



MANAGING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

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Policy Reviewer	Director – Kane Wilson
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Changes since last review	-
Next Review Date	September 2027

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy sets out how The Ark Smallholding Ltd promotes safe, respectful and positive behaviour within its outdoor alternative provision. It applies to all learners, staff and volunteers during attendance at The Ark and during activities under The Ark's supervision.

The Ark is commissioned by schools to provide alternative provision. It does not exercise statutory school suspension or exclusion powers on behalf of a commissioning school. This policy therefore distinguishes The Ark's operational safety decisions and placement-review processes from statutory school disciplinary powers.

2. CORE PRINCIPLES

- Children are entitled to safety, dignity, respect and fair treatment.
- Behaviour is communication and may reflect unmet need, distress, trauma, anxiety, communication difficulty, SEND, safeguarding concerns, exploitation, dysregulation or environmental stress.
- Understanding behaviour does not mean accepting unsafe or harmful behaviour. Clear boundaries, predictable routines and proportionate consequences remain important.
- Trusted relationships, curiosity, prevention, co-regulation, de-escalation and teaching/rehearsing safer alternatives are preferred to punitive responses.
- Responses are individualised where necessary, taking account of age, development, SEND, disability, communication, medical needs, trauma and known risk.
- Behaviour management must never replace a safeguarding response where safeguarding action is required.
- Restrictive intervention is never a punishment and is governed by the separate Restrictive Interventions / Physical Intervention Policy.

3. POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT

Positive behaviour support at The Ark means creating the conditions in which learners can succeed: understanding what may be driving behaviour, reducing predictable triggers, teaching and reinforcing safer skills, making reasonable adjustments, and using proportionate responses that preserve dignity and relationships.

The Ark's existing policy identifies PACE. The Ark will therefore use PACE-informed principles - Playfulness where appropriate, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy - as part of a wider relational, restorative and trauma-informed approach. This does not imply formal accreditation in a particular proprietary programme unless separately evidenced.

4. RELATIONSHIPS, ROUTINES AND STAFF PRACTICE

- Build reliable, respectful relationships and use familiar adults where possible.
- Explain expectations clearly and revisit them before higher-risk activities.
- Use predictable routines and warn learners of changes where practicable.
- Model calm, respectful communication and avoid sarcasm, humiliation, threats or power struggles.
- Notice and reinforce positive engagement, effort, self-regulation, repair and safe decision-making.
- Intervene early when signs of dysregulation emerge and consider what need or trigger may be present.
- Use restorative conversations after incidents when the learner is regulated and this is appropriate and safe.

5. INDIVIDUAL NEEDS, SEND, DISABILITY AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Staff must consider whether behaviour may be linked to autism, ADHD, communication and interaction needs, sensory processing, learning difficulty, social/emotional/mental health needs, trauma, disability or a medical condition before deciding how to respond.

The Ark will make reasonable adjustments where required and practicable. Examples may include adapting language, reducing verbal load, visual prompts, sensory breaks, quieter spaces, additional processing time, different transition arrangements, altered task demands, or closer adult support.

A consequence that would be reasonable for one learner may be inappropriate or discriminatory for another. Behaviour arising in consequence of disability must not automatically be characterised as deliberate defiance or misconduct. Safety remains paramount, but the response must be proportionate and individualised.

6. SAFEGUARDING AND CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR

A change in behaviour, presentation, attendance, relationships, sexualised behaviour, aggression, withdrawal, substance-related behaviour or risk-taking may be a safeguarding indicator. Staff must remain professionally curious and follow the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy whenever concerns arise.

- Possible abuse or neglect, including domestic abuse.
- Child sexual exploitation or child criminal exploitation, coercion or trafficking.
- Child-on-child abuse, including bullying, physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour.
- Online abuse or technology-facilitated harm.

- Self-harm or suicidal ideation.
- Substance misuse.
- Radicalisation or extremist influence.
- Any pattern suggesting exploitation, coercive control or a child being unsafe in the community.

Where an incident may constitute child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern, it must not be treated only as a behaviour incident. The DSL must be informed in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

7. EXPECTED STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR AT THE ARK

- Treat other people with respect and avoid bullying, harassment, threats, intimidation and discriminatory abuse.
- Use language that is appropriate to a safe environment and respond to reasonable safety instructions.
- Remain within agreed supervised boundaries unless permission is given to move elsewhere.
- Use tools, equipment, feed, chemicals and activity resources only as instructed.
- Do not deliberately damage or steal property.
- Do not bring or use weapons, illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vapes or other items that create an unacceptable safety risk.
- Do not engage in sexual harassment, sexualised conduct toward others, coercion or harmful sexual behaviour.
- Follow activity-specific safety rules around animals, fires, woodland, climbing, roads, water and other hazards.

