



Behaviour & Wellbeing Policy

September 2026

1. Ethos and principles

Birtley House Specialist School aims to provide a calm, safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which positive behaviour, engagement, mutual respect and wellbeing are promoted. The school recognises that behaviour may communicate an unmet need, difficulty, emotion or response to the environment. Staff therefore seek to understand the function and context of behaviour while maintaining clear, safe and consistent boundaries.

Because pupils have differing needs, communication profiles, developmental levels and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) provision, reasonable and proportionate adjustments may be required. High expectations remain important, but equality does not mean treating every pupil identically.

The school uses positive, preventative and relational approaches. Punitive practice is not the default approach. Where a sanction is necessary, it must be lawful, reasonable, proportionate, consistent with this policy, and take account of the pupil's age, SEND, disability, communication needs, circumstances and any safeguarding concerns.

Corporal punishment is prohibited. Force must never be used as a punishment.

2. Aims

- promote positive behaviour, self-regulation, wellbeing and engagement;
- set out clear and accessible expectations for pupils;
- ensure staff use consistent, fair and individualised approaches;
- prevent and respond to bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment and child-on-child abuse;
- support pupils to understand the impact of their behaviour and develop safer alternatives;
- set out rewards, consequences and sanctions that may be used;
- ensure restrictive interventions are minimised and, where necessary, used lawfully and safely;
- ensure serious sanctions are recorded and monitored;
- work in partnership with parents/carers and relevant professionals.

3. Legal and regulatory framework

This policy is written for an independent school in England and has regard to the legal and regulatory framework applicable in the 2026-27 academic year, including:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, particularly Part 3, paragraph 9 (written behaviour policy, effective implementation and a record of sanctions for serious misbehaviour), paragraph 10 (anti-bullying strategy) and paragraph 7 (safeguarding).
- DfE Independent School Standards Guidance, April 2026.
- Equality Act 2010, including the duty not to discriminate against disabled pupils and the duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- DfE Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff.
- DfE Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools, effective from 1 April 2026.
- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance.
- DfE statutory guidance Mobile Phones in Schools, which schools should follow from 1 September 2026.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, where applicable, and pupils' individual EHCPs.

The DfE statutory guidance on suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units does not govern independent schools. Birtley House therefore manages suspension and termination of

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placement in accordance with its published policies, contractual arrangements with parents/carers, the Equality Act 2010, safeguarding duties and any applicable EHCP/local-authority arrangements.

4. Understanding behaviour and SEND

The school recognises that pupils may experience difficulties associated with communication, autism, ADHD, learning difficulties, sensory processing, speech and language needs, emotional development, adverse experiences, attachment, dyslexia or other SEND. Staff will avoid labelling behaviour as deliberately defiant without considering the pupil's communication, understanding, regulation and environment.

Where behaviour is persistent, unusual or changes significantly, staff will consider whether there are unmet SEND, medical, mental health, safeguarding or environmental needs. Appropriate support may include review of the pupil's EHCP/provision plan, pupil passport, risk assessment, behaviour support plan, communication strategies, sensory support and advice from relevant professionals.

A pupil will not be sanctioned for behaviour that arises from disability without proper consideration of the Equality Act 2010 and whether reasonable adjustments have been made.

5. Behaviour expectations

Expectations will be taught and reinforced in ways pupils can understand. Depending on age and ability, pupils will be supported to:

- keep themselves and others safe;
- show respect to pupils, staff and visitors;
- allow others to learn and participate;
- use kind and appropriate language;
- respect personal space, property and boundaries;
- follow reasonable adult instructions, with appropriate communication support;
- seek help or a break in an agreed way when overwhelmed;
- behave safely and respectfully online and during school-related activities.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Proprietor / Governing Board

The proprietor/governing body will assure itself that the policy meets the Independent School Standards, is implemented effectively and is reviewed. It will receive appropriate information about serious behaviour, restrictive interventions, suspensions/placement terminations and trends, while maintaining confidentiality.

