Positive Communication and Emotional Regulation Policy [Mandatory Read for school staff]

Lead Director Melanie Burrough, Director of Education and Therapies	**Date Reviewed** April 2026
Lead review author(s) Robin Bertrand Co-Headteacher Ish Hopkins – School Mental Health Lead	**Date** April 2026
Critical reader Launa Randles	**Date** April 2026
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Policy

1. Introduction

This policy will provide the framework through which a positive school ethos for pupils learning and personal development can be created and sustained. A working partnership with families, or those holding parental responsibility, is essential to promote successful outcomes, as pupils who receive a consistent approach from school and home are most likely to develop strategies that lead to them managing their own behaviour with increasing independence.

2. Purpose and Objectives

At The Children's Trust School, our primary aim is to foster an environment where every child can thrive to their fullest potential. Our proactive and collaborative approach promotes a culture of respect, understanding, and empathy, ensuring that every individual feels valued, accepted, and capable of success. We aim to ensure that the environment is carefully considered and staff interactions (e.g. tone of voice, body language used, communication methods etc.) support and promote positive behaviour. (Behaviour in Schools, DoE, 2024)

In our belief system:

• We view behaviour as a means of communication, emphasizing the importance of supporting children and young people in expressing themselves safely and effectively, utilising their preferred methods of communication.

• Our commitment extends to fostering a positive, safe, and nurturing environment for everyone involved—children and young people, their families, staff, and volunteers—where each individual is valued and respected.

• We prioritise the highest standards of safety, well-being, and quality of life for all the children and young people. By identifying the most suitable methods of support, we promote positive practices through non-restrictive approaches.

• We ensure that all staff members have the opportunity to gain insight into the individual needs of children and young people. Through collaboration with multidisciplinary teams, families, and professionals, we develop tailored strategies to support emotional regulation and positive behaviour management.

• Compliance with the statutory requirements of organisations such as the Care Quality Commission and OFSTED is paramount in our service delivery.

• Our commitment to excellence extends to delivering services in line with National Clinical Excellence Guidelines and KCSIE ensuring that our practices consistently meet the highest standards of care.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

All Children's Trust School staff.

4. Definitions

Unless otherwise stated, the words or expressions contained in this document shall have the following meaning:

Emotional regulation support:	Supporting the emotions of young people when they become dysregulated.
Communication of distress / unmet need:.	All behaviour is communication, dysregulation is an example of the communication of distress and of unmet need.
Co-regulation:	Recognition and validation of the young person's communication.
Emotional support:	Support for young people when they are in emotional need
Emotional safety and engagement:	The environment required to ensure successful delivery of the policy
Parental responsibility	The responsibility of all adults to act in the best interests of the young person
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Disability
MDT	Multi-disciplinary Team

5. Policy Statement

5.1 Understanding Behaviour as Communication

In our understanding, behaviour serves as a profound form of communication for the children and young people at our school. Through vocalisations, gestures, or actions, our students convey their needs, emotions, and preferences. We view each behaviour with empathy, recognising the individual stories they tell. Our commitment is to unravel these layers of communication, ensuring compassionate and insightful responses.

We do not view behaviour as something to be managed or corrected. All observed behaviour is understood solely as a form of communication, particularly for children and young people with complex needs and profound and multiple learning disabilities. Our approach is grounded in

Trauma-Informed Practice and the Zones of Regulation framework, recognising that children communicate unmet needs, emotional states, sensory experiences and feelings of safety or threat through their actions, expressions and responses.

5.2 Trauma Informed Practice

The Children's Trust School adopts a Trauma-Informed Practice approach, recognising that many children and young people may have experienced trauma, adverse life experiences, medical trauma and prolonged stress. Trauma can directly impact emotional regulation, sensory processing, communication and feelings of safety.
Staff understand that stress-based responses are not deliberate or wilful, but are adaptive responses to perceived threat or overwhelm. Our practice prioritises:

- Emotional and physical safety
- Predictability and routine
- Attuned, relational responses
- Co-regulation before self-regulation
- Repair and reflection following distress

Interactions focus on *"What are you communicating?"* rather than *"What is wrong with you?"*

5.3a Principles of Zones of Regulation

The Zones of Regulation was developed by Leah Kuypers to support the development of self-regulation and emotion control skills. (The Zones of Regulation Curriculum ® by Leah Kuypers 2011, © Think Social Publishing, Inc.) The Zones of Regulation is a framework designed to help individuals, especially children, develop self-regulation skills and emotional awareness. The framework categorizes emotions and states of alertness into four color-coded zones, each representing a different level of emotional and sensory arousal.

