



FIRST BRIDGE SCHOOL

Behaviour policy

Aims

First Bridge School's work is set firmly in a framework of Applied Behaviour Analysis. Staff, therefore, are behaviour experts who are ready to address any challenging behaviour in which a pupil may engage in an appropriate and safe manner, based on these principles.

Occasionally, pupils attending First Bridge School may display 'challenging' behaviour that poses a risk to themselves, others, or property. In such situations, staff may be required to implement positive handling procedures to maintain the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved. The use of positive handling will always adhere to guidelines on the use of reasonable force and will be proportionate, necessary, and in the best interests of the pupil.

This policy is closely linked to the school's safeguarding policy, positive handling policy and anti-bullying strategy. It pays regard to the DfE's latest safeguarding guidance ([Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), 2025), behaviour guidance (DfE's [Behaviour in Schools](#) guidance, 2024) and reasonable force guidance (DfE's [Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools](#), 2026).

This policy includes First Bridge School's approach to use of suspension and exclusion.

Definitions

"Challenging behaviour" refers to any behaviour that is disruptive to learning or poses a risk to the safety (emotional or physical) of the person or another. This includes but is not limited to:

- Disruptive behaviours – hitting, biting, scratching, kicking, pulling hair, smearing, spitting, pushing, licking, swearing, motor stereotypy.
- Tantrums – yelling, crying, screaming, flopping, flailing.
- Property destruction – throwing furniture, tearing books/stimuli, breaking items, defacing, throwing stimuli.
- Off-task behaviours – leaving the work area (eloping), wandering around the room, "staring off".

- Non-compliance – refusing to complete an activity, refusing to follow directions, refusing to respond in any way.
- Self-injurious behaviour – head-banging, hand-biting self, hitting self (slaps, punches, strikes), pinching/picking, rubbing/scratching, hair pulling, pica (mouthing inedible items).

“Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA)” refers to the assessment conducted by a Board-Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA)/Clinical Supervisor. This assessment:

- Defines the behaviour of concern in observable and measurable terms
- Identifies under what conditions the behaviour is more and less likely to occur
- Analyses data collected to hypothesise the function of the behaviour (what purpose it serves the pupil)
- Consists of records review (all data recorded on the Antecedent-Behaviour- Consequence data sheets) data collection, and interview.

Sometimes, an FBA will also include a Functional Analysis (FA), during which staff contrive opportunities for the behaviour to occur in order to assess how the pupil will respond to different scenarios. First Bridge will always request written consent from the Clinical Director and Parents/Carers before conducting an FBA or FA.

“Behaviour Support Plan (BSP)” refers to a highly-individualised set of strategies and procedures that aims to minimise the occurrence of inappropriate or challenging behaviours; they:

- include a plan to teach appropriate replacement behaviours, increase skill deficits and how to set the occasion for these using prevention strategies.
- address how to respond to inappropriate behaviours in a safe and dignified manner that will minimise future occurrences.

Every pupil at First Bridge School has a written BSP that is specific to them and their needs and details the necessary and required antecedent and



consequence strategies required to support the pupil's learning and behaviour and to keep them safe, happy and engaged in effective learning.

Not all pupils will engage in challenging behaviours that are to the level that warrant a formal Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA); however, they will still need individualised strategies to help them learn. In these scenarios, Behaviour Support Plans for these pupils will focus on the antecedent strategies required to support them most effectively, and sequence-analysis data (Antecedent-Behaviour-Consequence- ABC) will be taken daily to continuously keep information on any potential environmental stimuli and behaviours that could evoke challenging or inappropriate behaviours, that may require an FBA/FA in the future. Staff will work with each pupil's family to determine what skills should be addressed to support this. Staff will model appropriate behaviours and facilitate positive social interactions.

If a pupil is engaging in inappropriate behaviours that are persistent (occur more than three times within a fortnight) or are severe in frequency or duration (pose a safety risk to the pupil or others), First Bridge Staff (therapists, senior therapists and/ or room lead) will notify the pupil's family and supervising BCBA, immediately, so that it can be determined if an FBA is needed. Staff will only collect behaviour data if the parents have consented to this.

