**Relationships Policy – Castlehill Primary School**

**Section 1: Purpose, vision, values and aims of the policy**

The purpose of this policy is to highlight the importance of relationships in building and sustaining the ethos of Castlehill Primary School. We understand the importance of relationships in underpinning vital socio-emotional skills which lay the foundations for academic learning, and this links clearly to our school vision, values and aims. We strive to provide a nurturing, safe and engaging environment for our learners by encouraging emotional resilience, which we understand comes from building positive relationships, restoring relationships and promoting self-regulation skills through co-regulation. Our school values of respect, kindness, friendship and responsibility put relationships at the heart of our school environment.

Furthermore, this policy aims to support inclusion, equality and wellbeing of all staff, children and stakeholders. We adopt a rights based approach and understand that the rights of **all** children and staff must be protected through mutual respect and the undertaking of key actions, which is reflected in our classroom charters. As outlined in the Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equalities Professional Learning Framework; inclusion, rights and equalities and wellbeing and care (GIRFEC) are interconnected and interdependent with relationships and therefore all must be a focus of this policy.

We aim to use the language of relationships, replacing terms such as challenging behaviour with distressed behaviour and referring to struggles with self-regulation rather than struggles with behaviour. Research on language used in relation to behaviour indicates that dispositional language should be avoided - dispositional language in this case refers to language that locates the problem in the individual rather than taking account of other situational or individual factors (*Stanbridge & Mercer (2022) Mind your language: why the language used to describe children’s SEMH needs matters)*.

HMIE and Education Scotland prioritise behaviour and relationships as a focus of their inspection framework, asking us to reflect on how effective our arrangements are in promoting positive relationships and behaviour and how well we are recording and responding to any instances of distressed behaviour, both of which will be outlined in this policy.

HGIOS 4, Q.I 2.3 clearly states that for highly effective practice to be taking place the learning environment must be built on positive, nurturing and appropriately challenging relationships which lead to high-quality learning outcomes.

Castlehill Primary School strives to achieve the following key principles:

* An ethos that encourages a commitment to developing positive relationships and promoting shared values
* A safe environment in which all pupils and staff can be healthy, happy and successful
* Recognition that all behaviour is communication and that understanding what is being communicated and the underlying needs, is crucial for assessing and meeting children’s needs and moving forwards
* A sensitive response to behaviour that takes into account context and individual needs
* Promoting early intervention and support
* An environment which supports children in developing responsibility for their actions
* Encouraging a positive relationship with parents and carers to develop a shared approach
* A commitment to self-evaluation and quality improvement involving all stakeholders

Our Policy Aims:

* To ensure there is mutual respect between all members of the school community
* To promote a climate in which everyone feels safe and secure
* To model respect and vital self-regulation skills, promoting and developing this in our learners
* To use learning and teaching approaches which promote high levels of engagement

This policy applies to all pupils, parents/carers, school staff, visitors and extra-curricular clubs. It applies to school excursions as well as activities on school premises.

**Section 2: Expectations and Boundaries (All Stakeholders)**

At Castlehill Primary School we have expectations in place that are inclusive and apply to all stakeholders. We believe that adult modelling of our expectations and values is vital in ensuring the ethos of the school is maintained. We understand that it is natural for children to push boundaries, but we believe that when this happens, boundaries should be reinforced in an attuned manner, demonstrating care but also making expectations clear.

At Castlehill Primary School our expectations are:

* Mutual respect – all children and adults should be spoken to and treated with respect. This includes using a respectful tone, respectful words and respectful body language. All visitors to the school should be treated with respect and this might include greeting them in the corridor, holding the door and showing them the way around.
* Kindness – all children and adults should demonstrate kindness to others through their words and actions.
* Responsibility – taking responsibility for our actions and the impact that these may have on others and on the school and wider environment.
* Taking care of our school environment – ensuring tidy classrooms and corridors helps to emphasise the importance of the environment in creating a sense of belonging and encouraging a positive work ethic. Up to date displays of children’s work show the value we place on their learning.

