



A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Calm Classrooms, Confident Schools

BEHAVIOUR & CLASSROOM CULTURE

Evidence-informed behaviour management for secondary schools: aligned to DfE statutory guidance and the Ofsted framework, grounded in established psychological theory, and written to be handed straight to your teaching staff.

49

sections, from the evidence base to print-and-use classroom tools

5

ready-to-print templates, scripts and a 45-minute INSET outline

DfE

statutory guidance and the 2025 Ofsted framework, fully referenced

1

Routines

2

Relationships

3

Consequences

4

Rewards

5

De-escalation

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For staff INSET, handbooks
and SLT policy review

What’s Inside

Forty-nine sections across eight parts — the case, the theory, the practice, the leadership tools, a print-and-use toolkit, a closing word, and a standalone UAE chapter.

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Scenarios. Any account in this book of what a school, department, team or individual did is a composite illustration, assembled from patterns that recur across many settings. None describes a real school or a real individual, and no number inside one should be quoted as data.

Why Behaviour Is the Foundation, Not an Add-On

Since November 2025, Ofsted’s report-card framework has judged schools against nine separate evaluation areas, and **Attendance and behaviour** is one of them in its own right, graded on its own line rather than folded into a general impression of “ethos”. That change reflects something headteachers have known for years: a school cannot teach well, retain staff, or support wellbeing without a calm, predictable, consistently applied approach to behaviour.

The Department for Education is direct about where responsibility sits. Its 2024 guidance states plainly that creating a positive behaviour culture “**cannot be delegated**” by a headteacher. It is set from the top, modelled by leaders, and lived out consistently by every adult in the building.

This guide exists to make that job easier. It brings together the statutory guidance, the psychological theory that actually underpins good practice, and the practical scripts and systems that turn theory into a Tuesday-period-4 reality. It is written to be read cover-to-cover by senior leaders, then handed, chapter by chapter, to every member of teaching staff.



“Creating a school culture of good behaviour is one of the most important elements of good education. It is a core part of a headteacher’s role and cannot be delegated.”

Department for Education (2024) *Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff*



WHAT A STRONG BEHAVIOUR CULTURE ACTUALLY BUYS YOU



Learning time returned

Every minute not spent settling a class is a minute of teaching. Across a year this is the largest single block of time a school can recover without touching the timetable.



Staff who stay

Behaviour is now among the top drivers of teachers leaving. Retention is cheaper than recruitment, and continuity of staff is itself a behaviour intervention.



Pupils who can access it

The pupils who gain most from a calm room are those with the least calm elsewhere, which makes behaviour culture an equity issue, not just an operational one.

FROM MY PRACTICE

In the specialist settings I worked in, we had no option to exclude our way out of a problem. The young people in front of us had already been excluded from everywhere else. That constraint turned out to be a gift. It forced us to get very good at the things schools can actually control: the routine, the greeting, the tone of the correction. Everything in this guide comes from that discipline.

How to read this guide

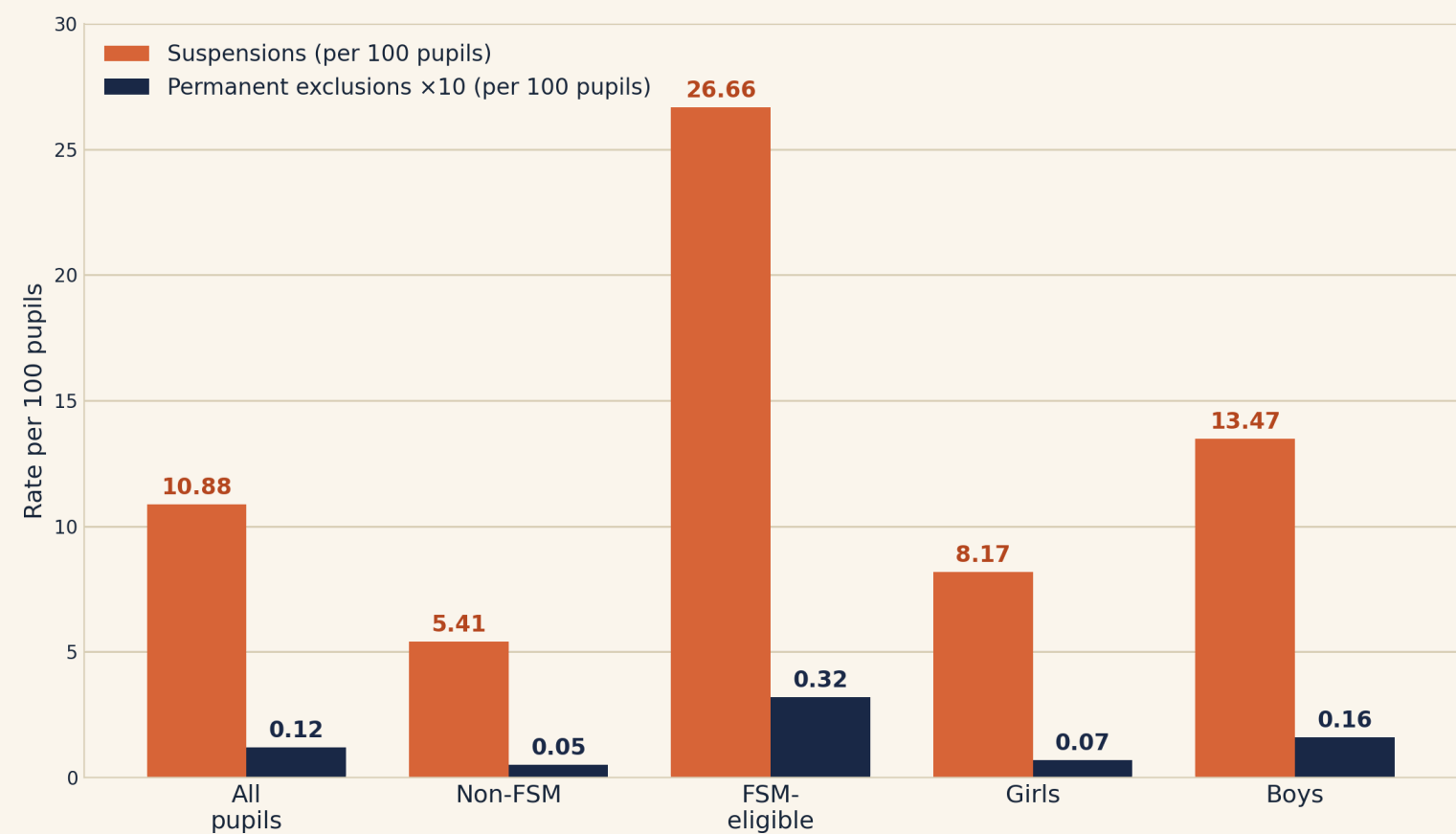
Sections 1–5 make the case. Sections 6–24 are the theory and the practice, designed to be handed to staff. Sections 25–36 are the leadership tools: roadmap, adoption plan, FAQ, templates and self-audit. Sections 37–39 close. Sections 40–43 are a standalone UAE chapter for leaders working in the Emirates.

The variation problem

The Timpson Review found that schools with near-identical intakes exclude at wildly different rates. That finding is uncomfortable and liberating in equal measure: if intake does not determine outcomes, then culture and systems do, and those are things a headteacher can change.

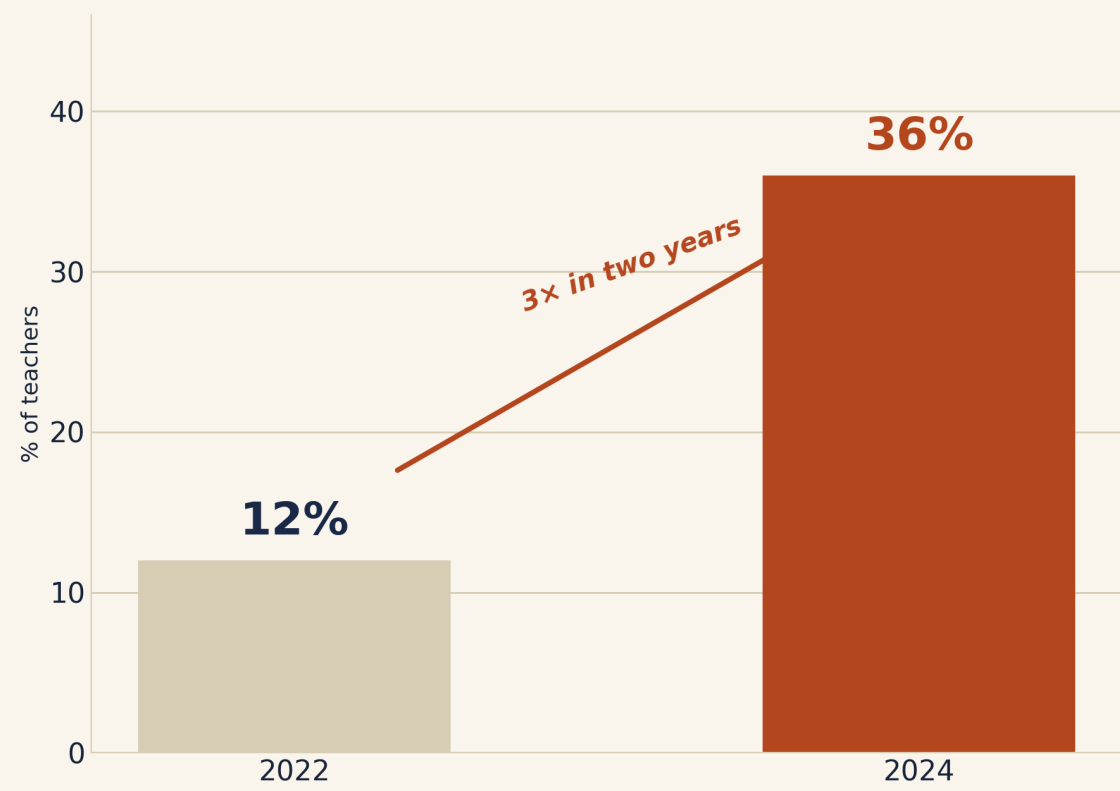
The National Picture: What the Data Shows

SUSPENSIONS & EXCLUSIONS, ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25

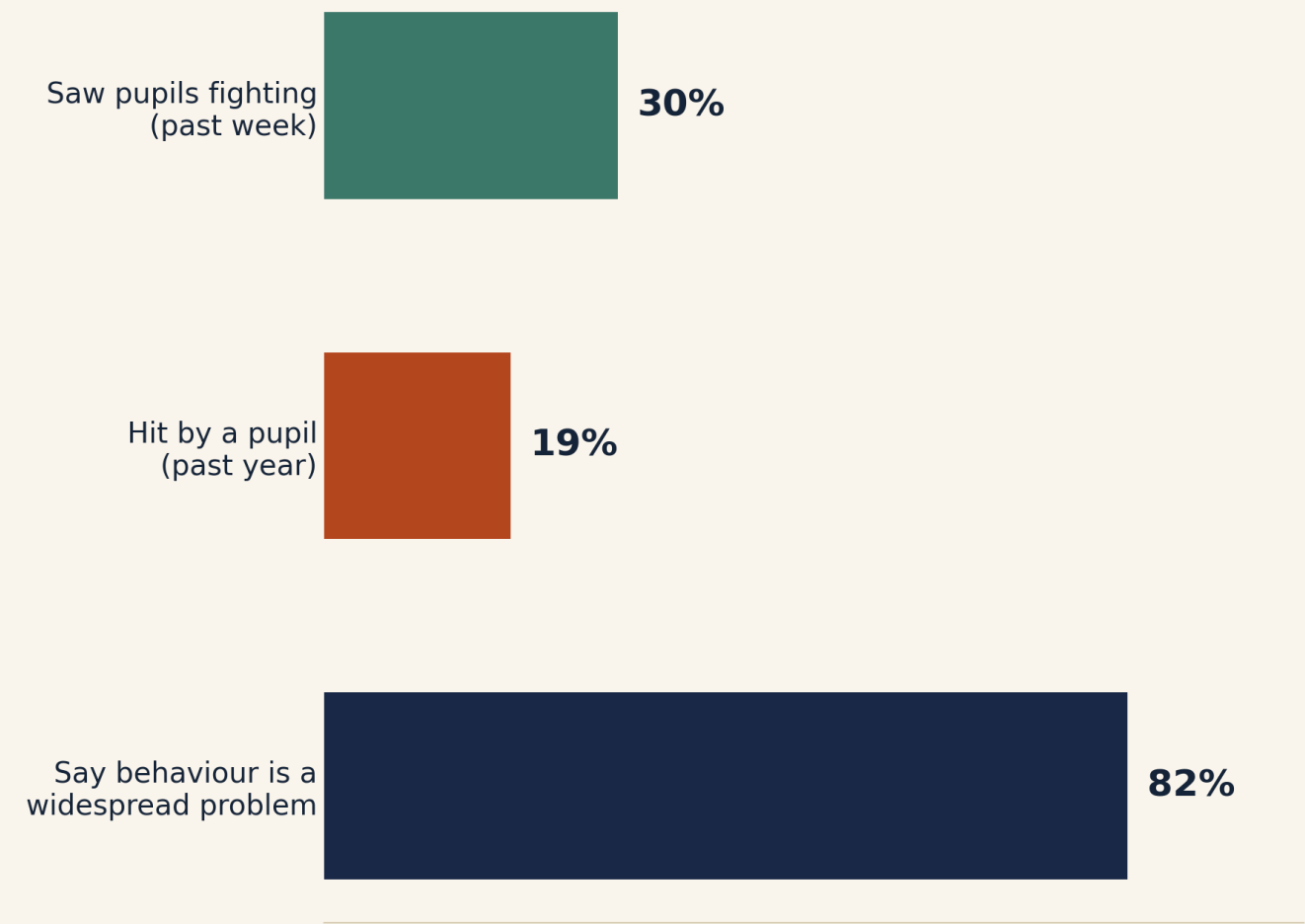


Persistent disruptive behaviour remains the single most common reason for both suspensions and permanent exclusions. Disadvantaged pupils (FSM-eligible) are suspended at nearly 5× the rate of their peers.

PUPIL BEHAVIOUR AS A DRIVER OF TEACHER STRESS



Teachers citing pupil behaviour as a main factor in increased work-related stress (NASUWT, 2024). Only these two years are reported in the source.



Teacher survey findings reported by the BBC using the Teacher Tapp panel (c.9,000 respondents), and TES reporting on teacher perceptions of behaviour. Verify against the original releases before quoting externally.

The case for this guide, in one paragraph:

Behaviour is not a peripheral pastoral issue. It is the biggest lever a school has over both outcomes and staff retention. Get it right and every other improvement priority becomes easier to deliver; get it wrong and no amount of curriculum design or CPD can compensate.

WHAT THIS DATA MEANS FOR YOUR NEXT INSPECTION

Inspectors read national data too
Your own suspension and attendance figures will be benchmarked against exactly these national rates, so know where you sit before they tell you.

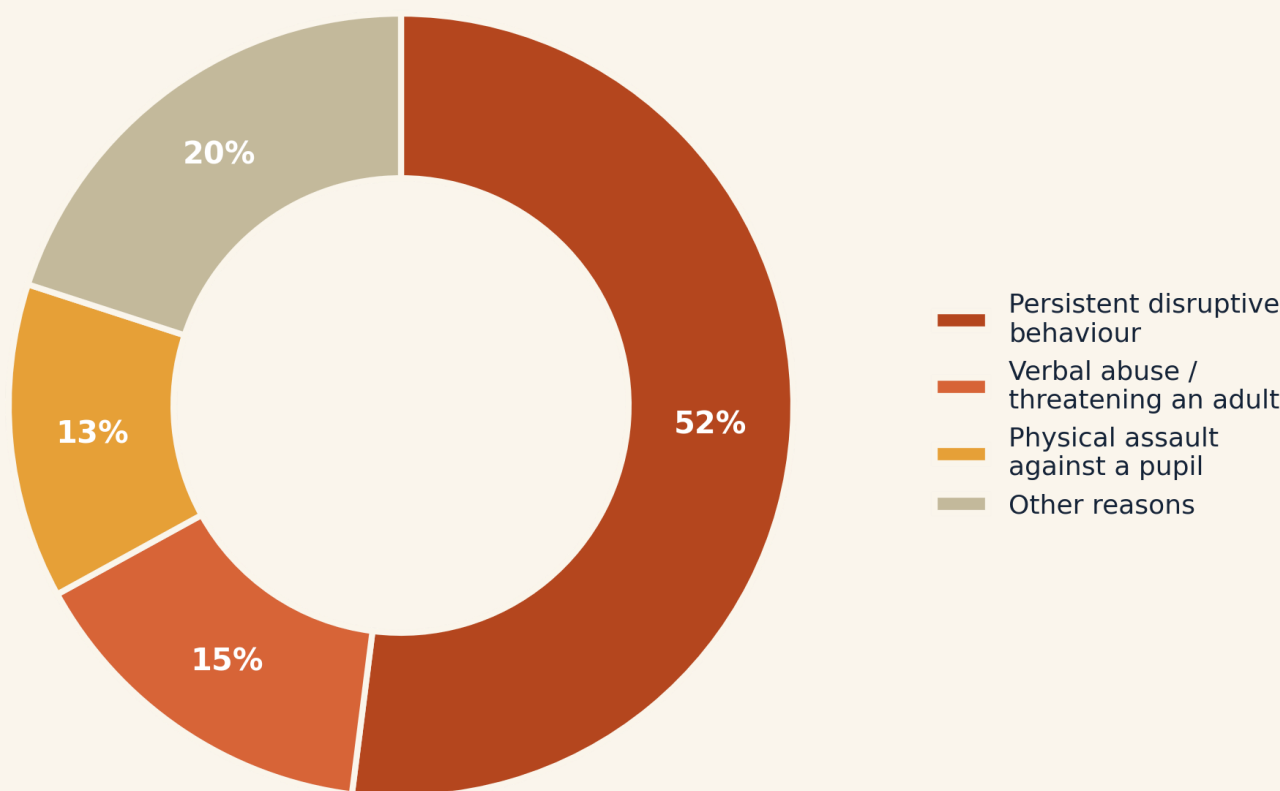
Disadvantage gaps are a specific focus
The FSM suspension gap shown above is a standing line of inquiry in the Inclusion and Behaviour evaluation areas.

