



DISCIPLINE (BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT) POLICY



Discipline (Behaviour Support) Policy Jonah Special School

Statement of Core Values

All children and young people are valued irrespective of their needs, behaviour or background. They must be given the opportunity to enjoy and achieve, stay healthy and safe, make a positive contribution to their community and enjoy economic wellbeing.

When children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are nurtured, guided and encouraged, they learn to behave appropriately in a variety of social and educational settings. They achieve healthy emotional growth, acquire social understanding and learn the necessary social and inter-personal skills that will enable them to succeed.

The long-term aims are –

1. To promote positive self-esteem and to encourage self-advocacy.
2. To enable each student to learn in the least restrictive and least dependent setting possible.
3. To teach each student to manage and control his/her own behaviour.
4. To provide the student with the skills necessary to meet his/her individual needs while replacing behaviours that stigmatise. Only behaviours which have a negative impact on a student's individual quality of life will be considered for intervention.
5. To promote and enhance each individual student's quality of life.

Behaviours of Concern

Behaviours of Concern may be defined as –

"Behaviour of such intensity, frequency, or duration as to threaten the quality of life and/or the physical safety of the individual or others"

Any behaviour displayed by a person which is considered inappropriate by others, or gives rise to reasonable concern, may be considered a behaviour of concern. However, the use of such a term should be understood in terms of the social context in which the behaviour occurs.

The term Behaviour Support is used in this document as opposed to behaviour management, as it implies the need to consider **all** aspects of each student's behaviour rather than just those identified as "problem or difficult". Passive, non-assertive behaviours restrict a students' independence and learning as much as those which are perceived as being problem behaviours. These behaviours serve a necessary purpose for an individual and it is largely learned through a history of interactions between the person and the environment. A single behaviour may be maintained by more than one outcome and a group of behaviours may be used to achieve a single outcome.

Philosophy

What is unacceptable behaviour to one person is not necessarily unacceptable behaviour to another. Because changing behaviour is acting against a person's personal choices it is therefore ethically more defensible to operate within the context of positive, supportive programmes. The function of most behaviour is legitimate, e.g., there is nothing wrong with asking for attention. Much behaviour serves either a communicative function or is due to dysregulation and it is therefore more effective and valid to teach an alternative, appropriate response than to try and extinguish a behaviour using aversive techniques (punishment). Research shows that there are a variety of interventions as effective as punishment, and that these have fewer problematic side-effects. Punishment frequently elicits aggression, does not teach generalisation, is poorly received in the community and needs to be continued in order to maintain a reduction in behaviour. Positive procedures are constructive, in that they teach alternative responses and build self-esteem.



Punishment will not be used as a means of managing a students' behaviour. This does not preclude the use of standard discipline such as not allowing a student to do something until they have finished what they are currently doing, or re-doing poorly attempted work. However, disciplinary decisions must always be made to take into account the abilities of the individual. The Code of Behaviour of the school will be adhered to disciplinary procedures will be followed.

Student Support Plans must operate in the context of a curriculum, which is in itself rewarding and stimulating. The curriculum should strive to provide an instructional context within which a student performs functional, age-appropriate acts in a variety of natural domestic, academic, vocational, recreational and community settings. There should always be an emphasis on a regulation first approach to learning. Without such an ethos, Behaviour Support is likely to be coercive and ineffective.

Student Support Plans can only be effective if staff have ownership of them. Class teams will be involved in their development and implementations. All staff must be fully informed of relevant procedures in order to ensure continuity across all settings. Wherever possible, students should be involved in the development and implementation of their Student Support Plans. Student voice will be included where appropriate, in line with each student's communication ability. Positive expectations have a positive effect on the behaviour of others. Every student is of equal value and deserving of the same respect.

Legislative and Policy Framework –

- Education for Persons with Education Needs Act 2004.
- Education Act 1998.
- Child Care Act 1992.
- Bí Cineálta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2024).
- Child Protection Procedures for Schools (2025).

Jonah Special School will continually identify ways of sharing information and working together to protect its students from harm and help them to achieve what they want in life. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Anti-Bullying and Code of Behaviour Policy. The school fully implements its Child Safeguarding Statement and associated risk assessment in line with the Child Protection Procedures for Schools (2025).

Prohibited Negative Procedures

The Board of Management of Jonah Special School recommends that the following procedures are prohibited from use within the school –

1. Corporal punishment, including smacking and rough handling.
2. Withholding of sustenance and force feeding.
3. The use of unpleasant events including sounds tastes, visuals, sensations and smells.
4. The withdrawal of basic rights of the individuals including the right to three nourishing meals per day, the right to be in a comfortable safe and warm environment, the right to go home and the right to personal possessions.
5. Leaving students in conditions of discomfort.
6. Emotional and psychological harm.
7. Unauthorised restraint which exceeds the degree of restraint that may be required on occasions to prevent injury to the individual or to other students or staff.
8. Withholding of basic physical comforts such as warmth and appropriate clothing.
9. The locking of a student in a room, at any time, even if an adult is present.
10. The use or withholding of medication.
11. Inappropriate use of voice and tone.
12. The use of language which demeans or intimidates the student.
13. Putting students out of the classroom unsupervised.

