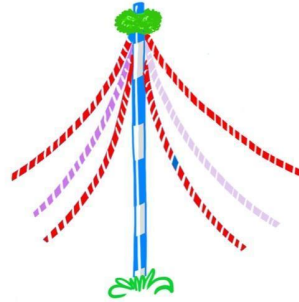


# MAYPOLE SCHOOL



## BEHAVIOUR POLICY

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Drafted by:	John Herring	
Authorised by:	Adrienne Cherrywood	04 Sep 2022
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# 1. INTRODUCTION & GENERAL PRINCIPLES

## Introduction

Our young people come to us with a range of complex needs and may have experiences of insecure attachments to caregivers, traumas such as domestic violence, and histories of rejection and exclusion. The school uses an approach that understands the pupils' behaviour in the context of these factors, and helps them to realise their full potential by using strategies that work therapeutically with their difficulties.

## General principles

The general principles upon which our Behaviour Policy is based include:

- **Nuture.** We provide a nurturing approach that involves caring, consistent, empathic, non-retaliatory and bounded relationships between staff and pupils.
- **Recognising needs.** We recognise that pupils may have early-years needs (e.g. need to learn how to play) that are unmet and need to be provided before they can progress. This may mean providing support which is appropriate to their emotional/social age rather than their chronological age.
- **Clear communication of expectations.** We have clearly-communicated expectations of pupils' behaviour.
- **Understanding of emotions.** We develop pupils' abilities to understand and communicate about their emotions.
- **Rewards and recognition.** We have a positive approach with a focus on praising and rewarding good behaviour, recognising and developing strengths and abilities and helping pupils to develop an improved perception of themselves.
- **Unconditional support.** We ensure that pupils always feel wanted and supported despite their behaviour – firm expectations around behaviour without shaming or further damaging self-esteem.
- **Act as role models.** We, the staff, act as appropriate role-models for our pupils.
- **Staff self-awareness.** We will be aware of our verbal and body language as well as our emotional reactions to the pupils and how we respond to them.
- **Seeking support.** We will be responsible about seeking support when we need it.
- **Providing good attachments.** We provide good attachments for our pupils whilst being sensitive to and supporting relationships between parents/carers and their children.
- **Specialist therapies.** We provide opportunities for specialist therapeutic input where needed.
- **Providing opportunities.** We provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate maturity and responsibility as they progress through the school.

Although we can adapt this approach to our own cultural backgrounds and language styles, it is important that as a staff body we work consistently and in a joined-up way with our pupils, and that the above approach is used throughout the school.

## 2. UNDERSTANDING OUR PUPILS' NEEDS

### The meaning behind the behaviour

It is important that we understand the meaning behind our pupils' behaviour if we are going to be able to support their difficulties. Our pupils' behavioural difficulties can be caused by a wide range or combination of complex issues such as communication difficulties, anxiety, ASD, by lack of development due to attachment difficulties with parents/carers and also by them developing protective behaviours that have helped them cope with their situations.

### Typical behaviours

Typical behaviours might include:

- Insecure attachment behaviours – clinginess, defiant independence, mistrust of adults, ambivalence (clinginess combined with rejecting behaviours).
- Lack of awareness or tolerance of external boundaries and lack of development of internal boundaries – risk-taking behaviours, impulsivity, inability to manage emotions, inability to think ahead and predict consequences, oppositional defiance, inability to understand or communicate about their feelings.
- Inability to tolerate difficult feelings – projects them onto others through challenging behaviour to achieve temporary relief.
- Lack of empathy for others.
- Intense envy of their peers.
- Feelings of low self-esteem, critical of self, unable to recognise achievements.
- Intense fear of failure, inability to take healthy risks (e.g. in learning).
- A rigid need to control born out of anxiety of the unknown (often in children from chaotic backgrounds).
- Hyper-vigilance – always on the look out for threat, hypersensitivity to insult or perceived threat.
- Inability to tolerate “good” and “bad” in the same person – splits people into “good” and “bad” people and changes often who is perceived as “good” and who is perceived as “bad”.
- Bullying behaviour - including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.

### The need to see behaviour in the context of the pupil's background

These behaviours can be frustrating and distressing when we are exposed to them daily but it is important that we see them in the context of our pupils' backgrounds and that we do not retaliate against them, i.e. we separate the child from the behaviour. These behaviours are not fixed, and given the right kind of support within nurturing relationships, our pupils can make significant and lasting progress.

