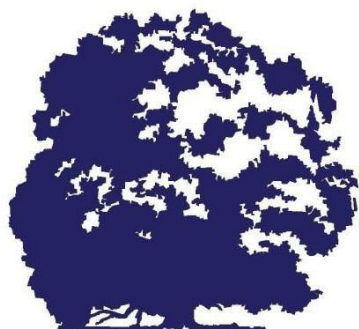




**MUNTHAM HOUSE SCHOOL**

# CO-REGULATION AND RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

## **Co-Regulation and Relationships Policy**

### **Context**

Muntham House School is a non-maintained residential special school that provides education and care for boys aged 5–18 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Our pupils have various needs ranging from Autistic Spectrum Condition, ADHD, Social communication difficulties, Speech and language difficulties, Mild learning disabilities, attachment difficulties and Trauma.

These difficulties can often mask anxiety and fear based on school and expectations regarding behaviour and conduct.

At Muntham House School, we see positive and negative behaviour as communication of need, and when we respond appropriately, positive outcomes follow.

We strive to validate the feelings and needs of the pupil and model and teach how to communicate these acceptably because we all feel anger, disappointment, anxiety, confusion and excitement.

### **Mission Statement**

Muntham House School is a safe, caring and happy community. We strive to effect positive change to equip our pupils with the academic, social, emotional and moral skills to be positive members of society. Resilience and personal well-being are at the core of everything we do, along with high academic expectations.

*'Muntham House School is a safe, caring and positive environment dedicated to supporting pupils' individual needs; seeking effective change to send our pupils forward into society.'*

### **Values**

Safe – Muntham House is a safe community where staff and pupils are expected to adhere to a code of conduct that keeps us all safe. This is based on mutual respect and understanding and working with each other to make positive choices.

Caring– All the adults at MHS always strive to demonstrate unconditional positive regard. The six principles of Nurture are embedded in our curriculum and practice. We strive to meet the needs communicated through the child's behaviour and make them feel heard and valued.

Happy – We celebrate success and achievement and ensure everyone is aware of their talents, which we nurture and encourage. Praise is celebrated regularly.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is at the heart of everything at Muntham House School. Transparency and collaboration between the school, families, other professionals and external agencies ensure our community is safe.

Muntham House School is a safe, caring, happy and positive community dedicated to supporting the individual special needs of children and young people. We work to improve.

learning and social behaviour effectively so that our pupils can make the right choices in the wider community and move forward with society.

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting every pupil's physical and emotional welfare both inside and outside the school premises. We implement a whole-school preventative approach to managing safeguarding concerns, ensuring pupils' wellbeing is at the forefront of all action taken.

This policy sets out a clear and consistent framework for delivering this promise, in line with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance. However, safeguarding is a human response based on clear, safe, and transparent relationships that seek mutuality and sustainability. Safety is a right. For clarity, our approach, based on a profound understanding of our pupils and the social contexts they experience, is: if it doesn't seem right, it probably isn't: REPORT IT - RECORD IT.

Our community's safety is confirmed by:

- Creating a culture of safer recruitment by adopting procedures that help deter, reject or identify people who might pose a risk to children.
- Teaching pupils how to keep safe and recognise unacceptable behaviour.
- Identifying and making provision for any pupil subject to abuse.
- Ensuring that members of the Governors and Trustees, the Principal and staff members understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, are alert to the signs of child abuse and know to refer concerns to the DSL.
- Ensuring that the Principal and any new staff members and volunteers are only appointed when all the appropriate checks have been satisfactorily completed.