Physical Interventions



Jonah Special School adopts a least restrictive approach. Any intervention used will be proportionate, time-limited, and based on the immediate level of risk. Physical restraint at Jonah Special School is defined as the use of force in order to protect a person from harming him/her or others. In exceptional circumstances, and as a last resort procedure, staff may use physical intervention as part of a total response to the student. However, this must only be done where there is imminent risk to an individual or individuals. All other available strategies must be tried first if possible, inclusive of – calling senior staff, removing all demands, providing opportunities to the student to regulate. Parents must be notified immediately and incident report forms must be completed before the end of the school day. These are stored securely and reviewed regularly by school leadership. A meeting with parents will be called to develop a Student Support Plan for potential future occurrences. Any use of physical restraint must be notified in writing to the NCSE using the appropriate form.

Use of Time Out

The use of time out at Jonah Special School is defined as a positive procedure whereby a student is given the opportunity to leave a situation, which she/he is finding over stimulating and/or stressful in order to regulate through co – or self-regulation strategies.

The emphasis must be on teaching the student to recognise she/he needs to leave the situation and to communicate that need in an appropriate way. Time out should be used as an opportunity to teach the child independence in recognising and regulating their behaviour as is appropriate to their individual needs.

Time out should not be used as a negative procedure. Time out from activities should never be punitive, alone or in seclusion.

Equal Opportunities

The schools role is to plan for and meet students' individual needs. Should a situation develop that is beyond the expertise of staff, external agencies will be consulted, e.g., NCSE, NEPS, Behavioural Psychologist, Educational Psychologist etc.

The Behaviour Support needs of all students will be discussed at an Annual IEP meeting and Student Support Plans, when needed, will be included in the Student Support File along with the Individual Education Plan.

Parents must agree all Student Support Plans. The student's cultural background must be taken into consideration and the individual support plans should strive to maintain a balance between environments of school, home and community.

Methodology

1. Student's will have a Student Support Plan (SSP) as a component of their – Student Support File if staff/parents feel that aspects of their behaviour impede their safety and learning or interfere with the safety or learning of others. Prior to compiling a SSP the function of the behaviour will be assessed. This should involve the use of at least one recognised tool such as ABC Data Collection, observation data, Questions About Behavioural Function (QABF), Functional Analysis Screening Tool (FAST). In the case of behaviours which are severely challenging at least two assessment tools should be used. The aim is to always work collaboratively with parents. Student Support Plans have replaced what we historically referred to as Behaviour Support Plans. This is to recognise the adoption of a neuro-affirmative and regulation first approach to behaviour of concern across our school.
2. The Student Support Plan (SSP) must include –
 - The results of behaviour assessment detailing the function of the selected behaviour.
 - A precise description of the behaviour of concern and precise description of the behaviour to be developed.
 - A component, which considers the students' environment and alterations, which will reduce the need for inappropriate behaviours. The term environment is used in its broadest sense to cover everything that may affect a student, including personal interaction styles.
 - A component which outlines the goals for the student which may include specific, socially acceptable responses that serve the same function as, or replace the need for, the behaviour that



has been targeted for reduction. This section may be cross-referenced to the students' communication programme.

- Details of how appropriate behaviours will be reinforced.
- A section on Reactive Strategies i.e., how to respond when the behaviour occurs.
- A start date and a review date.
- A record of who has been involved in drawing up the programme, who is responsible for implementing the program.
- A record of any physical interventions, which may be used with parents' consent – only if relevant.

Implementation – Staff Development

All staff will receive ongoing instruction and in classroom Student Support Training. All staff have taken part in Verbal Interventions training provided by CPI UK (March 25). The aim of this training is to increase the repertoire of Student Support strategies and interventions that are familiar to staff especially when faced with novel behaviours of concern.

As part of our approach to support in Jonah Special School, the Principal will ensure that only a qualified individual in clinical behavioural interventions and person centred planning designs and sanctions the individualised Student Support Plans. At Jonah Special School, this person is the Clinical Director, who holds a Master's degree in Applied Behaviour Analysis and Behaviour Support Interventions.

Whenever a very complex case of behaviour of concerns arises with any particular individual student, advice is sought by the Clinical Director from other professionals involved with the student, with parental permission.

Support for Staff

The success of Student Support Plans depends on an on-going system of support for staff. This support will be given through management and colleagues at Jonah Special School and through outside agencies where identified. All training will include how to seek advice and help in dealing with behaviours of concern and in functional analysis of behaviours and the development of Behaviour Support Plans with an emphasis on a regulation first approach.

Jonah Special School

Discipline (Behaviour Support) Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Jonah Special School at its meeting held on:

Ratified by the Jonah Board of Management on: _____

Date

Signed: _____

Principal

Signed: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Next Review Period: *September 2029*