Where these expectations are being met, we have a number of systems in place to recognise this. These include:

* Verbal praise
* Stickers/raffle tickets
* Certificates/Star Awards
* Nomination for Wonderwall Wednesday – pupils join DHT for hot chocolate and time to reflect on achievements
* Phone calls/notes home to parents/carers
* Head Teacher visit and certificate
* Nominating pupils for ‘Well Done’ cards for each monthly celebration assembly
* Work on display
* Recognition on social media

At Castlehill Primary we understand the importance of the wider school environment in supporting our expectations and fostering a sense of belonging for those that work in our environment. We believe the following actions for all are important in achieving this:

* Meet and greet – a welcome when entering the school gates, the classroom and/or the school office
* Emotional check ins – universal and more regularly for those with targeted support
* Use of visual timetables
* Lining up and maintaining lines for walking through the school
* Offering help or support if someone appears to be in need

At Castlehill Primary School we believe that consequences are necessary in order to establish boundaries that keep everyone safe. We believe that consequences can help to establish clear boundaries, and where consequences are necessary these will be proportionate, and where possible, natural and collaborative. Where a child has an additional support need they may need adapted consequences which should be reflected in their Child’s Plan.

**Firstly, acknowledge good choices**

* Acknowledge good choices in the classroom or when passing children in the corridor – refer to meeting expectations
* Use of positive and proximal praise
* Use positive reinforcement to re-engage

**When boundaries are being pushed, take the following positive steps:**

**1. Reminder**

- Reminder of the class charter and their actions within this to respect the rights of all

-  Draw back from confrontation (e.g. I can see you’re angry right now, I’m going to come back in a couple of minutes to give you some time to feel calm again)

- Speak to the learner privately and at eye level

- Remind them of the expectations (e.g. “Remember, I always speak to you respectfully, you should speak to me respectfully too”)

**2. Choice**

- Give learner the time/space to make changes

- Speak to learner privately and at eye level

- Make them aware of behaviour and choice (e.g. “You are continuing to speak to me disrespectfully, you must now stop and continue with your task. If you don’t, I’m going to have to call for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (member of SLT)”)

**3. Cool Down**

- Member of SLT to be called for where a restorative conversation will take place. Learner may spend a short time in a safe space, with an adult where possible, to help them to self-regulate.

**4. Repair – with class teacher on return/at a suitable quiet time**

- Have a brief restorative conversation – what happened? What could have been done differently? How can we put things right moving forward?

- Speak to the learner privately and at eye level

We understand that there are times where relationships may break down significantly. We are focused on trying to take a solution orientated approach where this happens, and where it is necessary to escalate this, it will be based on individual circumstance and steps being made will be in collaboration with SLT, class teacher, pupil and parents/carers.

*Occasionally an incident will be serious enough to by-pass one or more of the steps above. Such incidents include:*

* forceful physical contact
* fighting
* swearing
* vandalism
* aggression
* disrespectful personal comments

Consequences for more serious incidents will strive to be natural, collaborative and restorative. At this stage, parents/carers will be contacted, a note will be made in Pastoral Notes on SEEMiS and consequences will be agreed. For example, vandalism may result in being involved in repairing/cleaning up damage, swearing may result in writing a letter of apology during free time, fighting may result in amended break time arrangements etc.

Castlehill Primary School is an inclusive and nurturing school. We try to ensure that all pupils are able to flourish with us and therefore we try to avoid the use of school exclusions. However, on very rare occasions, and in line with the Argyll and Bute Council’s Education Management Circular 3.08 Managing Exclusions in Schools, a pupil’s distressed behaviour may require significant additional supports to be put into place to ensure their safety and the safety of others, or a very formal consequence may be required to underline the seriousness of a pupil’s actions. In these instances, the Head Teacher may take the decision to exclude a pupil either internally; in school but not in class or, externally; out of school and recorded officially on the council’s SEEMiS database. In either instance, the Head Teacher or Depute Head Teacher will hold a re-admittance meeting with the pupil and their parents to agree on actions and expectations for being readmitted to school. Where exclusion is used, it should be as a proportionate response where there is no other appropriate alternative.

