



River Bourne Edge Alternative Provision

Relationships Policy

Policy Owner: Head of Provision

Approved by: Senior Leadership Team

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1. Policy Statement

At The River Bourne Edge we believe that positive relationships are the foundation of learning, wellbeing and personal growth.

Every interaction between staff, students, families and professionals is an opportunity to build trust, strengthen confidence and create a sense of belonging.

We recognise that many of our students have experienced disrupted education, trauma, adverse childhood experiences, anxiety, unmet needs or difficulties forming trusting relationships. These experiences can affect how young people communicate, regulate their emotions and engage with education.

For this reason, our approach is centred on understanding before judgement, connection before correction and restoration before punishment.

We believe that behaviour often communicates an unmet need or emotion. Rather than asking, *"What is wrong with this young person?"* we ask, *"What has happened to them?"* and *"What do they need from us now?"*

Our aim is not simply to manage behaviour, but to help young people develop the confidence, emotional regulation, resilience and responsibility they need to flourish both within and beyond The River Bourne Edge.

Every young person deserves the opportunity to learn from mistakes, repair relationships and experience success.

2. Our Philosophy

Relationships are at the heart of everything we do.

We believe that young people thrive when they feel:

- physically safe;
- emotionally safe;
- understood;
- respected;
- listened to;
- valued;
- successful;
- connected to others.

Strong relationships enable learning, reduce anxiety and create the conditions in which young people are able to regulate their emotions, solve problems and make positive choices.

Our staff seek to understand the reasons behind behaviour rather than simply reacting to the behaviour itself.

We understand that sustainable change comes through consistency, empathy, clear boundaries and positive relationships rather than fear or punishment.

Every day is viewed as a new opportunity to reconnect, rebuild trust and move forward together.

3. The River Bourne Edge Values

Everything we do is guided by our core values.

Engage

Relationships begin with connection.

We actively engage with every student, recognising that feeling noticed, welcomed and valued is the first step towards successful learning.

Discover

We seek to understand before we respond.

Staff remain professionally curious, exploring the reasons behind behaviour and recognising that every student has their own story, strengths and challenges.

Grow

Mistakes are opportunities for learning.

Students are supported to reflect upon their choices, repair relationships where necessary and develop the emotional skills needed to make different choices in the future.

Empower

Our aim is to develop confident, resilient young people who increasingly take responsibility for themselves, their relationships and their futures.

Success is measured not only by academic achievement but also by personal growth, independence and wellbeing.

4. Our Relational Approach

The River Bourne Edge is a restorative, trauma-informed provision.

Our practice is based upon four key principles:

Relationships First

Positive relationships provide the foundation for learning, wellbeing and behaviour.

Every interaction matters.

High Expectations with High Support

We believe that every student can succeed.

We maintain clear expectations whilst recognising that different students require different levels of support to achieve success.

Fairness does not always mean treating everyone the same; it means providing everyone with what they need to succeed.

Restoration Over Punishment

When difficulties arise, our focus is on repairing relationships, restoring trust and helping students understand the impact of their actions.

Consequences are designed to support learning, reflection and personal responsibility rather than to punish.

Every Day is a Fresh Start

Students are never defined by previous mistakes.

Once harm has been acknowledged and relationships repaired, every student is given the opportunity to move forward positively without judgement.

5. Understanding Behaviour

At The River Bourne Edge we recognise that behaviour is often a way of communicating needs, emotions or experiences that a young person may find difficult to express in words.

Behaviour may be influenced by:

- anxiety;
- trauma;
- attachment difficulties;
- autism;
- ADHD;
- sensory processing differences;
- communication needs;

- mental health difficulties;
- adverse childhood experiences;
- low self-esteem;
- frustration;
- previous educational experiences.

Understanding these influences does not remove personal responsibility, but it helps us respond in ways that support learning, emotional regulation and long-term positive change.

We therefore seek to balance compassion with accountability by helping students understand both the reasons behind their behaviour and the impact their choices have on others.

6. Building Positive Relationships

Positive relationships are developed intentionally every day.

Staff build trust by:

- greeting students warmly each day;
- taking time to listen;
- remaining calm and consistent;
- modelling respectful communication;
- celebrating effort as well as achievement;
- noticing and recognising success;
- showing genuine interest in students' lives;
- maintaining clear and predictable boundaries;
- repairing relationships following conflict.

Students are encouraged to develop positive relationships through:

- kindness;
- honesty;
- respect;
- cooperation;
- responsibility;
- empathy;
- supporting one another;
- recognising that everyone deserves dignity and respect.

We believe that strong relationships create emotionally safe environments where students feel confident to learn, take appropriate risks and develop resilience.

7. Regulation Before Restoration

At The River Bourne Edge we recognise that young people cannot reflect effectively when they are overwhelmed, frightened, angry or emotionally dysregulated.

Our first responsibility is therefore to help students regain a sense of emotional safety before expecting reflection or problem-solving.

We understand that:

- dysregulated young people cannot always access rational thinking;
- co-regulation by a calm adult supports emotional regulation;
- relationships are strengthened when adults remain calm and consistent during difficult moments;
- restorative conversations are most effective once emotions have settled.