6.2 Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for implementation, staff expectations, monitoring, ensuring serious sanctions are recorded, and ensuring decisions are fair, lawful and consistent with safeguarding and equality duties.

6.3 Staff

- implement this policy consistently and model calm, respectful behaviour;
- use preventative and de-escalation strategies before sanctions wherever appropriate;
- make reasonable adjustments for SEND and communication needs;

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- record significant behaviour and serious sanctions on the school's designated recording system;
- report safeguarding concerns to the DSL/Deputy DSL without delay;
- follow individual plans, risk assessments and agreed handling strategies.

6.4 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are asked to work in partnership with the school, share relevant information about changes in health, medication, circumstances or needs, and raise concerns promptly. The school will communicate significant incidents and support plans appropriately.

7. Positive support, prevention and de-escalation

Personalised support may include visual timetables and prompts, structured tasks, first/then approaches, choice, additional processing time, sensory regulation, communication aids, movement breaks, trusted-adult support, calm spaces, social stories, restorative conversations, mentoring and therapeutic input.

Staff will use de-escalation techniques appropriate to the pupil. Team Teach approaches may be used by appropriately trained staff as part of the school's wider strategy, but training does not itself create a legal justification for force. Any restrictive intervention must meet the legal and policy tests set out below.

8. Rewards and positive recognition

Positive reinforcement is central to the school's approach. Rewards may include verbal praise, stickers, individual reward systems, house points, certificates, Worker of the Week, Headteacher awards, privileges and positive communication with parents/carers.

Rewards should recognise achievement, effort, progress, regulation, communication, kindness and positive behaviour. Once awarded, a reward will not normally be removed as a later sanction.

9. Responding to behaviour of concern

Responses will be proportionate and individualised. Staff should first consider safety, communication, regulation, unmet need and whether a safeguarding response is required.

Behaviour of concern may include persistent disruption, unsafe behaviour, damage to property, theft, fighting, discriminatory language or conduct, bullying, sexual harassment, sexual violence, possession of prohibited or dangerous items, substance misuse, or serious refusal that creates a safety or significant learning concern.

A single serious incident may require immediate action even where there is no history of similar behaviour.

10. Consequences and sanctions

Birtley House prioritises teaching, support and restoration rather than punishment. However, the Independent School Standards require the behaviour policy to set out sanctions. Depending on circumstances, sanctions/consequences may include:

- a clear reminder or verbal warning;
- supported completion or repair of learning/work where appropriate;
- loss or restriction of a specific privilege where this is proportionate and related to the behaviour;
- time away from a situation with adult support for regulation and reflection;

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- restorative or reparative action where safe and appropriate;
- temporary removal from a class/activity under supervised arrangements;
- a formal behaviour review, risk assessment or behaviour support plan;
- suspension from school in serious cases, in accordance with section 20 of this policy;
- termination of placement/permanent removal in exceptional cases, in accordance with section 20.

The following are prohibited: corporal punishment; deprivation of food or drink; withholding prescribed medication or necessary medical/dental treatment; humiliating or degrading treatment; sarcasm intended to intimidate or shame; sanctions based on protected characteristics; and the use of force as punishment.

A record will be kept of sanctions imposed for serious misbehaviour, as required by the Independent School Standards. Records will be reviewed to identify patterns, disproportionality and whether further support or reasonable adjustments are required.

11. Restorative practice

Restorative approaches may help pupils understand what happened, who was affected and what may help repair relationships. Questions and language will be adapted to the pupil's communication and developmental needs.

Restorative work is not appropriate in every case. It must not be used to require a pupil who has experienced bullying, abuse, sexual harassment or other harmful behaviour to meet with the pupil who caused harm. Safeguarding and the wishes and safety of the harmed pupil take priority.