## 3. THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

### Work and Nurture areas

The classroom is clearly defined to include a work area and a nurture area. The nurture area is a comfortable area where pupils are encouraged to interact socially under the guidance of staff. This is where pupils eat breakfast, are prepared for the day, engage in play and recreational activities,

and reflect at the end the day.

## **Importance of a sense of belonging and pride**

Classrooms should be clean, tidy and orderly and pupils encouraged to respect the room and its contents. To facilitate attachment to the class, a sense of belonging and pride in the class can be encouraged by, for example:

- Agreeing a themed name for the class.
- Pupils' names on the door.
- Examples of pupils' good work on the walls.
- Pictures of class trips etc on the walls.
- Giving pupils class jobs and responsibilities.

## **4. ROUTINES AND DAILY TRANSITIONS**

Our pupils find transitions anxiety-provoking and these times are flash-points for challenging behaviour. They need help to cope with daily transitions, such as:

- Use the beginning of the day to prepare pupils for the day ahead – let them know (or remind them) about any changes to their usual routine.
- Have clear visual displays of timetables which can be repeatedly referred to.
- Give older pupils small laminated copies of timetables to carry around.
- Prepare them for ending an activity or lesson by warning them that a break or change is due (timers may be useful for some pupils).
- Close the lesson/activity in a concrete way – sum up what has happened, achievements etc and what will happen next time.
- Reassure pupils when you will see them again to remind them of your consistent availability.
- When a lesson change involves a change of teacher, TAs can aid the transfer of attachment. This involves preparing pupils for the change and communicating to the incoming teacher concerns and successes from the first lesson in front of pupils so they see a visible transfer of care.
- Really praise children who manage movement from one area to another and are in the right place at the right time.
- Make sure, when children leave a room, we remind them about coming back.
- Rehearse younger children through transitions. Predict it all and eliminate the unknown. Tell them what will happen when they return.
- Use the end of the day to go over the day and prepare for the following day.
- Give advance warning of any changes to routine.
- Many pupils find leaving the security of school very difficult. Reassure them that you will be there for them tomorrow and are looking forward to seeing them but that it is now time to go home.

## **5. PROVIDING GOOD ATTACHMENTS**

### **Importance of a secure attachment to a caregiver**

A secure attachment to a caregiver is essential for children's psychological development. Many of our pupils have not experienced this at home. If they experience secure attachments to caregivers at school, this can help them catch up on the development they have missed out on. This cannot and should not replace attachments to parents/carers, but can be a vital "top up" if their full attachment needs have not been met at home.

## **How Staff can provide secure attachments**

Staff can provide secure attachments to pupils by:

- Being consistent, patient and dependable.
- Giving clear expectations and being predictable in our responses and reactions
- Tuning into their needs – noticing when they are hungry, upset, tired etc and demonstrating care through your responses.
- Getting to know the child and what they need from your relationship with them. Empathising with and understanding their feelings.
- Containing their distress/rage – trying to understand the reasons for challenging behaviour and figure out solutions for the child, not retaliating through our reactions, managing our own behavioural responses to challenging behaviour.
- Demonstrating unconditional acceptance of the child – disapproving of behaviours, never the child as a person (e.g. "what you said was really rude", not "you are so rude").
- Accepting that our relationships with pupils is often one-way to start with – not expecting much back from them.

## **The need to understand the child's background**

Knowledge of the child's background can help us build good attachments with them. When we understand what they've been through, this can help us put their behaviours into context. When you start to work with a child, reading their file and speaking to other professionals with experience of the child, e.g. class teachers/therapists, can help your understanding of them.

## **6. PROMOTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Activities for social and emotional learning opportunities**

Our pupils come to our school to learn about social skills and emotions as well as academic learning, and it is important that we provide opportunities for this. Certain times should be focal points for this learning, e.g. breakfast, tutor time, assemblies, end of day, break time and lunch, and PSHE. However, social and emotional learning needs to be embedded throughout the whole day, and to be a part of all lessons.

Activities for practising social skills and learning about emotions will include:

- Story-reading and story telling.
- Circle/tutor time.
- Drama / roleplay.
- Group musical activities.
- Sport and games.
- Group art activities.
- Discussing films and stories in the news.
- Action songs and rhymes encouraging the children to focus on the teacher.

