

# Oakmont Education

## Policy



Community Values

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## Introduction

At Oakmont school every member of the community is equally valued. However, we understand that it may take time for new members to believe and recognise that they have a worthy contribution to make.

Our aim is to create a culture of growth, to foster positive relationships where young people feel safe and able to learn. We work towards creating a community where there is mutual respect and both a recognition of and acceptance of difference.

## Aims

This policy aims to outline how staff and other stakeholders in our school will work with pupils to develop a culture of growth and belonging. We recognise that all pupils arrive with us at different developmental starting points and with different strengths and challenges. Through focussing on character development and wellbeing first, we will instil core values that allow our pupils to thrive academically too. We understand that the adults who work collaboratively with our school will require training and support to understand and follow this policy consistently. Ensuring adherence to this policy will create a safe and therapeutic environment that allows pupils to reach their full potential. We aim to have a strong community that is contributed to by all members and where all members feel they belong.

## Growth Factors

We have selected three areas of focus for our school's core values. We call them Growth Factors because they are not fixed traits but can be strengthened and developed over time. Our pupils will grow as people and learners through practising these characteristics. They are at the heart of our community values and connect closely with our school motto Learn, Grow, Lead. We believe that focussing on developing each pupil's wellbeing and positive character traits will lead in turn to stronger academic progress.

Our Growth Factors are:

- Take Responsibility
- Work Hard
- Be Kind

These values are embedded and interwoven into all aspects of school life. We ensure that all pupils understand what they mean and how they may be actioned e.g.

### Take Responsibility

I take responsibility for how I present and express myself.

I contribute to my community.

I take responsibility for my learning by asking questions and seeking help when needed.

I welcome feedback and am responsible for using it accordingly.

I am responsible in my use of resources and the environment.

### Work Hard

I arrive for each session on time and prepared.

I participate fully in every session.

I complete all tasks to the best of my ability.

I appreciate challenge and understand that mistakes are part of learning.

### Be Kind

I communicate politely and kindly.

I am respectful of the feelings of others and can work co-operatively.

I accept we are all different and understand that the support we each receive will reflect this.

In our community we are kind to each other, I know everyone is valued and welcome.

Time is set aside each day to explore and understand these values more thoroughly, how they feel, how they sound, how they may be seen in action and what happens when they are not evident. We hold daily Learn Grow Lead (LGL) sessions for each peer group, where pupils undertake tasks, exercises or discussions based on these values. Our reward and sanction system is based on these values and our restorative conversations use this language. They are an opportunity to reflect upon and support pupils struggling in one or more areas. We as staff must model and guide the traits we seek to develop in our pupils.

As they become settled and feel safe pupils appreciate that they have responsibility for both their choices and their learning. Our community is only as strong as the people that contribute to it. Everyone deserves to feel safe and have the opportunity to learn and this is what we are working towards.

## Communication

Young people can use behaviour as a method of communication when they have difficulties expressing themselves, especially when they are experiencing strong emotions. Knowing the context of each child is essential to understanding their behaviours and their responses to perceived challenges. Helping them to understand and manage their emotional arousal is at the heart of our work and a core part of our day-to-day curriculum.

Building strong trusting relationships is fundamental to this process. It allows staff to get to know pupils well and can help defuse or avoid situations of distress. All pupils have key members of staff who work consistently with them. These staff members will be responsible for writing and updating individual pupil Risk Assessments and Pupil Profiles which provide guidance on how best to support pupils and outline the behaviours or skills they are working towards currently. Every pupil will be involved in devising their own set of strategies for managing stress and challenge.

Modelling is essential to good practice. Members of staff throughout the school must always model appropriate communication. This includes having fun, making jokes that are suitable for school and demonstrating how to deal with conflict, upset or challenge in a calm and respectful manner. Maintaining clear boundaries is an important aspect of modelling behaviour. Speaking respectfully and being consistent in our responses, using the familiar language of our Growth Factors, not only reduces conflict but is key to demonstrating and embedding the behaviours that our pupils need to acquire to move safely and successfully into adulthood. Sometimes this may mean handing a situation over to another member of the team if that is what's best for the pupil.

