Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour in Educational Settings

Contents

The Scottish approach to behaviour in schools has evolved significantly from the punitive discipline policies of the past to a focus on building relationships to promote positive behaviour. This shift in focus to relationship-based and trauma informed approaches has been embedded systematically into the curriculum and education related policies and guidance including those that promote attendance[1] and participation, and those that reduce barriers to learning and exclusion[2].

Since 2020 however the Independent Care Review Reports[3] (The Promise) and the ASfL Implementation Review[4] (Morgan Review) both presented significant evidence that more work needs to be done to prioritise relationships and strengthen relationship-based approaches in education. Both reviews highlighted significant gaps between policy intention and practice.

Policy and Guidance Intentions

Common principles are interwoven across all Scottish education related legislation and guidance[5]:

- children have a **right to education**
- children have the right to get the **support** they need to benefit fully from their education and fulfil their potential
- **wellbeing,** positive **relationships** and an inclusive ethos and culture are the foundation for learning
- children need to be **included, engaged and involved** in their learning

G
A
P

The Practice Learners Want to Experience

In both Reviews children and young people told us clearly what they want from their educational experience:

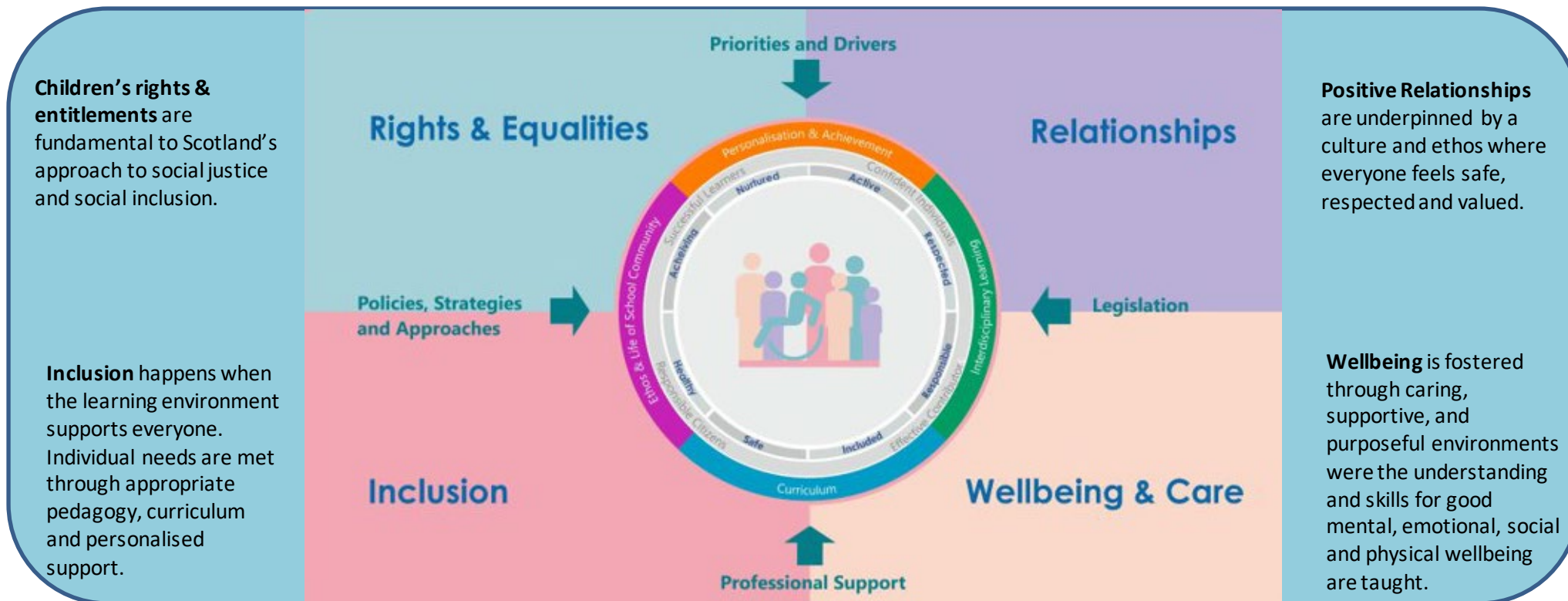|	Article
their **rights** to be fully recognised and realised	28
to be **support**ed in ways that meet their needs and this support to be consistent from all adults who work with them	29
to be **listened to** and **included**, never marginalised or stigmatised	12
relationships to be prioritised	2, 3
school to be a safe space	6, 23, 31

Children and young people told us that this isn't always what they experience

These reviews, the plans to incorporate United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law (March 2021[6]), and post-COVID issues, such as, lower attendance, higher anxiety, and more distressed behaviour in schools has prompted many educational establishments and local authorities to consider reviewing their current practice, policies and guidance around relationships and behaviour. This resource is designed to support this work. Another significant concern is the impact distressed behaviour has on staff wellbeing. This resource is designed to explore these key areas:

1. Making sense of legislation, policies and recommendation to focus on what matters to children, families and the workforce
2. People Matter – Supporting staff wellbeing through strong relational practice
3. Why the shift from punitive to relational approaches?
4. Relationships matter for wellbeing, learning and behaviour
5. Relational approaches to promote positive behaviour
6. Relationships and Behaviour: making policies and turning them into practice
7. The Wicked Issues: consistency, consequences, exclusions and the rights of the many vs the rights of the few

The educational landscape can be complex (see Appendix 1 for main legislation and guidance relevant to relationships and behaviour). ''Making sense'' of this complexity, however, is essential if the system is to be understood by the people it's there to serve. Those people include learners, parents and carers, and the educational worforce. It is the educational workforce who have to translate current educational policy into practice. Identifying common themes across legislation, policies and priorities, and recommendations for change (Rights, Reviews and Promises), supports this decluttering and simplification process. Four inter-dependent themes emerge when all these factors are considered (illustrated in the diagram below).

Children's rights & entitlements are fundamental to Scotland's approach to social justice and social inclusion.

Inclusion happens when the learning environment supports everyone. Individual needs are met through appropriate pedagogy, curriculum and personalised support.

Positive Relationships are underpinned by a culture and ethos where everyone feels safe, respected and valued.

Wellbeing is fostered through caring, supportive, and purposeful environments were the understanding and skills for good mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing are taught.