- Memory games both auditory and visual.
- Speaking and listening activities.
- Time for conflict resolution and facilitating apologies after incidents (this may not always be appropriate and may be some time after an incident).

## Importance of Play

Play is vital in children's development, and teaches them about their emotional and social world. Children use play to rehearse for real life. It is essential that the children have the opportunity for directed and spontaneous play as part of their personal and social development. Age-appropriate play is just as important for older pupils, who may have missed out on early years opportunities for play, and will have missed out on this kind of learning as a result. Boundaries and rules are important in play, and these need to be explicit with reminders where necessary. Play opportunities need to be matched to pupils' level of development - pupils may need to engage in supported solitary play, before moving onto parallel play, (play in the company with others but without much interaction) and finally social play.

However, please note that 'play-fighting' does not constitute constructive play, and we do not allow or encourage play-fighting, either between pupils or adults and pupils.

## Communicating about feelings

Pupils need to be encouraged to communicate appropriately about their feelings instead of acting out their feelings through challenging behaviour. We can support them in this in a number of ways:

- Modelling – talking about our own feelings and emotional reactions.
- This is particularly important for male staff to help overcome gender stereotypes around boys being "allowed" to talk about feelings.
- Praising pupils whenever they manage to tell you about their feelings.
- Verbalising your thoughts about a child's emotional state (this is communicating their feelings for them before they're able to do this themselves) – wondering aloud ("I'm wondering if you're upset because...").
- Providing opportunities for emotional communication – ask about their weekend etc.
- Make it safe for children to talk about their feelings – normalise their feelings by letting them know that we all have these feelings ("I'm not surprised you're upset, most children get upset when...").
- Empathise with their feelings – this helps them feel understood and when we feel understood it encourages further communication.

Because much of our pupils' SEMH stems from difficulties at home, it is helpful to provide them with opportunities to talk about their personal lives but without prying or being intrusive. Use open questions such as "how was your weekend?" If a pupil discusses a difficult personal issue with you, praise them for the communication and let them know it will help you help them. Reassure them they can talk with you again about it if they want to and identify other sources of support (e.g. therapist).

## 7. MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

### Expectations and boundaries

The children need to be faced with clear expectations and boundaries. They will feel safe when they recognise that we are all working together for them, that the boundaries hold them secure and that the adults are in charge of themselves and the children. Class rules should be clearly displayed and should emphasise "do's" rather than "don'ts". Pupils, particularly older pupils, should

be involved in deciding the rules.

## **Abusive language**

Abusive language and disrespect is unacceptable and children need to be given the appropriate language and strategies to use. They need to be reminded of the school ethos of respect for yourself and others and dealing with each other in an acceptable manner. If abusive and disrespectful language is not challenged, it becomes accepted and allows for a climate of conflict and hostility to develop. If a child has become extremely distressed and is out of control and requiring physical intervention, the language used may be regarded somewhat differently. At these times it may be more helpful to ignore any verbal abuse and not to respond to it until the child has gained some level of calm. It is likely that there are other behaviours that need to be addressed at this point and the language is not a priority.

## **Right place, at the right time**

Be in the right place at the right time. This is an important management tool. Children should be taught to always ask before leaving a room and should only visit the place stated. Younger children should always be accompanied or discreetly monitored by an adult. Older pupils should be given opportunities to prove they can be trusted.

## **Self-Awareness / Managing Ourselves**

It is important that we act as role-models for our pupils. This means containing our own emotional reactions to situations and modelling behaviours that we hope our pupils can achieve. Managing behaviour is firstly dependent on the climate created by the adults within the classroom, and then within the school. To achieve this we will:

- Use respectful verbal and body language when addressing pupils.
- Make positive eye contact and address children with confidence.
- Address children by name and be clear in your message to them.
- Never use swearing or discuss inappropriate subjects in the presence of pupils.
- Don't shout or use aggressive body language.
- Remain calm but confident even (*especially*) when faced with challenging behaviour. We can be authoritative without being aggressive.
- If you are finding a situation too challenging to remain in control, ask for support or for someone else to take over – recognise when you are no longer helping the situation.
- Model positive communication with other staff in front of pupils.
- Communicate honestly and openly with the children and each other.
- Be careful with humour – avoid humour containing playful threats of aggression – often misinterpreted by the child as real aggression.
- Never play fight with pupils or allow them to play fight together; the children are unable to manage this positively.

