

Managing and Responding to Behaviours of Concern in Education Settings – Procedure (2026)

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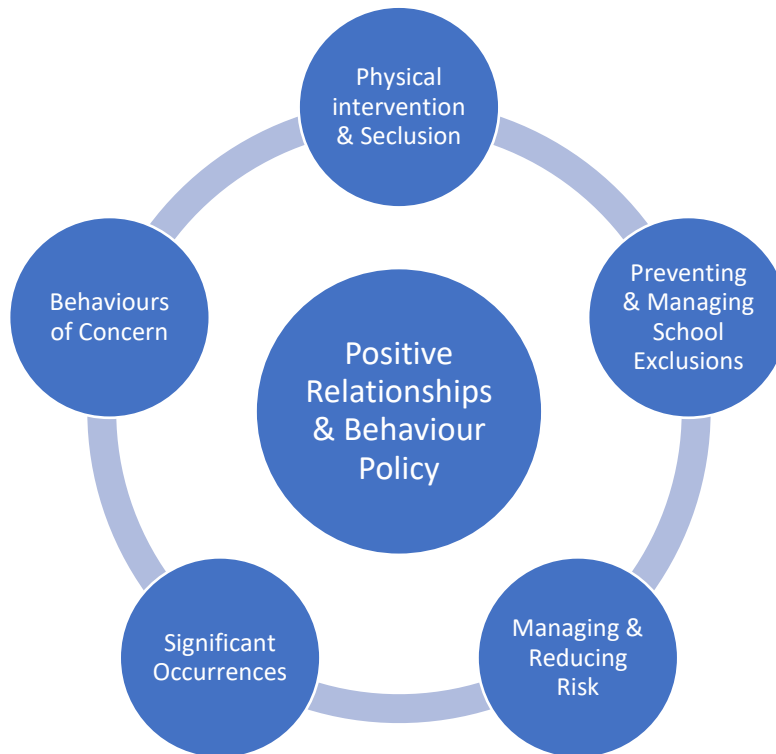
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1. PURPOSE

1.1 This document sits as a suite of procedural documents within the Children, Education and Justice Services Positive Relationships & Behaviour Policy (2026) outlined below.



This procedure aims to support colleagues and learners within the City of Edinburgh Council's education establishments to feel safe and free from harm. The procedure will enable individuals, teams and leaders to have clarity regarding the actions required in the workplace to ensure access to appropriate professional learning and development opportunities and robust processes and quality assurance activities that are proactive in identifying and managing risk.

The City of Edinburgh Council's Children, Education and Justice Service is committed to working in partnership with professional associations and trades unions to understand and respond to the current context and offer challenge and support as required.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This procedure details the processes for managing and responding to behaviours of concern.
- 2.2. This procedure applies to all Children, Education and Justice Services staff working within an education setting.
- 2.3. Behaviours of concern are behaviours that within a school context may disrupt learning, harm others, or pose a risk to the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others. These behaviours can vary in severity and frequency. Some common examples of behaviours of concern include:
 - Abusive or threatening language
 - Physical aggression such as hitting, kicking or biting
 - Aggressive behaviour threatening property damage
 - Behaviour likely to cause self-harm

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

The City of Edinburgh Council recognises that all behaviour is a form of communication. Staff and schools should always seek to use their assessment and knowledge of the child or young person to plan strategies and approaches to meet their learning, health, and wellbeing needs. It is important to note that behaviours of concern can be indicators of underlying issues such as an unmet learning or wellbeing need, trauma, mental health, drug misuse or neglect. It is essential to address these behaviours through a combination of supportive interventions, proactive strategies, and appropriate professional support.

The City of Edinburgh Council aims to promote three important principles:

1. Risk Reduction

- Ensuring our schools are inclusive and have an ethos built on positive relationships and a commitment to inclusion, across the whole school community which is underpinned by a coherent, inclusive curriculum and learning and teaching that meets learners' needs and provides appropriate challenge.
- Putting in place strategies and supports to ensure reasonable adjustments are in place to meet the needs of children and young people with additional support needs.
- Providing ongoing professional learning and development opportunities that foster a positive, inclusive, and supportive school culture that promotes respect, empathy, and positive relationships among pupils and staff.