8. ANIMAL WELFARE AND SAFETY

Learners are expected to treat animals calmly, safely and respectfully. Staff will distinguish between behaviour arising from impulsivity, distress or lack of understanding; deliberate unsafe behaviour; and behaviour creating immediate danger. The response will be based on risk, intent only where it can reasonably be understood, the learner's needs and what support or teaching is required.

- Follow staff instructions when approaching, feeding, moving or handling animals.
- Do not chase, strike, throw objects at, deliberately frighten or intentionally hurt animals.
- Do not open gates, pens, cages or enclosures without permission.
- Do not interfere with veterinary items, medicines, feed stores, tools or equipment without permission.
- Where behaviour creates immediate danger to an animal, learner or other person, staff may stop the activity and move people/animals to safety immediately.
- Repeated or significant risks must lead to review of the learner's individual risk assessment/support plan and activity access.

9. FOREST SCHOOL AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITY SAFETY

- Learners must follow instructions concerning tools, fires (where used), climbing, uneven terrain, roads, gates, water and site boundaries.

- Leaving the supervised area or moving toward a known hazard is treated as a safety and safeguarding issue, with the Missing Children/Attendance procedure followed where relevant.
- Refusal of a non-urgent instruction should normally be addressed through calm explanation, choices and de-escalation. Where refusal creates imminent danger, staff may intervene immediately to prevent harm, consistent with the Restrictive Interventions Policy and general safety duties.
- Risk controls should be adapted for the individual learner and activity rather than relying solely on blanket rules.

10. DE-ESCALATION AND CO-REGULATION

De-escalation should normally be attempted before restrictive intervention unless an immediate danger requires urgent action. Staff should use the least intrusive strategy likely to keep people safe.

- Remain calm, reduce audience and avoid unnecessary confrontation.
- Reduce verbal demands and use short, clear language.
- Allow processing time and avoid repeated rapid instructions.
- Offer limited, appropriate choices without bargaining away essential safety boundaries.
- Reduce sensory or environmental triggers where possible.
- Use known regulation strategies and familiar staff where practicable.
- Offer access to a quieter or lower-stimulation space where this is safe and the learner is free to leave unless a lawful safety intervention is required.
- Consider communication aids, visual supports and the learner's preferred communication style.
- Pause non-essential tasks and return to learning/activity when the learner is regulated.

11. GRADUATED RESPONSE TO BEHAVIOUR

Responses should be proportionate to the level of risk and the learner's needs. Staff may move up or down these stages as circumstances change.

LEVEL	TYPICAL RESPONSE
Early signs / low-level difficulty	Prompt, reassurance, redirection, rule reminder, positive reinforcement, choice, movement/sensory break, task adaptation, staff proximity or reduced demand.
Escalating dysregulation	Reduce demands, create space, use familiar adult, remove unnecessary hazards/audience, co-regulate, move activity/others if safer, review trigger and communication needs.
Significant harmful behaviour	Prioritise safety; separate affected pupils where appropriate; call senior/DSL support; consider first aid; safeguarding assessment; contact commissioning school/parent as appropriate; record and review.
Immediate danger	Act promptly to prevent harm. Restrictive intervention may only be used where justified, necessary, reasonable and proportionate, using the least restrictive response and following the separate policy.

Repeated/complex pattern	Multi-agency/commissioner discussion; learner voice; review EHCP/SEND information, risk assessment and support plan; consider additional specialist support or placement review.
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12. REWARDS AND POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

- Specific verbal praise linked to the behaviour or skill demonstrated.
- Positive feedback to parents/carers and the commissioning school.
- Recognition of progress against individual targets.
- Opportunities for trusted responsibility or preferred activities where safe and appropriate.
- Restorative acknowledgement when a learner repairs harm or successfully uses a regulation strategy.

13. CONSEQUENCES AND RESTORATIVE FOLLOW-UP

Consequences should be reasonable, proportionate, related to the behaviour where possible, explained calmly and adapted for individual need. Their purpose is safety, learning, repair and restoration - not humiliation or retribution.

