotion of positive relationships between adults and learners. ACfE provides educationalists with the opportunity to further develop an effective learning environment through the use of curriculum flexibility, design and 'Assessment is for Learning' strategies.

There is no single, easy answer to developing positive relationships; it requires collegiate working at establishment and Service levels, particularly through regular review of policies and practice in consultation with all stakeholders.

The following paper aims to provide practitioners with 'signposting' to a range of easily accessible strategies which already support and promote positive relationships in establishments across Aberdeenshire.

2. Desired Outcomes

To provide practitioners with;

(a)   'Signposting' to positive relationship documentation for use by professionals delivering the integrated children's service agenda in Aberdeenshire

(b)   'Signposting' to professional development and training opportunities to support positive relationships among staff, children and young people

(c)   Guidelines for practitioners and managers in the formation of positive relationships, policies and practice

(d)   'Next steps' to be taken by the Education, Learning and Leisure Service to support establishments in the promotion of positive relationships

(e)   'Next steps' to be taken by Aberdeenshire establishments.

3. Discipline Task Group Response

Since the publication of *'Better Behaviour – Better Learning'* in June 2001, Aberdeenshire staff have been working with the Scottish Executive and schools to deliver recommendations made. Much good work has been done during this time, specifically in policy formulation both at Service and establishment levels, professional development, pedagogy, staged intervention strategies, pupil care, child protection, health, well-being and multi-disciplinary working.

There will continue to be a place for developing innovative practice, but it is important for all educators to share and further develop the consistent application of existing approaches into their current practice to promote positive relationships.

4. Promoting Positive Relationships across Aberdeenshire (Desired Outcomes (a) and (b))

To ensure the development of positive relationships across Aberdeenshire there needs to be a shared responsibility and ownership in the process and outcomes. It is therefore essential that a partnership approach involving staff, children, young people, parents/carers and other professionals is adopted in the formation of establishment policies and procedures that impact on ethos and relationships. It is further recognised that much advice, training and professional development is most effectively provided in a multi-disciplinary context.

Further information on promoting positive relations, including recent developments, examples of good practice and signposting to national policies and advice is available on the Better Behaviour website – *www.betterbehaviourscotland.gov.uk*

5. Entitlements and Responsibilities (Desired Outcome (c))

Unacceptable behaviour at all levels can be challenging for staff, children and young people. Any behaviour that disrupts or impacts adversely on the learning of other children or young people and the maintenance of health, safety and discipline within the school community is unacceptable. This includes low-level disruptive behaviour, bullying and incidents of verbal abuse, physical violence or assault. Establishment staff should not be made to feel they are failures as a result of challenging behaviour from a child or young person. All staff should be able to seek support without prejudice.

Aberdeenshire staff should be entitled to:

● A clearly defined Positive Relationships Policy, consistent with Service procedures, which outlines the available support to staff, children and young people. All behaviour management policies should be linked to other relevant establishment policies e.g. learning and teaching, health and safety and pupil support and include sanctions and support strategies. It is of key importance that such an agreed policy should be consistently applied and evaluated.

● Regular professional development and training on effective behaviour strategies

● Effective leadership and support from Head Teachers, promoted staff and ASSIST Coordinators

● A safe working environment, free from verbal abuse and threats/actual physical assault to protect all those in the school community. A Positive Relationships Policy should include clear guidelines on the reporting of abusive and violent behaviour and appropriate support for staff affected by such behaviour. It should also ensure the development of appropriate and effective risk assessments of disruptive pupils and/or classes

In addition to the above entitlements, Aberdeenshire staff have individual and collective

responsibilities to promote a positive learning environment in their establishments. This responsibility includes:

- Respect for children and young people

- High expectations towards pupils' learning and achievement

- A consistent application of agreed positive relationships policies

- Promoting a safe environment for learners

- Keeping parents/carers informed of their child's educational, personal and social development, including issues related to behaviour.

6. Professional Development and Resources (Desired Outcome (b))

All staff have an entitlement to support when taking forward responsibilities in meeting the needs of children and young people. Professional development activities on promoting positive relationships at school and Community Schools Network levels can be supported by the Educational Psychology Service. The Aberdeenshire CPD programme takes account of professional development needs identified by development planning, EDRS/PDRS and legislative/ policy requirements, as follows:

- A range of courses relating to inclusion, early intervention and accessibility are available to staff through the Aberdeenshire CPD programme
- ASPECTS courses to support children and young people with divergent learning styles and a range of learning difficulties
- All schools have been issued with the CD-ROM "Dealing With Disruption"
- ASSIST. Almost all Aberdeenshire schools (primary, secondary and special) have an ASSIST Coordinator to support staff in dealing with low-level indiscipline
- One-day courses on solution focused skills and behaviour management – available via the Aberdeenshire CPD catalogue
- De-escalation training focusing on the managing of extreme and/or challenging behaviour. Training has been 'rolled out' in all special schools and is being offered to staff in primary and secondary schools
- Promoting positive relationships database, containing details of personnel, staff expertise and resources available from Quality Improvement Officers within each Aberdeenshire Community Schools Network.

7. Aberdeenshire staged intervention supporting teaching (ASSIST) (Desired Outcomes (a) and (b))

The Discipline Task Group recommended that curriculum flexibility, the promotion of inclusion, staged intervention, dissemination of good practice, consistent approaches, involvement of parents/carers and collaborative approaches are important aspects to promoting positive relationships. The ASSIST programme meets these requirements. It is designed to support all school staff whether teaching or non-teaching. The focus is on the context in which unwanted behaviour occurs.