Trend matters as much as the number
An improving three-year trend, evidenced and understood by leaders, reads far better than a single good term.

Where the Problem Is Actually Coming From

Serious, headline-grabbing incidents are rare. Almost all of the national suspension figures are driven by something far more ordinary, and far more preventable.

REASONS GIVEN FOR SUSPENSION, ENGLAND, 2024/25



52%

of all reasons given for suspension are persistent disruptive behaviour, by far the largest category

26.7

suspensions per 100 FSM-eligible pupils, against 5.4 for their peers

36%

of teachers cite pupil behaviour as a main factor in rising work-related stress, up from 12% in 2022

82%

of teachers say pupil behaviour is a widespread problem across English schools

Read across the two data pages together

Persistent, low-level, everyday disruption, not one-off crises, is what drives the national numbers. That means the five-pillar framework in this guide, built around routine and consistency rather than crisis response, is targeted at exactly the right problem.

UNPACKING THE BIGGEST CATEGORY — WHAT “PERSISTENT DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR” ACTUALLY MEANS

Talking over the teacher
Repeated calling out and side conversation during instruction.

Refusal to start work
Passive non-engagement, often avoidance of difficulty, not defiance.

Equipment & uniform
Low-level rule-breaking that escalates when challenged inconsistently.

Corridor & transition
Unstructured minutes between lessons, where most incidents begin.

THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK OF YOUR OWN DATA

- 1 **When?**
Plot incidents by period. A spike after break or in period 5 is a routine problem, not a pupil problem.
- 2 **Where?**
Plot by room and corridor. Hotspots are almost always about supervision and sightlines.
- 3 **Who — and who not?**
A handful of staff logging most referrals may need support; staff logging none may need it just as much.

Behaviour data is not a record of which children are difficult. It is a map of where your systems are thinnest.

The Policy Framework: DfE, Ofsted & the Law

Nothing in this guide replaces your statutory duties. It is designed to help you meet them well. Every strategy that follows sits inside this framework:

- ✓

DfE — Behaviour in Schools (Feb 2024)
Statutory advice: headteachers must set and model a behaviour culture; consistent routines; mobile phone restrictions; searching & screening; suspension and exclusion as a last resort.
- ✓

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) — in force 1 September 2026; KCSIE 2025 applies until 31 August 2026
Behaviour incidents must always be considered through a safeguarding lens. Persistent disruption can signal of unmet need, not just defiance.
- ✓

Equality Act 2010 & SEND Code of Practice (2015)
Reasonable adjustments are a legal duty, not a courtesy. Sanctions must not disadvantage pupils because of a protected characteristic or unmet SEND need.
- ✓

Timpson Review of School Exclusion (2019)
Found wide, unexplained variation in exclusion rates between similar schools, a strong signal that culture and systems, not pupil intake, drive outcomes.
- ✓

Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (2025)
From November 2025, Behaviour is graded as one of 11 stand-alone evaluation areas, assessed against the school's own published behaviour policy and its consistent application.



A school’s behaviour policy must be published and applied consistently. Inconsistency, not strictness, is what most often triggers parental complaint and Ofsted concern.

WHERE SCHOOLS MOST OFTEN FALL SHORT — AND WHAT TO CHECK

THE DUTY	COMMON GAP	WHAT TO CHECK THIS TERM
Policy published and current	Version on the website predates the 2024 guidance.	Open your own website as a parent would. Check the date on the PDF.
Consistent application	Policy exists; practice varies floor to floor.	Sample logs for the same infraction across five staff. Compare outcomes.
Reasonable adjustments	Adjustments agreed verbally, never written into the plan.	Pick three SEND pupils. Can you produce their behaviour plan in two minutes?
Safeguarding lens	Repeat suspensions never trigger a pastoral review.	List pupils with three or more suspensions. Has anyone asked why?

What Ofsted Actually Looks For on Behaviour

Since the November 2025 report-card framework, Behaviour is graded on its own five-point scale, separate from every other evaluation area. Here is what moves a school up or down that scale.

EXCEPTIONAL	Behaviour is consistently exemplary across every space in the school, sustained without reliance on any one adult, and pupils can articulate why routines matter.
STRONG STANDARD	Routines and consequences are applied consistently by almost all staff; low-level disruption is rare and dealt with calmly and swiftly.
EXPECTED STANDARD	Behaviour is generally good, but consistency varies noticeably between classrooms, staff, or times of day.
NEEDS ATTENTION	Disruption is frequent enough to affect learning; the published policy is not applied consistently across the school.
URGENT IMPROVEMENT	Behaviour is not effectively managed; pupils, staff or both are not kept safe or able to learn.

EVIDENCE INSPECTORS GATHER

- Corridor and lesson observations across the day, not just a showcase lesson
- Suspension, exclusion and attendance data, and how it is used to inform practice
- Pupil and staff voice — do pupils know the rules, and do staff apply them the same way?
- How consistently your *published* policy is actually followed, floor to floor

Why this guide helps

Every pillar here is designed to produce exactly the kind of visible, cross-school consistency inspectors are trained to look for, because it is also what works.

AND WHAT THE FIRST OUTCOMES UNDER THE NEW FRAMEWORK SHOW

85%

of schools reached the expected standard or better on **attendance and behaviour**

Fifteen per cent did not — roughly one school in seven. It is neither the strongest area (personal development and well-being, 95%) nor the weakest (achievement, 70%), which is worth knowing before anyone assumes behaviour is either a solved problem or the whole problem. What the spread says is narrower and more useful: behaviour is the area where the gap between a school’s self-image and its inspection outcome opens up most often, because it is judged on what happens in corridors rather than on what is written in the policy.

Ofsted, *State-funded schools inspections and outcomes as at 31 March 2026* — the first published outcomes under the renewed framework, covering 937 inspections from 10 November 2025, about 4% of state-funded schools. Percentages are schools reaching the **expected standard or better**.

YOUR INSPECTION-READY EVIDENCE PACK

Four things a headteacher should be able to put on the table within five minutes of being asked.

- ☐ **Behaviour policy** — Published, dated, and cross-referenced to DfE (2024) guidance.
- ☐ **Staff CPD log** — Dates and content of behaviour training, including de-escalation and not only sanctions.

- ☐ **Suspension & exclusion data** — By pupil group, by term, with a written narrative of what leaders did in response.
- ☐ **Pupil & parent voice** — Recent survey or forum evidence that pupils and families know the policy exists.

How Behaviour Is Learned

Three foundational theories explain why consistency and modelling, not charisma, are what change behaviour at scale.

Operant Conditioning

Skinner, 1953

Behaviour is shaped by its consequences. Reinforced behaviour is repeated; behaviour met with a clear, calm consequence fades. **Implication:** praise and sanctions only work if applied consistently, every time, by every adult.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura, 1977

Pupils learn behaviour by observing models, especially high-status adults, and by seeing what happens to others. **Implication:** staff conduct is a curriculum in itself; calm adults produce calm classrooms.

The Premack Principle

Premack, 1965

A more probable behaviour reinforces a less probable one: "first this, then that". **Implication:** "Finish the task, then choose your seat" is more effective than a threat, and needs no confrontation.

IN PRACTICE

A school where one teacher enforces the uniform policy and the next ignores it is not applying *either* theory correctly. Pupils learn that rules are negotiable and personality-dependent, which increases testing behaviour school-wide.

Conversely, a school where every adult follows the same script for the same infraction gives pupils a predictable, low-stakes environment, which reduces anxiety-driven disruption as well as defiance.

A common misconception, worth naming in staff training

“Behaviourist” is often heard by staff as cold or transactional. In practice the opposite is true: without consistent reinforcement, warmth and good intentions alone produce unpredictable classrooms, and unpredictability is what drives anxiety-based disruption. Consistency *is* the kindness.

WHY INCONSISTENCY IS WORSE THAN NO RULE AT ALL

Skinner’s most uncomfortable finding for schools concerns **intermittent reinforcement**: a behaviour rewarded only *sometimes* becomes more persistent, not less. It is the same mechanism that makes fruit machines compelling.

Applied to a corridor: if calling out is ignored by nine staff and challenged by the tenth, the pupil is not learning “don’t call out”. They are learning that calling out pays off often enough to be worth trying, every time, with every adult. The inconsistent school has accidentally built the most powerful reinforcement schedule known to psychology, and pointed it at the behaviour it least wants.

The leadership implication: a mediocre policy applied by everyone will outperform an excellent policy applied by two-thirds of staff. Consistency is not the finishing touch. It is the active ingredient.

THE FOUR CONSEQUENCES OF ANY BEHAVIOUR

IF THE ADULT...	THE BEHAVIOUR WILL...
Notices and praises it	Increase — the fastest, cheapest lever available
Applies a calm, certain consequence	Decrease — provided it happens every time
Reacts loudly and publicly	Increase , if attention is the goal
Ignores it inconsistently	Increase and persist — the fruit-machine effect

Note that two of these four outcomes are the opposite of what the adult intended. Most behaviour that staff describe as “getting worse despite everything” is sitting in row three or row four.

Needs, Systems & Trauma

Behaviour rarely happens in a vacuum. Five frameworks explain the “why” behind the pupils who don’t respond to conventional rewards and sanctions.

MASLOW’S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS — MASLOW, 1943



A pupil who is hungry, unsafe or friendless cannot easily access the “top” of the pyramid — sustained learning. Disruption is often an unmet lower-order need rather than a discipline failure.

ATTACHMENT THEORY — BOWLBY, 1969

Children build an internal model of adults from their earliest relationships. A pupil whose experience of adults is unreliability or threat will test every new adult, not out of malice but to find out whether this one is safe. The teacher who stays calm and consistent through that testing becomes, over time, a secure base from which the pupil can learn.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES) — FELITTI ET AL., 1998

Landmark research linking early adversity — abuse, neglect, household dysfunction — to long-term outcomes, including behaviour in school. Pupils with multiple ACEs are disproportionately represented among those suspended or excluded, which means exclusion data is, in part, a map of unmet need.

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY — BRONFENBRENNER, 1979

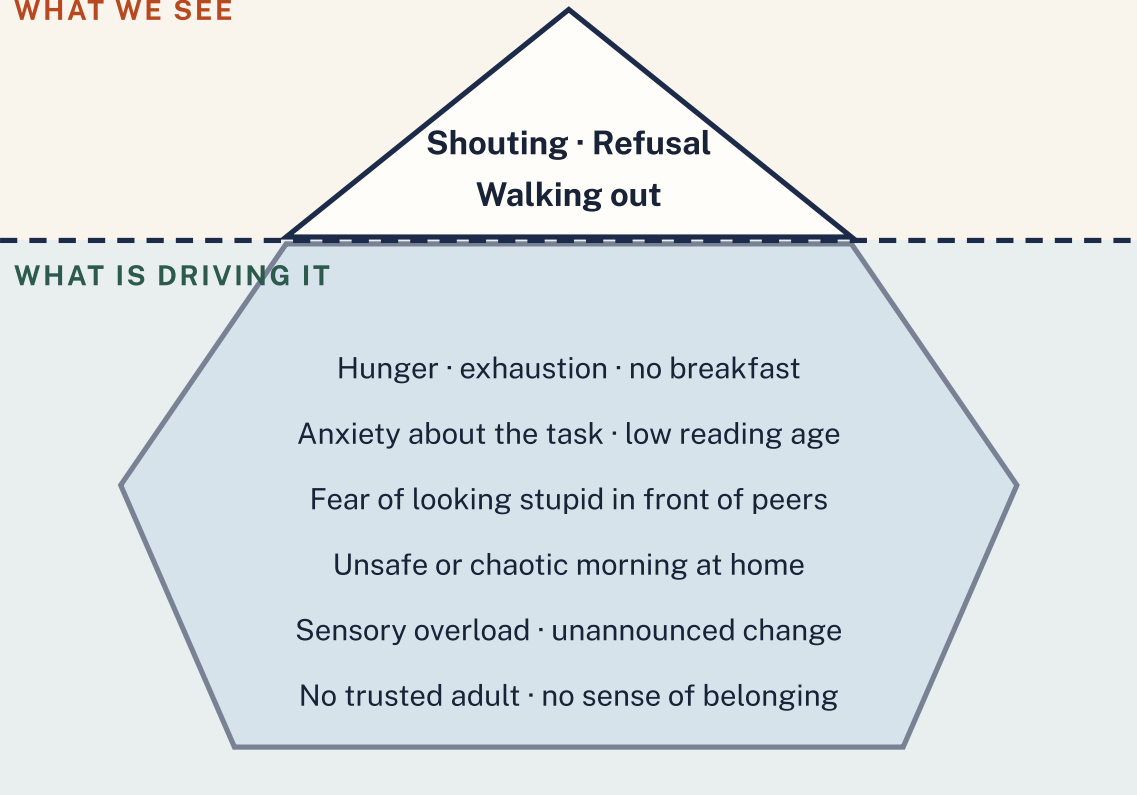
A child’s behaviour is shaped by nested systems — family, peers, classroom, community, policy. A school cannot control the family system, but it is the most stable and controllable system in a struggling child’s life.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE — SIEGEL, 1999

Every pupil has a zone in which they can think clearly and learn. Outside it, they tip into fight/flight or shutdown, and cannot process instructions or consequences until they are back inside it. This is the biology behind Pillar 5.

BEHAVIOUR IS COMMUNICATION — THE ICEBERG

WHAT WE SEE



Staff respond to what sits above the waterline, because that is all the classroom shows them. But the visible behaviour is rarely the problem — it is the *signal* that something below the line has gone unmet.

This is not an argument for lowering expectations. It is an argument for accuracy: you cannot fix a driver you have not identified, and a sanction aimed at the tip of the iceberg leaves everything beneath it exactly as it was.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED TO ASK

Before I decide what a behaviour *is*, I ask what changed today. Nine times out of ten the answer is not about me, not about the subject, and not about defiance — it is something that happened before 8am, and the classroom is where it surfaced.

FROM THEORY TO MONDAY MORNING — WHAT EACH NEED LOOKS LIKE AS SCHOOL PROVISION

Physiological

Breakfast club, water access, uniform and equipment support — quietly, without stigma.

Safety

Predictable routines, calm corridors, supervised spaces at social times (Pillar 1).

Belonging

Tutor groups that function as communities; clubs; one trusted adult per pupil (Pillar 2).

Esteem

Recognition that reaches every pupil, not just the usual names (Pillar 4).

Relational Practice in UK Classrooms

The theory most directly shaping current UK classroom practice — and the one this guide’s five pillars are built on.

PACE

Hughes, 2009

Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy. A trauma-informed stance that responds to the need behind the behaviour, not just the behaviour — de-escalating rather than confronting.

Decisive Discipline

Rogers, 2015

Behaviour management as a skill, not a personality trait. Rogers popularised the calm, scripted, low-key correction that avoids public confrontation and preserves the pupil’s dignity, and the teacher’s authority.

When the Adults Change

Dix, 2017

Paul Dix’s influential UK text argues consistent adult behaviour — rather than escalating sanctions, is the biggest single predictor of whole-school behaviour improvement. Widely adopted across English secondary schools.

Assertive Discipline

Canter & Canter, 1992

An earlier, more transactional model: clear rules, clear positive and negative consequences, applied assertively. Still visible in most UK sanctions ladders. This guide keeps its clarity but adds the relational layer it lacked.

THE RESTORATIVE CONVERSATION — FIVE QUESTIONS, IN ORDER

- 1

What happened?
- 2

What were you thinking at the time?
- 3

Who has been affected by what you did?
- 4

How have they been affected?
- 5

What needs to happen to put things right?

Run after the consequence, once everyone is calm — five minutes, in private, without relitigating the sanction. The consequence addresses the past; the conversation protects the future.

RELATIONAL IS NOT THE SOFT OPTION

PUNITIVE-ONLY CULTURE ASKS	RELATIONAL CULTURE ASKS
What rule was broken?	What happened, and what need sat under it?
Who is to blame?	Who was affected, and how?
What punishment fits?	What consequence <i>and</i> repair fits?