### **Autism, Attachment and Trauma**

#### **Autism**

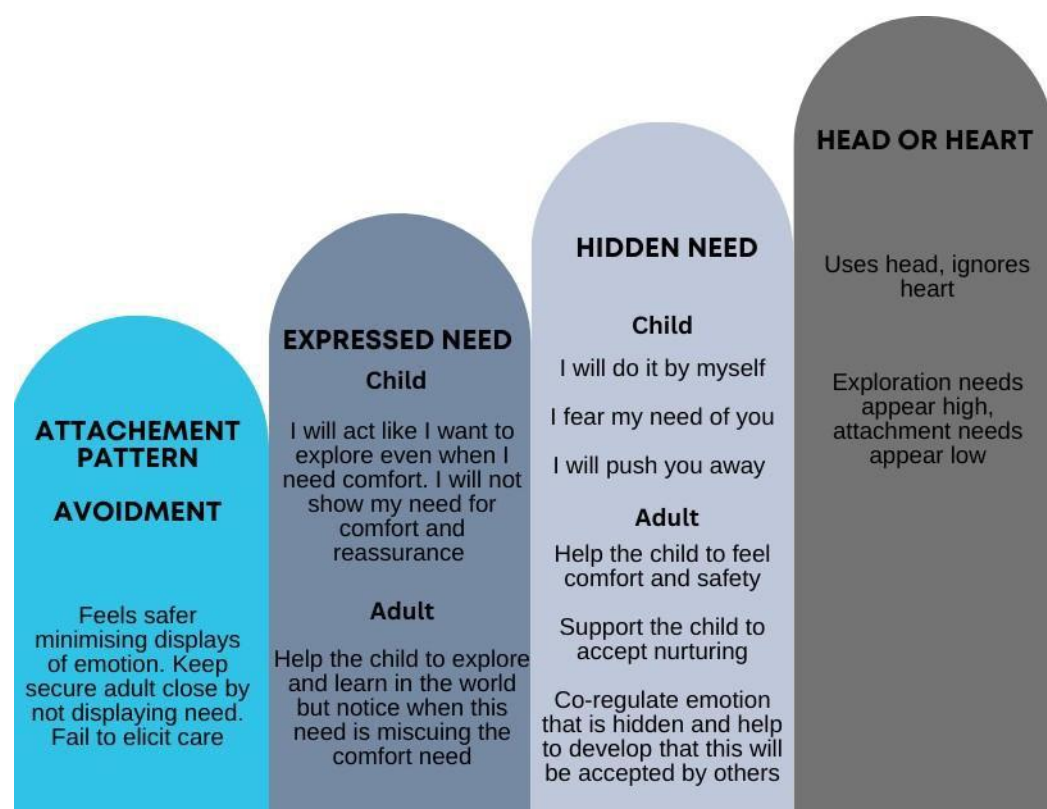
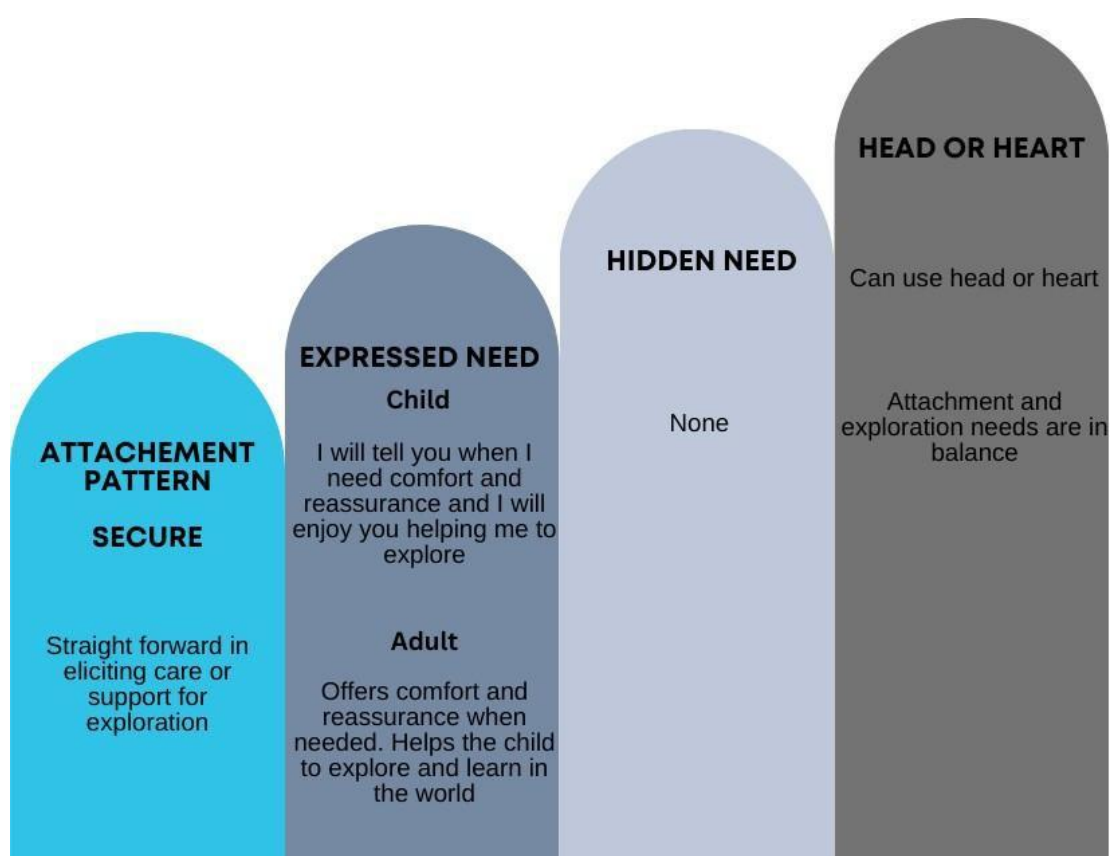
A large percentage of our pupils will have an autistic spectrum condition diagnosed on their EHCP; this will typically coincide with a co-morbidity of one or more of the following: ADHD, ODD, Social Communication Difficulties, Speech and Language Difficulties, and Sensory Processing difficulties.

