



Delivering Special  
Provision Locally



Dacorum Education  
Support Centre

# DESC Primary Behaviour Toolkit



# Introduction

This toolkit has been commissioned by DSPL8, in response to leadership teams in Dacorum schools requesting more support for improving outcomes for learners with SEMH needs. This toolkit is aimed at supporting SENDCos and Behaviour Leads and is best used by them, to support planning for the learners in their school, to facilitate discussion and support the Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) process.

We aim to provide you with the following:

1. Ideas banks for strategies and language to try for some of our most common behaviour challenges.
2. Ideas for how to teach and provide learning opportunities for identified gaps in SEMH skills.
3. Example library resources that could support teaching and learning of SEMH skills.
4. Prompts and questions for reflection for SENDCos and behaviour leads. This is to support the analysis and planning of behaviour and staff responses.

We know that time is tight in schools, and it is increasingly hard to find the opportunity for planning, reviewing and reflecting on how to meet the needs of the learners presenting with behaviours that challenge. This document is designed to support the APDR cycle in school, with suggestions and ideas to try. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to all behaviour issues that may arise within your school, nor a checklist to be completed. Rather, it is a summary of the most commonly seen behaviour challenges that our local schools are facing and some ideas for working to support those. It could be a quick-reference point for things to try as needs emerge, or additionally when needs have presented for a while and you are looking for more ideas to try.

## Context and Wider Policy

The content of this guide is designed to complement a therapeutic and relational approach to behaviour support within schools, as per the Hertfordshire Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Strategy, and Hertfordshire's preferred approach to behaviour management in schools, 'Therapeutic Thinking', previously known as 'Hertfordshire Steps'. This toolkit does not discuss the theory or reasoning, as there is a local offer for this. All leaders should therefore familiarise themselves with the following documents:

Hertfordshire Emotional and Wellbeing and Behaviour Strategy:

<https://www.desc.herts.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=124&type=pdf>

Dacorum Emotional Wellbeing and Behaviour Guidance:

[https://www.desc.herts.sch.uk/\\_site/data/files/documents/2024-2025/E45C9D43A078043FAA3F9EFC9D9B07824.pdf?pid=74](https://www.desc.herts.sch.uk/_site/data/files/documents/2024-2025/E45C9D43A078043FAA3F9EFC9D9B07824.pdf?pid=74)

Relational Practice: A Hertfordshire approach:

<https://thegrid.org.uk/wellbeing/behaviour/relational-practice-a-hertfordshire-approach>

This toolkit is also designed to support the implementation of a graduated response for SEND learners with SEMH needs. Further reading on this can be found in Hertfordshire's Ordinarily Available Provision guidance document:

<https://thegrid.org.uk/assets/ordinarily-available-provision-guidance-sep25.pdf>

The toolkit outlines the most commonly witnessed behaviour needs and challenges seen by the DESC Outreach and Haven teams:

1. **How can we best support demand-avoidant learners?**
2. **How can we best support learners with low self-esteem and resilience?**
3. **How can we best support a learner who seeks control in peer-peer interactions?**
4. **How can we best support a learner who internally absconds?**
5. **How can we best support a learner who swears and uses inappropriate language?**
6. **How can we best support learners who are dysregulated and being disruptive and/or dangerous?**
7. **How can we improve engagement in post-incident measures: reflect, repair, and remove barriers to success?**
8. **How can we best support staff who are supporting learners with SEMH needs?**

#### **A note on implementation:**

In schools where we see the most positive impact of trying new strategies, we often see the following:

- Staff consider adequate time to allow things to embed before stopping/ trying something new.
- Leaders plan review points – 2 weeks, 4 weeks, or 6 weeks away – when presenting needs and strategies are reviewed.
- All staff consistently trial the strategy in the same way. Good practice is modelled and shared.
- Leaders pick a few core adaptations to focus on and embed at any one time.
- Communication across the team supporting the learner is effective, and all relevant staff are up-to-date on current plans and adaptations.
- For SEND learners with or without an EHCP, always use professional judgment and consider first whether a strategy is age/ stage appropriate, and if it would be a reasonable approach to try, given needs listed on EHCP/advice for other external support agencies.

This toolkit has been created by Alice Neve (Dacorum Primary Behaviour Service Lead) and Sarah Cheshire (Outreach and Therapeutic Services Coordinator) along with support from the wider team at DESC.



# 1. How can we best support demand-avoidant learners?

## What might this look like?

- Reluctant to follow instructions
- Likes to say 'no'
- Can't cope with the day-to-day demands that are expected of most learners
- Might vocalise 'you can't make me do it'

