

Language That Cares:



A Trauma-Informed Behaviour & Relationships Policy

School: St Margaret's Academy

Approved by: Trustees

Owner: Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Review cycle: Annual (or sooner if guidance changes)

Effective from: February 2026

1. Policy Statement

St Margaret's Academy is committed to a safe, nurturing environment where positive relationships underpin behaviour and learning. We adopt a trauma-informed, relational approach that prioritises connection, empathy and restoration. Children learn best when they feel secure, safe and happy. When behaviour falls short, we recognise this is often a communication of need or distress and respond with support and structured repair. Our policy aligns with current DfE guidance on [behaviour](#), [safeguarding](#), [reasonable force/restrictive interventions](#), and [mobile phones](#).

2. Aims

- Promote positive behaviour through strong, caring relationships.
- Support pupils' emotional regulation and wellbeing.
- Embed trauma-informed principles across the school.
- Ensure consistency while recognising individual needs and context.
- Work in genuine partnership with parents/carers and appropriate agencies.

3. Principles of a Relational Approach

- **Behaviour is communication:** We seek to understand the need beneath the behaviour.
- **Relationships are central:** Connection, trust and psychological safety are the foundation for learning and wellbeing. [See DfE link](#)
- **Language matters:** We use language that is calm, non-shaming and future-focused and follow the Torbay 'language that cares' initiative.
- **Repair before sanction:** Restorative practices and teaching replacement skills take precedence over punishment. [See DfE Link](#)

4. Expectations

For Pupils

- Live our values of **kindness, respect, responsibility and aspiration** - in class, around school and online.

For Staff

- Model calm, respectful behaviour; use consistent, relational responses; de-escalate and restore.

For Parents/Carers

- Work in partnership with the school, reinforcing our values and supporting restorative solutions.

5. Recognition and Celebration

At St Margaret's Academy, we are committed to recognising, celebrating, and reinforcing healthy, safe and positive choices made by our pupils. Our approach to behaviour is rooted in positive praise and a culture of encouragement, ensuring that all children feel valued for their efforts, achievements, and contributions to our school community.

To promote and celebrate positive behaviour, we use a range of recognition systems, including:

- Verbal praise to acknowledge positive actions and attitudes in the moment.
- Dojo points, awarded consistently for demonstrating school values, positive learning behaviours, kindness and safe decision-making.
- Stickers and certificates to reward effort, improvement and achievements across all areas of school life.
- Celebration Assemblies, held weekly, where pupils are publicly recognised for displaying our values and positive behaviours.

At the end of each term, we host a Special Values Assembly, where we celebrate pupils who have consistently demonstrated our school values. These assemblies highlight exemplary behaviour, resilience, kindness, and dedication to learning.

We also operate a House Point system, with pupils in Red, Yellow, Blue or Green teams working collectively to earn Dojo points throughout the term. The team with the highest total is celebrated with a House Point Award, fostering teamwork, community spirit and positive competition.

In addition, we hold Headteacher and Trustee Tea Parties each term. Pupils invited to these events have shown exceptional commitment to our values or have made significant positive contributions to school life. These gatherings provide a special opportunity for pupils to celebrate their achievements in a relaxed and enjoyable setting.

Attendance is also strongly promoted at St Margaret's. We recognise and celebrate improved and sustained attendance through:

- Stickers and certificates,
- Attendance awards, and
- Special celebration discussions over hot chocolate or ice cream, for pupils who demonstrate notable improvement or excellent attendance.

Through these varied systems of recognition, St Margaret's Academy ensures that all children feel encouraged, supported, and celebrated for making positive, healthy and safe choices.

6. Strategies to Embed Relational Practice

- **Daily connection routines:** Check-ins, warm welcomes, names/pronouns used correctly; recognition of effort and progress.
- **Emotional literacy & regulation:** Age-appropriate language for feelings; co-regulation; access to safe spaces for regulation (e.g., calm corners).
- **Restorative conversations** after incidents (see section 13).
- **Positive reinforcement:** Noticing and narrating desired behaviours; values-linked praise.
- **Planned transitions:** Adults present and proactive at transition points; tailored plans where needed.

6a. Every Behaviour Is a Voice

“Every behaviour is a voice – what matters is if we choose to listen.”