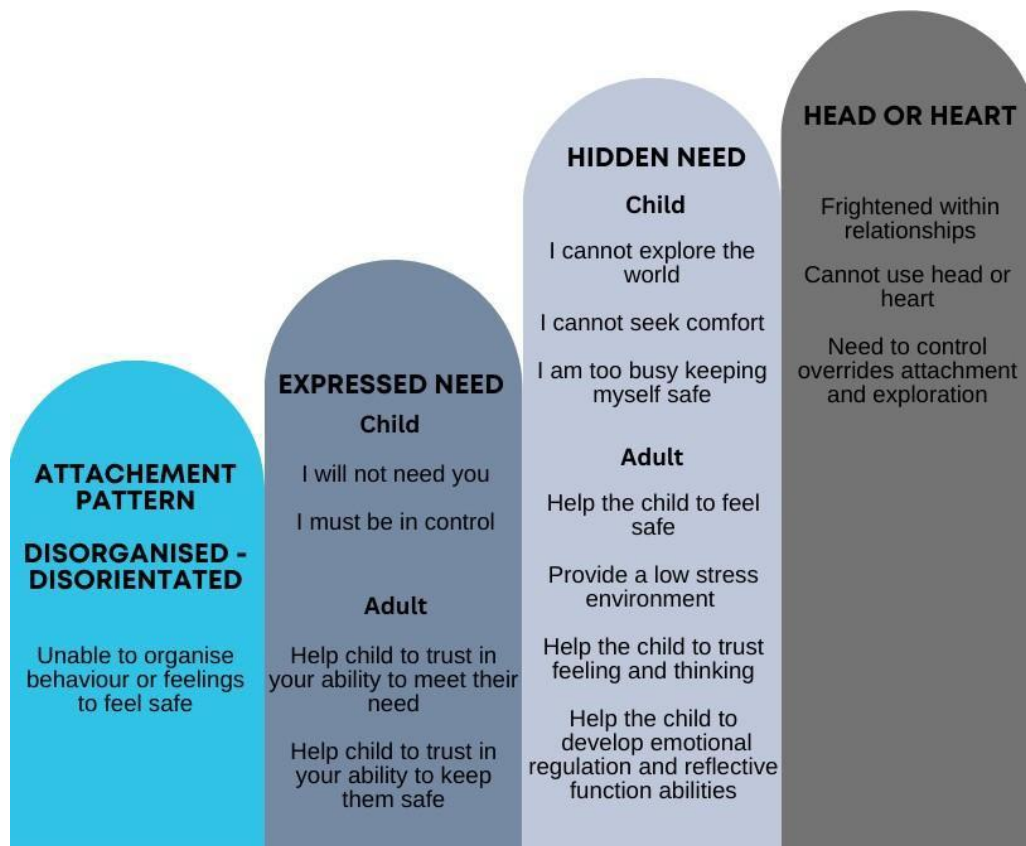
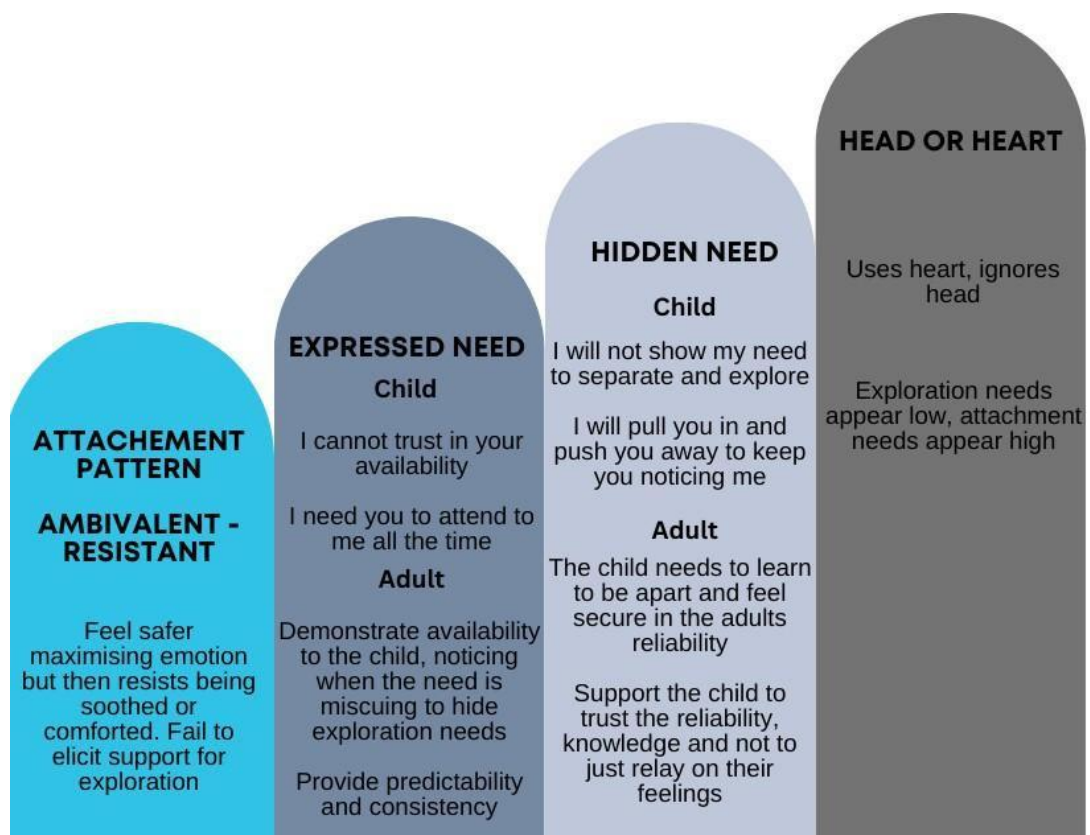
Muntham House School is sensitive to these needs and makes all reasonable adjustments to ensure these pupils succeed within our community.