5.3b Zones of Regulation at The Children's Trust School

At the Children's Trust School the Zones of Regulation framework is used as a shared, accessible language to support emotional awareness, regulation and communication. For children and young people with PMLD and complex needs, the Zones are adapted to reflect individual sensory profiles, communication methods and trauma histories.
The purpose of the Zones is not to move children into a preferred state, but to:

- Understand emotional and physiological states
- Validate all emotional experiences
- Identify supportive co-regulation strategies
- Promote emotional safety and connection
- Support preparation for learning

All Zones are viewed as acceptable. Support is focused on helping children feel safe, supported and understood within each state.

Creating a Zones of Regulation plan for the children and young people involves a thoughtful and collaborative process of information gathering, intervention to provide consistency across environments, monitoring and review. Regular assessment and collaboration with the multi-disciplinary team can help refine and adjust the approach as needed.

Staff training is a critical component when implementing interventions of Zones of Regulation. Staff will receive training to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to understand, implement, and support the Zones of Regulation plan.

5.4 Creating a Supportive Environment

At our school, we are committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment where every child and young person can thrive. Central to this commitment is the creation of an environment that nurtures, learning, a sense of belonging, acceptance, and safety for all.
We recognise the importance of providing structure and predictability for the children and young people. Routines help to create a sense of stability and security, which is essential for promoting learning. Staff members work collaboratively to establish consistent routines, to provide a sense of predictability, reduce anxiety and facilitate smoother transitions between activities.
Sensory considerations are incorporated into learning spaces, with attention to lighting, noise levels, seating options, and sensory materials to accommodate diverse sensory profiles and promote comfort and engagement.
Through proactive and collaborative efforts, we strive to ensure that all students feel valued, respected and empowered.

5.5 Emotional Regulation Strategies

At The Children's Trust School, we are dedicated to employing evidence-based emotional regulation strategies. Using the principles of Zones of Regulation, our approach encompasses both proactive and preventive strategies to encourage a positive and safe environment, as well as reactive strategies to meet un-met needs.

Proactive strategies focus on creating an environment that supports regulation and promotes positive wellbeing, and reduces the likelihood of triggers or stressors. Such strategies might include:

- Creating supportive relationships with familiar staff
- Providing choices and autonomy
- Considering environmental adjustments
- Establishing consistent routines

Reactive strategies are employed in response to unmet needs, with a focus on de-escalating situations, ensuring safety, and promoting respectful interactions. Such strategies might include:

- Staff members modelling calm and composed presentation
- Providing a safe and stable environment
- Providing sensory breaks
- Promoting comfort through, for instance, positional change, medical needs
- Use of positive touch when appropriate

We collaborate with the multidisciplinary teams, including teaching staff, residential house staff, therapists and nursing staff, to develop and implement strategies. These are reviewed regularly as required.

We engage in reflective practices after incidents where needs have been identified, to analyse triggers, identify patterns, and develop proactive strategies for preventing future occurrences.

5.6 Zones of Regulation Plans

Zones of Regulation plans are tailored to address the unique strengths, needs, preferences, and challenges of each pupil. Children and young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities have complex and varied support needs that require personalised attention and intervention. Zones of Regulation plans empower pupils to actively participate in their learning and development. They also provide professionals with the tools and strategies to support the co-regulation of pupils.
The process for developing and implementing Zones of Regulation plans involves input from the multidisciplinary team, who collaborate to develop an individualised plan to outline strategies and interventions. Staff members receive training and support to ensure consistent implementation of strategies.

The ”assess, plan, do, review” cycle is utilised to guide the development, implementation, and review of Zones of Regulation plans, to ensure responsiveness to progress and evolving circumstances.

5.7 Training and Professional Development

Continuous training and professional development are crucial for equipping staff members with the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to effectively support the children and young people. At our school, we recognise the importance of ongoing learning to enhance the quality of education, health, therapy and care we provide.
By providing ongoing training and professional development of our staff members and providing regular integrated supervision, we aim to foster a skilled, knowledgeable, and empowered workforce capable of delivering high-quality support and care to the children and young people.

5.8 Restrictive Physical Intervention

Any form of restrictive physical intervention is recognised as potentially distressing and re-traumatising and is avoided wherever possible. There are situations where some restrictive practice is necessary as an act of care. This means that staff must do what is reasonable to protect from foreseeable harm.

Following any restrictive physical intervention, reflective practice, relational repair and review are prioritised to ensure emotional safety for both the child and staff.
The Children’s Trust is committed to meeting the Restraint Reduction Network’s training standards and continuously aims to reduce the use of restraint across the organisation by providing training, focusing on prevention, co-regulation, emotional support and reflective practice. It is also recognised that the use of proportionate physical intervention, as a last resort, may be necessary when there is an immediate risk to child or staff safety due to risk behaviour.