What if pupil behaviour wasn't a problem to fix, but a message to understand?

At St Margaret's Academy, we recognise that all behaviour communicates something about a child's internal world, emotional state or unmet needs. Our aim is not to “fix” behaviour, but to **understand, respond and restore**.

- **Unmet needs lens (Karla Simiane):** Behaviour is a signal - emotional, cognitive, relational or sensory. We ask: *What happened? What is needed? How can we meet that need relationally and proportionately?*
- **The adult makes the difference (Paul Dix):** Adult behaviour sets the climate. Calm, consistent, kind adult responses create psychological safety and predictability.
- **Emotion Coaching (Louise Gilbert, Licette Gus & Janet Rose):**
 - 1) Notice the feeling, 2) Validate, 3) Name it, 4) Coach problem-solving, so pupils learn to regulate and repair.
- **Attachment-aware practice (Marie Delaney):** We aim for pupils to feel **safe, connected, valued and held in mind**, repairing ruptures rather than deepening them.

This section complements Dan Siegel's **Four S's** (Safe, Seen, Soothed, Secure) in 7a.

7. Trauma-Informed Practice

- **Understanding ACEs and adversity:** Staff recognise that stress, trauma, SEND and context can impact behaviour and regulation. ([Mental health and behaviour in schools](#)).
- **Avoid re-traumatisation:** We avoid shaming, public sanctions and unnecessary punitive measures; we prioritise predictable routines, clarity and felt safety.
- **Graduated support & partnership working:** Early identification, reasonable adjustments, and work with external agencies where appropriate.

7a. Dan Siegel's Four S's: Safe, Seen, Soothed and Secure

- **Safe:** Predictable routines, calm responses and clear boundaries create physical and emotional safety.
- **Seen:** We notice and validate the child's inner experience and the meaning behind behaviour.
- **Soothed:** Adults remain emotionally available, offering comfort, co-regulation and coaching.
- **Secure:** When children consistently feel safe, seen and soothed, they develop security-enabling learning, healthy risk-taking and resilience.

8. Team Teach Support (Safe, Appropriate Physical Intervention)

A number of staff are Team Teach trained. Physical intervention is a last resort - used only when absolutely necessary to prevent harm (e.g., to prevent injury, serious property damage, a criminal offence or serious disorder) and for the least time and minimum force required. All such interventions are recorded, reviewed, and parents/carers are informed as soon as is practicable and no later than the same day in line with [DfE expectations](#).

Guidance link: The DfE's [Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools](#) (effective **from 1 April 2026**) replaces the 2013 guidance; until then, the 2013 *Use of reasonable force in schools* remains in force. Procedures will reflect this transition. Restrictive interventions are never used as punishment or routine discipline. We de-escalate first and always consider SEND and individual needs.

9. Staff CPD and Debriefs

- **Ongoing professional development** in relational, restorative and trauma-informed practice for all staff.
- **Team Teach** refresher training according to certification cycles.
- **Debriefs** (adult and pupil) after significant incidents to reflect, repair and learn, promoting resilience and reducing repeat incidents.

10. Monitoring and Review

- **CPOMS logging** for significant incidents; termly analysis of data and patterns to inform preventative strategies.
- **Pupil voice** and **staff feedback** shape ongoing improvement.
- **Annual review** by SLT and Trustees; interim updates if DfE guidance changes (e.g., mobile phones, restrictive interventions).

11. Linked Policies

- Safeguarding & Child Protection ([KCSIE](#))
- SEND/Inclusion
- Anti-Bullying
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Safe Touch & Positive Handling
- Searching, Screening & Confiscation ([DfE](#))
- Suspensions & Exclusions ([DfE](#))

12. Mobile Phones in School (Years 5–6)

Rationale. In line with [DfE guidance](#), schools should be mobile-phone-free environments by default; exceptions may be made where justified.

St Margaret's approach (Key Stage 2 – Years 5 and 6 only):

- Pupils may bring a mobile phone *only* if a parent/carer believes it is needed for safety on the journey to and from school.
- On arrival, the phone must be switched off and handed in to the class teacher for secure storage; it is returned at the end of the day.
- Phones must remain off on school premises at all times.
- Any breach (use/visibility of a phone on site) may lead to **confiscation** for collection by a parent/carer and a restorative conversation about expectations. Confiscation and any necessary searches will be undertaken in line with [DfE guidance](#) on searching, screening and confiscation.
- **Reasonable adjustments** may be considered (e.g., medical needs). Decisions rest with the school following discussion with parents/carers.