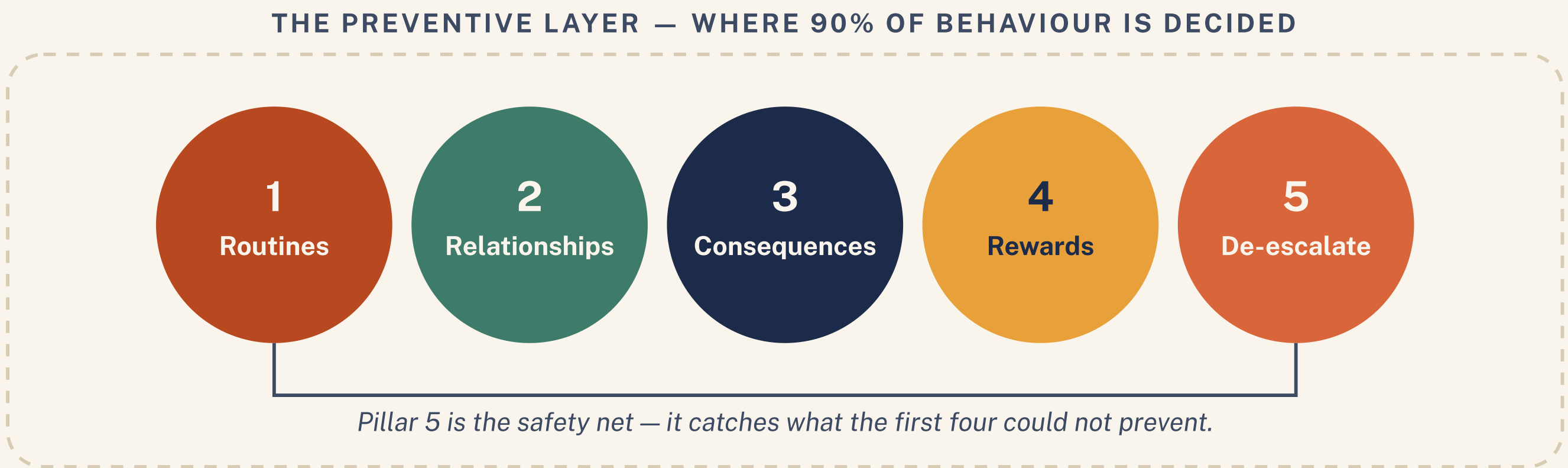
Both cultures issue consequences. The difference is that the relational one also repairs the relationship, which is what stops the same incident recurring next week.

The synthesis this guide is built on

Behaviourist theory tells us *consistency* works. Needs-based and trauma-informed theory tells us *why* some pupils don’t respond to it as we expect. Relational practice tells us *how* to hold both truths at once — firm boundaries, delivered with warmth. That balance is the five-pillar framework on the next page.

The Five-Pillar Framework, at a Glance

Five pillars, applied consistently by every adult, in every lesson, every day. Each is covered in full over the following pages — with scripts you can lift straight into a staff handbook.



WHY THIS ORDER MATTERS

Routines come first because they remove ambiguity before it becomes conflict. Relationships come second because pupils accept boundaries from adults they trust. Consequences and rewards are two sides of the same consistency coin. De-escalation is the safety net for the moments when the first four aren’t enough.

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

Each pillar page is designed to be photocopied or screen-shared in a five-minute staff briefing. Read them in staff meetings across a half-term, one per session, with time for department teams to adapt the scripts to their own subject context.

WHAT CHANGES IN A REAL CLASSROOM

SITUATION	WITHOUT THE FRAMEWORK	WITH THE FIVE PILLARS
Pupil arrives late	Response varies teacher to teacher — sometimes ignored, sometimes a public confrontation.	Same calm script, every time: quiet entry, brief note, conversation at the end.
Low-level chatter	Lesson stops repeatedly to address it; disruption escalates through the lesson.	Proximity and a pause redirect it in seconds; teaching barely breaks stride.
Pupil refuses a task	Becomes a stand-off in front of the class; both sides dig in.	PACE-based redirection defuses it privately, in under a minute.

THE FIVE DAILY NON-NEGOTIABLES — WHAT EVERY ADULT COMMITS TO

- MEET THEM AT THE DOOR
- TEACH THE ROUTINE, DON'T JUST EXPECT IT
- FOLLOW THE LADDER, NEVER SKIP IT
- PRAISE BEFORE YOU CORRECT
- NEVER ARGUE WITH A DYSREGULATED CHILD

Five sentences, learnable in a day and sustainable across a career. If every adult in the building holds these five lines, the rest of this guide is detail.

Consistency & Routines

Predictability is a form of kindness. When pupils know exactly what will happen, and when, anxiety-driven and testing behaviour both fall.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Every classroom uses the **same entry routine**: line up, silent entry, coats off, equipment out, task on the board.
- Expectations are **displayed, taught explicitly** in week one, and revisited after every holiday.
- The same behaviour gets the **same response** regardless of which teacher, which lesson, which day.
- Transitions are rehearsed like fire drills, because unstructured transitions are where most low-level disruption starts.

30-SECOND ENTRY SCRIPT

“Good afternoon. Coats off, bags under desks, planners open. Today’s Do Now is on the board — you have four minutes, starting now.”

Evidence link

Consistent routines reduce the “decision load” on both pupils and teachers — freeing attention for learning rather than for working out what is expected (Skinner, 1953; Rogers, 2015).

COMMON PITFALL Introducing a routine in September and never revisiting it. Routines decay over a term without being retaught, so build a 60-second refresh into the first lesson back after every holiday.

WHAT AN INSPECTOR WOULD SEE

The same entry routine visible in every corridor they walk; pupils self-starting on a task within two minutes of the bell, without being told.

TRY THIS TOMORROW

Pick your single messiest transition — entry, books out, packing away — and rehearse it explicitly with your hardest class.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

Time-to-task: minutes from the bell to full engagement, sampled across a week. Falling numbers mean the routine is embedding.

IN THE ROOM — YEAR 9, PERIOD 5, FRIDAY

BEFORE

Pupils drift in over four minutes. Coats stay on. The teacher asks three times for equipment out, each time louder. Eleven minutes of a fifty-minute lesson are gone before anyone writes anything.

AFTER

Pupils line up outside. The same six-word instruction is given at the door. The Do Now is already on the board. Writing starts at minute two — and the teacher has not raised their voice once.

MAKING IT STICK ACROSS A DEPARTMENT

- Agree the department’s entry routine in one meeting and write it on a card for every room.
- Ask each teacher to rehearse it with their most challenging group in week one, not week six.
- Review it at the first department meeting after each holiday — routines decay, and reteaching is normal.

Relationships First

Boundaries land when they come from someone the pupil believes is on their side. Relationship is not a reward for good behaviour — it is the precondition for it.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Greeting every pupil **by name** at the door — a two-second act with a disproportionate effect on compliance.
- A **5:1 ratio** of positive to corrective interactions — noticing what is going right, out loud, more often than what is going wrong.
- A genuine interest in pupils' lives outside the subject — the largest single predictor of a pupil trying for a teacher.
- Repair after conflict: a two-minute check-in at the end of a lesson where a sanction was issued, so the relationship resets before the next lesson.

PACE IN ONE LINE

“I can see you’re finding this really hard right now — let’s figure out together what you need to get started.”

Evidence link

Pupils are far more likely to accept a boundary from an adult they trust (Bandura, 1977; Hughes, 2009) — relationship is not the soft option. It is the mechanism through which firmness works.

COMMON PITFALL Treating relationship-building as something only pastoral staff do. A subject teacher who never learns a pupil’s name beyond the register has no relational capital to draw on when a boundary needs enforcing.

WHAT AN INSPECTOR WOULD SEE

Staff greeting pupils by name at classroom doors; corrections delivered warmly, without sarcasm; pupils who say an adult in school knows them well.

TRY THIS TOMORROW

Find the pupil you sanctioned yesterday and have a two-minute, sanction-free conversation about anything else.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

Pupil voice survey: the share of pupils who can name an adult they would go to with a problem. Track it annually by year group.

IN THE ROOM — A YEAR 10 PUPIL WITH A GROWING REFERRAL LOG

BEFORE

Each lesson begins with the pupil already braced for conflict. Every correction is heard as confirmation that this teacher, like the others, has decided who they are. Compliance is grudging; escalation is quick.

AFTER

The teacher greets them by name at the door each lesson, and once a fortnight asks about something outside the subject. The same boundaries are enforced — but they now land as fairness rather than as a personal verdict.

MAKING IT STICK ACROSS A DEPARTMENT

- Divide the class list across the team so every pupil has one adult checking in on them.
- Make repair after sanction an explicit expectation, not an optional extra for the naturally warm.
- Watch the referral log for pupils appearing under many staff — that is a relationship gap, not a behaviour trend.

Clear, Predictable Consequences

Every step of the ladder is known in advance by pupils and staff alike. No surprises, no shouting, no negotiating in front of the class.

THE STEPPED-CONSEQUENCE LADDER

- 1

Non-verbal cue
Eye contact, proximity, a tap on the desk.
- 2

Quiet, private redirection
A word at the pupil's side, not across the room.
- 3

Clear verbal warning
States the behaviour and the expected change, once.
- 4

Consequence applied
Calm, brief and non-negotiable, per the published policy.
- 5

Restorative conversation
Repairs the relationship once everyone is calm.

30-SECOND CONSEQUENCE SCRIPT

“You’ve chosen to keep talking after two reminders. That means five minutes at break, as we agreed. I’ll check in with you after the lesson.”

Evidence link

Consequences work when they are certain and swift rather than severe (Skinner, 1953). A predictable ladder, applied every time, out-performs occasional harsh sanctions.

COMMON PITFALL

Skipping straight from step one to step four because a lesson is under pressure. Jumping the ladder is what makes consequences feel arbitrary to pupils, and it is the arbitrariness rather than the sanction that triggers the complaint.

WHAT AN INSPECTOR WOULD SEE

Pupils who can explain the consequence ladder unprompted; behaviour logs showing the same infraction handled the same way by different staff.

TRY THIS TOMORROW

Correct by pointing at the displayed ladder rather than raising your voice — let the system carry the authority, not your mood.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

The ratio of step 1–2 interventions to step 4 sanctions. A healthy ladder resolves most incidents early; a rising step-4 share means steps are being skipped.

IN THE ROOM — TWO PUPILS TALKING DURING SILENT WORK

BEFORE

The teacher, already stretched, goes straight to a detention for one pupil and misses the other. The class sees the inconsistency instantly. The sanctioned pupil argues, the lesson stops, and a two-minute issue becomes a fifteen-minute one.

AFTER

A non-verbal cue, then a quiet word at the desk, then a stated warning — both pupils, same sequence. One settles at step one, the other takes a consequence at step four. Nobody argues, because nobody is surprised.

MAKING IT STICK ACROSS A DEPARTMENT

- Print the ladder on a card and display it in every teaching room in the department.
- Agree what each step actually looks like — a shared vocabulary beats a shared document.
- Sample-check logs monthly for sanctions issued at step four with no step one to three recorded.

Recognition & Rewards

What gets noticed gets repeated. A school culture built only on catching pupils doing wrong will, eventually, only catch pupils doing wrong.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Specific, immediate praise — “**nice use of evidence in that answer**”, not a generic “well done”.
- Whole-class and whole-school recognition systems that are visible, consistent, and genuinely valued by pupils.
- A postcard or call home for positive behaviour — not only for incidents. Rare, and disproportionately powerful.
- Recognition targeted at pupils who rarely receive it — those hardest to reach often need it most.

5:1

Target ratio of positive to corrective comments per lesson

Evidence link

Reinforced behaviour is repeated (Skinner, 1953). Praise is the cheapest and fastest classroom management tool available, and the most under-used.

COMMON PITFALL

Letting rewards default to the same handful of high-attaining pupils every time. If recognition isn’t deliberately tracked, it drifts towards pupils who need it least, so audit who is receiving it at least once a term.

WHAT AN INSPECTOR WOULD SEE

Recognition displays that are current, not last term’s; praise heard more often than correction in lesson observations; pupils who value the system rather than mock it.

TRY THIS TOMORROW

Send one specific-praise postcard or make one positive call home — for a pupil whose family has only ever heard from school about problems.

HOW TO MEASURE IT

Coverage: the percentage of pupils in each class who received any recognition this half-term. The gaps in that list are your hardest-to-reach pupils.

IN THE ROOM — A QUIET PUPIL WHO HAS NEVER BEEN IN TROUBLE — OR NOTICED

BEFORE

They arrive, comply, produce adequate work and leave. In three years they have received no sanction and no recognition. Their effort has no audience, so it slowly declines to the minimum the system requires.

AFTER

A specific piece of praise for a well-reasoned answer, and a postcard home in December. The parent rings the school, surprised. The pupil’s effort visibly lifts for the rest of the term — at a cost of ninety seconds.

MAKING IT STICK ACROSS A DEPARTMENT

- Run a termly coverage check: whose names have never appeared in the rewards system?
- Set a team norm of one positive contact home per teacher per week — small, sustainable, cumulative.
- Make sure at least one reward route recognises effort and improvement, not only attainment.

De-escalation & Co-regulation

When a pupil is dysregulated, the goal is safety first, learning second. Confrontation in that moment almost always makes things worse.

THE STOP MODEL FOR DE-ESCALATION



30-SECOND DE-ESCALATION SCRIPT

"I'm not going to argue with you right now. Take a minute — I'll come back over when you're ready, and we'll sort it out."

Co-regulation means the calmer adult lends the dysregulated pupil their own nervous-system state. Lower your voice, slow your movements, widen the exit, and give processing time before expecting a response.

Evidence link

A dysregulated brain cannot access reasoned argument (Siegel, 1999); and a child whose more basic needs are unmet is not free to attend to anything else (Maslow, 1943). De-escalation comes before consequence, not instead of it. The consequence can wait five minutes; safety cannot.

COMMON PITFALL

Treating a calm response as letting a pupil "get away with it". De-escalating now and addressing the consequence later, once everyone is regulated, is not leniency. It is the only sequence in which either one works.

WHAT AN INSPECTOR WOULD SEE Incidents that end quietly rather than in corridor stand-offs; staff who visibly lower their voice as a pupil raises theirs; pupils returning to lessons successfully after removal.	TRY THIS TOMORROW Decide your personal exit line now — the sentence you will use to step back from a confrontation — so it is ready before you need it.	HOW TO MEASURE IT Repeat incidents within 48 hours of a serious one. Effective co-regulation and restorative follow-up cut the repeat rate sharply; punishment alone does not.
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IN THE ROOM — A PUPIL WHO HAS JUST BEEN TOLD TO LEAVE THE ROOM

BEFORE The teacher repeats the instruction louder, standing square-on in the doorway. The pupil, now fully dysregulated and watched by thirty peers, has no way out that preserves their dignity — so they escalate. The corridor becomes an audience.	AFTER The teacher lowers their voice, steps aside to widen the exit, and says one line: they will come back over in a minute. The pupil leaves without a scene. The consequence is issued ten minutes later, calmly, and is accepted.
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MAKING IT STICK ACROSS A DEPARTMENT

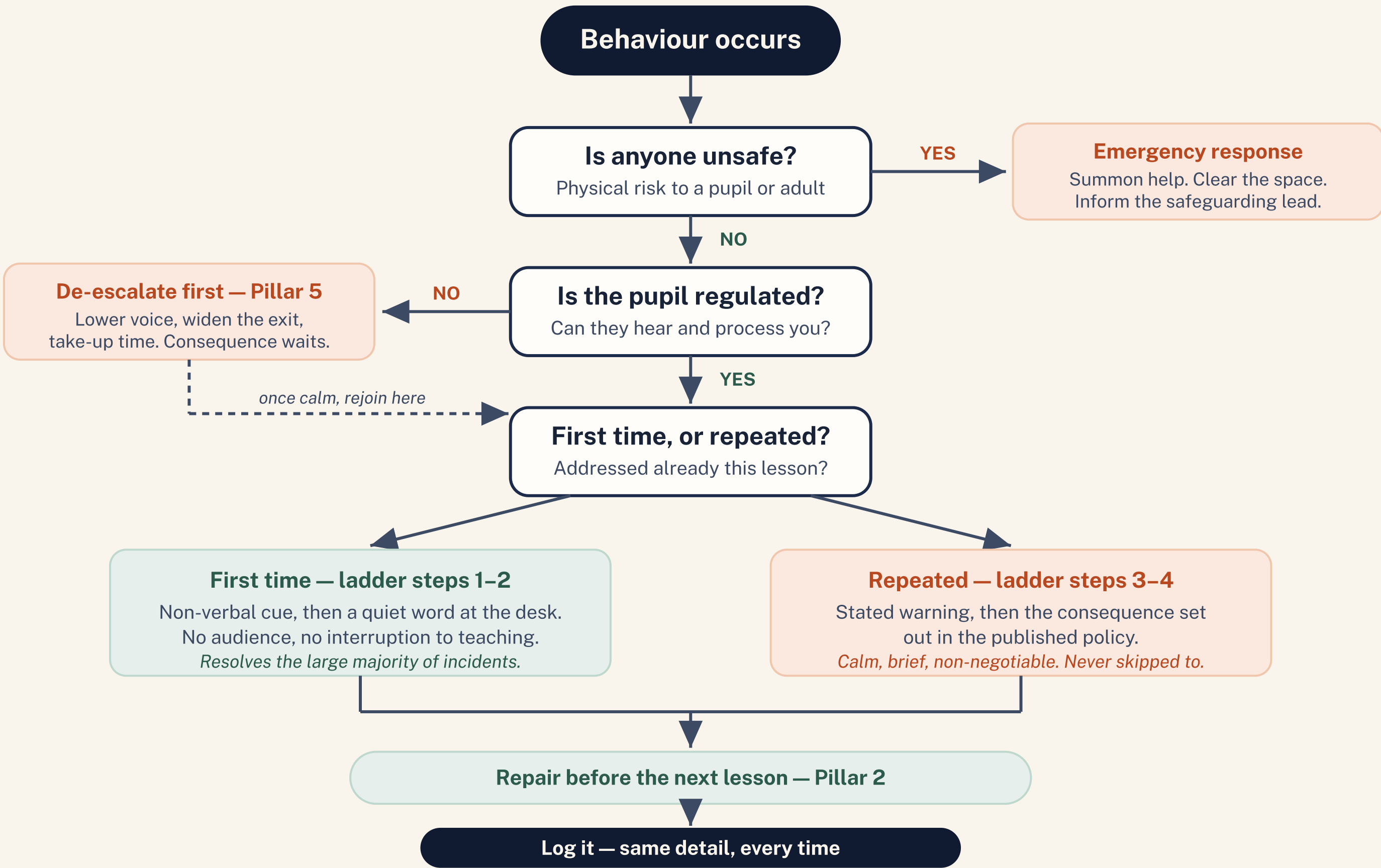
- Agree a single departmental exit line so no one has to improvise mid-incident.
- Rehearse it in a meeting — de-escalation is a physical skill, and reading about it is not practising it.
- Debrief serious incidents as a team, focusing on the system and the trigger, never on blame.