We also need to be clear that we are the adults and it is our job to educate the pupils and look after them when they are in our care. We take charge and although the children are to be included in decision making and in particular in devising their own behaviour targets, it must be clear to them that the adults look after them. This does not mean that we can't be friendly and warm with the children, but that we always combine this with being adult and boundaried. This requires particular skill with older pupils where this needs to be balanced with allowing them more opportunities for being responsible and independent. The way we do this mirrors how a good parent gradually renegotiates boundaries with a teenager while still remaining the parent.



## Dealing with challenging behaviour

The school has an emphasis on prevention rather than reaction. All the elements of our practice should be contributing towards prevention of challenging behaviour arising. When challenging behaviour does arise, the emphasis is on de-escalation.

### De-escalation strategies

- Firstly speak quietly and privately if possible to the child.
- Remark on a time when they have successfully changed a response.
- Pick out their strengths and remind them.
- Remember their individual targets and highlight the rewards.
- Offer alternative strategies (where these have already been agreed with a child so much the better).
- Use time-out or moving to the nurture area.
- Reiterate your commitment to supporting them and desire to help them.
- Avoid shouting or raising your voice, be aware of your body language and giving the child space.
- Use diversion, change the activity to remove pressure.
- Wonder aloud about the feelings behind the behaviour – empathise with the feelings.
- Don't use threats of sanctions.
- Remind of rewards.
- Listen to what the child is trying to tell you (if the child says “go away and leave me alone”, if it is safe to do so, move a distance away but where you can still see them).
- Don't stand over them.
- Ask for help from another adult if you feel the pupil might be better helped by someone else.
- Behaviour Points- Behaviour points are marks for low level behaviours which could lead to affecting others learning or be the start of the student struggling to regulate themselves. When pupils get 3 behaviour points in a short space of time this will be a point to realise they will need a bit of time in the nurture room to regulate themselves before their energy gets so high they find it harder to get back to a calm ready to learn state. This is not a punishment but a tool used for the pupils to begin to acknowledge when they are not okay and need some time before concentrating on the task at hand again.

## 8. PHYSICAL INTERVENTION (please refer to our PI policy)

The following points also need to be adhered to by all staff.

### When Physical intervention may be justified

Physical intervention is only to be used in order to prevent:

- injury being caused to any person, including the child themselves;
- damage to property;
- engagement in any behaviour prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school or among any of its pupils.
- committing an offence

## Five Golden Rules

- **Last resort.** Physical Intervention should **only** be used as a **last resort**.
- **Prior warning.** Whenever practical, the child should be given warning prior to a physical intervention. All staff are fully trained in appropriate PI and should be familiar with the school's PI policy.
- **Avoid attempting a solo hold.** No member of staff should attempt to "hold" a child by themselves unless absolutely unavoidable.
- **Minimum force.** The force used must be the minimum necessary to deal with the harm that needs to be prevented, i.e. it must be reasonable in the circumstances. Staff should only "hold" a child for a maximum of ten minutes. Other staff may need to offer support.
- **Minimum necessary staff.** The number of staff involved should be the minimum necessary to safeguard the child and others.

## During the incident

During a PI, don't attempt to discuss the incident – the child will be too distressed to think about it and it may further escalate behaviour. The time for that is later when the child has calmed down. Focus any talking on trying to soothe the child and help them calm.

Verbalise your belief in their ability to calm down and turn the situation around. Verbalise your commitment to continue to support them ("I'm here to help you" etc). Don't retaliate to verbal abuse from the pupil. As a general rule, keep dialogue to a minimum during a physical restraint and resist telling the child to 'calm down'.

## After the incident

A complaints procedure is in place for pupils and parents. Pupils have the right to complain and if they want to, should be supported in this.

Where possible "timeout" is given for staff and child following a "holding". Senior members of staff offer supervision sessions for less experienced members.

Wherever possible time needs to be taken to work through the reasons for "holding" with the child. The experience can be used for addressing issues which cause violent responses and the child can be guided in how to prevent a reoccurrence. Explain to the child that you are sorry that you had to hold them, but you needed to in order to keep them safe.

A reflection time will be had with the pupil(s) and staff involved to reflect on what happened, what the trigger was, feelings involved and what could have been done differently. This is to help support the staff and pupils in learning about themselves and each other so the incident can be avoided from happening again and begin to learn from our mistakes and grow as an individual.