This approach supports a calm, focused learning environment while recognising legitimate safeguarding concerns for travel. See [DfE Guidance](#) for more information.

13. Responding to Behaviour: Restore & Repair (R&R)

A. In-the-moment, relational responses

1. **Values reminder** (allow take-up time).
2. **3Rs Right Place, Right Time, Right Thing** - This approach is used consistently to support correcting behaviour through positive language. "I can see that you are in the right place and the right time, but I wonder if you are able to show me the right thing."
3. **Safe hands, safe feet** - To be used when a child may be hitting, pushing, grabbing, kicking etc..
4. **When/Then** - To be used when a child is finding it difficult to complete an adult lead task or transition to the next stage of the day. Using the principle of when/then is a strategy that links a specific expectation to a positive outcome.

5. **Not ok** - To be used when a child is being unsafe, shouting etc.. “That is not okay, to shout at an adult. We would like to help.” This short and consistent phrase serves as a clear indicator of expectations and can help the children self-regulate and improve understanding of classroom expectations in challenging moments.
6. **Private prompt** of the behaviour we want to see; outline any proportionate consequence if appropriate and always use “Thank you” instead of “Please” as this reinforces that the instruction is an expectation, not a choice, but still remains polite.
7. **I hear you** - To use when a child is explaining something to an adult or expressing a need they may have. Consider using the phrase “I hear you” as a powerful way to validate a child’s voice and emotions.
8. **Final check-in** (privately):
 - “I’ve noticed...” (describe behaviour factually)
 - “I wonder if you’re feeling...” (name the feeling)
 - “Remember when you showed our value of...” (recall success)
 - “Now I need you to...” (state expectation)
 - “Thanks for listening.” (walk away; ignore secondary behaviours)

B. Reflect & Restore (usually in the pupil’s time, near to the incident, limit the time to 5 minutes if a breaktime, if longer is needed then this is arranged for an appropriate time and parents are informed and involved if necessary).

Guided by the adult involved (or SLT as needed), often using drawing or simple visuals - See Appendix B, C & D for templates:

1. What happened? (active listening/empathy)
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought since?
4. How did this affect others?
5. What needs to happen to put things right?
6. How will you do it differently next time? (co-problem-solving)

C. Consequence & restoration options (proportionate and educational):

- Completing missed learning; helping to repair/restore; values-linked apology (verbal/note/card); positive reconnect (e.g., handshake/high-five) when ready to return to learning.

14. Inclusion and Use of Sanctions

We stand by our most vulnerable pupils, focusing on inclusion, support and connection.

However, the safety, wellbeing and education of all must be protected. Where there are serious and/or persistent breaches of values and safety, an internal exclusion, a suspension or, in rare cases, permanent exclusion may be necessary, following [DfE statutory guidance](#) and with proportionality, fairness and due process.

15. Roles, Contacts & Escalation (Behaviour)

Class Teacher – first point for day-to-day concerns; initiates restorative response and parent communication where appropriate.

Key Stage Lead: (S. Tandy for EYFS & KS1 and L. Kerswell for KS2)– supports consistency and tailored plans.

Behaviour & Relationships Lead (Designated Person): (N.Turner Deputy Headteacher) – oversees strategy, data, staff coaching, complex cases; contact: nturner@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk or [01803 327090](tel:01803327090).

SENCo: (S. Essam) – ensures reasonable adjustments and graduated SEND support; contact:sessam@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk or [01803 327090](tel:01803327090).

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): (N.Turner Deputy Headteacher) – coordinates safeguarding where risk thresholds are met; contact: nturner@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk or [01803 327090](tel:01803327090).

Headteacher: Nikki O'Dwyer – ultimate on-site escalation; decision-maker for suspensions/exclusions; contact: nodwyer@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk or [01803 327090](tel:01803327090).