- Temporary removal from a particular activity where needed for immediate safety.
- Repairing or helping remedy damage where appropriate and safe.
- Revisiting or practising a safety routine before returning to an activity.
- Restricting access to a specific high-risk tool, area or activity until risk can be safely managed.
- Restorative discussion, apology or other repair where freely and appropriately undertaken.
- Reviewing activity expectations, support strategies or supervision level with the learner.

Prohibited measures. The Ark will not use corporal punishment; humiliation or degrading treatment; withholding food or drink as punishment; preventing necessary medication, first aid, toileting or other basic welfare needs; unlawful restraint; punitive seclusion; deliberately placing a learner at increased risk; or damage/disposal of personal property as punishment. Restriction of an item or activity may be used only for a legitimate safety or welfare purpose and must be proportionate.

14. RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS / PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

This policy must be read with The Ark's Restrictive Interventions / Physical Intervention Policy. Restrictive intervention is not a sanction and must not be used merely to obtain compliance where there is no lawful and proportionate safety justification.

Prevention, environmental adjustment and de-escalation are expected where practicable. Any intervention must be necessary for the circumstances, reasonable and proportionate to the risk, and use the least restrictive response reasonably available. Incidents must be recorded, reviewed, communicated and followed up under the separate policy. Only staff trained and authorised for specific physical techniques may use those techniques; ordinary emergency actions to protect life or prevent immediate serious harm remain subject to the law and the circumstances.

15. SEARCHING, SCREENING, SURRENDER AND CONFISCATION

The Ark does not assume the statutory search powers given by education legislation to specified schools. Staff must not conduct a non-consensual pupil search simply by relying on the DfE school searching guidance.

Where staff reasonably believe a learner has a weapon, drugs, alcohol, vape, stolen item, harmful material or another item presenting an immediate safety risk, the priority is safety and safeguarding rather than evidential recovery.

- Ask the learner to voluntarily surrender the item and, where appropriate, to empty pockets or open a bag with consent.
- Do not conduct intimate searches or searches that expose underwear or skin.
- Move other learners away and secure the immediate area where necessary.
- Contact the Lead Coordinator/DSL and the commissioning school; contact parents/carers where appropriate and consistent with safeguarding.
- Contact police where an item may be unlawful, there is a weapon/immediate threat, or a safe voluntary resolution is not possible.
- Where an item is voluntarily surrendered, store it safely only for as long as necessary and decide return, transfer to parent/school, or handover to police according to risk and legality.
- If a learner will not comply with a reasonable safety condition for entry or participation, The Ark may pause access to the site/activity while urgently consulting the commissioning school and parent/carer. This is an operational safety decision, not a statutory school exclusion.

16. BULLYING, DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOUR AND CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

The Ark will challenge racist, misogynistic, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, disability-related, religious or other discriminatory abuse. Responses will support the targeted child, address immediate safety, record the incident and consider safeguarding implications.

Bullying, physical abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour, coercion, exploitation and online abuse must be assessed to determine whether safeguarding procedures are required. Serious or repeated incidents must not be minimised as ordinary conflict or "banter".

17. DRUGS, ALCOHOL, VAPING AND OTHER SUBSTANCES

Possession, supply, intoxication or suspected substance-related behaviour will be treated as a safety and safeguarding concern. Staff will secure immediate safety, seek medical assistance where indicated, notify the DSL/Lead Coordinator, liaise with the commissioning school and parent/carer as appropriate, and involve police or emergency services where necessary. The searching limitations in section 15 apply.

18. LEAVING SITE / ABSCONDING

Attempts to leave or actual departure from the supervised area must be responded to using the learner's individual risk information and the Attendance / Missing Children Policy. Staff must consider exploitation, distress, self-harm risk, road/environmental hazards and other safeguarding concerns. Physical intervention to prevent departure is not automatic and may only occur where justified under the separate Restrictive Interventions Policy and the immediate circumstances.

19. TEMPORARY REMOVAL, EARLY COLLECTION AND PLACEMENT REVIEW

- Temporary removal from an activity may be used where necessary to protect immediate safety or allow regulation. It should be time-limited and reviewed.
- Early collection may be requested where risks cannot be safely managed for the remainder of the session, following consultation with the commissioning school and parent/carer and with safeguarding/transport arrangements considered.
- A temporary cessation of attendance at The Ark may be agreed with the commissioning school where a short pause is necessary for risk assessment, planning or safe staffing. This is not a statutory school suspension.
- Where a placement appears unsafe, unsuitable or no longer able to meet need, The Ark will seek a placement review with the commissioning school, sharing evidence, learner voice, safeguarding concerns and required adjustments/support.
- Abrupt termination should be avoided where it would increase risk, unless immediate safety makes continued attendance untenable. The commissioning school remains responsible for statutory suspension/exclusion decisions and the pupil's education arrangements.