Where pupils give conflicting accounts, staff remain responsible for investigating and making professional decisions. Pupils must not be left to resolve serious or safeguarding-related disputes independently.

12. Bullying, discrimination and child-on-child abuse

Bullying and discriminatory behaviour are not tolerated. The school's Anti-Bullying Policy provides the detailed prevention and response framework.

Bullying, sexual harassment, sexual violence and other harmful behaviour may constitute child-on-child abuse. Staff must not dismiss harmful behaviour as 'banter' or an inevitable part of growing up. Safeguarding concerns must be reported to the DSL/Deputy DSL and managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and KCSIE 2026.

The school will actively challenge prejudice and discriminatory behaviour connected with protected characteristics, including disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

13. Sexual harassment and sexual violence

All reports of sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour will be taken seriously and never ignored. The response will be proportionate, supportive, safeguarding-led and based on the circumstances of the case.

The school will consider immediate safety, the wishes of the child who has been harmed, risk assessment, support for all pupils involved, and whether referral to Children's Social Care, the police or other agencies is required. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy takes precedence where there is a safeguarding concern.

14. Online behaviour

The school may respond to online behaviour where it affects the welfare or safety of a member of the school community, disrupts the school environment, damages relationships within school or involves bullying, harassment, threats or abuse. This applies even where the conduct occurred away from the school site.

Online incidents will be managed alongside the Online Safety, Anti-Bullying and Safeguarding policies as appropriate.

15. Mobile phones and personal interactive communication devices

From September 2026, the school will have regard to the DfE's statutory Mobile Phones in Schools guidance. Birtley House is a mobile-phone-free environment for pupils throughout the school day by default, including lessons, movement between activities, breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Any exception must be justified by individual circumstances, for example a disability, medical need or other agreed reasonable adjustment, and recorded/communicated appropriately. The school's detailed arrangements for storage, access, smart watches and other personal interactive communication devices are set out in its Mobile Phone/Acceptable Use arrangements.

16. Searching, confiscation and prohibited items

Any searching, screening or confiscation will be undertaken only by staff authorised to do so and in accordance with the law, current DfE guidance and the school's procedures. Staff must consider safeguarding, dignity, SEND, communication needs and any relevant protected characteristics.

Where an electronic device is lawfully examined, staff will follow the applicable legal and safeguarding requirements. Concerns about indecent images, criminal material or safeguarding content must be referred to the DSL and handled in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

17. Restrictive interventions, including reasonable force

Restrictive intervention is a last resort and must be minimised. The school follows the DfE guidance 'Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools', effective from 1 April 2026.

Reasonable force may only be used when it is necessary, lawful and proportionate in the circumstances. It must never be used to punish, humiliate, cause pain deliberately or secure compliance where force is not otherwise justified.

Before using force, staff should use prevention and de-escalation where practicable. In an emergency, staff may need to act immediately to protect a pupil or another person from harm.

When force is used:

- the minimum reasonable force should be used for the minimum necessary time;
- the pupil's dignity, communication needs, medical needs, SEND and known risks must be considered;
- staff should avoid techniques that create an unreasonable risk of pain, injury or breathing restriction;
- the intervention must stop as soon as it is no longer necessary;
- the pupil and staff should receive appropriate post-incident support and debriefing;
- every significant incident must be recorded in accordance with current legal/guidance requirements and reported to parents/carers as required;

- leaders will monitor restrictive-intervention data for patterns, frequency, injury, disproportionality and opportunities to reduce future use.

Individual positive handling plans/risk assessments should be used where restrictive intervention is foreseeable. Staff training, including Team Teach, supports safe practice but does not replace professional judgement or the legal requirements of necessity and proportionality.

18. Reduced or part-time timetables

A reduced or part-time timetable must not be used as a behaviour sanction or an informal suspension. Any temporary reduced timetable must be exceptional, be in the pupil's best interests, have a clear purpose and review arrangements, and be agreed with parents/carers. Where the pupil has an EHCP, the local authority and EHCP duties must be considered and appropriate consultation/review undertaken.