The Anatomy of an Incident

One page to pin above a desk. The decision path is what every adult should be able to follow without thinking — and the curve beneath it explains why the timing of your response matters more than its severity.

THE DECISION PATH — EVERY INCIDENT, EVERY ADULT



WHY TIMING BEATS SEVERITY



Every incident follows this shape. The cheapest, quietest intervention sits on the left of the curve — a look, a name, a quiet word before arousal climbs. The same words at the peak will not land, because the pupil is physiologically unable to process them.

The single most common error I see is an adult trying to reason, lecture or sanction at the top of that curve — then concluding the pupil is beyond reach when it fails. It was never going to work there. Wait for the right-hand slope: the consequence still happens, and it is accepted.

POST-CRISIS MATTERS TOO
After the curve comes down, pupils often dip below their normal baseline — flat, tearful or withdrawn. This is not sulking. Pushing for an apology in that window restarts the entire cycle.



The Scripts: What to Say in the Moment

Pre-planned, low-emotion language removes the need to improvise under pressure, and keeps every adult’s tone consistent.

LOW-LEVEL CHATTER	<i>“I need everyone tracking me in three, two, one.”</i>
LATE TO CLASS	<i>“In you come — see me at the end so we can sort your plan for on-time arrival.”</i>
REFUSING A TASK	<i>“I hear you don’t want to start. Let’s do the first line together, then you’re off.”</i>
BACKCHAT / RUDENESS	<i>“That’s not the tone I need right now. Let’s reset — try that again.”</i>
ESCALATING CONFLICT	<i>“I’m stepping back for a minute so we can both think clearly. I’ll come back over.”</i>
REPEATED DEFIANCE	<i>“This is now a call home, as we discussed. It’s not a punishment — it’s what happens next.”</i>
AFTER AN INCIDENT	<i>“Good to see you back. Clean slate — let’s get started.”</i>

HOW TO DELIVER ANY SCRIPT

Low and slow Drop your volume and pace below the room’s — pupils match the calmest voice in the room rather than the loudest.	Side-on, not square-on A side-on stance at eye level reads as non-threatening; squaring up triggers an audience-facing response.	Deliver, then move Say the line and walk away. Hovering invites negotiation. Moving on signals the matter is settled.	Same words, every adult The scripts work because pupils hear them from everyone, so adapt the vocabulary as a staff rather than individually.
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AND FOUR THINGS NEVER TO SAY			
“Why did you do that?” Invites justification rather than reflection. Ask “what happened?” later, and in private.	“I’m sick of this class.” Global criticism breeds global resistance. Correct the behaviour, not the identity.	“Right — whole-class detention.” Collective punishment burns trust with the compliant majority you depend on.	“Do that again and see what happens.” A vague threat reads as a challenge. State the next step on the ladder, calmly.

TALKING TO PARENTS — THREE SCRIPTS THAT KEEP THEM ON SIDE

Opening a difficult call <i>“I’m ringing because I want to sort something out early, while it’s still small.”</i>
When a parent disputes a sanction <i>“I understand why that feels unfair. Let me talk you through what happened and what the policy says — then let’s agree what happens next.”</i>
Closing on a shared plan <i>“Here’s what I’ll do at school. Is there anything at home that would help me support them better?”</i>

WHY SCRIPTING IS A WORKLOAD MEASURE, NOT JUST A BEHAVIOUR ONE

Improvising language under pressure is cognitively expensive, and teachers do it dozens of times a day. Pre-agreed phrasing removes that load at exactly the moments when a teacher has least capacity to spare.

It also protects staff. A scripted, policy-anchored correction is far easier to defend to a parent, a governor or an inspector than a remark made in frustration — because it was never personal in the first place.

For your INSET: have staff rehearse these aloud in pairs. Reading a script silently does not make it available to you at 2:40 on a Friday — saying it ten times does.



When the Scripts Fail — Escalation Matrix

Every framework meets its edge cases. These are the eight that come up most often — and what to do in the sixty seconds when the script in your hand has stopped working.

THE SITUATION	WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT	ESCALATION & FOLLOW-UP
Pupil refuses to leave the room You have asked twice. The pupil is seated, arms folded, saying "no". The class is watching.	Stop asking. Every further request in front of an audience raises the cost of compliance. Move to the pupil's side, lower your voice, and offer a face-saving alternative: <i>"Stay there for now. I'm going to carry on teaching. Mr Ali will come to the door in a minute."</i> Then teach.	Send for on-call. Do not physically block, guide or crowd. If the room is unsafe, remove the class, not the pupil.
Pupil goes non-verbal or shuts down Head down, hood up, no response to name. May be tearful, frozen, or completely still.	This is a shutdown, not defiance — the pupil has dropped out of their window of tolerance. Stop questioning. Reduce all demand. Say one line and step away: <i>"You don't have to talk. I'm here when you're ready."</i> Give physical space and at least five minutes.	No consequence is issued while shut down. Log it, inform the tutor, and check for a safeguarding pattern the same day.
Pupil walks out of the lesson Pupil leaves without permission, mid-lesson, and is now in the corridor or unaccounted for.	Do not chase down a corridor. Radio or send a reliable pupil to reception immediately — a walked-out pupil is a supervision issue, not a discipline one, until they are located.	Named adult follows at a distance. Safeguarding lead informed if the pupil leaves the site or cannot be found within five minutes.
Pupil escalates in front of an audience Voice rising, standing, playing to the class. Any correction now is fuel.	Remove the audience, not the pupil. Redirect the class to a task, turn your body away from the confrontation, and drop your voice below normal speaking volume. Give a single instruction with take-up time.	If the pupil continues to escalate, call on-call and begin clearing the room. Never issue the sanction at the peak of the curve.
Pupil says "you can't make me" A direct challenge to authority, usually aimed at the audience rather than at you.	Agree, then redirect. <i>"You're right, I can't. But I do need you to make a choice here, and I'll give you a minute to think about it."</i> Refusing the power struggle removes the point of it.	Record as refusal, apply the ladder step later and privately. Do not re-issue the challenge publicly.
Pupil discloses something serious mid-incident Behaviour conversation turns into a disclosure about home, harm, or safety.	Stop the behaviour conversation immediately. Listen, do not question or promise confidentiality, and use their words. The sanction becomes irrelevant in that moment.	Safeguarding takes precedence over all of this guide. Record verbatim and pass to the DSL the same day, without exception.
Staff applying the framework inconsistently Some staff use the ladder; others improvise, skip steps, or avoid logging altogether.	This is a leadership problem, not a staff problem. Sample logs monthly for step-4 sanctions with no earlier steps recorded. Coach individually and privately — never name staff in briefings.	Repeated non-application after coaching becomes a line-management conversation, framed around pupil entitlement to consistency.
A pupil the framework simply is not reaching Six weeks in, the ladder, the relationship work and the adjustments have all been applied faithfully with no change.	Stop iterating alone. Convene the SENDCo, tutor and family for a single structured meeting and re-run the graduated response from "Assess". Assume the formulation is wrong, not the child.	Consider external assessment, alternative provision or a managed part-time arrangement — documented, time-limited and reviewed.

The rule that governs this entire page

In every row above, the immediate goal is to **lower the temperature, not to win the exchange**. The consequence is not cancelled by de-escalating — it is simply deferred to a moment when the pupil can actually process it. An adult who insists on compliance at the peak of an incident will get neither compliance nor learning.

Three things that are always true

- Safeguarding overrides behaviour policy, every single time.
- No adult should be managing a serious incident alone — if you are, that is a system failure, not yours.
- Every incident here gets logged with the same detail as any other.



When It Becomes a Safety Incident

There is a point at which behaviour management stops and **safety management** begins. It is not a matter of degree — it is a different task, with a different objective, and most schools have never told staff where the line is.

THE LINE, AND THE FIVE PRIORITIES BEYOND IT

BELOW THE LINE

Behaviour management

Goal: restore learning.
Tool: the ladder, Section 12.

ABOVE THE LINE

Safety management

Goal: nobody gets hurt.
The ladder is suspended.

Above the line the consequence system is **not the priority and should not be applied in the moment**. Sanctions come later, from a calm room, on a considered basis. An adult trying to run a ladder during a safety incident is doing the wrong job.

- 1

Move the audience. Remove the other children, not the child. It is faster, safer, and it takes away the crowd that is sustaining the behaviour.
- 2

Summon help by name. “Aisha, get Mr Khan now.” Never “someone get help” — an unnamed instruction costs minutes.
- 3

Reduce input. One adult speaks. Fewer words, more space, no ultimatums, no audience commentary.
- 4

Act on danger, not defiance. Force is for preventing harm — never for winning the exchange.
- 5

Record and report the same day. Not because of paperwork, but because it is a statutory duty. See below.

THE STATUTORY DUTIES MOST SCHOOLS UNDER-RUN	
DUTY	WHAT IT REQUIRES
Record	Governing bodies and proprietors must have a procedure to record every significant incident involving use of force. Written up as soon as practicable, by the staff involved, endeavouring to do it the same day — even where the intervention was agreed in advance in a behaviour support plan.
Report	There must be a procedure to report every significant use of force to parents , as soon as practicable and endeavouring to do so the same day. The report should cover time, date, location and duration; why it was judged necessary; the type and degree of force; and any injuries.
Seclusion	From April 2026 there is also a legal duty to record and report the use of seclusion , under the 2025 Regulations. If your policy has no definition of seclusion, it has a gap.

DfE (2026) *Restrictive interventions, including use of reasonable force, in schools*. The recording and reporting provisions are statutory guidance under section 93A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This guidance replaced *Use of reasonable force* (2013) — check that your policy cites the current document.

THE LEGAL POWER, STATED PRECISELY

All members of school staff have a legal power to use reasonable force to prevent or stop a pupil from:

1.

causing injury to themselves or others

2.

committing a criminal offence

3.

damaging property

4.

causing disorder among pupils at the school

It is a **power, not a duty**. Staff likely to need it should be adequately trained, and schools should risk-assess accordingly.

AND WHAT IS NEVER LAWFUL

• **Force as a punishment is illegal.** It falls within the definition of corporal punishment.

• Pupils **should not be restrained in any way that affects airway, breathing or circulation** — covering the mouth or nose, or pressure to the neck or abdomen.

• Force on the ground is particularly dangerous. If a pupil is unintentionally held on the ground, release or move to a safer standing position as quickly as possible.

• All restraint, seated or standing, risks physical and psychological harm and should be avoided where possible.

Do not adopt a “no contact” policy. The guidance is explicit that schools should not, and should not grant requests from parents or staff to be exempt. A no-contact rule feels protective and leaves an adult unable to act when a child is in danger.

② AFTERWARDS — IN THIS ORDER

1

The child: medical check if needed, then a calm return conversation. Never on the same day if either of you is still activated.

2

The adult: a named person checks on them. Being involved in a restraint is distressing even when it was handled correctly.

3

The class: they witnessed it. Say something true and brief, or they will construct their own version.

4

The record: facts, times, decisions — not justification.

Outside England, none of the legal detail on this page applies. The powers, the recording duties and the reporting duties above are English law. Abu Dhabi’s school behaviour policy, for example, states that schools are prohibited from using force as a form of punishment, that this constitutes maltreatment, and that it is unlawful. If you are working in the Emirates, the position is set out in the UAE chapter — and must be confirmed with your own regulator.

Where this connects to safeguarding

A serious incident is sometimes a behaviour matter and sometimes the visible edge of something else — a child in crisis, a disclosure waiting to happen, or an allegation about an adult. If any part of it concerns a member of staff’s conduct, it leaves the behaviour system entirely and goes down the route in the companion volume, *Safe Children, Confident Schools*.

Managing Low-Level Disruption

Low-level disruption — chatter, calling out, off-task behaviour — costs more lesson time nationally than serious incidents. Small, calm interventions matter most here.

Proximity, not volume

Move towards the pupil while continuing to teach — most chatter stops before you arrive.

Name, then task

Use the name to gain attention, then immediately redirect to the task, not the behaviour.

The pause

A silent pause and a look often do more than words, and interrupt the lesson far less.

Positive narration

Praise a pupil nearby who is on-task; peers often self-correct without being singled out.

Planned ignoring

For attention-seeking behaviour with no safety risk, briefly withholding attention can be more effective than a response.

The 'not yet' rule

Defer minor issues to the end of the lesson rather than stopping teaching for every infraction.

38

days of learning lost per pupil, per year

Ofsted's landmark review found low-level disruption costs pupils up to an hour of learning a day — roughly 38 school days a year (Ofsted, 2014).

THE 60-SECOND DECISION PATH

NOTICE IT → NON-VERBAL FIRST → PRIVATE WORD SECOND →

LADDER STEP THREE ONLY IF IT CONTINUES

Most low-level disruption never needs to reach the formal ladder at all. The sequence above resolves the overwhelming majority of incidents inside a minute, without breaking the flow of teaching — which is the whole point.

THE ENVIRONMENT DOES HALF THE WORK

Seat by need, not friendship

A considered seating plan prevents more disruption than any sanction responds to.

Clear sightlines

If you cannot see every face from the front, the room is designed for off-task behaviour.

Circulate constantly

Teaching from the front for a whole lesson concedes the back third of the room.

Task ready on entry

Idle time is not neutral time. It is where disruption is manufactured.

ASK THIS BEFORE ISSUING THE SANCTION

A large share of what presents as defiance is actually avoidance. A pupil who cannot access the task will choose to look naughty rather than look stupid, every time — because in front of thirty peers, that is the cheaper option.

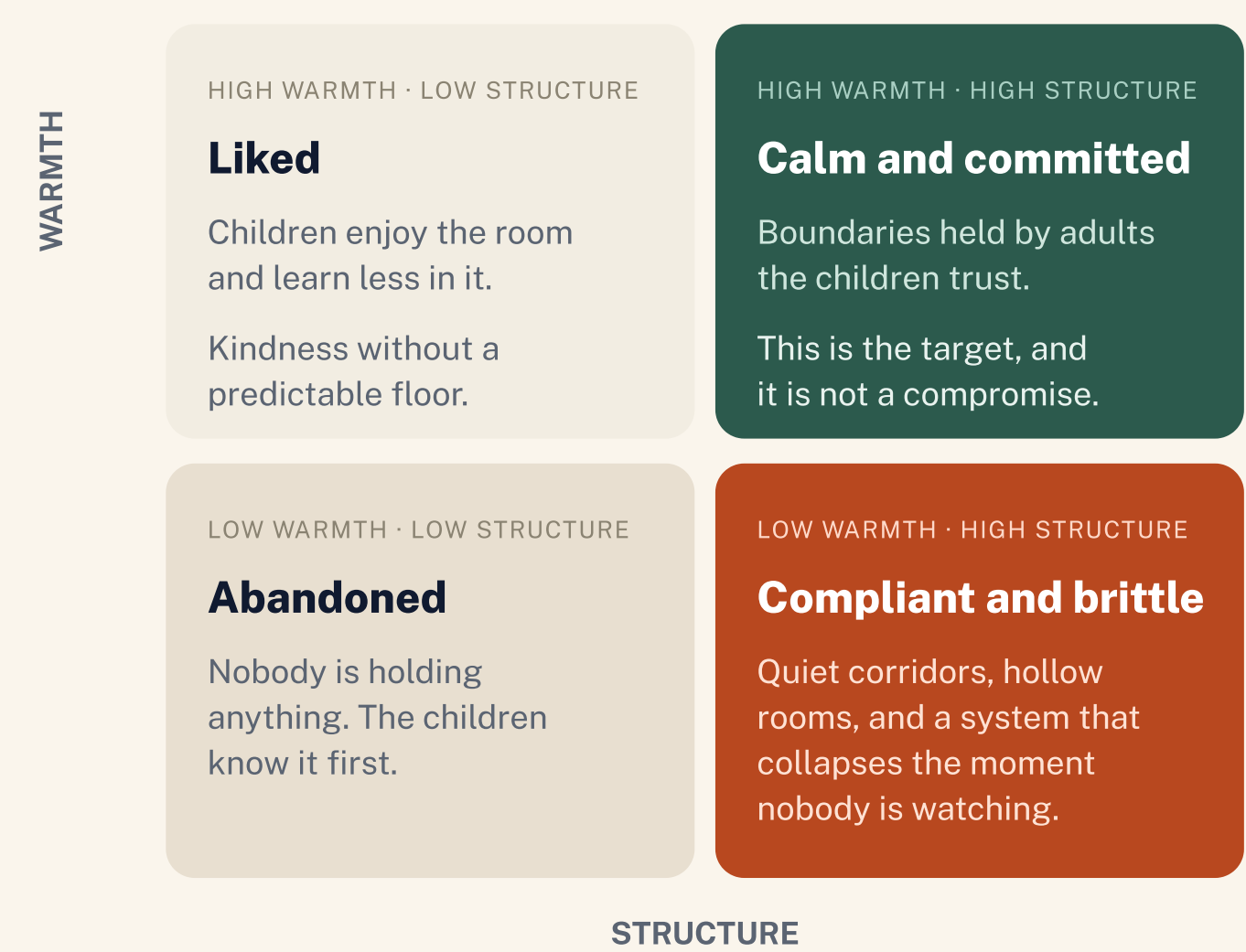
The diagnostic question: “Can’t, or won’t?” If a pupil consistently disrupts in one subject and not others, the trigger is more likely the work than the character. The fix is a scaffold, not a detention.