Please note that these themes are important for everyone in the learning environment including the adults

Although this resource focus's on the 'Relationships' theme, relationships cannot be considered in isolation from the other three themes. This resource is supplementary to and compliments the national guidance 'Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour[7]', the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence[8], the implementation of Getting it Right for Every Child[9], and the aspirations of the Scottish Attainment Challenge[10] and the National Improvement Framework[11]. Also Education Scotland's inspection frameworks[12] provides a set of quality indicators for use in self-evaluation of effectiveness of inclusive, relationship and rights-based practice. Further guidance on how to involve learners effectively in self-evaluation and improvement in educational settings can be found in the How good is OUR School[13]?

2. People matter - Supporting staff wellbeing through strong relational practice

If educators have a lifelong impact on learners, staff wellbeing should be a priority.

Bethune and Kell (2021)[14] in their book 'Teacher wellbeing and self-care' strongly support the belief that 'wellbeing is innately linked to the essential satisfaction we draw from our professional roles' (p3). They suggest that individuals consider the following ideas as part of their wellness journey:-

- Wellbeing at work is about feeling trusted and supported to do a good job
- Having a sense of purpose in your work can help support your wellbeing
- Being aware of your morals and values, knowing what is important to you

"Teachers, I believe, are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the world"– Helen Caldicott

Unfortunately, a recent teacher survey (EIS, April 2023[15]) indicated that just 33% of the teachers who responded feel generally satisfied in their working life and only 26% of respondents feel very well, health-wise, in their job. These statistics are alarming when we consider teachers are only part of the adult workforce who support and care for our children in educational settings.

In their book Bethune and Kell go on to emphasise the importance of **relationships** because 'positive relationships are one of the strongest predictors of good mental health and wellbeing so nurturing them is good for ourselves and for others' (p57). So regardless of whether we are focussing on learners wellbeing being vital for learning or staff wellbeing being vital for them to be good at their jobs – relationships are at the heart of 'getting it right for everyone' including staff. It may be a valuable exercise for, at least leadership teams, if not all staff, to honestly explore the values being 'lived' in their setting and the quality of relationships to see if their Relationship policy and relational practice is supporting the wellbeing of their staff and their learners.

Research[16] shows that the second most reported cause of stress in the workplace, after workload, is a lack of agency and control. Like children and young people, adults need to feel that they are listened to and that they are able to affect change. Ensuring that staff are partners in planning and decision making also helps to bring about responsibility and shared ownership of the plans and outcomes they are working towards rather than simply being accountable for them.

Time and space are also needed for staff to reflect on their practice both individually and with others. Time unfortunately can be a scarce resource in educational settings and settings may need to look for creative ways to support reflective practice, such as, peer coaching or mentoring for sharing ideas and problem solving. School leaders should also be mindful of 'secondary stress' and its impact on staff who are working with children and young people who have experienced trauma and loss. In these cases, professional supervision[17] could provide an essential opportunity for staff to understand and manage intense feelings and projections that can lead to compassion fatigue[18].

Helping staff to identify their own wellbeing needs, supporting meeting these needs were possible, and creating opportunities for staff to learn and socialise together will support positive staff relationships and wellbeing. Fortunately, there are many resources, and professional learning, to support staff wellbeing including:

Resources:

The Cycle of Wellbeing[19]
NES Wellbeing Planning Tool Animation[20] and NES Wellbeing Planning Tool[21]
CYP's Mental Health and Wellbeing: School Staff Wellbeing[22] (requires registration/login)

Professional Learning and Leadership Programmes (requires login):

Finding ways to wellbeing through coaching and self-empowerment[23] and
Excellence in Headship – Supporting the health and wellbeing of headteachers[24]

In our day to day lives all of us are exposed to the behaviour of others and other people experience how we behave. Our behaviour is a response to our thoughts and feelings, and these are often driven by previous experiences and memories. Three things to remember about behaviour:

- it changes to meet the demands of new or different situations
- it can change as a result of reframing our thoughts
- it can be taught (and learned)

Our values influence the **expectations** we have of ourselves and others and the **levels of support** we are prepared to provide to others. The combination of these two factors influences the culture and ethos that is experienced in an educational setting. The Social Capital Window, illustrated here, helps us see how different levels of expectations and support influence culture within a setting.

Watch this FILM (4.38 min) for a fuller explanation of the Social Discipline Window.

HIGH
Expectations

| TO | WITH |
| Punitive | Relational |

LOW
Nurture/
Support

HIGH
Nurture/
Support

| NOT | FOR |
| Neglectful | Permissive |

LOW
Expectations

Punitive Practice (TO)

Often when we refer to 'managing' someone's behaviour we are actually talking about forcing compliance through fear of a punishment or sanction. In this 'punitive' approach someone, an adult, is responsible for administering a sanction when the rules have been broken. This approach does not require the person, usually a child or young person, who has broken the rule to take responsibility for their actions. This approach can enhance or cause shame and breed resentment on behalf of the person receiving the sanction This punitive response can damage relationships and become a barrier to learning. Sanctions, if unrelated to the negative behaviour, may have no learning 'value' to the child or young person in terms of teaching them an alternative behaviour. Punitive responses therefore rarely prevent a re-occurrence of a behaviour. In settings where punitive responses are used children can be referred repeatedly for the same negative behaviour often resulting in an exclusion of some description (internal or external).

Punitive approaches are, however, easy to implement consistently across a staff group but are much less supportive for both the person whose behaviour is adversely affecting others and for the person, or people, harmed by that behaviour. Criminologist John Braithwaite, (1989) asserted that punishment used as a social regulator is problematic as it shames and stigmatises wrongdoers, often marginalising them, and fails to change their behaviour. No educational policy or practice should ever be stigmatising (see UNCRC[25] Article 2 and 29) or negatively impact on a child or young person's wellbeing or learning (Shame and its effect on children's reading[26]).