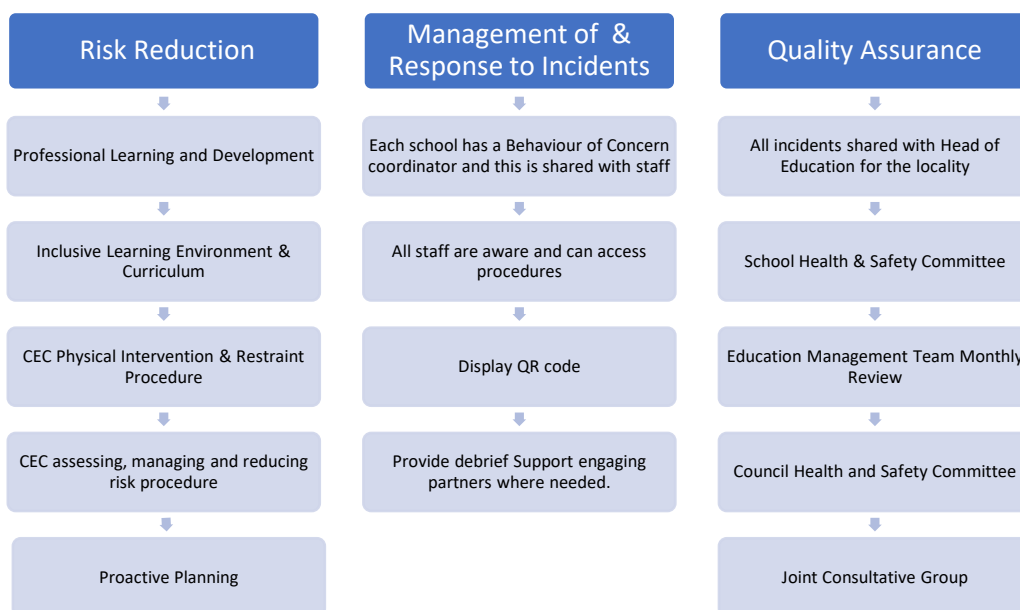
- Providing a comprehensive range of risk management and reduction policies and procedures that are up to date, address various aspects of school safety, reflect national and local drivers and ensure all staff are aware of expectations, responsibilities, and reporting process.

2. Management of and Response to Incidents

- Ensure pupil and staff wellbeing is a priority.
- Identify and share Behaviour of Concern coordinator in each setting.
- Encourage a culture of reporting and support where staff, pupils and parents feel comfortable reporting incidents and potential risks and feel confidence that every report will be taken seriously and investigated promptly.
- Ensure appropriate post-incident debrief and review.
- Provision of a range of supports to all those who have been affected by an incident.

3. Quality Assurance

- All incidents of Behaviours of Concern are shared with the Head of Education for the locality on an individual and weekly basis.
- School Health and Safety Committees (SHSC) meet every month to review reported incidents.
- The Education Management Team (EMT) is provided with a monthly summary of incidents highlighting concerns, patterns and trends.
- Quarterly reports on Behaviours of Concern are sent to the Council Health & Safety Committee.
- Thematic Reviews are conducted in schools to identify where practice is strong, concerning or improving.
- Procedure is subject to regular review by Joint Consultative Group.
- An annual report is provided to the Education, Children and Families Committee.