When Consistency Becomes Coldness

Everything in this book so far has argued for structure. Here is the honest risk that comes with it: **a system applied rigidly, without warmth, produces compliance rather than commitment** — and compliance looks identical to success from the corridor. This section is how you tell the difference.

STRUCTURE AND WARMTH ARE TWO DIALS, NOT ONE



A school that has worked hard on consistency almost never lands in the bottom-left. It lands in the **bottom-right** — and mistakes it for success, because every measurable indicator improves.

SEVEN SIGNS YOUR SYSTEM HAS GONE COLD

- Sanctions are issued faster than they are explained.
- Staff can quote the ladder but not one child’s interests.
- “It’s the policy” has replaced a reason.
- Corridors are silent and nobody is talking to anybody.
- Repair is a form, not a conversation.
- New staff are trained on consequences before relationships.
- Behaviour has improved and attendance has not.

That last one is the tell. Compliance can be enforced inside a building. Wanting to come in cannot.

THE WARMTH AUDIT — TEN MINUTES, ONCE A HALF-TERM

- 1 Walk a corridor at changeover. How many adult-child exchanges are not corrections?
- 2 Ask three staff to describe one child’s life outside your subject.
- 3 Read your last ten logged incidents. Does any record what was said afterwards?
- 4 Ask a student what happens here when you get it wrong. Listen for whether repair exists.

THE REPAIR — ADDING WARMTH WITHOUT LOOSENING STRUCTURE
KEEP EXACTLY AS IT IS ADD ALONGSIDE IT

		WHY IT DOES NOT WEAKEN THE SYSTEM
The consequence ladder and its thresholds	A named adult who follows up every sanction with a two-minute conversation before the next lesson.	The sanction still lands. What changes is that the relationship survives it — which is what makes the next one work.
Silent transitions and entry routines	A greeting at the door by name, every lesson, before the silence starts.	Four seconds. It costs nothing from the routine and changes what the routine feels like from the inside.
The script for a first warning	A sentence naming what you know about the child. “This isn’t you. What’s going on?”	Structure tells them what happens next. Warmth tells them you noticed it was out of character.
Whole-school non-negotiables	Deliberate recognition running at the same volume as correction.	A child who only hears from adults when they are wrong will comply and disengage. Both, or neither, works.

The one sentence to hold on to

Consistency is what makes a school safe to be a child in. Warmth is what makes it worth being a child in. A leader who delivers the first and calls the job finished has built somewhere children behave — and somewhere they will not miss.

If this section describes your school

The companion volume, *Motivated Minds, Confident Schools*, is entirely about the other dial — recognition, belonging and the adult culture that sustains them. Order and warmth are not competing projects. They are the two halves of the same one.

Start here

Pull your behaviour data and your attendance data for the same half-term and put them side by side. If sanctions are falling and persistent absence is not, your system is producing compliance in the building and nothing beyond it. That single comparison is the fastest honest test of whether consistency has tipped into coldness.



Myths vs Facts

Six beliefs I have heard in almost every staffroom I have worked in — and what the evidence actually says. Useful as a discussion starter for a department meeting.

MYTH

“Strict schools have the best behaviour.”

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

Consistent schools do. Severity and consistency are different variables, and only one of them predicts calm corridors. A school with modest sanctions applied by everyone will outperform a school with severe sanctions applied by two-thirds of staff, every time.

MYTH

“Some teachers just have natural presence — you either have it or you don’t.”

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

Behaviour management is a set of learnable skills: where you stand, how fast you speak, what you say first. Rogers built a career on demonstrating this. Framing it as personality is the surest way to leave your least confident staff without help.

MYTH

“Being warm undermines your authority.”

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

The opposite. Pupils accept boundaries most readily from adults they believe are on their side. Warmth is not the reward for compliance. It is the mechanism that produces it.

MYTH

“Trauma-informed practice means fewer consequences.”

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

It means consequences delivered differently: privately rather than publicly, after regulation rather than during it, and followed by repair. For a child with chaos at home, a school that quietly drops its expectations has removed their only predictable structure.

MYTH

“If I ignore low-level behaviour, it will fade out.”

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

Only if you ignore it every single time. Ignoring inconsistently is intermittent reinforcement, which makes behaviour more persistent. It is the same mechanism that makes fruit machines compelling.

MYTH

“Exclusion rates reflect the intake we’re given.”

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

The Timpson Review found schools with near-identical intakes excluding at wildly different rates. Intake shapes the challenge. Systems and culture shape the outcome.

Why it is worth having this argument openly

These myths are not held by bad teachers. They are held by tired ones, and most were taught them implicitly. Naming them in a staff meeting does more for consistency than another policy document, because a colleague who privately believes warmth undermines authority will never deliver Pillar 2, however many times you publish it.

SEND & Inclusive Behaviour Management

The Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice (2015) place a legal duty on schools to make reasonable adjustments. A one-size-fits-all sanctions ladder can unintentionally penalise pupils for the very needs the school is required to support.

- Sensory regulation breaks**
Scheduled, not just reactive — five minutes out before dysregulation, not after.
- Visual timetables & warnings of change**
Reduces anxiety-driven behaviour for pupils with autism or processing needs.
- Adjusted sanctions, same values**
A reasonable adjustment changes *how* a boundary is enforced, not *whether* it exists.
- Pre-agreed exit card**
A discreet, dignified way to leave a lesson before dysregulation escalates.
- Communication with the SENDCo**
Behaviour plans should be written with, not about, the SEND team and, where appropriate, the pupil and family.

Reframe, don't remove, the boundary

“Adjusted” does not mean “no consequence” — it means the response is proportionate, understood by the pupil, and delivered in a way they can actually access and learn from.



THE GRADUATED RESPONSE, APPLIED TO BEHAVIOUR (SEND CODE OF PRACTICE, 2015)



When behaviour persists despite the universal offer, the same cycle used for learning needs applies: assess what sits beneath the behaviour, plan the adjustment with the SENDCo, put it in place, and review it with the pupil and family.

The word that matters most in that diagram is **Review**. Most behaviour plans in most schools are written once and never revisited — which means they describe a child who no longer exists. A plan reviewed each half-term is worth ten plans written beautifully and filed.

FOUR COMMON PRESENTATIONS — AND WHAT ACTUALLY HELPS

PRESENTATION	WHAT IT CAN LOOK LIKE	WHAT HELPS
ADHD	Calling out, fidgeting, leaving seat, appearing not to listen.	Movement built in legitimately; instructions chunked; task started with them, not just set.
Autism	Distress at unannounced change; literal interpretation of instructions; sensory overload.	Advance warning of change; unambiguous language; a planned low-stimulus exit.
SEMH	Rapid escalation, refusal, apparent indifference to sanctions.	Co-regulation before conversation; consistent adult; repair built into every incident.
Speech & language	Non-compliance that is actually non-comprehension; frustration at written tasks.	Check understanding rather than assume defiance; reduce verbal load; use visuals.



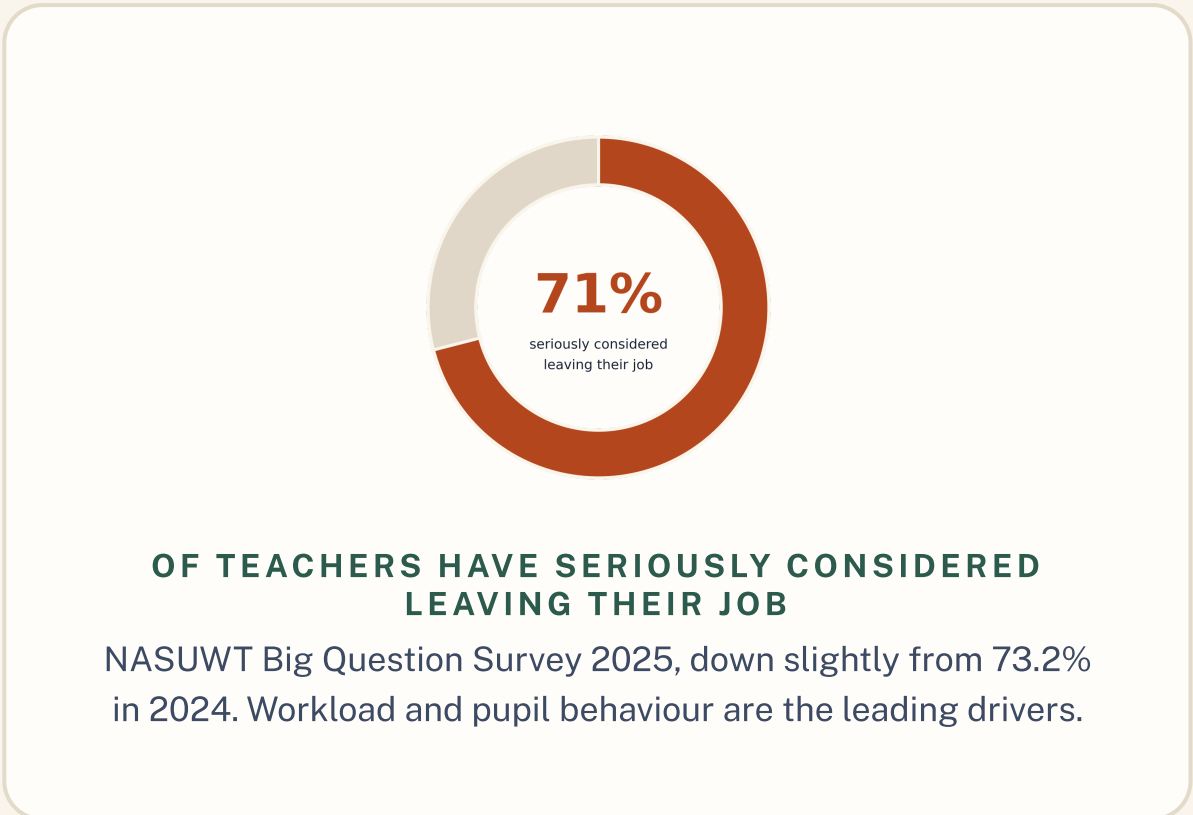
Staff Wellbeing & Support Structures

Teachers citing pupil behaviour as a main factor in rising stress has tripled since 2022 — from 12% to 36%. A behaviour policy that is not backed by visible senior leadership support will not survive contact with a difficult Thursday afternoon.

- **Guaranteed SLT response** — a named senior leader on call for every lesson, every day, with a response time staff can rely on.
- **No teacher deals with a serious incident alone** — support arrives, the pupil is removed if necessary, and the teacher is checked on afterwards.
- **Debrief, not blame** — incident reviews focus on system improvement, not individual teacher performance.
- Behaviour data reviewed with the same rigour as academic data — by class, by time of day, by staff member — to identify where support is needed.

“When the adults change, everything changes.”

Paul Dix (2017)



A STAFF SUPPORT ESCALATION LADDER, NOT JUST A PUPIL ONE

Level 1 — Daily

A two-minute corridor check-in from a head of department after any difficult lesson.

Level 2 — Weekly

Behaviour data and hotspots reviewed at pastoral/SLT level, with named actions.

Level 3 — Termly

Anonymous staff wellbeing survey, reviewed by governors alongside behaviour data.

The support that matters most is the support new staff can see

Early-career teachers judge a school’s behaviour culture in their first fortnight, largely by watching what happens when a colleague calls for help. If support arrives quickly and without judgement, they will use the system and stay. If it does not, they will stop calling — and you will lose both the data and, eventually, the teacher.

TWO SCHOOLS AFTER A SERIOUS INCIDENT

LEAVES STAFF CARRYING IT

- The teacher writes the incident up and teaches period five.
- The first question asked is what they did.
- Support is offered generally, to everyone, by email.
- The child returns with no conversation beforehand.
- Nobody asks the teacher a week later.
- The next incident is reported more slowly, or not at all.

SHARES THE WEIGHT

- Someone covers the next lesson. Non-negotiable.
- The first question asked is whether they are alright.
- Support is offered to the named person, in person.
- The teacher is consulted before the child comes back.
- Someone checks in a week later, deliberately.
- The next incident is reported immediately.

The right-hand column costs one cover lesson and two conversations. The left-hand column costs reporting rates, which is the mechanism the whole behaviour system depends on.

THREE THINGS STAFF NEED AFTER AN INCIDENT, IN ORDER

Physical space

Ten minutes out of the room. Everything else can wait.

An account being heard

Before any investigation, and separately from it.

A say in the return

Not a veto. A voice, and being told what was decided and why.

Schools that get the third right find that staff support reintegration rather than resisting it, which is the difference between a child returning successfully and a second exclusion.



Parents as Partners

A positive phone call is the start of a partnership, not the whole of one. Where behaviour is entrenched, the school and the home are usually running two different systems — and the child is the only person who has to live in both.

THE FOUR LEVELS OF PARENT PARTNERSHIP

1 · Informed	They hear what happened, promptly, and not only when it is bad. DfE guidance names communicating praise to parents by phone or in writing as a reward in its own right — the cheapest one available.
2 · Understood	They know what your ladder is, what each step means, and what happens next. A parent who cannot predict the system will experience every sanction as arbitrary.
3 · Aligned	Home and school are reinforcing the same two or three things, in the same words. Not the same rules — the same language.
4 · Co-regulating	The adults at home have the same de-escalation moves as the adults at school. This is the level almost nobody reaches, and it is where entrenched cases actually turn.

THE BEHAVIOUR AGREEMENT — AND WHY MOST ARE THEATRE

A signed agreement that lists what the *child* will do is not an agreement. It is a warning with a signature box, and families recognise it immediately.

A real one is **three columns**: what the child will do, what the school will do, and what home will do. If your school column is empty, you have not made a commitment — you have issued terms.

WHAT MAKES AN AGREEMENT WORK

- **Two targets, never five.** Specific, observable, achievable this fortnight.
- **Time-limited.** Four to six weeks with a fixed review date in the diary before anyone signs.
- **A named adult** the family can contact directly, not a generic inbox.
- **A defined success route.** What ending it well looks like — agreements with no exit become permanent labels.
- **Written in the family’s language**, at a readable reading age, and read aloud in the meeting.
- **Signed by the child** from an age where that means something.

OPENING A DIFFICULT MEETING

“I want to be straight with you: this is not going well at the moment, and I don’t think that is a reflection on your parenting. I’ve asked you in because we are getting something wrong too, and I want us to try the same approach for six weeks.”

CO-REGULATION AT HOME — THE THREE THINGS WORTH TEACHING PARENTS

Fewer words under pressure

The same move as Section 14. A dysregulated child cannot process a paragraph. Parents are usually relieved to be told that saying less is a skill rather than giving in.

Separate the moment from the conversation

Deal with safety now; discuss it later, when both are calm. Most household escalation happens because the debrief is attempted during the incident.

Repair, then move on

One conversation, then it is finished and not raised again. Children who expect an incident to be revisited for a week stop attempting repair at all.

ACCESS IS A DESIGN PROBLEM, NOT A COMMITMENT PROBLEM

The parents hardest to reach are rarely the least interested. They are working shifts, holding other caring responsibilities, reading in a second language, or carrying their own memories of school. Meetings at 4pm on a Tuesday, in writing, in English, will systematically exclude them — and the school will call that disengagement.

Offer a phone call instead of a meeting. Offer 7:30am. Send the summary as three bullet points rather than a letter. None of that lowers expectations; it removes an obstacle that was never about the child.

THREE THINGS NOT TO DO

- **Do not make the parent the sanction.** “Wait until your mother hears” outsources your authority and can put a child at risk in a home you do not know well.
- **Do not open with a list.** Fifteen logged incidents read aloud produces defence, not partnership.
- **Do not agree what you cannot deliver.** A school commitment missed twice ends the partnership more decisively than never offering one.

Start here

Take your five most-sanctioned pupils and check when their family last heard something positive from the school. If the answer is never, that is the intervention — before any agreement, any meeting and any plan. A partnership cannot be opened with a complaint.



The Ten Most Common Mistakes

Every one of these is a mistake I have either made myself or watched a capable leadership team make. None of them come from carelessness — they come from moving fast under pressure.