Behaviour[27] is functional and is designed to meet needs. Imposing sanctions doesn't require a consideration of the purpose of the behaviour or 'the need' the behaviour is communicating to us (Nurture Principle 5). We know, if needs are not supported, then the behaviour will more than likely recur and may even escalate (Behaviour and Discipline in Schools, 2010)[28]. Learners who repeatedly break the rules because they have no alternative strategies to have their needs met can quickly find themselves in a negative cycle of punitive measures which can lead to disengagement from learning, marginalisation, absenteeism, and/or exclusions (Includem Report, 2021)[29]. Some of our more vulnerable learners, such as those who have experienced adversity or trauma can be disproportionately and negatively affected by punitive approaches.
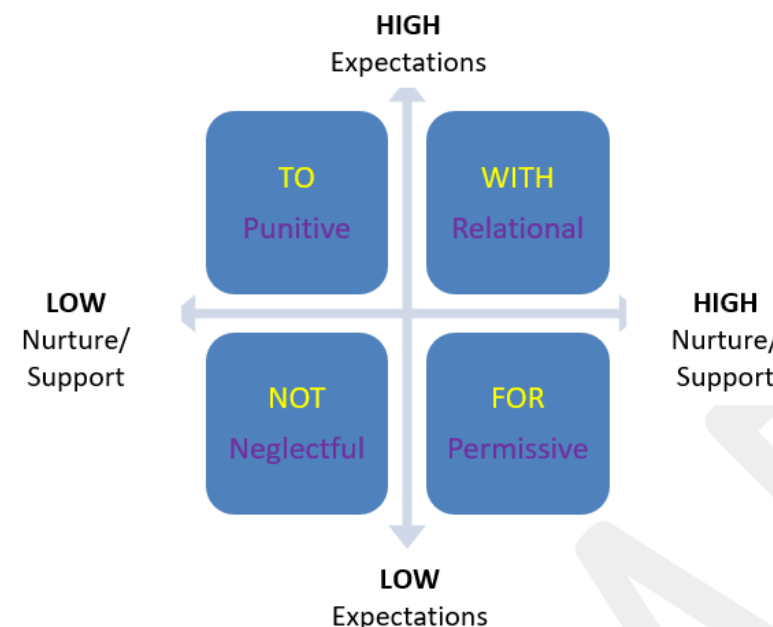
Relational Practice (WITH)

Using a relational approach, we can use our relationship to support another person to help change their behaviour. If their behaviour is having a negative impact on themselves, or others, then we can use our relationship with them to encourage them to stop this behaviour and potentially to move towards more positive and healthy alternative behaviours. In the context of education, influencing, teaching and/or supporting positive behaviour may involve a vast range of skills from helping a child or young person to regulate their emotions through to proactively helping them learn new more positive ways of behaving. Taking this approach means we work 'with' the person, and they take responsibility for their own behaviour i.e., they are, or become, a 'responsible citizen.'

If relationships are where things developmentally can go wrong, then relationships are where they are most likely to be put right. (D. Howe, 2005)[65]

Relational approaches are often mis-perceived as the 'soft' option that allows disrespectful or irresponsible behaviour to go unchecked. If implemented properly, however, they involve equal measures of **challenge and support** and create boundaries based on shared expectations or values which are proactive, preventative, and positive. Relational approaches build social capital. In other words, they help to build environments that reflects knowledge and understanding of what it takes to be cooperative and behave in ways that provides emotional and physical safety for everyone. Relational approaches create emotionally safe environments (Nurture Principle 2), encourage cooperation, and discourage behaviour that hurts others. Adopting relational approaches at a whole school level takes time - time for staff to develop a shared understanding of the underpinning principles, time to learn, practice and refine the skills and strategies to support the approach, time to become confident and consistent in their use. They are not a quick fix. Learners and parents also need time to become familiar with and trust the relational approaches being used.

Ideally, we want all educational settings to be in the relational quarter (WITH) of the Social Capital Window most of the time. In this quarter people (adults and children and young people) work together to create a culture where everyone has a place and have a say in how things are. Equally everyone has responsibility for the culture.

Why is the approach taken by an educational setting a rights and equality issue?

Punitive approaches disadvantage vulnerable learners. In this context vulnerable may refer to those learners whose additional support needs are known or those whose vulnerability arises due to reasons that are unknown or hidden. For example, hidden harm such as adversity in their home life, trauma, or even caring responsibilities. Their disadvantage is evidenced in the dis-proportionate number of children who are excluded who are also recorded as requiring additional support. Exclusion and absenteeism have negative implications for educational outcomes and longer term 'life' outcomes such as employment and health. [See the research of Markus Klein and Edward Sosu, University of Stratclyde][30]

Poor attendance at school, whether due to absenteeism or exclusion, leads to multiple social, educational, and lifelong socioeconomic disadvantages. (John, 2021)[66]

Use of punitive approaches and children's rights will be revisited in the Wicked Issues section.

Please Note:
- Despite government policy and guidance, personal views about how to promote positive pro-social behaviour can still be very polarised in educational settings (TES news, 6th June 2023[31] and 7th June 2023[32])
- Consistency in how adults behave will determine whether children and young people feel safe and are able to trust the adults who support them.
- It is therefore essential for the adults supporting children and young people to have robust professional dialogue to establish **shared values** that everyone signs up to and they can demonstrate in practice.
- Any practice that does not reflect an educational settings shared values should always be challenged

Relationships and Wellbeing

Watch this FILM[33]: **It's All About Relationships** (3:08 min) Film notes for practitioners

Public Health Scotland Top Tips for Healthy Relationships[34]: Promotes good practice in supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing through good quality relationships (a resource to aid discussion).

From the 80 year Harvard Study of Adult Development[33]– we know that connectedness and close relationships have more of an impact on health, development, happiness and longevity than money or fame, cholesterol levels, drinking or smoking.

Culture and ethos, linked to shared vision and values of an education setting, are key determinants in maintaining positive relationships and wellbeing. The mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing of everyone within a learning community can be positively developed by fostering a safe, caring, supportive, purposeful environment that enables the development of relationships based on mutual respect. Learning through the health and wellbeing aspects of the curriculum (Responsibility of All[35]) reinforces and develops the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities, and attributes which children need for mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing now and in the future. Wellbeing is a key determinant for attainment (The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment[36], Public Health England)

Relationships, Learning and Behaviour

Scottish-based research[37] indicates that good relationships and a positive ethos hugely influence engagement in learning (see sections 1.17-1.29).

'Staff and pupils agreed that teachers taking an interest in, and getting to know pupils as individuals, was key to developing relationships and managing behaviour' (1.18)

'Developing good relationships and positive behaviour in the classroom, playground and wider community is essential for creating the right environment for effective learning and teaching. Where children and young people feel included, respected, safe, and secure and when their achievements and contributions are valued and celebrated, they are more likely to develop self-confidence, resilience, and positive views about themselves. This applies equally to all staff in the learning community.' (Better relationships, better learning, better behaviour, 2013[38]).