The school will record the arrangement, expected duration, education provided, safeguarding arrangements and review date. The aim will normally be to return the pupil to full-time education as soon as appropriate. The school will not use a reduced timetable to place pressure on a parent to remove a pupil.

19. Safeguarding and changes in behaviour

A change in behaviour can be an indicator of abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health difficulty or other safeguarding need. Staff must consider whether behaviour is linked to a pupil suffering or being likely to suffer harm. Where there is a safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and KCSIE 2026 must be followed immediately.

Behaviour management must never delay a safeguarding referral.

20. Suspension, permanent removal and termination of placement

Birtley House is an independent school. The statutory DfE suspension and permanent exclusion framework for maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units does not directly govern the school's exclusion process. The school will nevertheless use a fair, transparent and documented process consistent with its published policy, contractual arrangements, equality duties, safeguarding obligations and any applicable EHCP/local-authority responsibilities.

20.1 Suspension

A suspension is a temporary removal from school for disciplinary reasons. It will be used only where proportionate to the seriousness of the behaviour and where lesser measures are not appropriate. Informal or unofficial suspensions, such as sending a pupil home simply to 'cool off', will not be used.

The Headteacher, or a senior leader formally acting as Headteacher, may authorise a suspension. Parents/carers will be informed promptly and the decision confirmed in writing, including the reason, duration, arrangements for education and the school's route for raising concerns or making a complaint.

The school will provide appropriate work/education during a suspension and will plan reintegration. For pupils with SEND/EHCPs, the school will consider reasonable adjustments, whether unmet needs contributed to the incident and whether an early/emergency review or local-authority discussion is appropriate.

20.2 Permanent removal / termination of placement for disciplinary reasons

Permanent removal is a serious step and will normally be a last resort following a range of support and intervention. Exceptionally, a single incident may be sufficiently serious to justify permanent removal, for example a grave threat to safety, serious violence, sexual assault, arson, serious drug-related conduct or possession/use of a weapon.

Before a final decision, the school will normally investigate the incident, consider relevant evidence, give the pupil an opportunity to communicate their account in an accessible way, consider whether bullying, discrimination, safeguarding concerns, SEND or unmet provision contributed, consider reasonable adjustments, and consult parents/carers.

Where a pupil has an EHCP, the school will liaise with the local authority as appropriate and consider whether an urgent review is required. A placement must not be terminated simply because the school considers that it can no longer meet a pupil's SEND; placement change for needs-led reasons should be managed through the appropriate EHCP/contractual process rather than disguised as a disciplinary exclusion.

Parents/carers will receive the decision and reasons in writing and be informed of the relevant school complaints/review route. Any contractual notice requirements will be followed unless the school's contractual terms lawfully provide otherwise for serious disciplinary termination.

20.3 Off-rolling and informal removal

The school will not remove a pupil from roll, prevent normal attendance, pressure a parent to withdraw a pupil or use a part-time timetable in the interests of the school rather than the pupil. Any suspension or permanent removal will be carried out transparently in accordance with this policy and the school's contractual arrangements.

21. Malicious, false, unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations

All allegations will be taken seriously. The school will distinguish between an allegation that is unsubstantiated or unfounded and one that is deliberately false or malicious. A pupil will not be sanctioned merely because an allegation cannot be substantiated.

Where there is evidence that an allegation was deliberately invented or malicious, the school will consider appropriate action and whether the pupil needs pastoral or safeguarding support. Allegations against staff will be managed under KCSIE 2026 and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

22. Recording, monitoring and data

Staff will record significant behaviour incidents on the school's designated recording system. The school will keep the record of sanctions for serious misbehaviour required by the Independent School Standards.