4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Teaching staff	Support Staff	Senior School Leaders	Heads of Education/Officers
<p>Access key policies and procedures on inclusion and positive relationships and behaviour.</p> <p>Know what to do to access immediate support in the event of an incident.</p> <p>Know how to report a Behaviour of Concern incident.</p> <p>Be able to identify the Behaviour of Concern coordinator.</p> <p>Ensure differentiated learning experiences to meet pupil needs.</p>	<p>Access key policies and procedures on inclusion and positive relationships and behaviour.</p> <p>Know what to do to access immediate support in the event of an incident.</p> <p>Know how to report a Behaviour of Concern incident.</p> <p>Be able to identify the Behaviour of Concern coordinator.</p>	<p>Ensure key policies and procedures on inclusion and positive relationships and behaviour are up to date, reflect national and local drivers and all staff are aware of expectations, responsibilities and reporting process.</p> <p>Ensure all staff are aware of the expectations, their responsibilities and the reporting process for Behaviours of Concern.</p> <p>Access appropriate and relevant professional learning for staff.</p> <p>Put in place a procedure for accessing immediate support in the event of an incident which all employees are made aware of, including supply staff/others in school for short periods.</p> <p>Put in place suitable arrangements in the event of senior leadership team being out of the building so</p>	<p>Put in place key council policies and procedures and ensure they are up to date, reflect national and local drivers and make them available.</p> <p>Ensure all staff are aware of expectations, their responsibilities and the reporting process for Behaviours of Concern.</p> <p>Use data from monthly summaries to quality assure processes and offer support and/or challenge to schools where patterns of concern emerge. Senior Education Officers/Heads of Service may make visits to schools or remit to other officers for a report.</p>

		<p>that there is a clear and consistent approach which all employees are made aware of, including supply staff/others in school for short periods.</p> <p>Put in place planning formats that support and develop differentiated learning to meet the needs of individual learners.</p>	
<p>Attend Professional Learning Opportunities.</p> <p>Discuss learning needs with line manager and record via the PRD process.</p> <p>Display standards in line with GTCS and the City of Edinburgh Council's Teacher's charter.</p>	<p>Attend Professional Learning Opportunities.</p> <p>Discuss learning needs with line manager and record via the PRD process.</p>	<p>Ensure all staff have access to relevant and appropriate learning opportunities on inclusion, positive relationships and behaviour.</p> <p>Put in place an induction programme for new teaching and support staff.</p>	<p>Provide regular and appropriate professional learning opportunities available on inclusion, positive relationships and behaviour.</p> <p>Arrange a network and ongoing support and training for Behaviour of Concern coordinators.</p> <p>Create opportunities for networking and sharing good practice.</p>
		<p>Designate a BoC coordinator (BoCC). This should be a senior member of staff who will be responsible for Behaviours of Concern policies and procedures, training, recording of incidents, follow-up, quality assurance and attendance at BoCC Network.</p>	<p>Ensure Health and Safety team review all myHS submissions and contact schools if RIDDOR is required.</p>

		<p>Ensure School Health and Safety Committee to meet every month to discuss reports and escalate issues to the Headteacher or Trades Unions if required. The SHSC should proactively review all incidents to see if any patterns are emerging, consider if amendments to school policy or practice are required, and recommend other actions that might need to be taken to support colleagues.</p>	
		<p>Ensure appropriate Child Planning Processes are in place and a Team Around the Child is in place. Ensure all relevant staff are involved and informed (including supply staff/others in school for short periods.)</p> <p>Ensure a proactive plan is in place if required.</p> <p>Ensure individual risk assessments are in place if required.</p>	