In other words, relational learning environments, where high expectations and structure is balanced equally against warmth and support, encourage engagement, improve attainment, and lead to less bullying in educational settings (ACEReSearch[39]).

There is now a wealth of research on the importance of connectedness in schools and on the specific qualities of in-school relationships that promote effective education. (Roffey, 2012)[43]

Relationships are our job!

Professional registration bodies (GTCS[40], SSSC[41] and CLD[42]) recognise the importance of relationships to support wellbeing and learning by incorporating the ability to build and nurture relationships into their standards. For example, GTCS CLPL standards include:
Social Justice: Building and fostering positive relationships in the learning community which are respectful of individuals.
Trust and respect: Understanding health and wellbeing and the importance of positive and purposeful relationships to provide and ensure a safe and secure environment for all learners and colleagues within a caring and compassionate ethos.

All staff, whether regulated or not, working for local authorities have a duty of care and are required to uphold their authority's vision and values.

5. Relational Approaches to Promote Positive Behaviour

ALL adults in an educational establishment should know why relationships are important in creating an effective learning environment and take personal responsibility for building and maintaining relationships with learners, parents and each other.

Unsurprisingly relationships form the basis of all relational approaches. Helpful relationships are simply the positive connections between people that foster positive social interactions and establish an environment of trust and support. In a trusting and supportive environment people can disagree and challenge each other.

Practitioners who are committed to relational approaches will generally:

- show unconditional positive regard to learners (accepting and supporting them exactly as they are without evaluating or judging them)
- understand and respond to behaviour in a respectful, child friendly and holistic way, considering the individual in the context of their family, community, and culture
- proactively develop responses to support learners' wellbeing and specifically to support learners who may be at risk of disengaging or of being excluded
- actively listen, with purpose, to children and young people
- focus on inclusion, wellbeing, and addressing barriers to learning rather than punitive processes and behaviour
- help children and young people to be aware of and understand the impact of their actions and behaviours

A wide range of relational approaches are used in educational establishments across Scotland as demonstrated in the illustration on the next page (see Appendix 2 for descriptions of each approach and links to professional learning).

> Every relationship has the power to confirm or challenge everything that has gone on before. (Bomber, 2007)[44]

All adults working with children and young people in any educational setting should receive professional learning to enable them to have a good understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of relational approaches and what they mean both in practical terms and emotionally for staff. They need to be able to understand children's and young people's behaviour in terms of their needs, including those with attachment issues or who have experienced trauma. Staff also need to be self-aware around their own possible traumatic experiences. Time should be set aside for regular professional dialogue about relational approaches and regular opportunities for continued professional learning. Developing a common language for describing children's behaviour and needs as well as strategies for support is also helpful.

No one approach is better than the others and they are not mutually exclusive, in fact they complement each other. Culture, however, is key! For any approach to be effective the lived experience of learners, staff, and visitors should be one of kindness, care, and compassion. Combining approaches in response to different circumstances, or learners needs, is good relational practice.

Approaches adopted by an establishment should clearly articulate with their Relationships policy, i.e., the behaviour resulting from the approach is consistent with the values and expectations contained within the policy. If this is not the case either the approach or the policy may need to be reviewed. Remember achieving consistency across a whole learning community, and everyone in it, is challenging and will require regular review and evaluation.

Please note: For some young people values may need to be explicitly taught (see The importance of teaching values to young learners [45]).
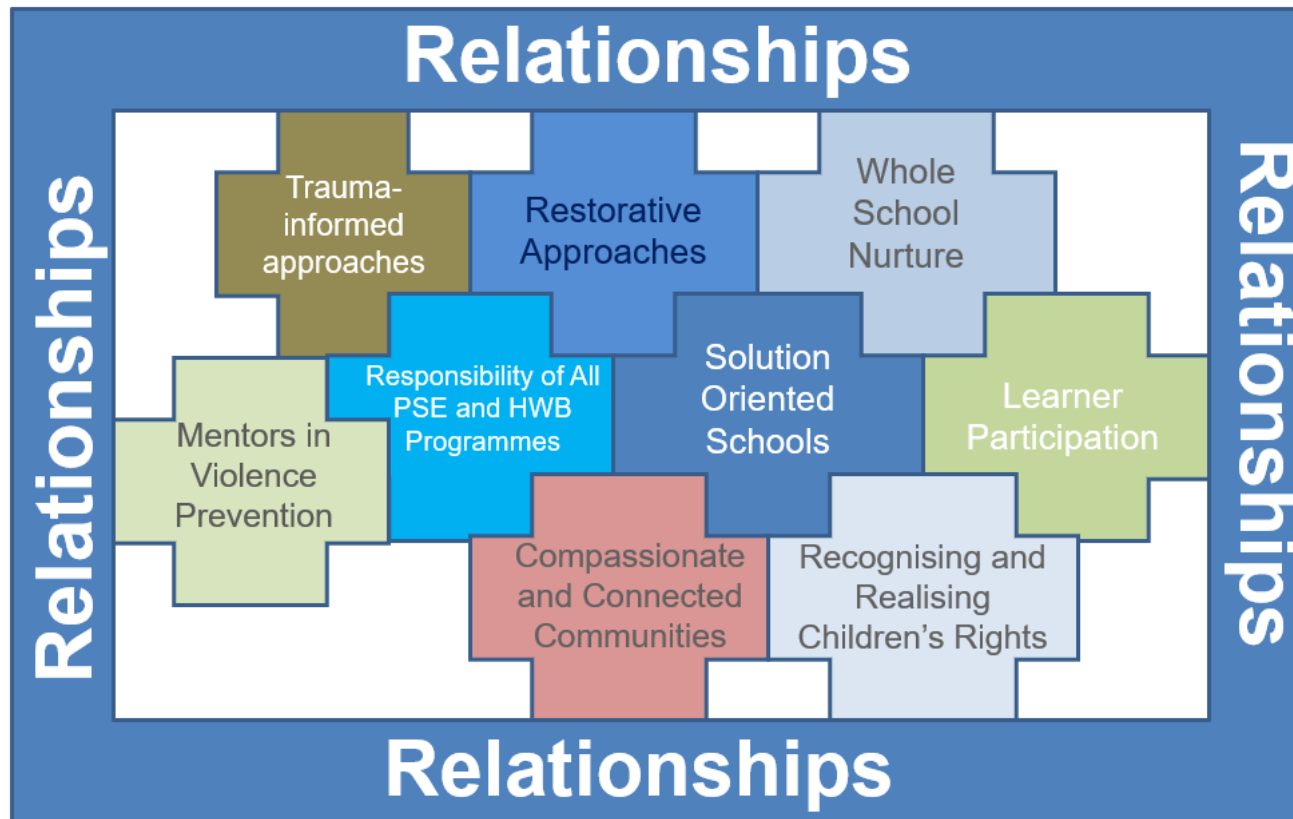
A whole school approach to positive relationships and behaviour is the most effective way of supporting wellbeing for children and young people. This is supported by a wealth of evidence that links culture and ethos with wellbeing as well as attainment.