## Strategies:

1. Two closed choices. Instead of asking to start the maths work (Can you start your maths work, please?), give two choices, and remove the request words: e.g. ask 'whiteboard or coloured pens and paper?' 'Numicon or cubes?'
2. Behaviour reminders framed as two choices with two different consequences.
3. Make 'boring' requests more engaging – instead of 'it's time to go to class' try 'Let's crawl like a tiger or creep like a ninja'.
4. Job list or in-tray– they can choose the order. Can be interspersed with rewarding activities.
5. Now and next board and visual timetable shows that it is isn't a personal demand – it's what's on the board! You can point to it instead of speaking.
6. Try a list of jobs drawn onto sticky notes (or laminated cards for regular activities) and ask learner to put them in their preferred order.
7. Work alongside. Adults to have own worksheet and work alongside, thinking aloud (metacognition) their work and asking the learner for help. This avoids sitting and watching/waiting for them to start.
8. Be busy whilst waiting – cut something out, sharpen pencils, tidy something up– reduces the demand of watching and waiting.
9. Adapt work to incorporate their likes and interests – can the same skill be taught with resources that appeal directly to them?
10. When transitioning at start of day, or after playtime, consider how to 'warm them up' to demands. Don't start with something they will push back on straight away.
11. Anxiety analysis across the day – when does it happen the most? What can we do before the push back to improve positive feelings and make a 'no' less likely?
12. Depersonalise requests 'At DESC we walk down the corridors, thank you'
13. Thank you instead of please. 'Take your feet off the table, thank you'.
14. Avoid saying 'don't' and 'no' and phrase things positively instead. E.g. don't tap your pen vs. hold your pen still, thank you.
15. Focus praise on the choices that have been made.
16. Explore and reflect on feelings when the right choices have been made, in the same way you might debrief after an incident.

17. Use less directive language: 'When you're ready to do it, let me know and I can come and help you'. 'I'm just going to fix this display, let me know when you're ready to go to the classroom'.
18. Consider TEACHH tasks – tasks which are set up with visual diagram of what to do/ how to complete – to reduce the need for any verbal instructions.
19. SMART behaviour targets constructed for the learner. Visual resources offered which highlight their target. Reflection against those targets to happen throughout the day.
20. Share or co-create flow diagrams about making choices and the positive and negative consequences that happen as a result.
21. Pick your battles: e.g. if they refuse to come to the carpet say 'you can listen from there'.

**Reflection questions for leaders:**


Do all the adults working with the child have good relationships with them? How can they be further improved? How can we plan positive experiences with those adults?

Are all staff who have contact with this learner trained in relevant areas: trauma-informed practice/ ACEs/ ASD/ Hertfordshire Therapeutic Thinking?

Are staff beliefs in line with the behaviour policy and practice? If not, what have you done about this?

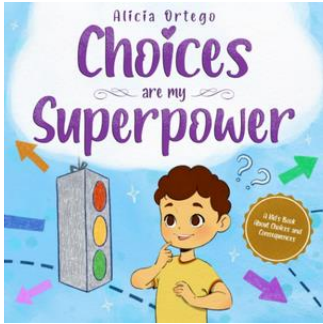
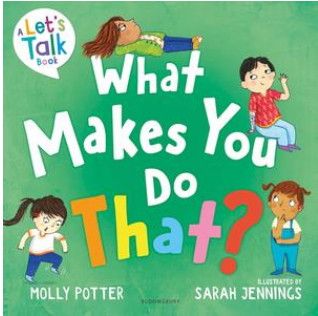
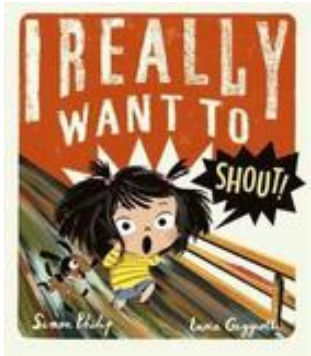
Do all staff working with the learner have a positive support network within school?

## Teaching ideas:

Objective	Works best for...	Key teaching points
<p>Reflect on things that make me feel stubborn or say 'nope'</p>	<p>KS2 learners</p>	<p>Review a visual daily timetable and think about 'When I am more likely to feel stubborn/ say nope about doing or not doing something?'</p>  <p>Use a visual checkpoint to record their ideas. Extend by thinking about what strategy could help in that specific lesson/ point in the day.</p>
<p>To reflect on what I can and cannot control (general)</p>	<p>KS2 learners</p>	<p>Use a hoop on the floor and ask the child to either jump into the hoop when you say something that they can control or hop out of the hoop if they can't control it.</p> <p>Have typed sentences for them to move and sort in and out of the hoop.</p> <p>For each statement 'e.g.' the traffic on the way to school.' Ask the learner to think if they can control it or not. This activity is very useful for making explicit that in life some things are out of our own control.</p>
<p>To reflect on what I can and cannot control (specific to a lesson)</p>		<p>Consider a lesson in which the learner often struggles, think about the things that they can and cannot control. Sort options in and out of a circle.</p> <p>For example, the statements could read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What we are learning about in maths</li> <li>- Where to sit and listen</li> <li>- The work that has been set</li> <li>- Doing the work on a whiteboard or in my book</li> <li>- Having a go</li> <li>- How hard I try</li> <li>- The fire alarm going off</li> <li>- Everyone else getting on with the work</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When the maths lesson is going to finish</li> <li>- Asking for help</li> </ul>
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Suggested library resources for teaching and learning:

	<p>Great to reinforce the message about stopping to think before acting.</p> <p>Could follow up with visual traffic lights as a quick-point reference point.</p>
	<p>Great for exploring outcomes of different choices. Very detailed so can be explored one topic at a time.</p>
	<p>This book can support discussions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger being a feeling that we all experience.</li> <li>• How talking about your feelings can help.</li> <li>• How shouting doesn't often get the outcome that you want.</li> </ul>