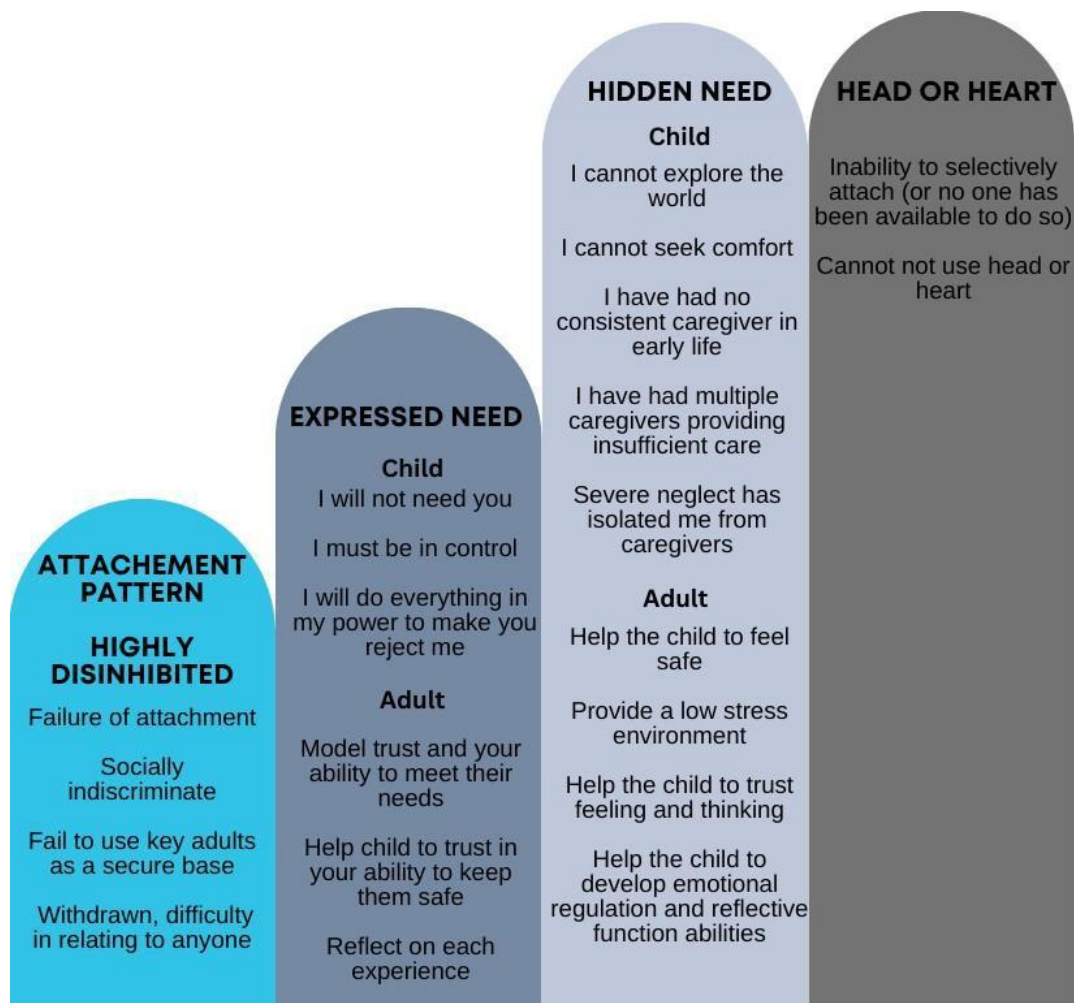
#### **Attachment**

Some of our pupils have a diagnosed attachment disorder, and others' EHCPs will indicate an attachment need.

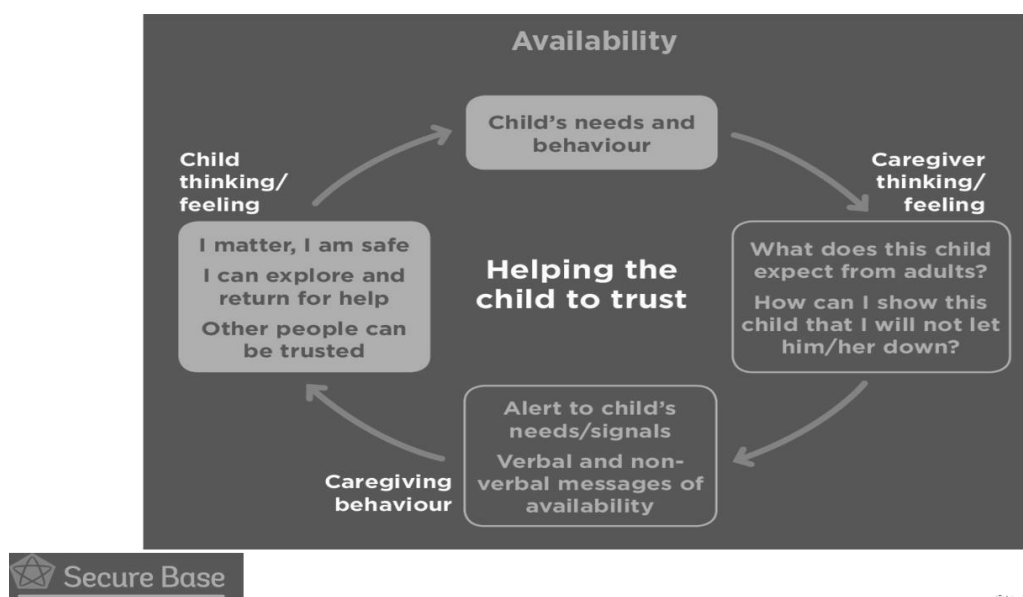
Our pupils require connection before correction. Positive relationships are at the heart of everything we