The Scottish Government, in partnership with local authorities, Education Scotland and other agencies, has invested significantly in a wide range of approaches which focus on improving positive relationships and behaviour and promoting community safety. There are a range of strategies and programmes which schools can and do use to improve relationships and behaviour. Brief descriptions of many of these approaches can be found in Included, Engaged, and Involved 2 Annex B[2].

More detailed information, professional learning, helpful resources, and examples of interesting practice please follow the links below:
- Nurture and trauma-informed approaches[46] and supporting positive mental wellbeing[47]
- Restorative approaches[48] (including peer mediation[49] and solution-oriented schools) and Mentors in Violence Prevention[50] (MVP)
- Anti-bullying[51] guidance and resources
- Recognising and realising children's rights[52] and Learner Participation[53]
- National Health and Wellbeing (PSE) Professional Learning Community[54] (requires registration/login to access)
- Compassionate and Connected Communities Professional Learning Activity[55] (requires registration/login to access)

Drive

Any attempt to develop policies or guidance to support practice before first establishing shared values across a learning community will likely render the policy ineffective as variations in values will result in inconsistencies in practice and behaviour. Policies have to be 'lived' to be effective and policies have to be underpinned by shared values and expectations.

Policies should empower a learning community to create an environment that articulates with its shared values and vision, rather than shackle it to a rigid set of rules and instructions which make it impossible to meet the individual needs of learners. Relationships and Behaviour policies are an important element in creating a learning environment that works for everyone – children and young people, staff, parents and carers, partners, and the wider community. If we want physically and psychologically safe learning establishments, we also need to be able to challenge behaviour that doesn't reflect the values and meet the expectations that have been agreed across the learning community. Clear and accessible Relationships and Behaviour policies that apply to everyone in the learning community are the appropriate lens through which that challenge can be made.

Any educational setting's policies should be constructed around its context and culture and ideally promote and support:

- high-quality classroom practice that allows ALL children and young people to develop their talents and abilities (Article 29)
- a solid platform of relational practice, reflection (HGIOS) and personalisation (BtC3[56])
- an understanding of why children and young people display different types of behaviour, based on an awareness of child development, the impact of adversity, trauma and wellbeing issues, and effective support strategies in place for individuals who need them
- an understanding of a wide range of additional support needs and strategies to support these through universal and targeted support

Developing a 'Relationships and Behaviour Policy' in educational settings

Read a simplified guide. Many local authorities support schools to develop their own policies by providing central guidance similar to the linked guide. The linked guide also provides an example of operational guidance for staff which should sit alongside an establishments Relationships and Behaviour Policy. Robust processes for staff, outlined in operational guidance, are absolutely required but should not be the substance of the Policy. The Policy should be for everyone, not just staff, and focussed on values, expectations and what we want our learning community to like.

Unfortunately, historically for many, Relationships and Behaviour Policies have been subjects of controversy, often viewed as being imposed with insufficient consultation, not recognising the needs of all stakeholders, and rarely seen as contextualised enough to take account of local factors. For this reason any refresh or rewriting of policies that support relationships, rights and behaviour should involve a participative process with all stakeholders and should be tailored to the specific context of each local learning community.

Involving everyone (children and young people, staff, parents and carers, partners, and the wider community) in the development of the policies that guide relational practice is key to successful implementation. If implementation of a refreshed or new policy requires a cultural shift or change in practice, then sufficient time should be allowed for this to happen including time for professional learning. The value of spending time as a school community exploring the link between wellbeing and learning, how the brain actually works, the psychology behind behaviour, and the benefits of using relational approaches cannot be under-estimated in helping to develop skills, confidence, and consistency in practice. This is a learning journey that requires regular evaluation and continuous, and on-going attention. Self-evaluation will support finding out what is working for an establishment and what needs to improve. Here are some simple questions to help you reflect on how well your establishment is doing in terms of relationship building, maintaining and restoring. [Creating an Ethos and Culture based on Positive Relationships]

Expectations and boundaries

Expectations, structure, and boundaries are necessary to support emotional, psychological, and physical safety. They provide points of reference for respectful interaction and are an expression of what is important to us and what we expect of ourselves and each other. Unlike rules which are directly linked to negative consequences if they are broken, expectations and boundaries can be explicitly linked to positive consequences[57] that are a result of everyone in the learning community realising and respecting them. Changing our language, from rules to expectations and from sanctions to positive consequences, in this context helps to support cultural change and a shift in mindset away from consequences only being perceived as negative and focusing on the benefits experienced when everyone meets the agreed expectations.

Rights should be at the heart of agreeing boundaries, routines, and shared expectations about how people treat one another (Together Scotland: UNCRC and Human Rights Act explained[58]). In line with Article 12 children and young people should be full partners in agreeing what the shared expectations and boundaries are. The Children's Parliament have created a very helpful Hub for Rights Based Practice: Dignity in School[59]. Additionally, the CIRCLE Framework[60] is a useful tool for examining boundaries and routines at establishment and class level.

Consequences

When behaviour causes disruption or distress to others it should never be ignored or dismissed.
It is not caring or fair to a child or young person to allow them to think being unkind is OK.

Consequences are simply the resultant experience of the actions we take. Positive consequences were mentioned in the section above however the word consequence is more often viewed in a negative context. Consequences, positive or negative, are necessary for healthy development as they help to teach us about cause and effect. Negative consequences can happen naturally, or they can be applied, usually by adults, as a result of negative behaviours.