**Section 3: Relational Approaches**

At Castlehill Primary we will take the following key approaches to support the building and maintaining of relationships at all levels:

* At whole school level, we have carefully considered our RSHP curriculum to include input on friendships and maintaining these, feelings, empathy, wider relationships, consent and diversity. We provide opportunities for play at all levels and in line with Article 31, have changed Golden Time to Fun 31 – protected time to play. We celebrate wider achievements through Wonder Wall Wednesdays and in classrooms. We provide a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, with many of these happening at lunchtime to ensure they are inclusive of all. We believe that all of the above is essential in providing opportunities for forming and developing relationships and ensuring a sense of belonging for all.
* We use restorative practice to promote positive relationships and the successful resolution of conflict and harm. This involves describing what happened, reflecting on the impact on everyone, understanding and valuing everyone’s perspectives, considering choices that were made and agreeing a way to resolve the situation moving forwards.
* Staff adopt basic Emotion Coaching strategies, helping learners to ‘name and tame’ emotions. This involves discussing physical responses to emotions, recognising situations that may elicit these responses and exploring strategies for coping with these.
* In classrooms, we ensure children are given time and opportunity to respond when not meeting expectations. Staff remain calm to ensure that they are providing opportunities for co-regulation when children become dysregulated. Children are given choices to allow them to feel some sense of control and the Nurture room is used effectively as a drop in when required to allow learners time to co-regulate in a safe space.
* We run Lego Therapy and Seasons for Growth groups all year round to support learners with managing distressed behaviour and forming positive relationships. Learners are selected for this based on current needs and can be self-nominated, parent nominated, teacher/support staff nominated or SLT nominated.
* At whole school level we use positive noticing to ensure we are highlighting good choices and not over focusing on those not meeting expectations.
* Where distressed behaviours are recognised in the playground and appear to be following a pattern, specific playground charters may be created in collaboration with learners. This would be to ensure that the rights of all children are being met and that all children are feeling safe in our playground.
* Occasionally a learner may need to be able to access a safe space/key adult at their own request at various points across the day. Where this need arises, cards will be provided to alert the class teacher to the fact that they need their safe space/safe adult. In some cases, learners may be able to access this independently, in other cases, contact should be made with SLT to arrange this as soon as possible.
* Occasionally a learner may benefit from scheduled classroom breaks across the school day. This may be to take on an additional responsibility or to access the nurture room or the sensory room. This should not be used as a reward or sanction as it is designed to support self-regulation.
* The school wishes to engage directly with parents and carers to foster a positive environment, maintain a consistent message, and develop shared values and excellent home/school communication. We welcome parents/carers approaching the school to make an appointment with the Class Teacher, in the first instance and at the earliest opportunity, if they have any concerns. Similarly, the school will keep parent/carers informed of any learners exceeding expectations or in need of consequences.
* The school draws upon a network of support services within Children and Families and externally, to offer expert input and advice to support individual children to meet their needs and promote their well-being, in line with GIRFEC principles.

**Section 4: Professional Learning to Support Development and Implementation**

The following links provide information, resources and professional learning to support the development and implementation of this policy:

**Inspection Advice Guidance Information: Education Scotland Blurb**

[Inspection Advice Note – January 2024 | Inspection and review guidance | HM Chief Inspector reports and guidance | Inspection and review | Education Scotland](https://education.gov.scot/inspection-and-review/hm-chief-inspector-reports-and-guidance/inspection-and-review-guidance/inspection-advice-note-january-2024/)

**Wellbeing, Inclusion and Equalities Professional Learning Framework: Education Scotland**

[Informed Level | Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities Professional Learning Framework | Resources | Education Scotland](https://education.gov.scot/resources/inclusion-wellbeing-equalities-professional-learning-framework/informed-level/)

Included, Involved & Engaged

**Time for Inclusive Education**

[Teachers - Time for Inclusive Education (tie.scot)](https://tie.scot/professional-learning/teachers/#cpd)

Keeping the Promise Award Programme

[Keeping the Promise Award Programme | Resources | Education Scotland](https://education.gov.scot/resources/keeping-the-promise-award-programme/)

Children and Young People’s Improvement Collaborative

[Method - CYPIC 2023](https://cypic.co.uk/method/)

**Complaints, concerns or compliments**

If you would like to make a complaint or pass on a concern or compliment, this can be done via phone (01586 553446) or email ([enquiries-castlehill@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries-castlehill@argyll-bute.gov.uk)). Complaints should be addressed to the Head Teacher, in the first instance.

If you remain dissatisfied in relation to a complaint after you have been to our school you can escalate a complaint by contacting [seemis@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:seemis@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

**Reviewing this policy**

This policy will be reviewed as needed but at least every 3 years and will be available to all stakeholders on our school website.

**Date of update:** August 2024