## Incident Report: after any physical intervention or behaviour incident

All children at Maypole will have an Individual Education, Health and Care Plan, and a Student Support Plan including a Risk Assessment Form. These will outline any specific considerations for that child, in relation to physical intervention. These are updated on a termly basis.

Staff need to complete an incident report following any physical intervention, or behaviour incident, before staff leave at the end of the day.

## 9. REWARDS AND CONSEQUENCES

### Rewards

Clear rewards and consequences are essential for pupils with SEMH, but the emphasis should always be on rewarding good behaviour. Our pupils come to our school with a perception of themselves as “bad” and it is often easy for them to fit into a cycle of behaving badly and being punished from which they can see no hope of escaping. A clear, easy-to-understand and consistent reward system is essential, to help pupils notice and celebrate their own successes and build a different perception of themselves.

The reward system should take account of the following issues / features:

- Pupils with SEMH find waiting difficult.
- In addition to weekly rewards, pupils may need opportunities to gain rewards on a daily or even shorter basis.
- Targets for rewards need to be realistic, bearing in mind the pupils’ SEMH difficulties.
- Rewards that are earned must be given when they are expected. If not, the child’s trust in adults will not be allowed to develop.
- **Never** take away or delay an earned reward as a consequence. This will again damage trust, and seem unjust to the child.
- Provide opportunities for public celebration of success (e.g. special mentions; assemblies).
- Make sure that small successes get noticed and rewarded/celebrated, as well as big ones.
- Avoid using time with a favoured adult as a reward – this contradicts the notion of staff as consistently available attachment figures, and can lead to insecurity in the child’s attachment to staff. It can also lead to unbearable feelings of envy in other children.

### The principle of Consequences

Debriefing incidents with pupils is essential in helping them to reflect on the consequences of their actions, and to understand the sequence of events involved. Our pupils act impulsively on their feelings, without thinking. We need to help introduce a pause for thought in the sequence, so that they can manage their reactions better.

- Consequences need to be applied sensibly and make sense to the child. They should, where possible, be included in the course of the day.
- Avoid escalating incremental consequences, e.g. the constant removal of minutes off break time, as this can become too anxiety-provoking for our pupils, leading to hopelessness and sabotage.
- Wherever possible, include a reparation activity as part of the consequence.
- Consequences should be as consistent as possible throughout the school but we recognise that they also need to be tailored, to a certain extent, to individual needs.
- Classes for younger children can operate a ‘choosing time’ system whereby children are rewarded for good achievements and good choices by receiving a short period of activity they choose. These times punctuate the day and occur at breaks between sessions.
- If a child displays negative and destructive behaviour during a lesson then part of the ‘choosing time’ will be used in paying back this time and resolving the problem.

### Consequences framework

To improve consistency of applying consequences to all children throughout the school, the following list offers a consistent framework:

- **Low level disruption:** child may work apart from classmates or pay back time out of choosing time or playtime (the whole playtime must not be taken away). Behaviour points may be used to give the child time out before their behaviour escalates into an extreme disruption.
- **Extreme disruption:** paying back time from choosing time or removed from class; miss some playtime or part of lunch break. Receive a conferencing session from a staff member and undergo a 'reparation' session or activity.
- **Absconding:** Paying back time and discussion with parents.
- **Dangerous behaviour:** child takes time out of choosing time to discuss with adults, repairs any damage, makes amends.
- **Damage to property:** makes good the damage, asked to contribute to replacement if appropriate, writes letter of apology to any persons concerned in own time, parents informed.
- **Violence:** if incident required physical intervention it needs to be discussed with child during choosing time or at an appropriate time in the school day (this may need to be the following day). Children are encouraged to reconcile differences, make amends, finding an activity that could help injured party.
- **Any incidence of bullying:** logged and both victim and perpetrator take time to discuss the situation and find appropriate ways of resolving negative interactions by finding positive and cooperative activities.
- **Willful violent attack** on member of staff or another child may result, after discussion with the Principal or Executive Headteacher, in an agreed internal exclusion. In extreme circumstances or after repeated similar incidents, a fixed term suspension may result. **Only** the Executive Headteacher or Principal can issue a fixed term exclusion.