Natural consequences are things that happen automatically, for example, a natural consequence of forgetting a coat could be we get wet in the rain. Natural consequences teach us about cause and effect and often provide us with opportunities to learn how to make better choices in the future. In the context of educational settings natural consequences can be enough to help a child learn a better way of doing things without any intervention from an adult. Natural consequences support the development of responsibility, independence, and motivation.

Negative consequences applied by adults are different from punishments, they don't cause shame, inflict harm, or force compliance. These consequences when delivered respectfully create learning opportunities. If used appropriately, consequences applied by adults can encourage the development of self-regulation skills and help learners become responsible citizens.

If adults need to intervene and apply consequences the purpose should always be for the child or young person to learn the impact of their behaviour and an alternative way of behaving that doesn't cause damage or harm to them or to others. These are often referred to logical consequences. *Logical consequences* are related to what's happened, they are respectful, and they are reasonable. What does this mean in practical terms?

Related	to the negative behaviour	If a consequence isn't related to the behaviour then it's likely to be, or be perceived to be, a punishment, and is likely to cause resentment rather than be an opportunity for learning.
Respectful	in the way it is communicated and enforced	If a consequence is delivered in a manner that is humiliating or instils fear, then the learner will focus on feeling bad and not on the learning opportunity.
Reasonable	proportionate & developmentally appropriate	If a consequence isn't reasonable, even if its related, it may be difficult to follow through cause resentment and make future consequences ineffective

For more information about Logical consequences see: Punishment vs Logical Consequences[61] and Logical Consequences[62] from the Responsive Classroom.

Behaviour Management and the Behaviourist Approach

In Section 3 the reasons behind the shift from punitive approaches to relational approaches were explained. Relational approaches are advocated in Scotland because they will work with **every** child and young person. They support equity and equality. In section 3, however, the Behaviourist or Consequence-based Approach, was not explained. The table on the next page gives helpful descriptions that exemplify the differences between the punitive, consequence based and relational approaches.

During the evolution of practice in Scotland from punitive approaches to relational approaches many educational settings adopted a behaviour management or consequence based approach. In many settings this approach is still apparent in practice. As outlined earlier in this section consequences are a natural, and necessary, part of child development. So why has the behaviourist approach gone out of favour? A number of reasons factor into this. The approach[63]:

- does not work for **every** child (creating equity and equality issues)
- focuses on environmental/external factors (which can be managed) as drivers of behaviour and does not account for internal factors (thoughts and feelings) or for individual needs
- does not require an understanding of the underlying reasons behind the behaviour
- tends to be 'process' based rather than 'values' based
- is prone to becoming punitive if the sole focus is on negative consequences when expectations aren't met.

A behaviourist approach however can be helpful if used in a positive way with an equal or greater focus on positive consequences rather than an almost exclusive focus on negative consequences. The behaviourist approach postulates that when a desirable result follows an action, i.e. a positive consequence, the behaviour becomes more likely to happen again in the future. Emphasising and reinforcing positive consequences is sufficient motivation, or encouragement, for most children and young people to try to meet expectations because the benefits are explicitly known or have been experienced. Social modelling/learning also plays a part. When most people see others benefiting from a particular behaviour they are more likely to copy that behaviour to receive the same benefit. The caveat with this approach is that for some children and young people it will not work as internal factors, often emotional factors, have a greater influence on behaviour. For these children and young people a relational approach will work. A hybrid model, behavioural and relational could offer the best of both approaches.

Behaviour Model	Punitive/ Rule-based	Behaviourist/ Consequence-based	Relational/ Developmental
Main means of behaviour management	Fear	Consequences	Relationship
Children & young people are	responsible for their actions	learning	developing, error-prone & highly responsive to environment
Boundaries are to	indicate right and wrong	make standards clear	try to meet everyone's needs
Rules should be	enforced without exception	clearly communicated	developed together and adapted where needed
Behaviour is something to	control	manage	listen to
Consequences are	sanctions & punishments	ways to shape behaviour	a last resort, only used within a process of rupture & repair
"Inappropriate" behaviour is	wrong-doing, deliberate	learned, not necessarily voluntary	a sign either of an unmet need, difficulty coping, or lack of knowledge
The causes of difficulties are	lack of compliance, insufficient discipline	learned poor responses, lack of appropriate reinforcement	mostly in the environment, felt relationships or developmentally appropriate
Solutions lie in	the child	adjusting consequences	understanding what the behaviour tells us about the child & their needs
Children who don't manage should be	excluded or fixed	helped and given intervention	understood & included
Policy effectiveness is measured by	compliance	behaviour change	well-being

Table created by James McTaggart, Educational Psychologist

© James McTaggart 2018   @JamesEdPsych

Adult behaviour

Children and young people are generally used to being challenged by adults when they fall short of the agreed expectations that are based on shared values. Adults however are not! Even responsible and experienced adults can find it difficult, feel vulnerable, and may be defensive if challenged about whether their behaviour is in line with the values and expectations of the learning community. Understandably we never want to upset colleagues or shame them and for this reason we often revert to the easier to manage issue of how closely they've adhered to procedure rather confront the more difficult issue of whether their behaviour reflects school values and expectations. If we want to be good role models, then we may also need to be brave and be prepared to be self-reflective around our own behaviour. This can only happen in a community where there is trust and strong supportive relationships.

Consistency

The success of any policy relies on how consistently it is implemented by everyone within a setting. This was a strength of traditional behaviour management (punitive) policies as they explicitly provided a consistent **response** when specific rules were broken. A consistent response, although easy to administer, does not take into account the individual needs of a child or young person. If we are to always act 'in the best interests' of the child (Article 3) our **response** should reflect that different children and young people need different things and these things could change over time. We can and should however always be consistent in our **approach** to relationships, rights, and behaviour even if our responses are flexible to meet the needs of the learner.

Relational and emotional consistency is key

Children need to know that they can trust their relationships with adults in order to feel safe. This means that there needs to be a reasonable level of consistency in the behaviour of the adults in a setting for children and young people to feel safe across the setting and throughout the day/week. Experiencing nurturing and caring relational approaches in one part of the establishment or with some staff, and punitive approaches in another part of the establishment with different staff, could destroy a child or young person's trust in the whole setting. Implementing whole school relational approaches such as nurture and restorative approaches promotes consistency in adult behaviour across an educational setting. That behaviour should reflect values, such as, compassion, care and kindness. The approach taken, however, should never be permissive of behaviour that is disrespectful or harmful. Our job as educators is to help children and young people develop the four capacities and be responsible citizens, effective contributors, confidential individuals, and successful learners. This includes learning to behave in pro-social ways that are helpful and not harmful.