For this reason, our response follows a consistent relational approach.

Our Relational Response

When a student experiences difficulty, staff will seek to:

Notice

Recognise changes in behaviour, emotional presentation or communication.

Ask:

- What am I noticing?
 - What might this student be communicating?
 - What has changed today?
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Connect

Approach the student calmly and respectfully.

Staff will:

- speak quietly;
 - reduce demands where appropriate;
 - acknowledge emotions;
 - listen without judgement;
 - provide reassurance.
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Regulate

Support the student to regain emotional regulation.

This may include:

- spending time with a trusted adult;
- movement or sensory breaks;
- time in an agreed safe space;
- breathing or grounding techniques;
- access to regulation resources;

- reduced stimulation.

The aim is to help the student feel safe enough to think clearly again.

Reflect

Once the student is emotionally regulated, staff will support reflection.

Reflection focuses on:

- what happened;
 - what the student was feeling;
 - how others were affected;
 - what could be done differently next time;
 - how any harm can be repaired.
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Repair

Where relationships have been affected, restorative conversations help rebuild trust.

Students are supported to:

- acknowledge responsibility;
 - understand the impact of their actions;
 - repair relationships where appropriate;
 - identify strategies for future success.
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Return

Every student is welcomed back positively following a difficult moment.

Once reflection and repair have taken place, students are supported to rejoin learning without judgement or ongoing criticism.

Every interaction is viewed as an opportunity for a fresh start.

8. Daily Relational Practice

Relationships are strengthened through everyday interactions rather than only during times of difficulty.

Staff intentionally create positive connections by:

- welcoming every student by name;

- checking in emotionally at the start of the day;
- celebrating effort as well as achievement;
- using humour appropriately;
- listening actively;
- maintaining calm and predictable routines;
- recognising positive choices;
- ending each day positively through check-outs where appropriate.

Students should experience far more positive interactions than corrective ones.

As a guide, staff aim to achieve a minimum ratio of **three positive interactions for every corrective interaction**, recognising that some students may require significantly more positive reinforcement to build confidence and trust.

9. Recognition and Encouragement

At The River Bourne Edge we believe that recognising positive choices is far more effective than focusing solely on mistakes.

Recognition helps students develop:

- confidence;
- resilience;
- motivation;
- responsibility;
- self-esteem;
- positive relationships.

Recognition should always be genuine, timely and specific.

We celebrate:

- kindness;
- honesty;
- perseverance;
- resilience;
- teamwork;
- curiosity;
- effort;
- emotional regulation;
- taking responsibility;
- helping others;
- achieving personal goals;
- showing respect.

Every success, however small, is an opportunity to reinforce positive identity and build self-belief.

10. The Bead Recognition System

The Bead Recognition System provides immediate, visual recognition of positive choices and personal growth.

Students earn beads for demonstrating The River Bourne Edge values and contributing positively to the community.

Examples include:

- showing kindness towards others;
- demonstrating resilience;
- engaging positively with learning;
- helping another student;
- taking responsibility for mistakes;
- asking for help appropriately;
- overcoming personal challenges;
- regulating emotions successfully;
- completing work with effort;
- contributing positively to group activities.

Beads can be exchanged for agreed rewards and privileges, helping students see the positive outcomes of their choices.

The focus is not on competition but on recognising individual progress and celebrating success.

11. Reflective Responses

When behaviour causes concern, our response is always intended to support learning rather than punish.

Where appropriate, students are first given opportunities to make positive choices independently.

If additional support is required, staff may use reflective responses such as:

- restorative conversations;
- time with a trusted adult;
- regulation breaks;
- repair activities;
- reflection sheets where appropriate;
- temporary change of activity;
- parent or carer discussions;
- meetings with commissioning schools;
- review of support strategies;
- temporary timetable adjustments where appropriate.

Reflective responses are designed to help students understand the impact of their actions, repair relationships and develop strategies for future success.

12. Accountability and Responsibility

Being restorative does not mean there are no boundaries.

The River Bourne Edge maintains high expectations whilst recognising that students require different levels of support to meet them.

Students are expected to:

- treat others with respect;
- follow reasonable instructions;
- contribute positively to the community;
- take responsibility for their choices;
- participate in repairing harm where appropriate;
- work towards making better choices in the future.

Adults support students to understand that mistakes do not define them, but learning from mistakes is an important part of personal growth.

13. When Safety is at Risk

Whilst relationships remain our priority, there are occasions when behaviour presents an immediate risk to the safety of the student or others.

In these circumstances staff will take appropriate action to protect everyone involved.

Responses may include:

- removing others from danger;
- requesting additional staff support;
- implementing individual risk management strategies;
- contacting parents or carers;
- working with commissioning schools;
- involving emergency services where necessary.

Any response will always be:

- proportionate;
- reasonable;
- the least restrictive option available;
- consistent with safeguarding responsibilities.

Following any significant incident, students will receive support to regulate, reflect and repair relationships before returning fully to learning.