

Area:	THORNHILL PARK SCHOOL		
Title:	Behaviour		
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Thornhill Park School is committed to providing a calm, supportive and inclusive learning environment in which every learner feels safe, valued and able to succeed.

All staff are responsible for learners' wellbeing. Staff act as positive role models and work together to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding and encouragement.

We recognise that the behaviour of autistic learners is often a form of communication and is closely linked to anxiety, sensory experiences, and difficulties in understanding the world. Our approach focuses on prevention, understanding, and support rather than punishment.

Thornhill Park School is a no-consequence school. We do not use sanctions, punishments, or punitive measures. We do **not** use seclusion or isolation.

Teaching learners to behave appropriately in different situations is central to our aim of supporting their acceptance, inclusion, and preparation for life beyond school.

2. Aims of this policy

- To promote a positive, calm and respectful school culture.
- To understand behaviour as communication, particularly in the context of autism and associated needs.
- To reduce anxiety and prevent behaviour that challenges through effective communication, environmental management, and sensory support.
- To provide clear guidance for staff on supporting learners consistently.
- To ensure the school meets the Independent School Standards and current DfE guidance, including requirements relating to reasonable force.
- To keep learners and staff safe while maintaining a non-punitive approach.

3. DEFINITION APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

At Thornhill Park School, judgements about behaviour are made on the basis of social acceptability and whether the behaviour hinders access to education or developmental opportunities for the learner or others.

We understand that behaviour displayed by autistic learners is frequently a product of anxiety, sensory overload, communication difficulties, or unmet needs. When a learner is confused, overwhelmed, or anxious, they are more likely to display behaviour that challenges.

Staff will always seek to understand the underlying reasons for behaviour and will use agreed whole-school approaches to reduce anxiety and support regulation.

We give positive guidance by teaching and modelling the following:

- Helping and supporting each other
- Listening carefully and speaking politely to peers and adults
- Taking care of property and the school environment
- Being calm and respectful of others' needs
- Being honest
- Thinking before acting
- Coming to school ready to learn

These expectations are taught explicitly, modelled by staff, and reinforced through the curriculum and daily interactions.

4. STEP Approach

Thornhill Park School uses the **STEP** approach as its core framework for preventing and responding to challenging behaviour:

- **See** the person
- **Trust** (Build the Trust)
- **Environment** (change the Environment)
- **Personalise** the plan

In practice this means:

Communication:

We reduce the likelihood of behaviour that challenges by ensuring every learner has a functional communication system. Staff consistently use each learner's preferred communication methods and ensure that expectations are clear, realistic, and appropriately differentiated.

Environment:

We sensitively and imaginatively manage the physical and social environment to reduce sources of anxiety. Structured, predictable, and low-arousal environments are known to reduce anxiety and support positive behaviour.

Sensory Needs:

We identify sensory factors that may contribute to a learner's anxiety or dysregulation and reduce or remove these sources of difficulty wherever possible. Sensory-friendly adjustments and regulation opportunities are built into the school day.

Personalised Support:

Support is individualised through EHCPs, Individual Education Plans, behaviour support plans, and risk assessments. Plans are reviewed regularly and developed with input from the learner (where appropriate), parents/carers, and relevant professionals.

5. Responding to an escalation in behaviour

When a learner becomes dysregulated despite preventative strategies, staff will:

- Remain calm and use a low-arousal approach
- Use the learner's preferred communication methods
- Offer known regulation strategies and safe spaces

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- Reduce demands and sensory input where possible
- Follow the learner's individual support plan
- Seek additional support from colleagues if needed

The emphasis remains on support, co-regulation, and helping the learner return to baseline. (Green Zone of Regulation)

No sanctions or consequences are applied.

6. Use of reasonable force

Thornhill Park School does **not** use seclusion or isolation.

In line with the DfE guidance *Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools* (effective from 1 April 2026), reasonable force will only be used as a **last resort** when it is necessary to prevent a learner from:

- Hurting themselves or others
- Causing serious damage to property
- Committing a criminal offence
- Any use of reasonable force will be:
 - Reasonable, proportionate, and for the minimum time necessary
 - In the best interests of the learner
 - Consistent with the learner's individual support plan and risk assessment wherever possible

Staff receive appropriate training in de-escalation and the safe use of reasonable force. After any incident, support will be offered to both the learner and the staff involved. Any level 3 incident or above will require a full debrief with appropriate communication formats being used for learners and staff involved.

7. Recording and reporting

All significant incidents of challenging behaviour, and **every** use of reasonable force and Physical Intervention, will be recorded in writing as soon as practicable (ideally the same day). Records will include:

- Names of those involved
- Date, time, location and duration
- What happened (including triggers and antecedents where known)
- De-escalation strategies used
- Any use of force and the degree of force
- Any injuries
- Follow-up actions and support provided

Parents/carers will be informed of any use of reasonable force or physical intervention as soon as possible, in line with current requirements, unless doing so would place the learner at risk of significant harm (in which case the appropriate safeguarding procedures will be followed).

Records are monitored by the School Principal and Senior Leadership Team to identify patterns and improve practice. Weekly STEP meetings for each class and daily monitoring of the MACS system also help to identify patterns.

8. Related Policies

- STEP Policy

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- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Restrictive Interventions / Reasonable Force procedures (if held separately)
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Individual learner EHCPs, IEPs and behaviour support plans