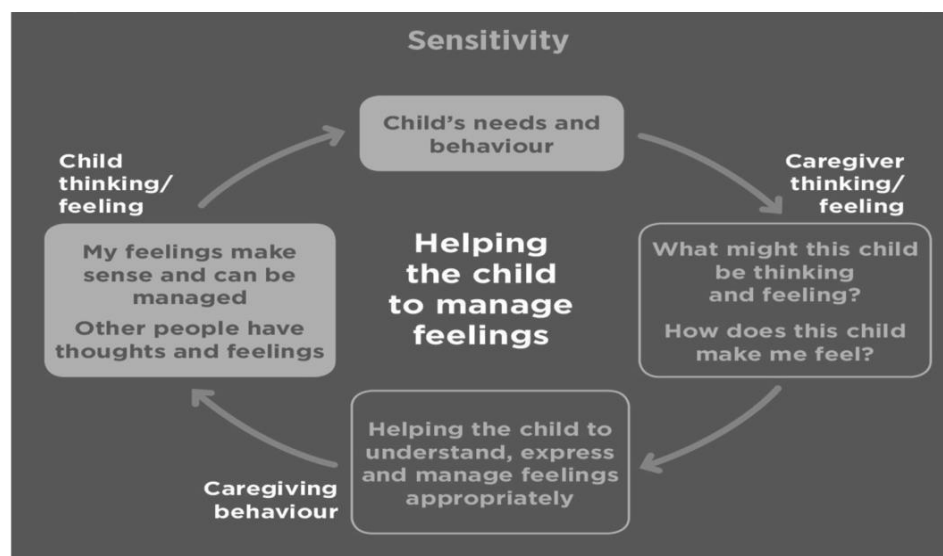


Secure Base Model ([www.uea.ac.uk](http://www.uea.ac.uk))





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**Trauma:** "If you can't say it, you behave it."

An emotional response to something that is overwhelmingly painful and stressful event where there was no one to help you.

Hyperarousal of unprocessed trauma means minor experiences become major emergencies.

The most effective protective factor when working with trauma is emotionally available adults showing unconditional positive regard.

### Quality Relationships = Quality Development

Protect, Relate, Regulate, Reflect

(Trauma Informed Schools)

#### Pupil Expectations (non-negotiables)

All pupils must demonstrate a desire to engage in school and the MHS community. High expectations regarding behaviour and conduct are taught, modelled, and then adhered to to enable the pupils to realise their potential and keep our community safe.

The Rules

- Be kind
- Make good choices
- Be in class or activities
- Complete classwork/homework

### **Staff Expectations – Providing good attachments/Emotionally Available Adults**

This is a critical part of the process, as only truly invested staff who understand Why can hold space and be positive community members.

The adults who **CHOOSE** to want to work within this community **MUST** be able to:

- Have feelings/empathy/respect, as well as intellect
- Show integrity
- Be a role model and enrich the lives of others
- Be polite and gentle even when faced with extreme stress and adversity
- Has a firm but not rigid moral compass and principles
- Wants to know why
- Is social and has a good sense of humour
- Can be a self-reflective and critical practitioner
- Can show unconditional regard and care even when being the target of transference/behaviour

Staff at Muntham House should strive to foster transparent, nurturing relationships with the pupils, making themselves emotionally available to work alongside the children in our care. The school's routines and boundaries are designed to help pupils feel safe and secure, so a mutual level of trust can develop and support re-engagement in learning academically, emotionally, and socially. Gentle challenges are offered to build resilience and confidence in pupils.

### **Core Professional Competencies to be developed through training, experience and supervision:**

(Some taken from TC Practitioner competencies framework, Dr Chris Nicholson)

#### **Detailed understanding of the role of young people in their care:**

- To fully understand the boundaries of their role and its place within the community and wider organisation.
- To fully understand the outcomes the role is designed to achieve.
- Can show developing insight into the young people in their care based on their individual and unique life stories and current reality.
- Provide response and understanding to the young people within the context of the community and beyond.