## 2. How can we best support learners with low self-esteem and resilience?

### What might this look like?

- Frustrated when making mistakes
- Defacing own work
- Refusal to start tasks
- Will not accept praise
- Dishonesty and lying
- Dysregulation when perceives things have gone wrong or not their way

### Strategies:

1. Ensure all negative feedback is about the choice and not them personally e.g., 'that was not a kind choice'.
2. Allow erasers to correct mistakes.
3. Offer whiteboards/ laptops/ chalk outside to record work in alternative ways.
4. Praise for meeting specific targets rather than 'good work'. e.g., well done for working hard on that for 10 minutes. Praise on the effort rather than the outcome.
5. Chunking work effort – 5 mins effort, 2 mins break, 5 mins effort, 2 mins break.
6. Positive mantras chosen with the learner and then stuck in key places. Use of positive mantras can be modelled and taught.
7. Having a lower-demand option for when anxiety is high. e.g., you can do your work or you can do this maths puzzle.
8. Pre-teaching of what is coming up to improve confidence and independence in starting a task.
9. Provide word banks, visual scaffolds and model using them.
10. Extra level of scaffolded practice/ modelling to improve confidence before starting independent work.
11. Use a timer to give a check-in point, to facilitate confidence in starting the task. 'I'm coming over in 5 minutes'.
12. Provide extra opportunity to consolidate, repeat, reinforce learning at the comfortable level.
13. Giving non-verbal cues across the room. Thumbs up or a smile to show you are keeping them in mind.
14. Feelings check-in at key transition points (see appendix for feelings check-in ideas).
15. Adults explicitly model things going wrong during main teaching input and coping with mistakes, using think aloud methods.
16. Ensure learner voice has been gathered – what do they think helps them? What would they like to support them?

17. Make growth mindset a regular reflection point and a part of daily dialogue. Ask at the end of the day: who made a great mistake today? Whole class reflection on mistakes and resultant learning.
18. Journaling – KS2 children might prefer recording successes and mistakes in a daily journal rather than a verbal reflection. It might be easier for them to ‘admit’ mistakes independently in their own journal rather than talk about it.
19. Consider ELSA intervention.
20. Consider planned check-ins with a key adult across the day focussed on wellbeing and feelings rather than behaviour choices.

**Reflection questions for leaders:**

Do any staff need modelling or extra support in particular strategies? Is feedback being provided?

Are there planned responses for key behaviours? e.g., ripping up work

Are all staff working with the learner up to date in training? Have all staff had trauma/ attachment training?

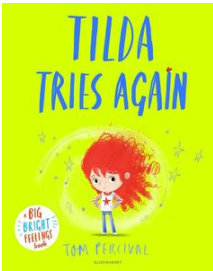
Have mental-health focussed interventions been accessed by the learner – what school-led interventions are available? What external referrals might need to be made?

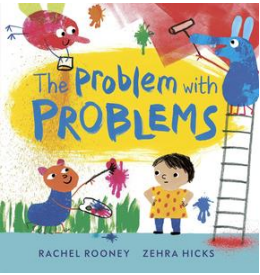

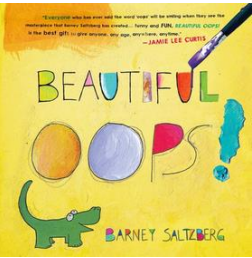
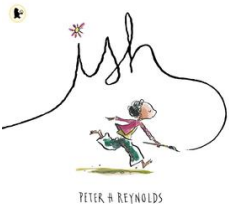
## Teaching ideas:

Objective	Works best for...	Key teaching points
<p>To stay calm when my work goes wrong.</p>	<p>All ages – adapt strategies to age and stage and based on school resources.</p>	<p>Make explicit that they are learning about staying calm when work goes wrong.</p> <p>What strategies might work for you? (deep breaths, count to 10, name 10 animals, positive mantras).</p> <p>Children to hold chunky felt pens in their mouth and to complete a colouring in. When it starts to get tricky, prompt to use a strategy.</p>
<p>To identify strategies when I don't feel confident in the work/ don't want to start the work.</p>	<p>All ages – adapt strategies to age and stage and based on school resources.</p>	<p>Choose 3 or 4 tedious or tricky tasks (This will be adapted based on the learner). For example, a long list of spellings to copy, sorting bookshelves, sharpening pencils, cutting out something very tricky) it depends on what they won't like!</p> <p>Make explicit that they are practising starting work that they don't want to/ looks too hard, so you have some very tedious tasks for them! Review ideas for how to cope when you don't want to start.</p> <p>Strategies could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try for 5 (use a 5-minute timer then do a feelings check-in)</li> <li>• Take a positive mantra from the pot</li> <li>• 1 minute colouring smileys for a positive boost (Provide a colouring sheet full of very happy smileys)</li> <li>• Read some positive mantras (either prepare these first or see separate lesson on positive mantras)</li> </ul> <p>Get learner to pick a task they do not want to do and try a strategy first. Review and repeat. Does it make you feel better? Which one helped the most? Make a poster to share the ideas and provide a visual reference for use in the classroom.</p>