In the case of any of these incidents a reflective session will take place after to reflect on what happened, what the trigger was, feelings involved and what could have been done differently. This is to help support the staff and pupils in learning about themselves and each other so the incident does not happen again and we begin to learn from our mistakes and grow as an individual.

## 10. POSITIVE TEACHING

To help boost self-esteem and change how our pupils view themselves, we need to constantly be on the look out for small successes and to recognise and praise / reward these successes - *Catch the children being good*. It is important to remember that we need to notice behaviours that might seem ordinary but are significant for our children. It could be something as simple as a child saying hello back to you, when you say hello to them.

Keep language as positive and solution-focused as possible, e.g. focus on what behaviours you want, not the behaviours you don't want.

## 11. ADAPTING LESSONS

The way lesson content is taught needs to be adapted for each pupil, to meet the special needs of our pupils.

This depends on the individual needs but can include:

- "Chunking" work into manageable small amounts.
- Getting pupils actively involved in learning, rather than being passive recipients.

- Using kinaesthetic learning whereby pupils are physically moving as part of their learning (particularly for hyperactive pupils).
- Adapting how we communicate, so that pupils can understand.
- Picking up on pupils' individual interests, and adapting lesson content to include these.

If lessons are not adapted appropriately, pupils may struggle to understand or engage with what is being taught, which can lead to challenging behaviour or absenteeism as well as affecting their learning.

## 12. SUPPORTING MAJOR TRANSITIONS

Our pupils often have histories of loss, and abrupt confusing endings. They find major transitions, such as changes in staff or changing class, hard to cope with; and will need support.

Strategies that can help include:

- **Advance warning.** Wherever possible give advance warning, at least 4 weeks.
- **Preparation.** Support the child emotionally during the preparation – reassure any anxieties, provide opportunities to ask questions.
- **Build relationship in advance.** Where a staff change is involved, give the child a chance to build a relationship with the new staff member before the handover takes place.
- **Memories.** Encourage the idea of memory to help them cope with the loss involved.
- **Photo albums.** At the end of academic year, create a photo album with pupils celebrating memories of experiences from that year.
- **Demonstration of new attachment.** Demonstrate a concrete transfer of attachment where handover between staff is involved.
- **Transition meeting.** Have a meeting with current staff, new staff and child and discuss successes, areas to work on etc
- **Honesty.** When leaving school, be honest with pupils. This is a real ending, you won't be coming back.
- **Personal message.** Express your pleasure at having worked with them, let them know you'll remember them, perhaps leave a concrete reminder of you such as a card.

Our pupils use all sorts of defences to protect themselves against the pain of loss involved in these transitions, and we need to understand those defences. They can include denying any feelings of sadness, pretending not to care, trashing relationships before they end, and projecting their feelings of anger/sadness into us through their behaviour.

## 13. SUPPORTING NON-ATTENDERS

### Factors we must consider

Some older pupils may be persistently absent from school. Sometimes this is partly an expression of natural adolescence, in that they are absorbed in peer group activities outside of school, and want to separate from the adult-imposed world. Often it is connected to their SEMH, e.g. anxiety about the future / depression, lack of motivation, or drug addiction. Sometimes what we are offering them simply does not interest them sufficiently. We need to be mindful of these themes when tackling persistent absenteeism.

### Strategies to support non-attenders

Strategies that can be used to support non-attenders include:

- Being proactive – not letting the situation worsen without any intervention.
- Reach out to the pupil – phone, text or visit.
- Communicate with parents.
- Arrange a Team Around the Child (TAC) meeting as soon as possible for other professionals, pupil and family to devise a strategy. If the pupil does not attend, ensure views are incorporated somehow into strategy and send copy to pupil.
- Use home visits.
- Be positive and encouraging in all communications with the pupil.
- Don't focus on the absence.
- Stress your ongoing support and availability for them (they may assume you don't want them back or have forgotten about them)
- If a non-attender manages to come to school, praise them enthusiastically and don't criticise them for the absence.
- Explore what helped them manage to come and how this could be developed.
- Be flexible with timetables – what are they interested in?
- Are they more likely to engage with a shorter timetable?
- However, balance this with constant change as this can appear inconsistent – give strategies time to work.
- Engage the family – help identify figures other than parents (Sibling? Grandparent? Family friend?) who can support the pupil come to school.
- Ensure pupil is being rewarded at home for attendance.
- Ensure regular communication with family.
- Identify specialist support that may help with underlying problems – therapy, drugs work etc.