Chair of Trustees: (N. Salter) – escalation on governance matters only; contact via Clerk: admin@st-margarets.torbay.sch.uk

Escalation route: Class Teacher → Key Stage Lead → Behaviour & Relationships Lead → SLT/DSL (as appropriate) → Headteacher → Trustee Body.

Recording: Incidents are logged on **CPOMS**; parents/carers are kept informed in line with this policy and statutory guidance.

16. Implementation, Communication & Review

- **Staff:** Policy introduced via briefing/CPD; reference materials placed on the staff drive; induction for new staff and supply.
- **Pupils:** Age-appropriate assemblies and classroom routines reinforce expectations and values.
- **Parents/Carers:** Policy published on the website; summaries shared in newsletters; welcome pack includes the mobile phone section.
- **Review history:** Consulted with parents on **21.04.2021**; updated by staff on **06.09.2021**, **10.03.2022**, **06.09.2022**, **02.01.2024**, **08.02.2026**. Updated Policy due to need and new SLT structure **February 2026** - All Stakeholders involved in consultation.

Appendix A: Quick Guide for Restorative Conversations (for staff)

(Printable one-pager retained from Section 13 to support on-the-spot use.)

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Guided by the adult involved (or SLT as needed), often using drawing or simple visuals - See Appendix B, C & D for templates:

7. What happened? (active listening/empathy)
8. What were you thinking at the time?
9. What have you thought since?
10. How did this affect others?
11. What needs to happen to put things right?
12. How will you do it differently next time? (co-problem-solving)

C. Consequence & restoration options (proportionate and educational):

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Appendix B:

My Feelings Are Important




 What is happening?







 home school classroom assembly playground





 How am I feeling?










 Where can I feel this in my body?






 calm worried sad annoyed






 angry hopeful happy bored






 ok scared upset relaxed








 What can help me feel better?










 hug fidget toy sensory circuits calm breathing walk snack drink









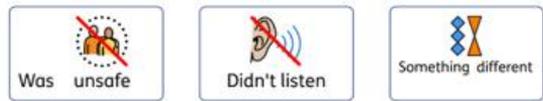


 heavy play talk first aid telephone toilet sleep 5 minutes rest

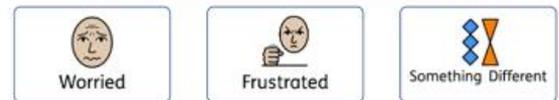
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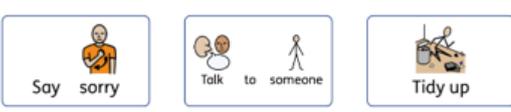
?
What Happened?



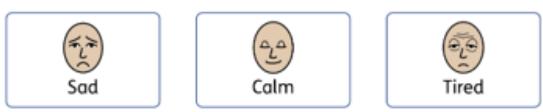
?
What were you feeling



?
Who has been affected



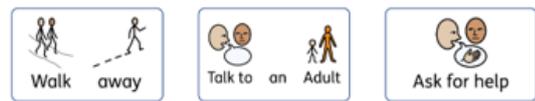
✓
What needs to happen to put it right



?
How do you feel now?



I need



↻
Next time i could



Appendix D:

Name: _____ Date: _____

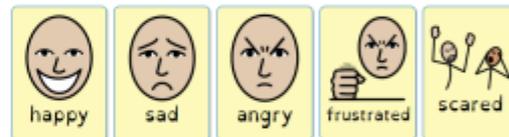


What happened?



How did you make others feel and what were they thinking?

How did you feel?



What do you need to do differently next time?



When I make positive choices like this...



I am going to make things better by : _____



Signed: Child: _____

Adult: _____

Notes on compliance and upcoming changes

- From **1 April 2026**, the DfE's *Restrictive interventions...* guidance takes effect. SLT will update staff notebooks, recording templates and parent communications to reflect the **statutory duties to record and report** significant uses of force and seclusion **the same day** (or as soon as practicable). [[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk](#)]
- DfE mobile phone guidance expects a **phone-free school day by default**; our KS2 travel-safety exception remains compliant when tightly controlled and clearly communicated. [[gov.uk](#)]

DfE link (Team Teach / restrictive interventions)

- **Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (effective 1 April 2026)** – GOV.UK & PDF. [[gov.uk](#)], [[assets.pub...ice.gov.uk](#)]