<p>To recognise and celebrate when I have made a mistake.</p>	<p>Learners who engage well with art and craft activities</p>	<p>Work together to create a picture or model of a tree – this will be a mistake tree.</p> <p>Prepare small cut outs of monkeys to stick to the tree.</p> <p>Every time our work goes wrong, we are going to hang a ‘mistake monkey’ on the tree.</p>
<p>To use positive mantras or affirmations to cope</p>	<p>KS2 children</p>	<p>Prepare a list of positive mantras – readily available on Twinkl etc.</p> <p>Model how you might use a mantra e.g., when driving the car, when forgetting your keys, when breaking something you care about, or when going to a party and feeling really shy.</p> <p>Talk about how sometimes our brains want to say ‘this is AWFUL’ ‘or ‘I want to go home’ but how if we say a positive mantra, it can help change our feelings.</p> <p>Sorting activity: sort the mantras into might help me/might not help me.</p> <p>Collate a list or jar of mantras. If working on just one mantra is more appropriate, then make a poster of it/ laminate it/ make bookmarks with it on.</p>

Suggested library resources for teaching and learning:

	<p>Useful book about coping with difficult situations and showing resilience.</p> <p>Great for children who struggle with change and shows how Tilda goes through that journey.</p> <p>Reinforces growth mindset teaching.</p>
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 <p>The Problem with PROBLEMS</p> <p>RACHEL ROONEY ZEHRA HICKS</p>	<p>Great for reflecting on different problems the learners often face.</p> <p>A useful resource to use in conjunction with a 'size of the problem' activity.</p> <p>Great for worriers and anxious children.</p> <p>Reinforces the message of sharing the bigger problems with other people.</p>
 <p>CLASSIC COT PICTURE WINNER DAN SANTAT</p> <p>AFTER THE FALL</p> <p>HOW HUMPTY DUMPTY GOT BACK UP AGAIN</p>	<p>Facilitates exploring the theme of picking yourself up after a failure and the emotions of a traumatic event.</p> <p>Good for KS2 children, who would be familiar with the nursery rhyme and find humour in this exploration of Humpty's experiences afterwards.</p> <p>Great for discussing resilience.</p>
 <p>BEAUTIFUL OOPS!</p> <p>BARNET SALTZBERG</p>	<p>Great for children who regularly destroy work or give up once they have made a mistake.</p> <p>Celebrates the joy of mistakes and normalises the process of carrying on.</p>
 <p>ish</p> <p>PETER H. REYNOLDS</p>	<p>Great for gently discussing issues of trying to make something perfect.</p> <p>Useful to read with someone who might give up rather than try and it not be exactly how they want it.</p>



### 3. How can we best support a learner who seeks control in peer-peer interactions?

#### What might this look like?

- Poor turn taking skills
- Answers for others
- Dominates games/ group situations
- Expects others to follow their lead and follow their rules

#### Strategies:

1. Scripted responses when supporting mid-incident. 'I can see that you are frustrated that they are not giving you the ball. That must be hard for you'.
2. Explicit modelling of the sharing/ social skills required for partner or group work within the classroom.
3. Regularly practice winning/ losing board games in small groups with adult modelling.
4. Social stories used to reinforce key learning.
5. Visual posters/ reference points of good group work/ play skills.
6. Pre-teaching and pre-empting with the learner the skills that will be required for the upcoming partner or group work. e.g., compromising on decisions and making a plan together about how to cope.
7. Reviewing coping strategies before unstructured times. 'Remind me, what will you do if you disagree with someone?' 'How will you cope if you get frustrated playing football?'
8. Show empathy even if they are in the wrong. Acknowledging their distress can support the dialogue moving forward.
9. Reflective debrief conversation after incidents.
10. Review and reflect with an adult after positive playtimes/ social interactions.
11. Offer structured games on the playground to reduce risk of control-seeking behaviours with peers.
12. Careful seating and use of privacy screens to help the learner reduce social anxiety when working in the classroom.
13. Adults to join in with the play when outside and model how to compromise/ take turns/ cope with frustration.
14. Replace lunchtime/ playtime on the playground with smaller group play opportunities e.g. inside free play with a small group of other children or a separate area of the field/ playground.
15. Opportunity to play outside involves resources for independent play – the only option isn't to have to play a social game.
16. Down-time after unstructured times such as playtime or lunchtime– something to help the learner regulate, perhaps with no social/ communication requirements.

**Reflection questions for leaders:**

Has ASD been explored with parents/ GP? Have speech, language and communication team been involved?

Could the learner benefit from any additional therapeutic support?

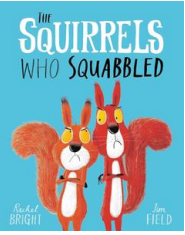
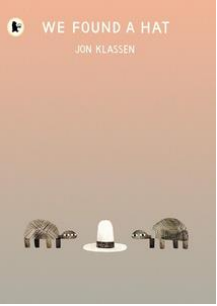
Has learner voice been ascertained, do we know what they think and feel about friendships, play and working with others?