20. RECORDING AND REPORTING

Records must be factual, timely and sufficiently detailed to understand what happened, why it may have happened, what staff did and what needs to change. Significant incidents should normally be recorded on the same day.

- Date, time, location, activity and people involved.
- Antecedents, triggers and environmental factors where known.
- Observed behaviour and exact words where relevant; avoid labels and assumptions.
- Staff responses, de-escalation, reasonable adjustments and choices offered.
- Outcome, duration and impact on others/activities.
- Any injury, first aid or medical response.
- Any safeguarding concern, disclosure, DSL action or referral.
- Any discriminatory, sexualised, bullying or child-on-child abuse element.
- Any prohibited item, substance, damage, theft or leaving-site incident.
- Any restrictive intervention, cross-referenced to the separate intervention record.
- Pupil voice when available and appropriate.
- Notifications to parents/carers, commissioning school, police or other agencies.
- Follow-up actions, plan/risk-assessment changes and review date.

21. POST-INCIDENT RESPONSE

- Ensure immediate safety and check the welfare of everyone involved.
- Provide first aid or seek medical assessment where required.
- Give the learner time and space to regulate before expecting reflection.
- Offer an opportunity for the learner to explain their perspective in an accessible way.
- Use restorative discussion where appropriate; do not compel an apology as a condition of emotional safety.
- Consider whether the behaviour indicates a safeguarding concern and inform the DSL where required.
- Debrief involved staff and identify learning, wellbeing or training needs.
- Review triggers, successful strategies and whether supervision/environmental controls need changing.

- Update individual risk assessments/support plans where new information changes risk or support need.
- Share relevant information promptly with the commissioning school and parents/carers where appropriate.
- Identify patterns across incidents rather than viewing repeated events in isolation.

22. INDIVIDUAL LEARNER PLANS AND RISK ASSESSMENTS

Before a learner starts, The Ark expects the commissioning/host school to share relevant current information, including EHCP content, SEND plans, behaviour/support plans, medical information, safeguarding information that can lawfully and appropriately be shared, and individual risk assessments.

The Ark will use that information to plan safe provision and will create or update its own operational risk assessment/support arrangements where site-specific or newly emerging risks require this. The Ark will feed relevant new information back to the commissioning school so the school's plans and risk assessments can remain current. Information sharing will follow safeguarding and data-protection requirements.

23. STAFF TRAINING AND COMPETENCE

All staff and regular volunteers will receive role-appropriate induction and updates so that behaviour practice is consistent with this policy. Training frequency will be determined by role, provider requirements, risk, incident review and changes in guidance rather than by an unsupported fixed interval.

- All staff: safeguarding; positive behaviour support; de-escalation/co-regulation; relational and trauma-informed practice; SEND/disability awareness; child-on-child abuse; discriminatory behaviour; recording; and outdoor/animal safety relevant to their role.
- Staff supporting higher-risk learners: individual risk/support plans, communication strategies and responses to aggression appropriate to assessed need.
- Only staff expected and authorised to use specified restrictive-intervention techniques: current specialist training from the relevant recognised provider/model, with refreshers required by that training framework and organisational risk assessment.
- After serious incidents or where practice gaps are identified, managers will consider additional coaching, supervision or refresher training before the staff member resumes higher-risk duties where necessary.

24. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Director / Lead Coordinator is responsible for implementation, staff competence, oversight of significant incidents, liaison with commissioners and annual review.
- The DSL is responsible for safeguarding decisions arising from behaviour concerns and for ensuring behaviour incidents are not allowed to displace child-protection action.
- All staff and volunteers must follow this policy, individual plans, risk assessments and their training; record significant concerns; and seek senior support when risk escalates.
- Commissioning schools are expected to provide relevant pre-placement information, remain engaged in review, and retain their own statutory responsibilities for the pupil.

25. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Ark will review behaviour records, restrictive-intervention data, safeguarding themes, discriminatory incidents, leaving-site incidents, injuries and placement disruptions to identify patterns and improve prevention. The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if statutory guidance, the provision model or significant learning from incidents changes.