#### **Using and establishing boundaries (relational, behavioural, community)**

- Develop an awareness and capacity to regulate boundaries.
- Able to own and use their authority appropriately with a balanced and planned approach (know why and the long-term outcome).
- The ability to SHARE authority with all members of the community.
- Understand and recognise the significance of space and time and how to use them effectively.

- Be able to build, test and maintain transparent and positive relationships with young people and the wider community.

### **Professional Observations**

- Be able to accept 'not knowing' and allow time for understanding to emerge.
- Be able to make observations about behaviour, mood, and interactions and report on these observations in writing and verbally (solution-focused, demonstrating function and understanding of both positive and negative behaviour/outcomes).
- Be able to base opinions on detailed evidence gathered over time, identifying a journey of intervention to consolidate learning and enable positive outcomes.
- Always looking for the function of attachment behaviours and enabling the need to be met through positive and appropriate means.

### **Communication Skills**

- Can communicate in a clear and direct manner
- Methods of communication that are suitable and accessible for the young person can be adopted.
- Doesn't tell others what to think but provides opportunities for understanding to emerge, develop, and grow.
- Understands that all behaviour is conscious or unconscious communication and strives to interpret this and meet the underlying need.

### **Use of self**

- Is sensitive, approachable, emotionally available, attuned and receptive.
- Can monitor and recognise the feelings evoked by others and link these to underlying issues of the young people (transference)
- Is genuine, congruent and authentic (reliable, honest, predictable)

### **Ability to work reflectively**

- Is aware of own strengths and weaknesses.
- Is self-reflective and self-aware (knows why they are working here)
- Can know when things have worked well and when things haven't.

### **Can contain behaviour (anxiety, aggression, withdrawal, omnipotence)**

- Can cope with 'not knowing'
- Can tolerate and manage stress within personal/professional limits
- Can notice and sustain difficult feelings (transference) long enough to try and understand where they come from and how to help.
- Can contain their anxiety/feelings.

### **Environmental setting conditions**

- Can use daily living and relational exchanges as opportunities for learning.
- Takes pride in their working environment.
- Teaches young people to take pride in their living environment.

All staff must undertake and engage in group (team meetings) and individual supervision. Clinical supervision should be conducted if appropriate and required by a suitably qualified person.

### **P.A.C.E (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy (Dr Dan Hughes)**

## **1.1 Playfulness**

This is about creating an atmosphere of lightness and interest when you communicate. It means learning how to use a light tone with your voice, like you might use when story telling, rather than an irritated or lecturing tone. It's about having fun, and expressing a sense of joy.

Having a playful stance isn't about being funny all the time or making jokes when a child is sad. It's about helping children be more open to and experience what is positive in their life, one step at a time.

Sometimes a troubled child has given up on the idea of having good times and doesn't want to experience and share fun or enjoyment. Some children don't like affection or reject hugs. A playful stance can allow closeness but without the scary parts.

## **1.2 Acceptance**

Unconditional acceptance is at the core of the child's sense of safety.

Acceptance is about actively communicating to the child that you accept the wishes, feelings, thoughts, urges, motives and perceptions that are underneath the outward behaviour. It is about accepting, without judgment or evaluation, their inner life. The child's inner life simply *is*; it is not *right* or *wrong*.

Accepting the child's intentions does not imply accepting behaviour, which may be hurtful or harmful to another person or to self. The adult may be very firm in limiting behaviour while at the same time accepting the motives for the behaviour.

One hopes that the child learns that while behaviour may be criticised and limited, this is not the same as criticising the child's *self*. The child then becomes more confident that conflict and discipline involves behaviour, not the relationship with parents nor her.

### 1.3 Curiosity

Curiosity, without judgment, is how we help children become aware of their inner life, reflect upon the reasons for their behaviour, and then communicate it to their parents or therapist. Curiosity is wondering about the meaning behind the behaviour for the child. Curiosity lets the child know that the adults understand.

Children often know that their behaviour was not appropriate. They often do not know why they did it or are reluctant to tell adults why.

With curiosity the adults are conveying their intention to simply understand *why* and to help the child with understanding. The adult's intentions are to truly understand and help the child, not to lecture or convey that the child's inner life is *wrong* in some way.

Curiosity involves a quiet, accepting tone that conveys a simple desire to understand the child: *"What do you think was going on? What do you think that was about?"* or *"I wonder what...?"*

You say this without anticipating an answer or response from a child.