<p>Report Behaviours of Concern immediately to line manager.</p> <p>Escalate concerns to school Health and Safety Committee.</p>	<p>Report Behaviours of Concern immediately to line manager.</p> <p>Escalate concerns to school Health and Safety Committee.</p>	<p>Ensure all staff are clear about protocols and procedures for reporting incidents.</p> <p>Ensure safety of all concerned immediately. Offer debriefing and ongoing emotional support to staff following incidents.</p> <p>Consider whether incident is a Significant Occurrence (SON).</p> <p>Ensure all incidents are reported on myHS within 2 days. Copy in Head of Education for locality.</p> <p>Follow and implement advice from central officers.</p> <p>Consider whether a risk management meeting is required for the individual child or young person.</p> <p>Review all incidents to see if any patterns are emerging, consider if amendments to school policy or practice are required, and recommend other actions that might need to be taken to support colleagues.</p>	<p>Review, investigate and support all incidents recorded on myHS.</p> <p>Respond to myHS quarterly report being alert to patterns of data and trends.</p> <p>Arrange a 2-week lessons learned meeting for SON.</p> <p>Ensure any follow-up actions have taken place.</p> <p>Arrange thematic reviews when required in schools where practice is noted to be strong, concerning or improving. Schools will be provided with individual reports and asked to take forward next steps. These Reviews will be conducted in partnership with trades unions and professional associations and supported by Headteachers and Inclusion staff.</p>
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			<p>Termly Behaviour of Concern strategy meetings.</p> <p>Quarterly meetings with BoC coordinators.</p> <p>Seek strong relationships with local emergency services such as police to ensure effective emergency response plans so emergency services can provide timely support when needed.</p>
			<p>Arrange an annual summary of incidents and lessons learned to enable reporting to Council Health & Safety committee, Edinburgh Learns Inclusion Board, JCC and ECF committee as required.</p>

5. MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENTS

- 5.1 All schools must have clear, accessible procedures to ensure that employees can obtain immediate support during an incident. This may include the use of a “Red Card” system, internal telephone support, or other agreed escalation methods. Arrangements must also be in place for periods when senior leadership are out of the building, ensuring a consistent and well-understood approach for all employees, including supply staff and visiting professionals.
- 5.2 Following any incident, Senior Leaders must determine appropriate next steps, ensuring that the employee involved is reassured, supported and confident that their needs will be addressed.
- 5.3 Consideration of the need for police involvement should form part of ongoing risk assessment and support planning for children and young people. In an emergency requiring immediate police attendance, the police must be contacted without delay and the Head of Service informed. For non-emergency matters, the Headteacher should liaise with Community Police. Employees retain the right to contact the police directly. As a courtesy, they should inform the Headteacher, who will notify the Head of Education. Employees should be aware that, for a claim to be made to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA), the incident must be reported to the police within 48 hours.
- 5.4 In cases of extreme or escalating behaviour, the Team Around the Child (TAC) must be reconvened to review and update the Risk Management Plan. Health and Safety colleagues will be involved where appropriate.

6. WELLBEING OF STAFF

- 6.1 The wellbeing of employees must be the primary concern following any serious incident.
- 6.2 The City of Edinburgh Council provides a range of support for employees who experience verbal or physical incidents in the workplace. A Wellbeing Meeting should be arranged as soon as possible to identify the most appropriate support. This may include information about [Employee Wellbeing \(PAM Assist\)](#), access to legal advice, or other relevant services.

- 6.3 Employees who experience such incidents may require sensitive and sustained support to rebuild professional and personal confidence. Where necessary, they should seek medical advice and may wish to contact external organisations such as Victim Support Scotland.
- 6.4 Employees may seek guidance and support from their trade union representative at any stage.
- 6.5 As soon as practicable, the Headteacher or representative should arrange a follow-up meeting to review the incident and any associated issues. Employees have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a fellow employee. Representatives acting in a legal capacity are not considered appropriate companions for this process.