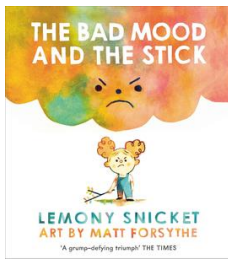
## Teaching Ideas:

Objective	Works best for...	Key teaching points
<p>To develop skills in compromise</p>	<p>KS2 learners</p>	<p>Ask questions... ‘When is play hard?’, ‘When do problems arise?’</p> <p>Sometimes play is hard when two people can’t agree on something, for example, what game to play.</p> <p>Explain how compromise is when two people might give up a little of what they want so that they can move forward - it’s about finding a fair solution, not about winning or losing.</p> <p>You want to play pirates, and your friend wants to build a fort; you agree to play pirates for a bit, then build the fort.</p> <p>There is one apple and one banana left in the fruit bowl. You and your brother both want the banana. You decide to both have half the apple and half the banana.</p> <p>Some people might call compromise...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘meeting in the middle’</li> <li>• ‘meeting half way’</li> <li>• ‘a bit of a give and take’</li> </ul> <p>It’s not always easy when you don’t get everything that you want, but at least it is ‘okay’ and everyone can move on.</p> <p>Task: Pose some problem scenarios to the learner (ones which are maybe relevant to their lives and their struggles) and ask them to think about what the compromise might be.</p>
<p>To understand what I can and cannot control</p>		<p>Sort statements into ‘I can control’ and ‘I can’t control’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘getting adult help if we can’t find a solution’</li> <li>• ‘coming up with ideas for what to play’</li> <li>• ‘what someone else wants to play’</li> <li>• ‘walking away if I’m not staying calm’</li> <li>• ‘other people following the rules’</li> <li>• ‘following the rules myself’</li> <li>• ‘asking a friend, what would you like to play?’</li> <li>• ‘suggesting ideas to solve problems’</li> </ul>
<p>To practice compromise</p>		<p>Discuss with the learner the task – to work together with an adult to make a Lego park. Talk about what</p>

(individual lesson)		<p>skills will be needed for good compromising e.g., letting each other make decisions even if we would do something differently. Discuss how sometimes when working with other people we have to 'let it go' if we don't totally agree on something.</p> <p>Work through the activity together modelling using 'think alouds' to show the compromising process e.g., 'hmmm well I would have used that piece to make a slide but never mind. Can you help me find a different piece for the slide?'</p>
To Practice compromise (Group lesson)		<p>Have a craft activity ready for learners to complete. Model with another adult some bad teamwork, and then some good team work. Construct together what good team work might look like, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can join in and contribute</li> <li>• I can make sure everyone has a voice and makes choices even if it isn't what I would choose</li> <li>• I can give positive feedback to me peers</li> </ul> <p>Ask peers to go into pairs or 3s and complete the craft activity. Stopping to pause and reflect on the success criteria.</p>

**Suggested library resources for teaching and learning:**

	<p>Supports learning about how being too focused on yourself can end up spoiling the play.</p> <p>Useful for children who show competitive or possessive tendencies.</p>
	<p>Useful for raising the issue of bickering and two friends both wanting the same thing.</p> <p>Useful for children who struggle to share.</p> <p>All ages seem to love this series of books!</p>



Supports discussion about moods and feelings.

Supports discussion about impact on others.



## 4. How can we best support a learner who internally absconds?

### What might this look like?

- Leaving the classroom for their own gain
- Wandering around the school grounds/ building
- Seeking other spaces which have rewarding activities e.g. balls from the school hall cupboard

### Strategies:

1. Find 5 then come back – have five pictures to find that are placed in an appropriate area for a movement break. Same pictures used every day. Could be numbers 1-5, could be 5 monsters, 5 characters (personalise it to the child).
2. Do they have some designated spaces that are appropriate? Do all staff know what these are?
3. What is the feeling that drives them to leave the classroom – planned responses for those feelings. Or is it driven by sensory needs?
4. Complete anxiety mapping – does it happen more in some lessons than others, with some teachers more than others, at certain times of the day?
5. Praise the choice to re-enter the classroom, rather than the initial decision to leave, 'so pleased to see you back', 'glad you're back with us', 'great choice to come back'.
6. Consequences for missing learning – when will they catch up on the work? e.g., do you want to catch up during music or at lunchtime?
7. Plan for time in the places they find rewarding or are seeking.
8. Use timers. If they currently leave the room for large chunks of time e.g. half an hour, take the 15 minute timer. If they currently leave for 5 minutes, take a 3-minute timer – what is the next step in progress for that learner?
9. If leaving the room is persistent – plan for 15 mins in, 5 mins out, 15 mins in, 5 mins out – or whatever time frames work with the current need.

### Reflection questions for leaders:

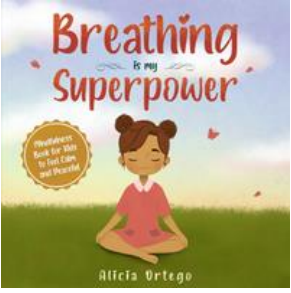
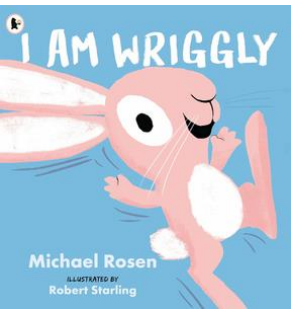
- By absconding do the learners get access to people, places or resources that are not otherwise available?
- Do staff get opportunity to observe colleagues responding in similar ways/sharing best practice?
  - Consider sensory needs assessment to identify needs
    - Consider sensory audit of the classroom.