BSPs are individualised to a pupil's needs and are written in a manner that scientifically explains the components that are controlling the behaviours; however, they are also designed to be easy to understand. BSP's will be reviewed with parents prior to implementation to gain consent. Data on the specified challenging behaviour will be collected each session and will be reviewed by the BCBA/Clinical Supervisor and/or Clinical Lead to ensure appropriate interventions are implemented. A plan for generalisation will be agreed which may include parent consultation as needed.

In the rarest of circumstances, a pupil's behaviour may present an imminent risk to their own safety or the safety of others. In such cases, staff may determine that the use of restrictive physical intervention is necessary as an emergency measure to maintain safety. Any use of positive handling involving restrictive physical intervention will always be reasonable, necessary, and proportionate to the level of risk presented.

All clinical staff at First Bridge School—including therapists, senior therapists, room leads, clinical supervisors, and clinical leads—are trained in Team Teach strategies. However, only staff members who hold a valid Team

Teach certificate are authorised to implement any Team Teach restrictive physical interventions (please see our separate policy).

Roles and responsibilities

Leaders

First Bridge School's senior leaders are dedicated to ensuring a safe and supportive environment where each pupil can achieve their full potential.

Teachers and therapists

All staff are responsible for setting the tone and context for positive behaviour within the school.

They:

- create and maintain a stimulating environment that encourages pupils to be engaged.
- use Team Teach strategies to ensure safely handling of pupils ('caring 'c's', specific hair pull releases) and only use Team Teach restraining physical intervention if team teach certified and specifically instructed by a consented Behaviour Support Plan for the pupil.
- develop and sustain positive relationships with pupils, which include:
 - Establishing clear routines
 - Communicating expectations of behaviour in ways other than verbally
 - Highlighting and promoting good behaviour
 - Concluding the day positively and starting the next day afresh
 - Having a plan for dealing with low-level disruption
 - Using reinforcement-based strategies to promote pro-social behaviour

Pupils' families

Parents are asked to support their child in adhering to our policies and approach. They should inform the school of any changes in circumstances that may affect their child's behaviour and discuss any behavioural concerns

with the clinical supervisor promptly. Families are encouraged to participate in their child's FBA and contribute to their BSP to the best of their ability.

Staff training

All staff at First Bridge School receive training on general behaviour management, teaching replacement behaviours (i.e.: functional communication), and the use of general environmental/antecedent interventions as preventative measures.

Staff who support a pupil with a BSP will receive additional training on that pupil's individualised strategies. Data will be collected on the staff's fidelity of implementation of each component of the BSP by the Clinical Supervisor and will be reviewed with the Clinical Lead and Clinical Director.

Recording and reporting incidents of serious misbehaviour

Only behaviours which are not addressed by a Behaviour Support Plan will be recorded as 'incidents'.

If a serious behaviour occurs (that is not part of the pupil's current behavioural programme), the incident should be reported to the clinical supervisor. All staff involved or witnessing the incident will be involved in writing an incident report which will be recorded on the incident log and acknowledged by a member of the senior team. Incident reports will be shared with parents via our online platform, Family.

Staff involved in a serious incident will receive a debrief from the clinical lead, where necessary.

Working with parents and caregivers

Working in partnership with our parents/carers is integral to the success of this policy. For it to work in practice, their contribution is vital.

We achieve this by:

- Sharing the expectations of behaviour at school, through informal and formal discussions with individuals and groups of parents/carers.
- Delivering parent training.



- Talking to individual parents/carers about all aspects of their child's behaviour daily, as well as at regular parent/carer meetings.
- Being fair, non-judgemental, and consistent when discussing pupil's behaviour with parents/carers.

Use of rewards and 'sanctions'

Rewards and reinforcement

At First Bridge School, we do not use "rewards" in the traditional sense. Instead, as a behaviour-analytic setting, we focus on the systematic use of reinforcement to strengthen positive and functional behaviours. Reinforcement is always individualised, meaning staff identify what is meaningful, motivating, and developmentally appropriate for each pupil and deliver it contingent on specific desired behaviours. This approach ensures that pupils learn the direct relationship between their behaviour and its consequences, promoting long-term skill development rather than momentary compliance. Reinforcement may include social praise, access to preferred activities, or other personalised motivators identified through assessment and ongoing observation. These practices are embedded across the school day to encourage engagement, independence, and positive behaviour, and form an essential part of each pupil's Behaviour Support Plan.