- 1

Launching all five pillars in September
Staff can absorb one change well or five changes badly. Sequence them across the year. The roadmap exists for exactly this reason.
- 2

Writing the policy without the people who apply it
A policy drafted by SLT alone will be followed by SLT alone. Ten minutes of consultation buys years of compliance.
- 3

Escalating severity instead of tightening consistency
When behaviour worsens, the instinct is to make sanctions harsher. It almost never works. The question is not "how do we punish more?" but "where are we being inconsistent?"
- 4

Confusing a display with a system
A printed ladder on a wall is not a consequence system. If pupils cannot describe what happens after two warnings, it is decoration.
- 5

Letting the on-call system quietly fail
If support does not arrive, staff stop calling, and you lose both the data and their trust. One unanswered call costs more than ten answered ones gain.
- 6

Treating restorative practice as an alternative to consequences
Repair follows the consequence. It does not replace it. Schools that blur this find staff abandon restorative work within a term.
- 7

Never reteaching routines
Routines decay. A routine taught in September and never revisited is a routine that will have vanished by February.
- 8

Judging staff by their referral count
Low referrals can mean excellent practice, or a teacher who has given up logging. Both need a conversation, and neither is visible from the number alone.
- 9

Reviewing behaviour data without acting on it
Reporting the number to governors is not the same as changing anything. Every data review should end with a named person and a date.
- 10

Expecting the framework to survive without leadership presence
If pupils never see senior staff in corridors at changeover, the message is that the culture matters less than the meetings.

If you only avoid one

Avoid the third. The instinct to escalate severity when behaviour deteriorates is the most understandable error on this list and the most damaging — It burns staff goodwill, raises exclusions and leaves the real cause, inconsistency, untouched.

The Framework in Practice — Scenarios I

About these scenarios — read this first

These are **composite illustrations**, not case studies of named schools. Each is assembled from patterns that recur across pupil referral units, secure residential settings and mainstream secondaries — the details are representative rather than drawn from one institution, and no figures here should be quoted as research findings. They are included because the *pattern* is the useful part: read them for the mechanism, not the numbers.

Scenario 1

MAINSTREAM SECONDARY

THE SITUATION

Behaviour was acceptable in most rooms but collapsed in the twenty minutes after lunch. Referrals clustered in periods 4 and 5, and staff described the same corridor as "impossible".

WHAT CHANGED

No new sanctions. Two senior staff were timetabled onto that corridor at that time, and every department agreed the identical door-greeting and entry routine for period 4.

WHAT FOLLOWED

The referral cluster flattened within a half-term. Staff reported the change as "the school finally backing us" rather than as a new initiative.

THE TRANSFERABLE LESSON

A hotspot in the data is almost always a supervision or routine gap, not a cohort problem. Look at when and where before you look at who.

Scenario 2

PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

THE SITUATION

A pupil permanently excluded twice was refusing all written work within four minutes of every lesson starting, then escalating until removed.

WHAT CHANGED

Staff stopped treating the refusal as defiance and tested it as avoidance — reading age was assessed and found to be four years below the material. Work was scaffolded; the boundary on conduct was left completely unchanged.

WHAT FOLLOWED

Refusals reduced sharply once the task was accessible. The conduct expectations that had been in place all along became enforceable for the first time.

THE TRANSFERABLE LESSON

"Can't or won't?" is the cheapest diagnostic in this book. A pupil will choose to look naughty over looking stupid nearly every time.

Scenario 3

MAINSTREAM SECONDARY

THE SITUATION

A new consequence ladder had been published and ignored. Half of staff applied it; half improvised. Pupils described sanctions as "depending who catches you".

WHAT CHANGED

Leadership stopped adding to the policy and started auditing it — sampling logs monthly for step-four sanctions issued with no steps one to three recorded, and coaching rather than reprimanding those staff.

WHAT FOLLOWED

Within two terms, pupils in focus groups described the ladder consistently, unprompted. Total sanctions fell while step-one interventions rose.

THE TRANSFERABLE LESSON

You cannot publish your way to consistency. What gets checked is what gets applied, and checking works better as coaching than as compliance monitoring.

The Framework in Practice — Scenarios II

Scenario 4

SECURE RESIDENTIAL SETTING

THE SITUATION

A young person with a long history of physical escalation was involved in repeated incidents at the same point each evening — during an unstructured transition between activities.

WHAT CHANGED

The transition was restructured and given the same explicit teaching a lesson would get: named adult, stated sequence, warning of change five minutes ahead.

WHAT FOLLOWED

Incidents at that point stopped almost entirely. Behaviour elsewhere was unchanged — confirming the trigger had been environmental, not dispositional.

THE TRANSFERABLE LESSON

The most dangerous minutes in any setting are the unstructured ones. Structure is not a restriction on a young person. For many it is the thing that keeps them safe.

Scenario 5

MAINSTREAM SECONDARY

THE SITUATION

A quiet Year 8 cohort produced almost no referrals — and almost no recognition. Attainment was drifting downward across the year with no obvious cause.

WHAT CHANGED

A coverage audit was run on the rewards system: which pupils had never appeared in it? Tutors were given the gap list and asked for one specific positive contact home each week.

WHAT FOLLOWED

Effort grades lifted across the following term. Several parents contacted the school — in some cases the first positive call they had ever received.

THE TRANSFERABLE LESSON

Compliant pupils are the easiest group in the school to fail. If your recognition system is not audited for coverage, it drifts towards the pupils who need it least.

Scenario 6

MAINSTREAM SECONDARY

THE SITUATION

Early-career teachers were disproportionately represented in serious incident logs, and two had privately said they were considering leaving the profession.

WHAT CHANGED

Timetables were rebalanced so ECTs held winnable groups; each was paired with an experienced colleague teaching the *same* class, and given a weekly behaviour slot explicitly separated from performance review.

WHAT FOLLOWED

Incident involvement evened out across the staff body over the year. Both teachers who had considered leaving stayed.

THE TRANSFERABLE LESSON

Timetabling is a wellbeing decision and a retention decision. A whole-school framework is the greatest support you can hand a new teacher — it means they inherit the school's authority instead of having to manufacture their own.

Reading these as a leadership team

Take one scenario per SLT meeting and ask a single question: *where in our school is this already happening, and would we currently know?* The value is not in the scenario itself but in the diagnostic habit it builds.



Implementation Roadmap: One Academic Year, Half-Term by Half-Term

A whole-school culture shift takes a full academic year to embed properly. This roadmap paces the framework across all six half-terms, so it sticks rather than fading after a single INSET day.

AUTUMN 1	Audit & Align Baseline behaviour data by class/time/staff. Publish (or refresh) the behaviour policy. Brief SLT on the five pillars.
AUTUMN 2	Train & Launch Staff INSET on the framework and scripts. Roll out consistent routines and the consequence ladder school-wide.
SPRING 1	Embed & Reinforce Department-level script adaptation. Recognition systems launched. First data review against baseline.
SPRING 2	Review & Support Wellbeing check-in with staff. SLT self-audit. Adjust based on what the data shows.
SUMMER 1	SEND & Inclusion Deep-Dive Review reasonable adjustments with the SENDCo. Targeted support for highest-need pupils and classes.
SUMMER 2	Evaluate & Sustain Full-year data review vs. national benchmarks. Refresh policy for the new academic year.

Success measure by the end of Spring 1

A visitor walking any corridor should not be able to tell which member of staff they will meet next from the behaviour they see. That is what “embedded” looks like.

If it slips

Culture change stalls at the point of least accountability. If a half-term’s milestone slips, revisit who owns it and when it is reviewed — not whether the framework works.

WHO OWNS WHAT	
ROLE	ACCOUNTABLE FOR
Headteacher	The culture itself. Visible presence at changeover; the decision that this is non-negotiable; reporting to governors.
SLT behaviour lead	The data cycle, the on-call rota, and the monthly consistency audit. Owns the roadmap milestones.
Heads of department	Translating the scripts into subject context, and coaching within their team rather than escalating first.
SENDCo	Reasonable adjustments written into plans, and the graduated response applied to persistent behaviour.
Every teacher	The five daily non-negotiables. Nothing above works without this row.

The 30–60–90 Day SLT Launch Plan

The half-term roadmap on the previous page paces the whole year. This is the first ninety days in operational detail — the window in which a launch either embeds or quietly dies.

Days 1–30

Prepare
Pre-launch. Nothing changes for pupils yet.

OWNER
Headteacher, with a named SLT behaviour lead

ACTIONS

- Baseline the data: suspensions, referrals and on-call volume by class, time and staff.
- Audit the published policy against DfE (2024). Rewrite only what contradicts it.
- Agree the five non-negotiables with SLT — wording locked, no further edits.
- Consult each department for 20 minutes: what would they keep, what would they drop?
- Book and protect the INSET slot. Say publicly what comes off the plate to make room.

FIDELITY CHECK
Can every SLT member recite the five non-negotiables without notes?

IF THIS PHASE FAILS
Without a baseline you can never prove the change worked. Do not skip day one.

Days 31–60

Launch
Staff INSET, then visible change from one agreed date.

OWNER
SLT behaviour lead, with heads of department

ACTIONS

- Deliver the 45-minute INSET. Rehearse the scripts aloud, in pairs.
- Launch on one named date, not a phased drift. Tell pupils and parents that week.
- Print and distribute the lanyard cards and staffroom poster. Every room, every adult.
- SLT visible at every changeover for a fortnight — the highest-leverage act on this page.
- Guarantee the on-call response time and measure it daily.

FIDELITY CHECK
Walk one corridor unannounced. Do three consecutive rooms show the same entry routine?

IF THIS PHASE FAILS
If leaders are invisible in week one, staff read the launch as paperwork and revert.

Days 61–90

Embed
Fidelity, coaching and the first honest data review.

OWNER
Heads of department, with SLT oversight

ACTIONS

- Run weekly ten-minute consistency walks. Feed back strengths first, always.
- Sample logs for step-4 sanctions with no earlier steps recorded.
- Coach the outliers individually and privately. Never name staff in a briefing.
- First data review against the day-one baseline. Expect recorded incidents to rise.
- Brief governors on that rise *before* they see it.

FIDELITY CHECK
Ask five pupils what happens after two warnings. Matching answers mean it has landed.

IF THIS PHASE FAILS
Skipping coaching turns a launch into an announcement. Most schools lose it here.

Beyond day 90 — making it survive you

A framework that depends on senior presence is a personality rather than a culture. From day 91, deliberately step back from one corridor and watch what happens without you. Write the five non-negotiables into your induction pack, your ECT mentoring and your recruitment conversations, so that new staff inherit the culture rather than having to discover it.

THE THREE DATES TO PUT IN THE DIARY NOW

DAY 30	SLT sign-off on the five non-negotiables
DAY 31	INSET delivery and launch date announced
DAY 90	First data review, with governors briefed



Measuring What Actually Changed

Most schools measure **activity** — sanctions issued, detentions served, referrals made — and then cannot explain what any of it bought. Six measures below turn a behaviour policy into something a governing body can hold you to.

MEASURE	HOW TO CALCULATE IT	WHAT MOVEMENT MEANS
1 • Lost learning time	Removals × average minutes out of lesson, summed per month. Include corridor conversations over five minutes.	The headline. It converts behaviour into the currency a headteacher already thinks in — hours of teaching recovered.
2 • Internal removal rate	Removals per 100 pupils per month, by year group and by department.	Falling overall but flat in one department is a training question, not a pupil question.
3 • Concentration	Share of all sanctions held by the top 5% of pupils.	High concentration means you have an individual-need problem wearing a whole-school costume. Section 30's plan, not a policy rewrite.
4 • Repeat rate	Proportion of sanctioned pupils sanctioned again within ten school days.	The single best test of whether your consequences teach anything. If this does not fall, the ladder is punishing without changing.
5 • Staff spread	Distribution of sanctions issued per teacher, as a range not an average.	A wide range is an inconsistency problem. The outliers at both ends need support, not comparison.
6 • Attendance of the sanctioned	Attendance of your twenty most-sanctioned pupils, against the whole-school figure.	The honesty check. If sanctions fall while this gap widens, you have moved a problem rather than solved it.

LOST LEARNING TIME — THE CALCULATION, WORKED

Removals last month

180

× average minutes out

38

= minutes lost

6,840

WHAT THAT IS IN A LANGUAGE PEOPLE FEEL

114 teaching hours — about 22 school days

of learning, removed from children, in one month.

Those figures are illustrative — the point is the conversion. “One hundred and eighty removals” sounds like a working system. “**Twenty-two days of lost learning**” **does not**, and it is the same sentence.

THREE WAYS THESE NUMBERS GET GAMED

• **Reclassification.** Removals become “supported study” and the count falls without a single child’s day improving.

• **Under-logging.** Staff stop recording because the number is being watched. Always read sanction data against staff spread.

• **Off-rolling by another name.** Falling suspensions alongside rising unexplained absence or managed moves is not improvement.

Report measure 6 every time you report measure 1. Together they are very hard to fake.

What to put in front of governors

One page, six numbers, three months of trend, and one sentence naming the measure that has **not** improved. A report with no bad number in it will be read as marketing, and experienced governors will discount the good ones too. Template 3 on page 36 is built for this.

Set the baseline before you change anything

Take one month of data before the roadmap in Section 26 begins. Without it, every improvement you make this year is an anecdote — and the first question any inspector, governor or sceptical head of department will ask is “compared with what?” An afternoon spent on the baseline is worth more than a term spent on the initiative.



Make This Your School’s Own Policy

This guide is built to be adopted, not just read — for governors' meetings, staff handbooks, INSET days and staffroom walls.

1

Adopt

Present this guide at SLT. Adapt the language in the five pillars to your own house and values vocabulary.

2

Adapt

Drop in your school name, logo and existing sanctions ladder where the framework references one — the structure works underneath any branding.

3

Issue

Print the Scripts page and the Staffroom Poster for every classroom and staffroom wall. Hand the full guide to every member of teaching staff.

4

Assure

Use the SLT Self-Audit Checklist termly, and the Ofsted page to brief governors ahead of any inspection window.

ZERO-COST TO DEPLOY

No licence, no subscription, no per-teacher fee. Photocopy it, project it in briefings, or rebuild it under your own school branding.

BUILT FOR A REAL STAFFROOM

Every pillar fits a five-minute briefing slot. No CPD day required to get started — start with the Scripts page tomorrow morning.

A ONE-SLIDE SUMMARY FOR YOUR GOVERNORS

What we are doing

Adopting a five-pillar behaviour framework, applied identically by every adult, aligned to DfE (2024) guidance and the 2025 Ofsted framework.

Why now

Behaviour is a stand-alone Ofsted evaluation area, the largest driver of lost learning time, and a leading cause of staff attrition.

What it costs

Nothing beyond existing INSET time. The framework requires no external provider.

How we will know

Termly reporting on suspensions by pupil group, time-to-task sampling, ladder-step ratios and staff wellbeing survey results.

Two sides, not twenty

A policy nobody reads is worse than none, because it creates the impression the matter is settled. Two sides that staff can hold in their heads will actually change what happens in a corridor.

Draft it with the people who use it

Amend rather than rewrite what they give you. A policy your staff drafted is one they will apply consistently; one issued to them is one they will apply when watched.



Questions Leaders Actually Ask

The eight questions that come up in almost every conversation I have had about rolling this out — answered honestly, including where the answer is inconvenient.

- Q

We already have a behaviour policy. Why do we need this?

A policy tells staff what the school has decided. This tells them what to *do* at 2:40 on a Friday — the words, the stance, the sequence. Most schools do not have a behaviour problem. They have a translation problem between policy and practice.
- Q

How long before we see a difference?

Routines shift within a half-term. Culture takes a full academic year. Anyone promising a transformed school by Christmas is selling something, and the schools that try to get there in a term are the ones where it collapses by February.
- Q

What if some staff simply won't do it?

Start with the ones who will. Consistency spreads from a visible majority rather than from a memo. Persistent outliers are a line-management matter, but they are rarer than leadership tends to fear. Most reluctance is uncertainty rather than refusal.
- Q

Doesn't scripting make teachers robotic?

The script is a floor, not a ceiling. It gives staff something reliable to reach for under pressure, which frees their attention for the parts that need judgement. Nobody accuses a pilot's checklist of removing their skill.
- Q

How does this work with a high-SEND cohort?

Better, not worse. Predictability and explicit routines are precisely what most SEND pupils need. What changes is the delivery of consequences, not their existence — see the graduated response on page 22.
- Q

Our staff are exhausted. Is this more work?

Less, once embedded. Improvised behaviour management is among the most draining things a teacher does. The set-up cost is real; the running cost is lower than what you are paying now.
- Q

What if the data gets worse after we start?

It often does, briefly. Tightening consistency means behaviour previously ignored now gets logged. A short rise in recorded incidents followed by a sustained fall is the normal shape of success. Brief your governors on this before it happens.
- Q

Can we use this in a primary school?

The principles hold. The examples do not. This edition is written for secondary. The five pillars translate directly, but the scripts and routines would need rewriting for a primary context.

The question nobody asks, but should

“What will we stop doing to make room for this?” Every school I have watched fail at culture change failed for the same reason — the new framework was added on top of everything else and staff were quietly asked to absorb it. Decide what comes off the plate before you put this on it.



Twelve Questions to Sit With

Not an audit — an audit tells you where you are. These are the questions I return to when I want to know whether what I *think* is happening in a building is actually happening.