7. REPORTING AND RECORDING INCIDENTS

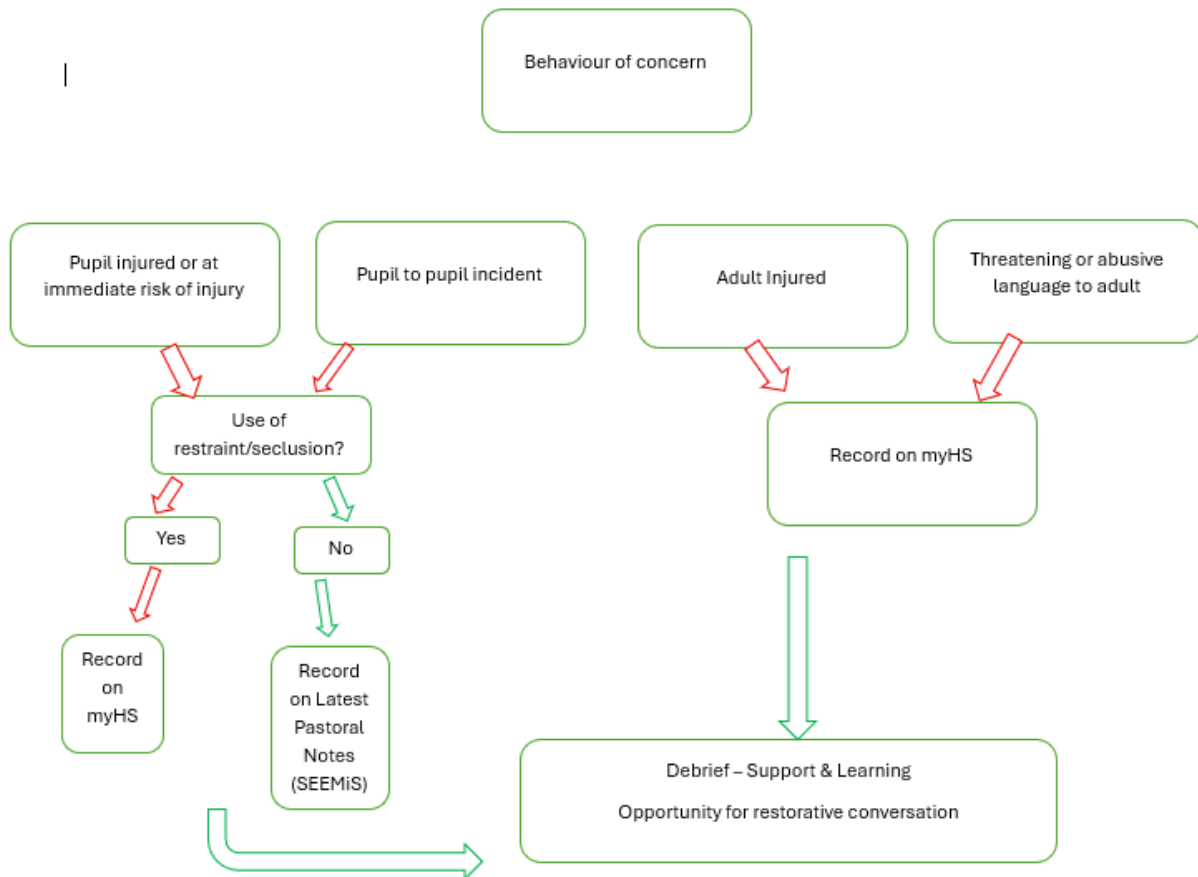
- 7.1 Accurate recording of incidents is essential for understanding patterns, identifying triggers and developing effective prevention strategies. Employees are encouraged to report and record all behaviours of concern and must be confident that doing so will not be interpreted as poor practice or incompetence. Behaviours of concern must never be accepted as “part of the job”. Incident should be recorded on [myHS](#)
- 7.2 The Health & Safety team will review the incident and may undertake further investigation depending on its nature.
- 7.3 The locality Education Support Officer/Head of Education will contact the Headteacher to gather background information and provide support as required.

8. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT	TYPE
Positive Relationships and Behaviour Policy (2026)	City of Edinburgh Policy
Protecting Colleagues from Unacceptable Behaviour (2024)	City of Edinburgh Policy
Assessing, Managing and Reducing Risk (2026)	City of Edinburgh Procedure
Use of Physical Intervention, Restraint & Seclusion In Education Settings (2026)	City of Edinburgh Procedure
Positive Relationship and Behaviour Prof Learning Strategy FINAL (2026).pdf	City of Edinburgh
Significant Occurrence for Education Establishments (2025)	City of Edinburgh Procedure
Included Engaged & Involved 3 (2024)	Scottish Government Guidance
Included, Engaged, Involved 2 (2017)	Scottish Government Guidance

Appendix 1

Behaviours of Concern Flowchart



Appendix 2

Post-incident Debriefing Guidance

Debriefing helps children, young people and staff in education settings to recover and learn from incidents. Good quality post-incident debrief helps to repair, build, and maintain relationships, enabling children/young people and adults to feel safe and secure and improve learners' experiences. **Check all involved are safe and manage any practicalities** (e.g. are there any injuries?).