6. Stakeholder Consultation

This policy was drafted collaboratively across The Children’s Trust School team.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Children’s Trust takes great pride in ensuring that diversity as well as equity and inclusion are at the forefront of our service development strategies. All staff involved in risk assessment must be capable of demonstrating cultural sensitivity and competence in relation to diversity including those relating to race, faith, age, gender, disability and sexual orientation. All staff involved in risk

assessment must be capable of demonstrating an appropriate level of cultural sensitivity and competence (DOH, 2009). It is essential to stay open-minded about the potential for violence and self-harm or suicide – regardless of race and gender – and not to expect people to conform to basic stereotypes (DOH, 2009). Staff are encouraged and provided opportunities to reflect on their assumptions about people from diverse groups within society and think about any judgements of risk that they are making about people from these groups. Reflective practice, integrated supervision and a team forum are also crucial resources available to provide accessible knowledge to equity, diversity and inclusion.

7. Related Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures stated below support the effective application of this policy and SOP:

- School child protection and safeguarding Procedure
- Child protection and safeguarding policy and School SOP
- Mental Capacity Act, Best Interest and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Policy
- Restrictive Physical Intervention, Clinical Holding, and Therapeutic Equipment Use Guideline
- Positive Touch Policy
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Curriculum Guidance

7. External References and Guidance

The following external resources and guidance were consulted in drafting this policy and SOP:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Department of Education)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department of Education)
- NHS England, Stop the Over Medication of People with a Learning Disability (2016)
- NHS England, Transforming Care and Commissioning Group, Winterbourne View: Time for Change (2014)
- National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE), Challenging behaviour and learning disabilities: Prevention and interventions for people with learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges (2015)
- World Health Organisation, Prevention and Promotion in Mental Health (2002)
- BILD, PBS Helpline Resources: Understanding Behaviour
- Zones of Regulation
- The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

1. Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have a duty of care and responsibility to support a culture of positive behaviour across the Trust.

1.1 All staff are responsible for:

- Familiarising themselves with Zones of Regulation plans for the children and young people that they are working with.
- Supporting the children and young people with their emotional states by following their individualised plans and ensuring they feel listened to and understood.
- Contributing to the development and reviewing of Zones of Regulation plans.
- Providing knowledge and feedback to teachers and the multidisciplinary team to provide consistent implementation of positive strategies for emotional regulation.

- Making necessary referrals to Mental Health Lead, class teacher, therapy team or house manager.
- Providing an environment that promotes learning

1.2 All teachers are responsible for:

- Ensuring the implementation of Zones of Regulation plans within the school setting.
- Collecting information using the relevant forms to document any changes in the child or young person's presentation or emotional state and escalting when necessary
- Liaising with parents, carers, and social workers in relation to sharing information relevant for developing and reviewing Zones of Regulation plans where necessary.
- Participating in ongoing training and professional development opportunities related to emotional regulation support, communication strategies and the Zones of Regulation approach.

1.3 The School Mental Health Lead is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Positive Communication and Emotional Regulation Policy is implemented through a whole school approach and integrated into the school's culture and practices.
- Coordinating multidisciplinary and "Team around the Child" meetings to support the needs of the children and young people, and to develop, assess, and review individual behaviour support plans and strategies.
- Ensuring Zones of Regulation plans are documented in the child or young person's clinical records and reviewed and updated where necessary.
- Liaising with residential house teams to ensure wellbeing care plans are kept up to date on young people electronic care records
- Updating wellbeing care plans for day pupils with support from class and school nursing teams.
- Communicating with and referring to external professional services where necessary.
- Assessing potential new pupils and referrals for their mental health and wellbeing needs.
- Providing ongoing support of staff, facilitating professional development opportunities, and ensuring adherence to the policy.
- Overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of the policy's effectiveness and considering improvements and adjustments.
- Following up on all incidents recorded on CPOMS under the 'behaviour' and 'mental health and wellbeing' category, with support from wider DSL team
- To celebrate successes and highlight good practice.

1.4 The School Therapists are responsible for:

- Providing professional guidance, advice, and strategies to support the emotional needs of the children and young people.
- Conducting necessary assessments to provide further knowledge and information regarding the needs of the children and young people.
- Attending multidisciplinary meetings regarding emotional regulation and collaborating with relevant professionals.
- Providing further specialist support in the event of dysregulation
- Implementing interventions and strategies to support positive behaviour and effective communication.
- Providing advice and guidance to staff and support best practices and evidence-based strategies.
- Facilitating training for staff on relevant topics, including the Zones of Regulation approach.

1.5 The Nursing and Care Team are responsible for:

- Collecting information using the relevant forms to document any changes in the child or young person's presentation or emotional state.
- Ensuring information regarding children and young people's emotional and behaviour needs are shared with relevant teams where necessary.
- Considering how any changes in health and medical needs of the children and young people may potentially impact their emotional needs.
- Collaborating with the multidisciplinary team to ensure consistent and integrated support for children and young people.
- Maintaining open and regular communication with the multidisciplinary team, including sharing observations and insights that can help inform regulation strategies.