At **level one**, attention is on a specific behaviour (e.g. swinging on chair, shouting out) and not on a particular child or young person(s). This level was designed to address issues around low-level disruptive behaviour. Checklists are available to enable staff to identify areas for action

and a plan can be drawn up to effect the desired change.

A school based ASSIST Coordinator, trained in Solution Focused approaches, is available to work with staff in considering strategies and formulating ideas. This process may be used by an individual as a voluntary and confidential process or accessed by a group of staff.

At **level two** attention shifts to the behaviour of a particular child or young person(s). At this level, processes are followed as outlined in "Supporting Learning in Aberdeenshire - Pathways to Policy." In addition, in line with Scottish Executive guidelines, the ASSIST checklist is completed as an audit of the learning environment for the child or young person(s) concerned, so that any appropriate contextual changes can be made to maximise their learning experience.

Checklists may be used as **audit tools** by the whole school, a class, or to address issues arising during non-class time.

Support Materials

- ASSIST checklist - available from ASSIST Coordinators or ARCADIA
- ASSIST playtime Checklist - available from ASSIST Coordinators or ARCADIA ASSIST Manual - available from ASSIST Coordinators or ARCADIA
- Thinking Things Through - Primaries (ASSIST for Pupils) - piloting in 2007/8
- Thinking Things Through - Academies (ASSIST for Pupils) - piloting in 2007/8

How do I find out more?
Further information can also be sourced from Aberdeenshire's Arcadia and *elaine.harding@ aberdeenshire.gov.uk*

8.   Restorative Practices (Desired Outcomes (a) and (b))

Restorative practice is a philosophy or a way of working. It emphasises the human wish to feel safe, to belong, to be respected and to understand and have positive relationships with others. Restorative practices are organised across a continuum from using restorative language in everyday interactions with each other to restorative conferencing to address situations in which relationships have been harmed. They acknowledge the potential of social and experiential learning approaches that enable children, young people and staff to understand, and learn to manage, their own behaviour. Restorative practices:

- Build and repair relationships
- Develop and maintain mutual respect
- Preserve a sense of belonging
- Ensure everyone is given a voice and feels heard
- Empower those with conflict to resolve it for themselves
- Ensure accountability

How do I find out more?
Further information can be sourced from Aberdeenshire's Arcadia, school Educational Psychologists and *elaine.harding@aberdeenshire.gov.uk*

9.   Challenging and/or Violent Behaviour (Desired Outcome (a))

In a minority of cases, staff may have to deal with extremely challenging behaviour. A

coordinated, planned approach potentially provides staff with vital additional expertise, professional development and resources to meet the needs of the establishment's community.

Within each establishment advice and training should be given to all staff on how to deal with any child or young person displaying very challenging behaviour.

Establishments should consider all strategies available to prevent challenging or violent behaviour, including a staged approach (ASSIST) and the involvement of other childrens' support services.

Aberdeenshire policies and procedures that can be used to support staff when dealing with children and young people displaying very challenging behaviour are:

- Risk Assessment procedures
- Managing Accessibility Plan
- Violence at Work Policy
- Violent Incident Reporting System
- Physical Intervention Policy
- Exclusion Guidelines

Being a witness to, or subject of, extremely challenging behaviour may cause anxiety and stress. The Violence at Work Policy underlines the entitlement of staff to contact the police in such circumstances. Furthermore, Aberdeenshire Council offers employees the following support services:

- Employee Assistance Programme http://home/ppc/index.html
  or Tel: 0800 282 193 (Confidential)
- Occupational Health Service – Referral is available through Head Teachers/Establishment Line Managers

10. 'Next Steps' for Education, Learning and Leisure Service (Desired Outcome (d))

The next steps for the Service will be to further develop its strategic and operational capacity to support the promotion of positive relationships across the Education, Learning and Leisure Service, in particular to:

- Promote the development of strategies outlined in 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (Scottish Executive 2007) to ensure the Service is compliant with the draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill and any future legislative framework

- Liaise, co-ordinate and support partner organisations in the delivery of multi-disciplinary childrens' service working through, for example, the Integrated Assessment Framework, ASSIST and Restorative Practices

- Identify, monitor and co-ordinate support for vulnerable children and young people, particularly 'Looked after Children'

- Take responsibility for the monitoring and where necessary, intervention and support of establishments in addressing:

  o   Violent incidents
  o   Equality Issues
  o   Child Protection matters
  o   Exclusions

- Provide establishments with training, professional development opportunities and advice to reduce the need for exclusions and occurrence of violent incidents, particularly through solution focused, staged intervention and restorative practices

- Advise and support the development of an Aberdeenshire Policy on Promoting Positive Relationships

- Facilitate the sharing of 'good practice' and peer support in establishments

- Review and contribute to local and national 'promoting positive relationship' development and research.

- Audit the current "on" and "off site" provision behaviour support across Aberdeenshire.

11. 'Next Steps' for Establishments (Desired Outcome (e))

Each establishment should continue to review their existing policies and practices on positive behaviour, particularly linking them with future Aberdeenshire and National policy development and guidance. An establishment committee, or similar working group, should be established to develop and systematically monitor and review policy and practice. The policies/procedures should demonstrate:

- The link between effective teaching and learning, ACfE and a consistent approach to promoting positive behaviour, including the use of ASSIST

- A collegiate and consistent approach to developing positive relationships

- Procedures for reinforcing good behaviour and also for dealing with indiscipline

- How to recognise, share and celebrate achievement and success

- How to access behaviour support and appropriate professional development

- Procedures for reporting, recording, monitoring and addressing serious indiscipline including the use of the Violent Incident Reporting system

- Clear procedures for the re-integration of excluded children and young people, including the possible assessing of risk.

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