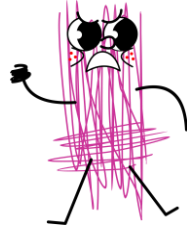
## Lesson Ideas:

Objective	Woks best for...	Key teaching points
To know what to do when I need to move/ need to wiggle	All ages	<p>Adult to prepare picture cards of options for movement breaks and include some which would be inappropriate/ disruptive (these are school and class specific). Could include a range of fidgets, standing with bare feet on a wobble cushion. Wall press ups. Bouncing outside on trampette. Carrying a heavy backpack to the school office. Walking up and down the corridor to find 5 animals. Balance trail.</p> <p>Ask child to try out all the different strategies and find the ones that would work for them and wouldn't disrupt others.</p> <p>Make a visual resource together of the chosen ideas.</p>
To identify different feelings in different places around school.	Best for trying to get learner voice on different environments	<p>Model to the learner that different places have different sounds, smells, are busy or calm, full or empty, and can have a different impact on our mood – e.g. if we go into a party with loud happy music it might make one person feel excited, but another feel stressed.</p> <p>Task: Take an iPad around the school and use a collage app (e.g. Piccolage) to take photos and record feelings they get in a space and why they like it.</p>
To make and use a safe space when I need a break		<p>Pre-plan 3 options of 'safe spaces' that the learner can go to, that would be reasonable, safe and acceptable to the adults.</p> <p>Introduce the idea that we all sometimes need a break from the place we are in. Adult to give some real-life examples e.g., getting out of the house for a dog walk when you've been inside tidying and cleaning all morning.</p> <p>Give child time to explore 3 different options and choose one or two that would work for them.</p>

		<p>Reflect, what can we add to the space to help it calm us/ regulate us/ give us the break we need? What timer shall we use so we know when time is up?</p> <p>Take a photo and make a note of the agreed expectations.</p>
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**Suggested library resources for teaching and learning:**

	<p>Useful for teaching mindful techniques that might refocus a learner.</p> <p>After reading, ask the learner, what they could try?</p>
	<p>Great for children with diagnosed or suspected ADHD who may be leaving spaces due to a need to move.</p> <p>Great for reflecting on what they do when they are wriggly and thinking about what they might do instead if it is disruptive/ affects others.</p>



## 5. How can I best support a learner who swears and uses inappropriate language?

### What might this look like?

- Using swear words when frustrated
- Swearing directed towards another person
- Personal insults directed at adults

### Strategies:

1. Scripted low-emotional response – ‘you know what appropriate language is, thank you’.
2. Be un-shockable in the moment. Later, in a reflective/ restorative conversation, you can explain how offensive the language is/ how serious it is. In the moment, do not use big reactions to the language that you hear.
3. Use a script for the rest of the class – ‘He has big feelings right now and is using inappropriate language, we are just going to carry on’
4. Reminders of the positive language - ‘We use kind words, thank you’.
5. If they are angry and swearing, offering an appropriate physical outlet for their anger: basketball, heavy lifting, a round on the trim trail.
6. If they are seeking reactions/ attention for their swearing, remove the audience. As a prevention method, consider how they could get attention from the class in a positive way – e.g., daily joke monitor.
7. Swapping to an alternative adult until calm, if one member of staff is being repeatedly targeted.
8. Offer some non-communication time. ‘I can see that you are frustrated with me, I’m going to give you a few minutes on your own and come back’.
9. Reflective debriefs consistently used once calm. Consider who is the most appropriate person to lead the conversation.
10. Sensory circuits planned as part of daily routine.
11. Planned opportunity to reflect on feelings and emotions and explore regulation strategies as part of daily timetable.
12. Staff model throughout the day their own emotional regulation strategies.

**Reflection questions for leaders:**

Has there been thorough analysis of the behaviours: when and why are they most likely to occur?

Are all staff ready to be un-shockable? Adults all have different feelings about, and reactions to, swearing and showing respect. Consider staff training/ modelling/ reflection on how they react to different behaviours

What parent communication is happening regarding this behaviour? Is the language widely seen at home and if so, do they need further parenting/ family support?

Where is the problematic language being heard e.g., access to older siblings/ peers in the community? Access to age-inappropriate gaming? Does the family need more support to limit access to the language?

## Teaching ideas/ interventions:

Objectives	Works best for	Key Teaching points
Reflect on 'when do I swear?'	KS2 children	<p>Ask children to think about times they have sworn in school recently. Reflect on how they were feeling? Silly? Excited? Out of control? Angry? Furious? People swear for different reasons.</p> <p>Work on finding strategies for those big feelings.</p>
Providing alternatives for swearing	KS1 children or children who swear colloquially as part of day-to-day dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss what swear words the learner is commonly saying and write them down.</li> <li>• Talk about instincts - if someone throws a ball at your head? If you take a sip of boiling hot drink?</li> <li>• Compare this to their instinct to swear. We need to try and fight this instinct and say something else instead.</li> <li>• In a different coloured pen, come up with alternatives for each swear word.</li> <li>• A common one for F*** is fudge.</li> <li>• For KS2 children you could also make up your own words – use Roald Dahl's made-up vocabulary for inspiration.</li> </ul>
To identify inappropriate and appropriate language using phrases and words that the learner has said.	Can be adapted for all ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do we mean by appropriate and inappropriate?</li> <li>• Label 2 hoops with 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate'.</li> <li>• Adult to read a statement and learner has to throw a beanbag into the hoop to show what is appropriate and inappropriate. e.g. 'I want to be on my own' vs 'F*** off'.</li> <li>• For younger learners it might be better to use 'kind' vs 'unkind'.</li> </ul>