On your own practice as a leader

- 1 When did I last stand in a corridor at changeover and simply watch, without a meeting to get to?
- 2 If I asked five staff to describe our consequence ladder, would I get five matching answers?
- 3 Whose behaviour am I modelling for the adults in this building — and would I want it copied?
- 4 When a member of staff last called for support, how long did it take, and did I check?

On your systems

- 1 Which twenty minutes of our week generate the most incidents, and what have we changed about them?
- 2 Are our reasonable adjustments written down, or held informally in people’s heads?
- 3 Who in this school has never appeared in our rewards system?
- 4 What would our behaviour data look like to someone who did not already know our excuses for it?

On the culture you are building

- 1 Would a new teacher be able to work out our expectations by watching, without being told?
- 2 Do our pupils experience our sanctions as fair, or as a lottery?
- 3 What do we do for the compliant child who never causes trouble and never gets noticed?
- 4 If I left tomorrow, how much of this culture would survive without me?

THE QUESTION I FIND HARDEST

The last one. Early in my leadership I mistook my own presence for culture — things worked when I was in the corridor and drifted when I was not. That is not a culture; that is a personality holding a building together, and it collapses the moment you take a day off. A real culture is one your staff would keep running on a Tuesday when nobody senior is watching.

How to use this page

Take one column per SLT meeting across a term. Answer honestly in writing before discussing — spoken answers in a group tend to converge on the most comfortable version. The gap between what you write privately and what the team says aloud is usually the most useful thing in the room.

How to use these badly: circulate them as a form and collect ratings. **How to use them well:** one question per leadership meeting, answered out loud, with evidence. Twelve meetings, twelve honest answers, and a behaviour improvement plan assembled without anyone writing a strategy document.

Template 1 — Individual Behaviour Plan

Photocopy this page. One side of A4, written *with* the pupil where possible, reviewed every half-term. If it takes more than fifteen minutes to complete, it is too complicated to be used.

PUPIL	YEAR / TUTOR GROUP	PLAN START DATE	REVIEW DATE

WHAT WE SEE (THE BEHAVIOUR, DESCRIBED NEUTRALLY)

WHAT SITS UNDERNEATH IT (NEEDS, TRIGGERS, DIAGNOSIS, HOME CONTEXT)

KNOWN TRIGGERS — WHAT RELIABLY STARTS IT	EARLY WARNING SIGNS — WHAT WE SEE FIRST

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AGREED	WHAT EVERY ADULT DOES THE SAME	AGREED EXIT / REGULATION PLAN

WHAT WORKS — SCRIPTS AND APPROACHES THAT LAND WITH THIS PUPIL	WHAT TO AVOID — WHAT RELIABLY ESCALATES THEM

NAMED KEY ADULT	PUPIL VIEW (THEIR WORDS)	FAMILY VIEW	SENDCO SIGNATURE

SIX THINGS THAT MAKE A PLAN WORK RATHER THAN EXIST

1
The function
What the behaviour achieves for the child. Escape, attention, control, or sensory relief.

2
The trigger
Specific. “Unstructured time” is a category; “the corridor before period four” is a trigger.

3
The early signs
What it looks like two minutes before, so staff can act while it is still cheap.

4
The agreed response
One page, same for every adult. Inconsistency is what makes plans fail.

5
The child's part
Written with them. A plan done to a child is a rota, not a plan.

6
The review date
Two weeks. Behaviour plans decay faster than any other document in school.

The first row is the one most often skipped and the one that determines everything else. A plan that does not name what the behaviour achieves is a list of consequences with a cover sheet.

FOUR PLAN FAILURES WORTH DESIGNING OUT

Written by one person
Fix: If the staff who will use it were not asked, they will not use it.

Too long to read
Fix: One side. A teacher has ninety seconds between lessons and eleven other plans.

No de-escalation script
Fix: The plan is needed most at the moment when nobody has time to interpret it.

Never shared with the child
Fix: They are the one person who knows what actually helps, and usually the last one asked.

Template 2 — Ten-Minute Consistency Walk

Not a lesson observation and never used for performance management. Walk one corridor at one changeover, tick what you see, and bring the sheet to the next SLT meeting. Consistency is a whole-school metric, so record the pattern — not the person.

DATE & TIME OF WALK		CORRIDOR / AREA		WALKED BY	

WHAT I LOOKED FOR	SEEN CONSISTENTLY	SEEN SOMETIMES	NOT SEEN
Adults at classroom doors as pupils arrive			
Pupils entering calmly, without needing to be told			
Task visible and ready before pupils sit down			
Corrections delivered quietly and privately, not across the room			
Praise heard at least as often as correction			
Uniform / equipment expectations applied the same by each adult			
Consequence ladder displayed and referred to, not improvised			
Senior staff visible in the space during changeover			

THE STRONGEST THING I SAW — TO BE NAMED PUBLICLY	THE ONE GAP TO CLOSE BEFORE THE NEXT WALK

How to feed this back: lead with the strongest column, always. A consistency walk that only ever produces a list of failings will be quietly resented within a term — and staff will begin performing for the clipboard rather than changing anything.

Template 3 — Termly Behaviour Data Review

The rule for this sheet: no row leaves the meeting without a name and a date in the final column. Reporting a number to governors is not the same as changing anything.

HALF-TERM	COMPLETED BY	COMPARED AGAINST	DATE REVIEWED WITH GOVERNORS
		Last term · Same term last year · National	

MEASURE	THIS TERM	LAST TERM	DIRECTION	SO WHAT — NAMED ACTION & DATE
Suspensions per 100 pupils				
Suspensions — FSM vs non-FSM gap				
Suspensions — SEND vs non-SEND gap				
Permanent exclusions				
Ratio of step 1–2 to step 4 interventions				
Rewards coverage — % of pupils recognised				
Repeat incidents within 48 hours				
On-call requests — volume and response time				

HOTTEST TIME OF DAY	HOTTEST LOCATION	YEAR GROUP NEEDING MOST SUPPORT

Expect a rise before a fall. Tightening consistency means behaviour that was previously ignored now gets logged. A short increase in recorded incidents followed by a sustained decrease is the normal shape of success — brief your governors on this before it happens, not after.

('

SIX CUTS THAT TURN BEHAVIOUR DATA INTO A DECISION

- 1**

By time of day

A period-four spike is a curriculum or a hunger problem, not a discipline one.
- 2**

By location

Corridors, dining hall, one stairwell. Supervision fixes more than sanctions do.
- 3**

By staff member

Handled sensitively, this is the most useful cut there is — in both directions.
- 4**

By group

SEND, disadvantage, ethnicity, gender. Disproportionality is only visible if you look.
- 5**

By repeat

How many children account for what share. Usually a very small number.
- 6**

By follow-through

Sanctions issued against sanctions completed. The gap is the credibility of the system.

The last cut is the one that most often explains a behaviour problem that looks inexplicable. A system where a third of consequences never happen teaches children exactly what it is worth.

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THREE FINDINGS THAT CHANGE PRACTICE RATHER THAN POLICY

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- \n

The concentrated few

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If twelve children generate a third of incidents, that is casework, not a policy revision.

\n
- \n

The single location

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One space generating disproportionate incidents is a rota problem you can fix this week.

\n
- \n

The variation between staff

\n

Not for performance management. For finding out what the calm colleague does.

\n

Behaviour data is usually reported as totals and trends, which supports a narrative but rarely a decision. These three cuts each end in something a leader can actually do on Monday.

')

The Lanyard Cheat Sheet

Print at 100%, cut along the dashed lines, laminate and punch a hole in the top corner. Three cards, designed to sit behind a staff badge and be readable at a glance during a lesson or on duty. Issue one set to every teaching adult, including cover staff and TAs.

In the moment

SIDE A

LOW-LEVEL CHATTER

"Tracking me in three, two, one."

"Thank you, table four."

OFF TASK / NOT STARTED

"First line together, then you're off."

"Show me your first sentence in two minutes."

LATE TO CLASS

"In you come — see me at the end."

BACKCHAT

"Not the tone I need. Try that again."

REFUSAL

"You've got a minute to think about it."

"I'll come back over."

REPEATED — ISSUING THE CONSEQUENCE

"You've chosen X, so Y happens, as we agreed."

Calm. Brief. Then walk away.

Before it escalates

SIDE B

NON-VERBAL FIRST — USE THESE BEFORE WORDS

Eye contact · pause · step closer

Tap the desk · point at the task

Stand still and wait — silence works

DE-ESCALATION — SAY ONE LINE, THEN STOP

"I'm not going to argue right now."

"Take a minute. I'll come back."

"You don't have to talk. I'm here."

YOUR BODY

Drop volume **BELOW** theirs

Stand side-on, not square-on

Widen the exit — never block it

Give 10 seconds of take-up time

NEVER

"Why did you do that?"

"Do that again and see."

Whole-class punishment

Arguing at the peak of the curve

Repair & reset

SIDE C

RESTORATIVE — FIVE QUESTIONS, IN ORDER

1. What happened?

2. What were you thinking?

3. Who was affected?

4. How were they affected?

5. What will put it right?

RETURNING AFTER AN INCIDENT

"Good to see you back. Clean slate."

THE FIVE NON-NEGOTIABLES

Meet them at the door

Teach the routine, don't assume it

Follow the ladder — never skip

Praise before you correct

Never argue with a dysregulated child

IF YOU NEED HELP

Call on-call. You should not be alone.

Safeguarding overrides everything here.

Why a physical card, in an age of intranets

Because the moment you need these words is the moment you have least capacity to look them up. A card on a lanyard is the only format that survives contact with a corridor at 2:40 on a Friday. Schools that issue these consistently report that new and cover staff, in particular, stop improvising within a fortnight.

GETTING THEM ACTUALLY USED

- Hand them out *during* the INSET, not in a pigeonhole afterwards.
- Have staff read Side A aloud in pairs before they leave the room.
- Keep a box of spares at reception for cover and visiting staff.
- Reprint each September — a dog-eared card signals the system is alive, a missing one signals it is not.

The 45-Minute INSET Workshop

A turnkey session any Vice Principal or Head of Department can deliver without preparation beyond reading this page. Six blocks, timed to the minute, with the speaker notes that matter.

TIME	BLOCK	WHAT YOU DELIVER	SPEAKER NOTES — WHAT MATTERS HERE
0–5 mins	Why we are here	Open with the data, not the policy. Show the national picture: 52% of all suspension reasons are persistent disruptive behaviour, and Ofsted’s landmark review put the cost at up to 38 days of learning per pupil per year. Then show your own baseline — referrals by period and by corridor.	Do not apologise for the session or frame it as a response to poor staff performance. Frame it as the school taking something off their plate. If staff think this is a criticism, you have lost the room in the first ninety seconds.
5–12 mins	The one idea	Deliver the core claim: behaviour is shaped by what adults do consistently, not by how severe our sanctions are. Use Skinner’s intermittent reinforcement — a rule enforced by nine staff and ignored by the tenth teaches pupils that testing pays. Land the line: <i>"A mediocre policy applied by everyone beats an excellent policy applied by two-thirds of us."</i>	This is the intellectual anchor for the whole session. Take your time. Invite one example from the floor of a rule that is currently applied inconsistently — and do not defend it when they name one.
12–22 mins	The five pillars	Walk the five-pillar diagram. Two minutes per pillar, no more. For each, give the one-line summary and the single script. Do not attempt to teach the theory here — point them to the guide for that.	Watch the clock ruthlessly. The most common failure of this session is spending twenty minutes on Pillar 1 and rushing de-escalation, which is the pillar staff most want help with.
22–34 mins	Rehearsal — the part that matters	Pairs. Hand out the lanyard cards. Person A reads a scenario from the escalation matrix; Person B delivers the script aloud, standing, side-on. Swap after four minutes. Run three rounds: low-level chatter, refusal, and a pupil escalating in front of an audience.	Expect resistance and discomfort — adults dislike role-play. Say so openly, then insist. Reading a script silently does not make it available under pressure; saying it ten times does. This block is non-negotiable and is why the session works.
34–40 mins	When it fails	Walk three rows of the escalation matrix: refusal to leave, non-verbal shutdown, and walking out. Emphasise that de-escalating is not letting a pupil win — the consequence is deferred, not cancelled. State the on-call guarantee and the response time in plain numbers.	This is where you buy trust. Staff need to hear a leader commit publicly to a response time. If you cannot guarantee it, do not promise it here — an unmet promise costs more than no promise.
40–45 mins	What happens Monday	Close on the five non-negotiables and the launch date. Be explicit about what is being <i>removed</i> to make room. Finish with the closing line from the guide: <i>"Tomorrow morning, thirty children will walk through your door carrying things you will never see. Meet them anyway."</i>	End two minutes early. A session on consistency that overruns undermines its own message. Have the cards, poster and one-page summary in their hands as they leave the room.

The three sentences that decide whether this session works

- *"This is not about you working harder."* — said in the first two minutes.
- *"Here is what we are taking away to make room for this."* — said before you ask for anything.
- *"If you call, we will come, within X minutes."* — said with a real number, and then kept.

Follow-up that makes it stick

Book a fifteen-minute department slot three weeks later — not to retrain, but to ask what is not working. A framework that is never questioned publicly is a framework staff have quietly stopped using.

CALM CLASSROOMS

FIVE PILLARS · EVERY ADULT · EVERY LESSON



Routines

Same entry. Same expectations. Every lesson.

1



Relationships

Greet by name. Notice what's going right.

2



Consequences

Calm. Certain. The same for everyone.

3



Rewards

Catch it. Name it. Out loud. Often.

4



De-escalate

Stop. Think. Observe. Proceed with PACE.

5

“Firm boundaries, delivered with warmth — every time, by every adult.”



SLT Self-Audit Checklist

Twelve questions for a termly SLT meeting. Aim for every box checked before the next Ofsted behaviour evaluation.

- ☐ Behaviour policy published, current, and consistent with DfE (2024) statutory guidance
- ☐ Every classroom uses the same entry/exit routine, taught explicitly in week one
- ☐ The consequence ladder is known by pupils, staff and parents before it is used
- ☐ A named senior leader is on call for every lesson with a guaranteed response time
- ☐ Recognition and rewards are visible, valued, and reach pupils who rarely receive them
- ☐ SEND reasonable adjustments are written into behaviour plans, with the SENDCo
- ☐ Staff have been trained in de-escalation and co-regulation, not just sanctions
- ☐ Behaviour data is reviewed termly by class, time of day and staff member
- ☐ New and early-career staff are paired with a mentor for behaviour, not just curriculum
- ☐ Staff wellbeing after serious incidents is followed up, every time, without exception
- ☐ Governors see behaviour data alongside academic data at every termly meeting
- ☐ Parents and carers know the policy exists and where to find it before their child needs it

10–12 checked

Strong foundations — focus SLT time on consistency at the margins.

6–9 checked

A solid start — prioritise the gaps before your next inspection window.

0–5 checked

Start with Pillar 1 (Routines) and the Implementation Roadmap on page 27.

THREE WAYS TO USE THIS SO IT PRODUCES SOMETHING

- Complete it separately

Each leader alone, then compare. The disagreements are the real audit.
- Test three boxes

Pick three ticks at random and find the evidence in ten minutes, or untick them.
- Give it to a new teacher

Their version is the most useful document you will read this term.

Completed together in a meeting, a self-audit converges on the view of the most confident person present. Completed separately, it surfaces the thing nobody had said aloud.

FOUR TICKS WORTH INTERROGATING

- The policy is applied consistently

Fix: Consistency is the hardest claim in behaviour. Ask which corridor is the exception; there always is one.
- All staff are confident with the scripts

Fix: Confident and trained differ. Ask an ECT what they say when a child refuses to move.
- Sanctions are followed through

Fix: Take yesterday's detentions and check attendance at them. This is a five-minute test.
- Parents support our approach

Fix: Ask about the last three complaints. Support in general is not support in the specific case.

The Adults Are the Curriculum

Everything in this guide reduces to a single idea: **children learn how to behave by watching how adults behave**. Not from the policy on the wall, and not from the assembly. They learn it from the ordinary, unremarkable conduct of the adults around them, repeated a thousand times a term.

That is a demanding standard, because it means the work is never finished and never entirely delegable. It is also the most hopeful finding in this book, because adult behaviour is the one variable a school completely controls. You cannot choose your intake. You cannot change what happened to a child before eight o'clock this morning. You can absolutely choose what happens when they walk through your door.

None of this requires money. There is no platform to buy, no consultant to book and no scheme to license. What it takes is a decision that every adult will do the same thing, and then the harder work of holding that line through the February when everyone is tired and it would be easier to let it slide. That is the difference between schools that transform and schools that announce.



No child has ever been argued into behaving well. Plenty have been quietly, patiently shown.

IF YOU DO NOTHING ELSE

- 1 Agree one entry routine. Every room.
- 2 Greet them at the door. Every lesson.
- 3 Never argue with a dysregulated child.

Three commitments, achievable by Monday. Everything else in this guide is detail built on top of them.

Every school has pupils who are difficult to reach. No school has pupils who are impossible to reach. The distance between those two sentences is where our whole profession lives.

THE FIVE PILLARS, ONE LAST TIME

1

Routines

Predictability is kindness

2

Relationships

The precondition, not the reward

3

Consequences

Certain, not severe

4

Rewards

What gets noticed gets repeated

5

De-escalation

Safety first, learning second

WHAT WE BELIEVE — READ THIS ALOUD ON YOUR FIRST INSET DAY

We believe behaviour is communication, and our first job is to listen to what it is saying.