Non-aversive strategies for reducing challenging behaviours

At First Bridge School, we focus on antecedent and reinforcement-based, highly individualised strategies. We do not use traditional punitive or withdrawal-based techniques, including seclusion.

Differential Reinforcement Procedures

We systematically reinforce alternative, incompatible or more appropriate behaviours to teach pupils a functional way to communicate, self-manage and have their needs met. Reinforcement is specific and always tailored to teach pupil's motivation.



Kind Extinction

This refers to withholding reinforcement for specific challenging behaviours without withholding care, safety, warmth, or emotional connection. “Kind extinction” means:

- We do not provide attention or feedback that may inadvertently reinforce the challenging behaviour.
- We continue to support, supervise, and remain present with the child.
- Compassion, dignity, and emotional safety are maintained at all times.

In practice, this may include *not labelling or responding verbally to the behaviour itself* (e.g., not saying “stop screaming”), because attention or verbal feedback could unintentionally strengthen that behaviour.

Withholding attention for behaviours we do not want to increase

If a behaviour is maintained by attention, staff will avoid giving attention to the challenging behaviour itself. Instead, attention and interaction are redirected or delayed until the pupil is calm and able to engage in a more appropriate behaviour.

Feedback when the pupil is calm and regulated

We never give behavioural feedback while a pupil is dysregulated or distressed. Once they are calm, staff may support them in reviewing what happened as part of a self-management strategy, helping them learn:

- what triggered their reaction
- what strategies they can use next time, and
- how to communicate or problem-solve more effectively.

This reflective process is supportive, non-punitive, and developmentally appropriate. It allows pupils to build their own understanding of emotional regulation and behavioural choices over time.

Sanctions

A sanction is typically defined as a punishment or penalty for breaking a rule. Sanctions are not used at First Bridge School. Many of our pupils may not yet understand the concept of punitive consequences, and sanctions do not support meaningful or lasting behaviour change.

Our approach is centred on:

- Setting high expectations for behaviour.
- Recognising and building on pupils' strengths.
- Fostering positive, supportive interactions.

Response cost

Response cost is a behavioural procedure that differs from a sanction. It involves removing a positive reinforcer following the occurrence of a specific behaviour, which may reduce that behaviour over time. For example, in a token economy system, a token may be removed after a particular behaviour as part of a response cost approach.

Response cost is rarely used at First Bridge School and would only be considered when:

- A pupil's Behaviour Support Plan contains clear, documented proactive and reinforcement-based strategies, and
- These strategies have been implemented consistently without achieving the desired reduction in challenging behaviours.

In such cases, response cost is considered solely as a reactive strategy, not as a punishment. A clear distinction is always maintained between punitive sanctions and behaviour-analytic response cost procedures.

Any strategy involving response cost must be:

- Formally approved by the clinical director, and
- Supported by written parental consent before implementation.

Suspensions and exclusions

The use of suspensions and exclusions are not commonplace at First Bridge School; indeed, at the time of reviewing this policy we have never suspended or excluded a pupil.

Suspension and/or permanent exclusion of a pupil due to challenging behaviour and associated unmanageable risk would only happen in the most severe of circumstances.

Possible reasons to suspend or exclude a pupil

Essentially, repeated challenging and dangerous behaviours for which support interventions have not been successful in modifying the pupil's behaviour may lead to the need for suspension and/or permanent exclusions. Examples may include:

- Actions which put the pupil or others in serious danger.
- Repeated physical abuse to/violence towards others.
- Repeated sexually inappropriate behaviours.
- Repeated damage to property.

However, in reality the use of suspension and/or exclusion is unlikely to ever be helpful in our specialist context. Instead, behaviours such as those listed above are likely to trigger the need to review the pupils' EHC plan with the family and placing authority via the formal annual process or via an emergency review.