Suggested library resources for teaching and learning:

	<p>Good resource for getting children to consider what it would be like if everyone was rude.</p> <p>Good for reflecting on the impact that we can have on others.</p>
	<p>Simple and light touch but reinforces the message about how people are much more likely to give you what you want when you speak kindly.</p> <p>Funny and engaging for difficult to reach children.</p>
	<p>Useful for reinforcing the message about how being unkind might result in losing friends.</p>
	<p>Useful teaching resource for children for whom it might be appropriate to teach a replacement word for the swear word.</p>



## 6. How can we best support learners who are dysregulated and being disruptive and/ or dangerous?

### What might this look like?

- Shouting, threatening others
- Leaving the room/ site, running away, hiding under tables
- Defacing own/ others work, not following instructions
- Throwing objects around/ directly at others
- Climbing, biting, fighting, kicking

### Strategies:

1. Reflection on emotions and coping strategies is modelled regularly by the class teacher and support staff, particularly after transitions. Staff are not always 'happy' and sometimes model how to cope with other more uncomfortable feelings too.
2. Soft starts, low demand transitional activities when few demands are placed on the learner.
3. When dysregulated, use learner's name first to increase likelihood of them hearing what comes next.
4. Offer alternatives for physical output – throwing beanbags, rolling tyres, using battle ropes, using a space hopper, bouncing on a trampette.
5. Offer suitable options for climbing e.g., allow use of climbing frame, certain safe 'trees'.
6. Strategic ignoring of running away – if they are safe, leave them to regulate, monitoring from a distance.
7. Give non-communication time. 'I can see you want to be alone; I'm going to be here when you need me'.
8. Keep adequate space between you and the learner to reduce risk.
9. Build sensory circuits into a regular routine.
10. Offer a safe-space e.g., a tent, where if they enter, they will be left alone until calm.
11. Have planned scripted responses.
12. Use visuals to help children express how they are feeling and what they need in order to regulate.
13. Check your own voice and body language – are you quiet, calm and in control?

**Reflection questions for leaders:**

Does the learner have a clear plan for how to predict, prevent and respond to incidents? Are all staff following the plan?

Has adequate analysis of behaviour been undertaken?

Has an assessment of sensory needs taken place?

Would family support benefit this family?

Do other diagnoses need to be explored?

Are all staff aware of potential triggers and signs that the child is starting to struggle?


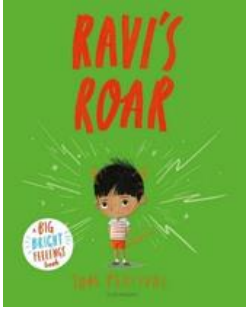
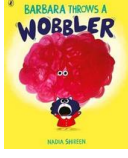
Are teaching staff taking responsibility for affecting change in regard to a learner's behaviour or is it often SLT coming in to support the staff. If the latter, how does this match your policies and procedures?

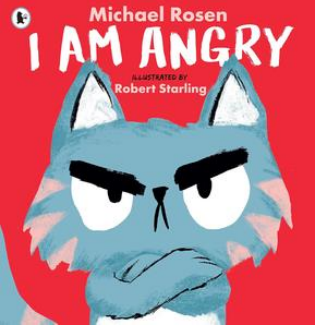

For learners who respond differently to different adults, has there been a discussion about why, and is there a plan to make responses from all adults consistent?

## Teaching ideas:

Objective	Works best for...	Key teaching points
To identify calming strategies for when I am angry/ frustrated/ losing control	Children who need alternatives to physical responses to anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore different regulation ideas/ tools.</li> <li>• Choose which ones might work with teacher guidance.</li> <li>• Make a Piccolage or visual mind map/ poster of a toolbox.</li> <li>• Follow up: prompt child to use toolbox and praise when they do.</li> </ul>
To identify breathing techniques that work for me	KS2 children or children who can stop and recognise that they are not coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read 'Breathing is My Super Power.'</li> <li>• Explore different breathing techniques. (finger breathing, 6-sided breathing, figure of 8 breathing, bubble breathing, square breathing, rainbow breathing.</li> <li>• Practice doing something that will instigate either silly or frustrated feelings and stopping to try the chosen techniques.</li> <li>• Make a visual prompt for the strategy to put in the key areas the learner might need it.</li> </ul>
To identify ways to be safe when I am angry	All ages – can be adapted for any child who is dangerous when angry	<p>Picture and word cards of dangerous behaviours – throwing a chair, pushing a table, shouting.</p> <p>Picture and word cards of permitted alternatives - bouncing on a trampoline, kicking a football.</p> <p>Make a flow diagram starting with the feeling of anger, and the two choices of responses, then the of the consequences of each. Keep this as a visual reminder.</p>