We believe consistency is not coldness. It is the most reliable kindness we can offer a child whose life is unpredictable everywhere else.

We believe no child is a lost cause, and we will not be the adults who decide otherwise.

We believe the boundary and the relationship are the same act, not competing ones.

We believe every pupil deserves the same response from every adult, on every corridor, on our worst day as much as our best.

We believe that when the adults change, everything changes — and that the adults are us.

Tomorrow morning, thirty children will walk through your door carrying things you will never see. Meet them anyway.

THAT IS THE WHOLE JOB. EVERYTHING ELSE IS DETAIL.

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WHERE TO GO NEXT

Statutory & official

DfE *Behaviour in Schools* (2024) and *Keeping Children Safe in Education* are the two documents every behaviour lead should have read in full, not in summary. Both are free on GOV.UK.

Practitioner texts

Rogers (2015) is the most practical single volume for classroom teachers. Dix (2017) is the better whole-school read for leadership teams planning a culture shift.

Data & benchmarking

The DfE's Explore Education Statistics service publishes suspension and exclusion data by term and by pupil characteristic — the source for benchmarking your own figures.

A note on the evidence in this guide

National statistics quoted throughout are drawn from DfE and published survey sources current at the time of writing, and are cited above so any figure can be checked at source. Data moves each term — verify the latest release before quoting figures to governors or inspectors. The psychological theory, by contrast, is long-established and stable.



Why I Wrote This

I did not set out to work in behaviour. I trained to teach Art.

What changed that was a period working in **Pupil Referral Units** and, later, with young people in **secure residential settings** — including a spell as Head of Art & Design in a residential specialist school. These were young people for whom the conventional toolkit had already been exhausted. Every sanction had been tried. Every escalation had been reached. Several had been permanently excluded more than once before they were fourteen.

That experience strips away a good many comfortable assumptions. You cannot threaten a child who has already lost everything the system can take. What remained, once all of that had gone, was surprisingly small and surprisingly powerful: a predictable routine, a calm adult, a boundary that did not move, and a relationship that survived the worst day.

When I moved into mainstream leadership, almost nothing I had learned needed changing. The pupils were different. The mechanism was identical. What worked with the hardest-to-reach young people in the country was the same thing that works with a restless Year 9 group on a Friday afternoon. The difference was only ever one of degree.

I wrote this guide because that knowledge is currently distributed badly. It sits with specialist staff, in specialist settings, largely unwritten, while mainstream colleagues who are often excellent teachers are left to reinvent it alone under pressure, usually somewhere around week three of their first term. There is no good reason for that. None of it is secret and none of it is expensive.

This is what I wish someone had handed me on my first day — and what I would want every colleague in my building to have on theirs.

Tahir Ali

HEAD OF BEHAVIOUR

Secondary Education · Experience in UK and UAE

15+ years in education · 9+ in leadership

PGCE · QTS · BA (Hons) · Safeguarding Level 3 · First Aid & CPR Certified · Prince's Trust Advisor



Behaviour is communication. Once you genuinely believe that, everything else in this book becomes obvious.

THREE SETTINGS, THREE LESSONS THAT SHAPED THIS FRAMEWORK

Pupil Referral Units

It taught me that escalating severity is not a strategy. With these young people every sanction had already been used. What remained (routine, relationship and absolute consistency) is where the five pillars come from.

Secure residential settings

It taught me that de-escalation is a practised physical skill rather than a temperament. It was drilled, reviewed after every incident, and expected of everyone. Pillar 5 is that discipline, translated for a mainstream corridor.

Mainstream leadership

It taught me the filter. Specialist practice only counts if it survives a full timetable, thirty pupils and a five-minute changeover. If it does not work at that scale, it is not in this book.



The Framework You Actually Work Inside

Everything before this page is written to the English system. This section is not. It stands on its own, for leaders working in the Emirates — and it begins with something that surprises most teachers arriving from Britain: **here, the structure of your behaviour system is set out in federal law.**

THREE LAYERS OF AUTHORITY



THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

In England, a school designs its own behaviour system inside statutory guidance. In the UAE, the shape of that system — how conduct is graded, how violations are ranked, how sanctions escalate, who decides — is set out for you. The Ministry of Education publishes a **Student Code of Conduct** covering grades 3 to 12, and your emirate regulator adds a binding school policy on top of it.

You are not writing on a blank page. You are writing into a form.

If your school is British-curriculum

You may also hold **British Schools Overseas** accreditation — a voluntary DfE scheme, inspected by one of three approved inspectorates (Education Development Trust, ISI or Penta International) at least every three years, against standards comparable to the English independent school standards. It sits alongside your emirate inspection rather than replacing it — but it does mean the practice in this guide maps more closely than the regulation does.

WHO SETS WHAT

LAYER	BODY	WHAT IT GOVERNS
Federal	UAE Ministry of Education	Student behaviour management, private education licensing, and the child protection duties that sit on every adult in a school.
Emirate	ADEK in Abu Dhabi; KHDA in Dubai; SPEA (Sharjah Private Education Authority, Emiri Decree 45 of 2018). The Ministry regulates directly through its branches in Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah.	Licensing, inspection, permission for the most serious sanctions, and additional local requirements that differ across the seven emirates.
Curriculum	BSO inspection, for schools that hold it	Alignment to British standards. Useful, but it does not displace federal or emirate requirements — it sits alongside them.
School	Your published behaviour policy	The daily system: routines, ladder, recognition, de-escalation. This is where the five pillars live.

THREE QUESTIONS WORTH ANSWERING IN YOUR FIRST TERM HERE

Where does my ladder sit against the federal degrees?

If you cannot show that on one side of A4, your policy and the national framework are running in parallel rather than together.

Who signs off the top of my ladder?

Not you. In Abu Dhabi a school must **apply to ADEK** to expel, with evidence every prior stage was followed. Find your emirate's route before a case forces you to look for it.

What does my inspector actually look at?

Read your own emirate's current framework rather than assuming the categories you know from England carry across. They do not.



What the Code of Conduct Asks of You

The Ministry of Education’s **Student Code of Conduct** applies to general education institutions from grade 3 to grade 12. Your emirate regulator then adds a binding school policy on top — Abu Dhabi’s is the most fully published. Between them, four things you might assume were yours to design have already been decided.

1

Conduct is a graded subject

Marked out of 100. Eighty per cent for positive conduct is allocated automatically to every student at the start of each semester; twenty per cent is available for excellent conduct. The minimum expected score is **60 per cent**.

2

Violations carry set deductions

Four degrees, each with a fixed cost: first degree (simple) **–4**; second (fairly dangerous) **–8**; third (definitely dangerous) **–12**; fourth (severely dangerous) — the student is failed.

3

Points can be won back

Deducted points may be restored through excellent conduct and sustained compliance. The design is redemptive, not simply punitive — which is worth saying aloud to a student who thinks one bad week has settled their year.

4

A committee decides

Abu Dhabi requires a **Behavioral Management Committee** of at least four: the Principal or delegate, a teacher, a member of the social care team, and the Child Protection Coordinator. It must be able to convene at any time.

SANCTIONS A SCHOOL IS FORBIDDEN TO USE

Abu Dhabi’s behaviour policy lists these explicitly. Several are ordinary practice in British schools, which is exactly why they belong in your induction.

- Corporal punishment of any kind
- Psychological punishment — verbal abuse or threats
- Mocking, insulting or demeaning a student, in private or in public
- Lowering, or threatening to lower, an academic grade
- **Imposing additional schoolwork**
- **Punishing a group for one student’s misconduct**
- **Detention outside official school hours without parental consent**
- Preventing a student using the washroom, or having water or food
- Locking a student inside the premises
- Seizing belongings without a committee resolution
- Disclosing a student’s personal information without consent

Using force as a punishment is treated as maltreatment, and the policy states plainly that it is **unlawful**.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR A HEAD OF BEHAVIOUR

Your ladder maps, it does not replace	Build the consequence ladder in Section 15 so each rung sits inside a recognised degree. Two systems running in parallel will fail an inspection and a parent challenge alike.
Three habits have to go	Extra work as a sanction, whole-class detentions and after-school detention without parental consent are all standard in England and all prohibited here. Say so in week one.
Your records carry a grade	A deduction affects a formal conduct score. The logging discipline in Section 20 stops being good practice and becomes the evidence base.
Escalation is reported upward	In Abu Dhabi, suspensions and expulsions are reported to the regulator, and expulsion itself requires an application to ADEK with evidence that every prior stage was followed.



The Five Pillars in an Emirates Classroom

The pillars themselves do not change. A restless Year 9 in Al Barsha is settled by the same five things as a restless Year 9 in Bradford. What changes is the cohort in front of you — multinational, multilingual, and moving.

PILLAR	WHAT THE SETTING DOES TO IT	THE ADAPTATION
1 · Routines	Students arrive mid-year from a dozen school systems, each carrying unwritten norms about noise, movement and how you address an adult. Nobody absorbs your culture by osmosis when they land in February.	Teach routines explicitly and visually. Give every new arrival the induction a September Year 7 gets, whenever they arrive — and make it somebody’s named job.
2 · Relationships	Norms around eye contact, apology, disagreement and adult authority differ sharply across the nationalities in one room. A student looking at the floor may be showing you respect.	Do not read body language as though the cohort shares one culture. Ask rather than infer. Brief new staff on this before they meet a class, not after their first mistake.
3 · Consequences	Families arrive with very different expectations of school discipline, and a fee-paying relationship changes the tone of a challenge. Your ladder also has to sit inside the federal degrees.	Publish the ladder in plain language, translated where it helps. Consistency is the defence: the answer is always “this is what we do for every child, and here is where it is written”.
4 · Recognition	Praise conventions vary. Public individual recognition motivates some students and mortifies others. The quiet new arrival is the easiest child in the school to overlook.	Offer more than one route — private, written, to the family, to the group. Audit coverage by nationality and by arrival date, not just by year group.
5 · De-escalation	A distressed student is often operating in their second or third language, and language capacity is the first thing lost under stress.	Fewer words, slower pace, more take-up time. Never require a dysregulated child to explain themselves in English.

CONTEXT IS NOT AN EXCUSE, AND IT IS NOT DECORATION

The calendar matters here in ways it does not in England. Ramadan changes energy, appetite, sleep and tolerance across a large part of your cohort and your staffroom. National Day, Eid and the long summer exodus all move behaviour. None of that lowers the standard — but a leader who plans the term without them will spend it reacting.

The same applies to language. Behaviour expectations communicated only in English are communicated to only part of your parent body.

THE TRANSIENCE TEST

- Ask this of every routine you run:
- Could a student arriving on Tuesday learn it by Friday?
 - Could a teacher arriving in August teach it in week one?
 - Does it survive being explained without idiom?
 - Is it written down somewhere a stranger could find it?
- If a routine fails those four, it is not a routine. It is a habit that a few experienced staff happen to share — and it will leave when they do.

THE PARENT CONVERSATION, IN A FEE-PAYING INTERNATIONAL SETTING

Fees do not move the line

They do change the tone of the conversation, and pretending otherwise helps nobody. Answer warmly, at length, and without moving the boundary a millimetre.

Lead with the written policy

“Here is the published ladder, here is the step we are at, here is what happens next.” A parent arguing with a document argues far more calmly than one arguing with a person.

Assume the school system they know

A parent may be reading your sanction against norms from a very different education system. Explain the reasoning, not just the outcome.



Making It Survive the Summer

International schools replace a far larger share of their staff each year than a typical English school. That single fact decides whether any of this holds.

A behaviour culture carried in the heads of experienced staff does not survive August. It has to live in documents, in induction, and in the first week of term — taught to arriving teachers with the same explicitness you would use with arriving students.

The practical consequence: your induction pack matters more than your policy. If a teacher arriving from another system cannot learn your five non-negotiables in week one, they will default to whatever their last school did — and your consistency is gone by October.

A FIVE-POINT INDUCTION FOR ARRIVING STAFF

- 1 The five non-negotiables, said aloud, on day one.
- 2 The entry routine, demonstrated in a real classroom, not described in a meeting.
- 3 The ladder, and where each rung sits against the federal degrees.
- 4 The prohibitions, in writing, signed — and the reporting duty that sits on them personally.
- 5 A named mentor for behaviour, separate from their curriculum mentor.

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Check before you write it into policy

UAE regulation is revised often, and requirements differ by emirate. Everything in this chapter is a starting point for a conversation with your own regulator and your school’s legal advice — not a substitute for either. Work from the current published version of each instrument above.

Where this guide and your regulator differ, **your regulator is right**.

THE FOUR DOCUMENTS THAT OUTLIVE YOU

The policy, mapped

Your ladder set against the federal degrees, on one page.

The induction pack

Five non-negotiables and the prohibitions, on paper, signed.

The routine bank

Every routine written as a script a stranger could follow — not as a value.

The escalation card

Who to call, how fast they come, and the route above school level in your emirate.

Nothing in this chapter is a different framework. It is the same five pillars, taught faster, written down harder, and built to sit inside somebody else’s law.



What a UAE Inspector Looks For

Here is the thing most behaviour leads arriving from England get wrong: **your work is not inspected as “behaviour”**. There is no such standard. It sits inside Standard 2 — and it is judged largely through what students are like, not through what your policy says.

THE SIX PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

- 1

Students’ achievements
- 2

Students’ personal and social development, and their innovation skills

Personal development · Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures · Social responsibility and innovation skills
- 3

Teaching and assessment
- 4

Curriculum
- 5

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

Health and safety, including arrangements for child protection / safeguarding · Care and support · Inclusion of students with SEND (students of determination)
- 6

Leadership and management

READ STANDARD 2 AGAIN, SLOWLY

Two of its three strands are not about conduct at all. **Understanding of Islamic values and awareness of Emirati and world cultures** is a judged strand. So is **social responsibility and innovation skills**.

A school can have quiet corridors and still be judged weak here. The framework is asking what kind of young person you are forming — not whether they comply.

WHERE INSPECTORS GET THE EVIDENCE

- Observation of students’ learning in lessons
- Review of students’ work
- **Discussions with students**
- Meetings with staff, parents and governors
- **Surveys completed by parents, teachers and students**

Note what is missing from that list: your behaviour policy. It is context, not evidence. The evidence is a corridor, a conversation and a survey return.

Judgements run on a six-point scale

Not four. The scale runs from performance significantly below UAE expectation up to outstanding, which gives a school more room to show improvement — and more room to slip without changing category.

Your work appears in three standards

Standard 2 for what students are like; Standard 5 for care, support and safeguarding; Standard 6 for leadership and **self-evaluation**. A behaviour lead who only reads Standard 2 has read a third of their own file.

Self-evaluation is itself judged

Under Standard 6, *school self-evaluation and improvement planning* carries its own grade. Knowing your behaviour data is weak, and saying so with a plan, scores better than not knowing.

Check the current arrangements — this page is a snapshot

The six standards and their strands above are taken from KHDA’s own published inspection framework and reports, and have been stable for many years. But KHDA paused full inspections of Dubai private schools after its 2024 cycle, and has since announced a renewed, differentiated approach from 2026/27 — reported as including short-notice visits and two visit types, a full inspection and a shorter monitoring visit. That change was announced publicly rather than published as a framework at the time of writing. **Confirm the current arrangements and the current framework directly with KHDA before planning against them.**



Students of Determination

Section 20 of this guide is written in English terms — SEND, the Code of Practice, the graduated approach. In the UAE the vocabulary is different, it is deliberate, and using the wrong words marks you out faster than almost anything else you could do.

THE TERM, AND WHY IT WAS CHOSEN

“Persons with determination” is how the UAE has chosen to view the attributes of persons with disabilities — described in KHDA’s framework as a reflection of their strength of character, their perseverance and their courage.

The *Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework* is explicit that it challenges outdated definitions and sets revised common terms of reference **which should be used across the education sector**. This is not a euphemism to be humoured. It is the required register.

WHAT CHANGES IN YOUR BEHAVIOUR PRACTICE

Your policy language Audit it. If it says “SEND pupils” throughout, it reads as imported. Inspection reports themselves pair the terms — *inclusion of students with SEND (students of determination)* — so both can appear, but the local term should lead.

Admission is protected The framework requires that students are **not refused admission based only on their experience of SEND**, and extends sibling priority. A behaviour record cannot become a back door to exclusion by admission.

Inclusion is separately judged Inspection reports carry *inclusion of students of determination* as its own reported area within Standard 5 — not folded quietly into a wider judgement.

The framework is broad Ten Dubai standards cover identification and early intervention, admissions and equity, leadership and accountability, systems of support, partnerships, culture, monitoring and resourcing.

A FIVE-MINUTE LANGUAGE AUDIT

- 1

Search your behaviour policy for “SEND”. Every instance is a decision, not an accident.
- 2

Check your consequence ladder for anything that penalises a need rather than a choice.
- 3

Ask whether a parent reading it would recognise their child as belonging in your school.
- 4

Check your induction slides. New staff copy the language they are first given.
- 5

Then leave the substance of Section 20 alone. The practice is right; only the words change.

KHDA publishes this framework as open data and expressly permits reproduction with acknowledgement — so you can lift its standards straight into your own policy, provided you credit them.

A child who cannot yet regulate is not choosing to be difficult in any country. What changes here is only what you are expected to call them — and the UAE has thought harder about that than most.



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