### 1.4 Empathy

Empathy lets the child feel *the adult's* compassion for her. Being empathic means the adult actively shows the child that the child's inner life matters to the adult and that they want to be with the child in her hard times.

With empathy, when the child is sad or in distress, the adult feels the sadness and distress with her and lets the child know.

The adult shows that they understand how difficult the experience is for the child. The adult is telling the child that she will not have to deal with the distress alone.

The adult will stay with the child emotionally, providing comfort and support, and will not abandon her when she needs the adult the most.

The adult also communicates strength, love, and commitment, with confidence that sharing the child's distress will not be too much. Together they will get through it.

## **The Environment**

A community with shared values and moral compass, based on mutual respect and understanding (because you are (all) worth the investment).

A community that gently challenges whilst asking why?

Growth of all parties and celebrating success and achievement with authentic praise from people with authentic and meaningful relationships.

The routines and environment within the school have been carefully designed to support the individual needs of our young people. We aim to provide a relaxed, supportive and nurturing environment. The routines within the school provide boundaries and structure, helping our young people feel safe and reducing the stress and anxiety of the unknown.

We carefully plan and support transitions and change. The six

principles of Nurture:

- **Children's learning is understood developmentally**
- **The importance of Nurture for the development of wellbeing**
- **All behaviour is communication**
- **The environment offers a safe base**
- **Language is a vital means of communication**
- **The importance of transition in children's lives**

(The Nurture Group Network)

## **Managing Behaviour – Reflective, Reparative, Restorative**

**ALL BEHAVIOUR IS COMMUNICATION**, whether conscious or subconscious.

Suppose you are taking a behaviour away because it is challenging, inappropriate, stressful, or dangerous (attachment, Autistic, Trauma). In that case, you **MUST** teach an alternative that has the same result and meets the underlying need.

That said, pupils still need firm, consistent boundaries of conduct, and you must enforce them when they challenge them. Adults must be the adults, and pupils need adult direction to stay safe and develop (cause and effect); this is normal parenting and a vital part of development.

### **Reflective Consequences**

- Time away from the group / Activity.
- Name what has gone wrong and its effect on them and others.
- Model ways it can be repaired.

### **Restorative Consequences**

- Making it better.
- Support and enable them to say Sorry (but mean sorry and do sorry)
- Supporting them through feeling bad and modelling how they can make it better so they feel better.
- Taking responsibility for their actions, words and behaviour.

### **Reparative Consequence**

- Community payback.
- Fixing something they have broken.
- Replacing something they have damaged/broken.
- Tidying any deliberate mess they may have caused.

### **Physical Management (RPI)**

MHS recognised that, at times, the children might become dysregulated to the degree that it becomes unsafe for the individual or the community as a whole. In these situations, it may be appropriate to physically contain and hold the individual to prevent a dangerous situation.

- Always a last resort
- Minimum amount of time
- Sensitively deployed with a sound rationale (trauma, autism)
- Dignity and safeguarding maintained
- Not for compliance
- Debrief always offered
- Maintain relationships
- Record and inform parents/carers

### **Short Term Exclusion**

Some behaviours and actions may lead the school to decide that the child needs time away from school to reflect on their actions and then reintegrate after a meeting between the senior management team, parents, and the child.

Such actions that may lead to short exclusion would include, but are not limited to:

- Physical aggression/assault on peers and staff
- Damage to property
- Persistent disengagement from the MHS community
- Causing an issue overnight
- Persistent rule-breaking and conduct that challenged the school's mission statement.
- For investigatory reasons and safeguarding.

### **Permanent Exclusion**

Suppose a pupil challenges the Muntham House School philosophy and community to the point that the behaviour shown is delinquent and repeatedly unsafe. In that case, we may make the difficult decision that MHS is not the proper provision, and a pupil may be permanently excluded to safeguard our community. Such actions that would warrant permanent exclusion would include, but are not limited to:

- Violence
- Bringing prohibited items such as knives, drugs or alcohol onto the school site
- Predatory sexualised behaviour
- Extreme self-injurious behaviours
- Persistent challenge of the MHS community that undermines our philosophy and impacts others academically and socially.

Muntham House will not continue the placement of a child if it is not in the child's best interests and primary needs are not being met.

**Last reviewed:** September 2026

**Next review due:** September 2027