**Suggested library resources for teaching and learning:**

	<p>Good for internalisers who may suddenly become overwhelmed.</p> <p>Useful for prompting discussion about worries about parents.</p> <p>Encourages reflection on which feelings do you have that are tiny...small, big...enormous.</p> <p>Draw a picture to show one of your big feelings.</p>
	<p>Great resource for helping children think about how sometimes it is lots of little things together that make us lose control.</p> <p>Good to use on reflection after an incident, particularly thinking about the build-up for Ravi and comparing that to their own build up.</p> <p>Child could complete art work – what animal are they when they are angry? – Ravi is a tiger. During activity discuss what does their body look like, what does their face look like, what do they sound like when they are angry?</p> <p>Could follow on with children keeping a feelings diary for 24 hours.</p>
	<p>Useful message about Barbara being in control of when her wobbler goes away –that she can choose to stop it.</p> <p>Children to think about when they 'see red', when have they thrown a wobbler before? What could the triggers be for them?</p> <p>Particularly good during reflection after an incident. What is similar to how they looked/how they acted when they threw a wobbler?</p> <p>Great for reflecting on how lots of little bad things can build up.</p> <p>Great for improving emotional literacy - all of the different words/ feelings that Barbara felt. Using a</p>

	<p>wide range of similar words – cross, angry, annoyed, furious, irritated, frustrated. Can you make your own 'guide to bad moods' like at the back of the book? Could you make a guide to 'good moods' too?</p>
	<p>Great for reading and comparing to themselves when they are angry – what do they look like? What are they doing? What do they sound like?</p>
	<p>Great for accepting feelings and helping children to understand that all feelings have a place/ a purpose. Can challenge the idea that we should be aiming to be happy all of the time.</p>

## 7. How can we improve engagement in post-incident measures: reflect, repair and remove barriers to success?

In line with Hertfordshire Therapeutic Thinking, DESC advocates that post-incident debriefs and reflective conversations are part of policy and practice. Hertfordshire advocates a relational approach where one of the pillars of good practice is 'Repairing and restoring'. This aspect, in some schools, for some learners, can be challenging to get into place.

We see the biggest successes in schools which...

- Make reasonable adjustments to support learners engaging in the debrief process. They ask themselves, 'how will X best engage in this discussion?' Children who cannot cope with a formal sit-down discussion, are still expected to debrief, but in a different environment.
- For children who really struggle to engage, start by just expecting one small part of the process e.g., recognising their own feelings and build up from there.
- Use widgets to support the discussion and ensure these are accessible in all teaching spaces.
- Make all staff responsible, and ensure that they are trained, for debrief conversations. Support staff may complete the conversations for lower-level behaviours, whilst SLT might take the lead for dangerous behaviours.
- Use planned scripts/ consistent phrases for debriefs which are used consistently by all staff.
- Staff have the opportunity to observe experts in the process in order to share best practice.
- Have a range of resources available to use to reduce talking/ verbal expectations during reflective conversations –e.g., feelings mats, fans, teddy feelings cards.
- Consider how to adapt the experience for the learner – how to make them feel as happy and safe as possible – e.g., sitting on beanbags rather than at a desk, whilst playing football or walking the Daily Mile.
- Consider how to ensure that the learner leaves with positive feelings about the future - as positive feelings feed into positive behaviours.
- Focus the conversation on finding solutions and have a plan of action moving forward.
- Ensure that repairs to relationships are made as well as repairs to learning and physical spaces.
- Ensure that repairs and consequences are natural and logical.
- Use protective consequences temporarily whilst educational consequences go into place. A plan is made with the learner about when those protective consequences could be lifted, ensuring the learner feels hopeful that they can be achieved.
- Praise the child for engagement in the process.

## 8. How can we best support staff who are supporting learners with SEMH needs?

We see it working best in schools that:

- Ensure that teaching and support staff have planned communication time to improve consistency in responses for learners. Have a clear, shared plan of action.
- Ensure that all staff who support that learner, are involved in the planning and reviewing of risk reduction/ prevention strategies.
- Ensure that solution-focussed debriefs happen with relevant staff after high-level incidents, with a focus on the next steps.
- Rationale for decisions is shared and made clear and bring focus back to the needs and experiences of learners.
- Protect time for reviewing and reflecting of behaviour/ risk reduction plans.
- Training is prioritised for the staff working with those learners. Have all the staff had the relevant training to work with children with those specific needs?
- Peer support is empathetic AND solution focussed.
- Staff wellbeing is prioritised, and there is clear strategy and policy to support it. Efforts to improve it are visible. See further advice on this on the Anna Freud website:

<https://www.annafreud.org/resources/schools-and-colleges/supporting-staff-wellbeing-in-schools/>

- Have a Mental Health Lead for staff, as well as learners.
- The ethos of the school clearly aims to support everyone within a wider-school community. Kindness, compassion and understanding are principles that are embedded and visible in the day-to-day running of the school.
- Train all staff in ACEs, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, trauma-informed approaches, therapeutic tree-roots; so that the behaviours that they are supporting are best understood.
- Modelling by senior staff of how to put external advice and strategies into practice.
- Focus discussions on progress and manage expectations of what progress looks like for every child. Celebrating children's progress however small. When progress in academic skills is being significantly limited by SEMH needs, focussing on the small steps of progress in SEMH skills is essential.
- Leaders get the balance right between getting stuck in and supporting, but not swooping in and undermining.