Exclusions

All educational settings should be safe and free from psychological and physical harm for both the children, young people and adults in them. All children and young people however have a right to an education (Article 28) and to be protected from a life of underachievement and social exclusion (Articles 15, 29 & 31). This does not however mean that we should never exclude a child or place a child in a specialist educational setting. If our focus is to always act in the best interest of the child (Article 3) then we may need to use the full range of supportive interventions and used in the right way an exclusion can provide needed breathing space to be able to do something restorative, an opportunity to hit the reset button, or allow time for planning an intervention. Exclusions however should be rare, a last resort, and never framed as a punishment. The checklists from Included, Engaged, and Involved 2 Annex C[2] should always be used in all situations when considering an exclusion. Relational approaches

support an ethos and culture that minimises exclusions. Any child or young person who is repeatedly excluded should be considered for whether they need additional support, and appropriate planning should be put in place to provide what's needed.

Do the rights of the many outweigh the rights of the few?

Many, if not most, instances of withdrawal from class, or exclusions from an educational setting, are based on this line of reasoning. Legally and ethically however the idea that 'the rights of the many outweigh the rights of the few' is fraught. The issue is complex, contentious, and has been legally contested however in practical terms it is one that practitioners, school leaders, and parents have to wrangle with on a daily basis. Gillet-Swan & Lundy (2021)[64] offer a useful rights-based model (3 Cs) to help resolve conflicts of rights in educational establishments. The model has been summarised below however an in-depth study of their ([Gillett-Swan & Lundy, 2021](#))[67] is recommended:

(1) **Classifying:** Identify all of the rights at stake for all actors involved to be sure that there is in fact a conflict of rights.
If there is a conflict:

(2) **Compromising or Choosing**: Reconcile where possible but, if a compromise is not possible, balancing the rights at stake.
If this is the decision:

(3) **Continuing**: Persist to ensure that, if an individual's (or individuals') rights are denied, that continual effort and action is taken to realise the right in question as soon as is feasible
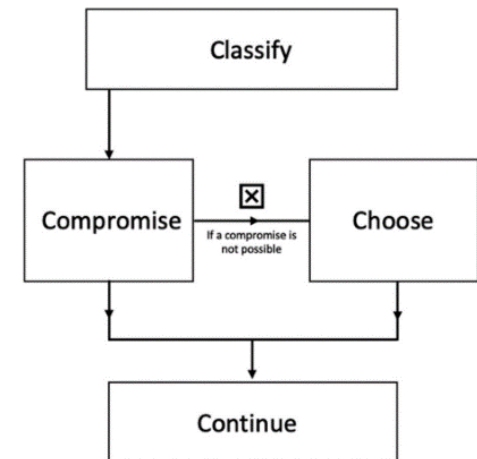
In the compromise stage good relationships and use of relational approaches will be vital to finding the compromise that best realises the rights of **everyone** involved. In the continue stage transparency, keeping the lines of communication open through strong trusting relationships, and robust risk assessment will be essential to ensuring that needs are being met whilst a compromise or solution is found.

Summary

Developing good relationships and positive behaviour in the classroom, playground and wider community is essential for creating the right environment for effective learning and teaching. Where people feel included, respected, safe and secure and when their achievements and contributions are valued and celebrated, they are more likely to develop self-confidence, resilience and positive views about themselves. This applies equally to all learners, parents and staff in the learning community. All educational settings are expected to have robust policies and effective practice to promote and support relationships and behaviour across the whole community. Effective whole setting approaches can only be developed by involving everyone in the learning community – children and young people, adult learners, staff, parents and carers and the wider community.

FILM 1 Social Discipline Window: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34XUCol-xu4
FILM 2 It's All About Relationships (Barnardo's Film): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1CzUO9yEtc

1 Policy Guidance on Attendance Included, Engaged and Involved Part 1: https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-1-attendance-scottish-schools/

2 Policy Guidance on Exclusion Included Engaged and Involved Part 2: https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-2-positive-approach-preventing-managing-school/

3 Independent Care Review Reports: https://www.carereview.scot/

4 ASfL Implementation Review: https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-additional-support-learning-implementation/

5 Related legislation and guidance (to include reference 1, 2 & 9):
   Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents/enacted
   The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended 2009); https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/7/contents
   Respect for All: National approach to anti-bullying: https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotlands-children-young-people/

6 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill: https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-incorporation-scotland-bill

7 Developing a positive whole school ethos and culture: relationships, learning and behaviour: https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-positive-whole-school-ethos-culture-relationships-learning-behaviour/pages/1/

8 Curriculum for Excellence: https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/

9 Getting it Right for Every Child: https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/

10 Scottish Attainment Challenge: https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment/

11 National Improvement Framework: https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/national-improvement-framework/

12 Inspection frameworks: https://education.gov.scot/inspection-and-review/inspection-frameworks/frwk20-how-good-is-our-school/

13 How good is OUR School: https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/frwk20-how-good-is-our-school/

14 Bethune, A. & E. Kell (2021) A little guide for teachers: Teacher Wellbeing and Self Care: Corwin Publishing

15 EIS Report (April 2023) Teachers and Lecturers Job Satisfaction and Wellbeing Survey

16 Top 10 Causes of Stress at Work: 2023: https://championhealth.co.uk/insights/top-causes-stress-work/

17 Supervision in Education – Healthier Schools for All: https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Supervision in Education - Healthier Schools For All - Main report_0.pdf

18 Understanding and combating compassion fatigue: https://toolkit.welbee.co.uk/understanding-and-combatting-compassion-fatigue/

19 The Cycle of Wellbeing : https://education.gov.scot/resources/the-cycle-of-wellbeing/

20 NES Wellbeing Planning Tool Animation: https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/30940

21 NES Wellbeing Planning Tool: https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/30741

22 CYP's Mental Health and Wellbeing: School Staff Wellbeing: https://www.cypmh.co.uk/

23 Excellence in Headship – Supporting the health and wellbeing of headteachers: https://professionallearning.education.gov.scot/learn/learning-activities/