1.6 The School Management Team are responsible for:

- Allocating resources, including time, staff, and materials, necessary for the effective implementation of the policy.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of pupil risk assessments and understanding specific risk

1.7 The Nursing and Care Education team are responsible for:

- Providing necessary and relevant training to ensure staff can best meet the emotional and behaviour needs of the children and young people.

1.8 The DSL Team are responsible for:

- Safeguarding and child protection (including online safety).
- To provide support and advice when any concerns may be relate to safeguarding and child protection.

1.9 Director of Therapies and Education and Headteacher are responsible for:

- Taking overall responsibility to ensure this policy is adhered to.

1.10 Educational Governance Committee are responsible for:

- Ensuring effective use of policies.

2. Process / Procedure

Implementing the Positive Communication and Emotional Regulation Policy involves a structured whole-school approach to ensure consistency and effectiveness. All incident and risk-related episodes and decisions must be recorded on CPOMS.

2.1 Pre-admission

- An appropriate school leader will be allocated to lead each pre-admission case
- They will meet with the potential pupil and their family as part of the initial assessment for placement to gain knowledge on wellbeing needs
- They will liaise with the appropriate professionals to review any concerns around ability to meet wellbeing needs
- The Senior Mental Health Lead will review any previous 'behaviour support plans' and transfer into a Zones of Regulation plan prior to admission if needed

2.2 Post admission

- If no concerns are raised at pre-admission, the class staff will observe the pupil to gain an understanding of their presentation in a variety of contexts and environments
- If emotional regulation concerns are raised at pre-admission Senior Mental Health Lead will carry out comprehensive assessments and observations
- Further assessments, such as, environmental audits and psychotherapy assessments to be carried out in conjunction with therapy team if needed
- ABC charts (Appendix 3) will be initiated if there are concerns and completed to document and help identify what the function of a behaviour might be.

2.3 Development of Individual Zones of Regulation Plans

- Multidisciplinary team meetings or "Team around the Child" meetings will be held to bring together staff to share knowledge and begin to develop an individualised Zones of Regulation Plan
- The team will use the Zones of Regulation template (Appendix 2) to document knowledge of:
    - How a pupil may present in differing emotional states.
    - What strategies can be used to support a pupil when in each state, to ensure they feel safe, heard, and supported.
    - Identify any necessary supplementary interventions and evidence-based strategies tailored to the individual pupil's needs.
- The plans will be sent to parents and families to gain their insight
- The Senior Mental Health lead will collate information and upload the Zones of regulation plan to the pupil's electronic care record in section nine.
- The goal is for all new pupils to have a completed Zones of Regulation plan within 3 months of joining TCTS.
- It is recognised that there may be instances when this is not possible e.g due to inconsistent attendance

2.4 Implementation of Zones of regulation Plans

- Staff members will refer to and consistently apply strategies outlined in the individualised Zones of Regulation plans.
- Staff will regularly monitor the behaviour and emotional states of the children and young people, and document any changes or challenges and escalate to the senior mental health lead.
- The senior mental health lead will conduct regular learning walks/observations across the school to ensure Zones of Regulation plans are being followed consistently and model best practice if needed

2.5 Review and Evaluation

- Zones of Regulation plans will be continuously assessed to monitor effectiveness, at least once per year in line with pupils Annual Reviews
- The Zones of regulation plans will be reviewed and updated with consultation from the MDT to better meet the evolving needs of the individual child or young person, and ensure the strategies remain effective.
- If concerns around a young persons' wellbeing or the effectiveness of the plan are raised before planned review then an MDT meeting will be called and plans will be updated accordingly
- The effectiveness of Zones of Regulation plans will be evaluated using ongoing observational evidence. This may include how often the young person shows signs of dysregulation, their

levels of engagement in learning and activities, and patterns identified through tools such as ABC observations and staff reflections.

2.6 Family, Carer and Social Worker Involvement

- Staff will maintain communication with families, carers and social workers, providing them with regular updates on their child or young person, and involving them in the review and adjustment process.
- Families, carers and social workers will be sent copies of the Zones of Regulation Plan as part of the Annual Review paperwork to review and suggest updates

2.7 Staff Training

- Relevant training sessions will be organised for all staff members on the principles and practices outlined in the Positive Communication and Emotional Regulation Policy, strategies to support emotional regulation, communication techniques, and the Zones of Regulation framework.
- Continuous professional development opportunities will be provided to keep staff updated on the latest research, best practices, and tools for supporting emotional regulation.
- This includes inputs from therapy team including Occupational therapy and Music Therapy