Leaders will analyse behaviour, sanctions, bullying, discrimination, suspensions and restrictive interventions for patterns, repeat incidents, locations, times, SEND/disability considerations and disproportionality. Findings will inform training, risk assessment, curriculum, staffing, supervision and school improvement.

23. Complaints

Parents/carers who wish to raise concerns about the application of this policy should first contact the school. Formal complaints will be managed under the school's Complaints Policy. Nothing in the complaints process prevents a parent from using any statutory right to bring a disability discrimination claim to the First-tier Tribunal (SEND) or another appropriate legal route.

24. Staff training

Staff will receive induction and ongoing training appropriate to their role. This may include SEND-informed behaviour support, communication, de-escalation, safeguarding, child-on-child abuse, equality, online behaviour and restrictive interventions. Leaders will identify further training from incident analysis and changes to statutory guidance.

25. Related policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Mobile Phone / Acceptable Use Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions / Medication Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

26. Key guidance

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026](#)
- [Independent School Standards guidance](#)
- [Behaviour in schools](#)
- [Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools](#)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation](#)
- [Mobile phones in schools](#)
- [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

27. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, school practice or pupil need changes. The next scheduled review is September 2027.

Appendix 1: Written Statement of Behaviour Principles

- Every pupil has the right to feel safe, valued and respected and to learn without unreasonable disruption.
- All pupils, staff and visitors should be free from unlawful discrimination, bullying, harassment and abuse.
- Staff and volunteers model calm, respectful and safe behaviour.
- Positive support, rewards, sanctions and restrictive interventions are used consistently and in accordance with this policy.
- Expectations and communication are adapted so pupils can understand them.

- Pupils are supported to develop responsibility, communication, self-regulation and repair relationships where appropriate.
- Families are involved appropriately in significant behaviour matters.
- Suspension and permanent removal are serious measures and are used through a fair, transparent process.
- Violence, threatening behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual violence and discriminatory abuse are not tolerated.

This statement will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and proprietor/governing body.

Appendix 2: Significant Restrictive Intervention Record - minimum information

The school's recording form/system should capture, as a minimum:

- pupil name, date, time and location;
- staff involved and witnesses;
- antecedents/context and risks identified;
- de-escalation/prevention attempted where practicable;
- reason the intervention was necessary;
- type and duration of restrictive intervention/reasonable force;
- any injury, medical attention or damage;
- pupil's views and communication after the incident, where appropriate;
- staff debrief and follow-up;
- parent/carer notification and timing;
- DSL/senior leader review where relevant;
- changes required to risk assessment, EHCP strategies, pupil passport or positive handling plan.

POSITIVE HANDLING RECORD

Birtley House School

Positive Handling Record

Name: _____ DOB: _____ Date: _____

Behaviours Displayed:

-
-
-

Strategies used (where possible) before Physical Intervention:

Give Time		Distraction		State Alternatives / consequences		Praise partial compliance		Other:
Give Space		Reassure/ Remind		Other staff Intervene		Repeat request		
Talk Calmly		Give a count		Instruct other Pupils		Remove stimulus		

Strategies used (include time):

Single Elbow Double Elbow Wrap Escort

Debrief process after Physical Intervention e.g. Space, talk through, consequence, etc.

Signatures:

Child (Where appropriate):

Parent / Guardian:

Teacher / Tutor:

Headteacher:

Director:

Birtley House Independent School
Pupil Exclusion Form

Date:.....

Pupil Name:.....

Teacher Name:.....

Lesson:.....

Brief description of what happened:

Fixed ☐ Permanent ☐

(State length of exclusion)

Reason for Verbal Abuse to pupil/staff * - including racial ☐

Exclusion: Physical assault towards pupil/staff* ☐

Persistent disruptive behaviour ☐

Damage to property or personal belongings ☐

Parent Informed Yes/No* Date..... Staff Signature.....

Outcome:
.....

Reintegration Meeting Date

Teacher Signature

Head Teacher Signature