24 Finding ways to wellbeing through coaching and self-empowerment: https://professionallearning.education.gov.scot/learn/learning-activities/

25 UNCRC: https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/

26 The Role of Emotion in Learning to Read – How Shame Exacerbates Reading Difficulties: https://childrenofthecode.org/interviews/nathanson.htm

27 What is Behaviour?: https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/psychosocial/principles/Pages/behaviour-whatis.aspx

28 Behaviour and Discipline in Schools (2010) UK Parliament Memorandum: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmeduc/writev/behaviour/we55.htm

29 Includem Report (2021) The School Experience Pre & During Covid-19 of Young People: https://includem.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-School-Experience-of-Young-People-Pre-and-During-Covid-19-Report-SPREAD-1.pdf

30 School Absenteeism and Educational Attainment - Evidence from the Scottish Longitudinal Study: https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/publications/school-absenteeism-and-educational-attainment-evidence-from-the-s

31 TES news: 'Behaviour: DfE warned about promoting 'punitive' approach' 6th June 2023: https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/behaviour-schools-dfe-warned-over-promoting-punitive-approach

32 TES news: 'Punitive' behaviour policies can 'harm pupil mental health' 7th June 2023: https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/behaviour-policies-harm-pupil-mental-health

33 Harvard Study of Adult Development: https://www.lifespanresearch.org/harvard-study/#:~:text=The%20joint%20mission%20of%20the%20Harvard%20Study%20of,healthier%20lives%20filled%20with%20meaning%2C%20connection%2C%20and%20purpose.

34 Healthy Relationships: https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/9506/its-all-about-relationships-10-top-tips-infographic-print.pdf

35 Responsibility of All: https://education.gov.scot/media/1hddrq2l/responsibility-of-all-hwb-lit-numeracy-across-learning.pdf#:~:text=The%20responsibilities%20of%20all%20include%20each%20practitioner%E2%80%99s%20role,the%20wellbeing%20of%20each%20child%20and%20young%20person.

36 The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/370686/HT_briefing_layoutvFINALvii.pdf

37 Behaviour in Scottish schools: 2016 research: https://www.gov.scot/publications/behaviour-scottish-schools-research-2016/pages/1/

38 Better relationships, better learning, better behaviour (2013): https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/Documents/BetterRelationships.pdf

39 Dinham, S (2007) Authoritative Leadership, Action Learning And Student Accomplishment: ACEReSearch Conference Archive: https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=research_conference_2007

40 GTCS standards: https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/Standard-career-long.aspx

41 SSSC standards: https://www.sssc.uk.com/knowledgebase/article/KA-01548/en-us

42 CLD standards: https://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/resources/the-competences/

43 Roffey, S (2012) Positive Relationships, Chapter 9, Developing Positive Relationships in Schools (pp.145-162). DOI:10.1007/978-94-007-2147-0_9: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321611929_Positive_Relationships_Evidence_Based_Practice_across_the_World

44 Bomber, L (2007): Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools. Worth Publishing

45 The importance of teaching values to young learners: https://www.pearson.com/languages/community/blogs/2019/09/the-importance-of-teaching-values-to-young-learners.html

46 Nurture and trauma-informed approaches: https://education.gov.scot/resources/nurture-and-trauma-informed-approaches-a-summary-of-supports-and-resources/

47 Positive Mental Wellbeing: https://education.gov.scot/resources/resources-for-school-staff-to-support-positive-mental-wellbeing-of-children-and-young-people/

48 Restorative Approaches: https://education.gov.scot/resources/restorative-approaches-to-support-positive-relationships-and-behaviour/

49 Peer Mediation: https://education.gov.scot/resources/restorative-approaches-peer-mediation/

50 Mentors in Violence Prevention: https://education.gov.scot/resources/mentors-for-violence-prevention-mvp-an-overview/

51 Anti-bullying: https://education.gov.scot/resources/a-summary-of-anti-bullying-resources/

52 Recognising and realising children's rights: https://education.gov.scot/resources/recognising-and-realising-childrens-rights/

53 Learner Participation: https://education.gov.scot/resources/learner-participation-in-educational-settings-3-18/

54 National Health and Wellbeing (PSE) Professional Learning Community: https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/healthandwbplc

55 Compassionate and Connected Communities Professional Learning Activity: https://professionallearning.education.gov.scot/learn/learning-activities/

56 Building the Curriculum 3: https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/curriculum-for-excellence-documents/building-the-curriculum/

57 Positive Consequences Article: https://janebluestein.com/2012/positive-consequences/

58 Together Scotland: UNCRC and Human Rights Act explained: https://togetherscotland.org.uk/media/3229/mapping-tool.pdf

59 Children's Parliament - Dignity in School Resource: https://dignityinschool.childrensparliament.org.uk/

60 CIRCLE Resource: https://education.gov.scot/resources/circle-resource-to-support-inclusive-learning-and-collaborative-working/

61 Logical Consequences Article: https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/three-types-of-logical-consequences/

62 Logical consequences vs Punishment Article: https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/how-logical-consequences-are-different-from-punishment/#:~:text=Logical%20consequences%20are%20respectful%20of%20the%20student%E2%80%99s%20dignity%2C,the%20student%E2%80%99s%20behavior%2C%20while%20punishment%20is%20usually%20not.

63 What is Behaviorism?: https://www.verywellmind.com/behavioral-psychology-4157183

64 Jenna K. Gillett-Swan & Laura Lundy (2021): Children, classrooms and challenging behaviour: do the rights of the many outweigh the rights of the few?, Oxford Review of Education, DOI: 10.1080/03054985.2021.1924653 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03054985.2021.1924653

65 Howe, D (2005) *Child abuse and neglect: attachment, development and intervention*. London: Palgrave and Macmillan

66 John, A et al. (2022) Association of school absence and exclusion with recorded neurodevelopmental disorders, mental disorders, or self-harm: a nationwide, retrospective, electronic cohort study of children and young people in Wales, UK. https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(21)00367-9/fulltext

67 Jenna K. Gillett-Swan & Laura Lundy (2021): Children, classrooms and challenging behaviour: do the rights of the many outweigh the rights of the few?, Oxford Review of Education, DOI: 10.1080/03054985.2021.1924653 To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2021.1924653