### **Don't forget about absent pupils – be persistent!**

It is easy to forget about absent pupils because they usually don't cause as much stress as the ones who do attend! However this is often linked to their own personal narratives about being unimportant and easy to forget about so demonstrating to them consistently that you are thinking about them is an important first step. Above all, don't give up hope and be persistent.

## **14. WORKING AS A TEAM**

### **Staff need to be seen to be working together, as a team**

It is essential that pupils see us working together as a team. Many are at an emotional stage where they use "splitting" as an emotional defence, to give them a sense of control over people. This involves splitting people into "good" people who are unrealistically idealised, and "bad" people who are unrealistically demonised. To discourage this, adults need to demonstrate to pupils that they will not allow themselves to be split in this way.

### **How we can demonstrate this**

Examples of how we do this include:

- Noticing when a colleague's authority is being undermined by a pupil and openly challenging this.
- Sharing information about behavioural incidents with colleagues in front of the pupil (in a way that isn't shaming and recognises any positives and opportunities for turning situations

around).

- Adults assigned the “good” role pointing out how adults assigned the “bad” role actually help and support the pupil.
- Being consistent as a class team with rewards / consequences / rules.
- Not (unconsciously?) colluding with pupils so that you get assigned the “good” role.

It is important that we all work together and share information as appropriate to ensure that we are providing effective joined-up care for our pupils.

## **15. WORKING WITH NETWORKS & PARENTS / CARERS**

### **Importance of working together**

The parents of our pupils are often struggling with their own past and present difficulties, that impact on their ability to care for their children. It is important that we build supportive relationships with parents, so that there isn't an unhelpful split between school and home.

Parents may have had difficult experiences themselves of school, and so may be anxious about forming a relationship with the school. We also can only do part of the job at school in terms of helping our pupils progress, and it is important to help in whatever way we can, to support the relationships between our pupils and their parents.

### **Ways we can support parents / carers**

We can support parents in the following ways:

- Find out what is the best way to contact them. Phone? Email? Text?
- What's the best time to contact?
- How regularly? (We would like it to be daily, if possible). Needs to be regular enough to be of any use, but not so that the parent feels overwhelmed.
- Ensure that positives are fed back, as well as concerns. (This is really important – who wants to hear only negative things about their child? We want to avoid the 'dread' of the school phone call.)
- Mention at least one positive, in every contact. Parents need to be given opportunities to praise their children.
- Model positive interactions with pupils in front of their parents. Model giving praise, being respectful, not shouting etc.
- Earn parents' trust by doing something concrete for them (e.g. find out about a play scheme).
- Be proactive – use home visits if parent would prefer not to come to the school.
- Ensure parents are informed promptly and effectively about school information, annual reviews, trips, incidents/consequences etc.
- Don't rely on parents reading letters or emails that are sent – always follow up with a phone call.
- Provide informal opportunities for parents to visit – opportunities for positive experiences with children at school – Cooking? Celebrations?
- Parents events within the nurture groups?
- Send home via email weekly pupil's overview of lessons and behaviour which may include pictures.

## **Working with professional networks**

It is also important that we work professionally and in a joined-up way with pupils' professional networks. These networks can also often become split, particularly when there is a lot of concern around a child. It is easy for one member (often the social worker!) to become demonised and blamed for everything that is going wrong; and it is important to bear this in mind in meetings.

The staff who work closest with the children should attend network meetings where possible – your input is valuable. If you feel you should attend but haven't been invited, then do ask if you can attend.

Network meetings can sometimes become negative and hopeless, in a way which is damaging for the child. If this happens then we can help by looking for positives, and possible solutions. Do not collude with any splitting, or unfair scapegoating within the network.

When sharing personal information about a pupil, be careful about what you share. It is important to balance the need to share information, with the child's need for privacy. You should discuss with the pupil beforehand what it is okay for you to talk about, otherwise you may damage your relationship with them.

## **16. CONCLUSION**

The most important thing to remember is why you wanted to work at Maypole School in the first place (especially after you have had a difficult day).

We have a shared passion and love for working with this group of children and young people. They are fun, and they enrich our lives, as much as we enrich theirs.

We all learn from each other throughout our lives, and whilst working at Maypole School will at times be challenging, we are all on a shared educational journey.