Post Incident Support

Post incident support is about the immediate physical and emotional wellbeing of all the people involved in the distressed episode. The main aim is to check the child/young person/adult are safe and able to recover. **It is not about asking questions.**

Child/Young Person Considerations	Adult
<p>Avoid asking questions about the incident. This is not the priority right now. Ensure that the child is safe and away from harm.</p> <p>Say as little as possible. Try to avoid overloading the child/young person further by keeping your language to a minimum. Keep your voice as calm and soft as possible.</p> <p>Reassure the young person, showing care in practical ways. (e.g. offer them a drink) or an activity you know they find calming.</p> <p>Check the child/young person's environment. Try to guide them away from the place where they experienced distress and away from sensory input (e.g. bright lights, busy common room, loud television) they are likely to find difficult.</p> <p>Try to re-establish routines and make things as clear and predictable as possible. This will help to create feelings of safety and promote recovery.</p>	<p>Avoid asking questions about the incident. This is not the priority right now.</p> <p>Do ask- What do you need right now?</p>

Post-incident learning

The aim of post incident learning is to learn about what caused the distress and how to prevent it in the future

Post-incident learning should NOT be done straight away. It is important for all the people involved to have enough time to ‘cool down’ so that emotions can settle, and people are in a better place to reflect.

Ask yourself if you are the best person to guide the post incident learning. Post-incident learning is best carried out by someone that knows the child/young person/adult well and who has not been directly involved in the distressed episode.

Child/Young Person Considerations	Adult Considerations
<p>Use communication-friendly strategies This is particularly important at times of distress as this may affect a child/young person’s ability to process what you are saying. Emotion Talks can support this.</p> <p>Say as little as possible. Try to avoid overloading the child/young person further by keeping your language to a minimum. Keep your voice as calm and soft as possible.</p> <p>Reassure the young person, showing care in practical ways. (e.g. offer them a drink) or an activity you know they find calming.</p> <p>Find a quiet and uncluttered environment, away from the place where the person was distressed. Remove any distractions or sensory triggers to help the person focus on what is important.</p> <p>Avoid judgmental language. Stick to the facts of what happened. and the child/young person’s responses and feelings. Avoid asking questions about WHY the child/young person behaved the way they did.</p> <p>If appropriate, try to help the child/young person understand the sequence of events that led to the incident of distress. Use as few words as possible. Encourage the person to reflect on what happened if appropriate. You could note down key information or draw pictures to help the person recall events from their perspective.</p> <p>Support the child/young person to think about what caused them to feel distress. Consider... Was there anything in the environment that caused them discomfort? What were they doing just before? Was there an unexpected change? Was the task they were involved in pitched correctly for them?</p>	<p>Avoid judgmental language. Stick to the facts of what happened. and the child/young person/adult’s responses and feelings. Avoid asking questions about WHY the child/young person behaved the way they did. Think about... What was the trigger? How did the child respond? Do we understand the motives for the child’s behaviour? How did staff respond? What were staff feeling during the incident? What strategies did staff try to de-escalate the situation? (symbols, distraction, humour, music, change of adult) What was the child feeling during the incident? Are there any issues that need to be addressed? How can we adapt our proactive plans?</p>

Did the adults involved know the person well? Does the person feel comfortable with them?

Was the person hungry or thirsty?

Does the person recognise and/or communicate they are in pain (e.g. headache, constipation, teeth pain)?

If appropriate, support the person to explore what they could do differently next time. The 5-point scale can be a useful tool.

End the session by describing what staff will do to support the young person