In order to encourage change it is important to notice and validate positive engagement and communication from our pupils when it occurs. Positive reinforcement is more effective than disapproval. For pupils with low self-esteem receiving praise can be difficult. Praise should be authentic, immediate where possible and specific. Describe exactly what it was that you saw that impressed you. Over time most pupils develop the ability to accept and absorb these observations. Appropriate and timely praise, focussing on what we want the pupils to do rather than what we don't want, feeds into a climate of growth and positivity that impact a child's self-image and self-worth.

Staff must be clear when giving instructions or outlining expectations. Long complicated requests or unclear expectations are unfair and cause confusion. When a pupil is already upset or dysregulated, we do not continue to direct them, it is unhelpful, and instructions are unlikely to be heard. Be present, acknowledge and be curious about their feelings. Having feelings is reasonable even if the behaviour demonstrating those feelings is not. Distraction, compromise, redirection and observation may all help de-escalate a situation. Adults should remain quietly confident and reassuring and ask for help from team members if its required.

Our PSHE curriculum and our LGL sessions which support our core values, will contribute to guiding pupils towards understanding their own emotions and how to communicate and express them more effectively and safely. Any conflict is an opportunity to learn for all parties involved. If as a staff we notice any newly emerging unhealthy behaviours, either in or out of school, we have the flexibility to amend our curriculum in order to incorporate the learning our pupils may require.

All staff will be trained in a variety of de-escalation techniques, trauma informed practice and positive behaviour support. We have a shared language, rooted in our core values, that will become familiar to pupils and will ensure continuity and consistency in response from staff.

## Rewards and Sanctions

We have a whole school reward system that is individual to each pupil. Points are awarded by staff for interactions, comments or acts of kindness that show a pupil is developing positive character traits in line with our Growth Factors, self-awareness, self-regulation and contributing positively to our community. Points may also be awarded for academic achievements, especially those that support the growth mindset we foster. Learning involves some risk taking in order to 'have a go' and mistakes are seen as part of learning. Rewards can be earned at the 25, 50 and 100 mark and are negotiated by the pupil themselves. The key point here is that the rewards are deemed such by the pupil, they are the experts in themselves and their preferences. Pupils negotiate with staff for these rewards and can be very creative in what they request.

Celebration assemblies acknowledging pupil progress and achievements, are an important part of the week. We use these to show the variety of ways a pupil may be successful and demonstrate our core values, our Growth Factors. They demonstrate our focus on making progress rather than being 'perfect'. It is important to acknowledge that everybody is unique, is working on something different and we make progress at different rates and times. For some pupils it can be difficult to celebrate the success of others but as our young people become more integrated into the school community, their capacity to recognise the achievements of others and even begin to support other pupils on their journey, develops and strengthens. All milestone achievements will be shared with parents and carers as they happen, through phone calls or their preferred method of written communication.

Sanctions are used to help pupils reflect upon and recognise the impact their choices are having on their peers, the adults working with them or the wider school community. If a controllable behaviour is becoming problematic, staff will both observe and speak with the pupil and try to discover what lies behind the behaviour. Staff will support and redirect pupils towards more positive interaction or expression. Each peer group will devise their class rules together with their class teacher so that their expectations, of themselves and each other, are clear and defined. As part of this discussion each pupil can offer suggestions on how they might be best encouraged or redirected if they are finding class rules difficult to follow at any given time.

All pupils, as part of their personal profile, will have worked with staff to devise strategies that help them regulate in class and manage strong feelings. These can include requesting supported time out from the classroom, the opportunity to work independently, take a wellbeing walk or speak to an emotionally available adult. If the pupil chooses not to engage with or follow the advice and guidance of staff, they will be offered the opportunity to use one of their coping strategies. If they choose not to engage and continue with the problematic behaviour, they will be given a warning and the reason for the warning will be clearly explained. Staff will again advise and outline what is expected from the pupil.

After three clear and formal warnings regarding the same behaviour choice, the pupil will receive a Detour card which will be recorded in class.

If three Detour Cards are accrued in the week, the pupil forfeits the opportunity to join other pupils at their weekly social event. Social events are selected and voted for by the pupils and can vary from physical activity such as trampolining to excursions in the local area. These activities are over and above curriculum requirements. They are a reward for contributing positively to our school community over the week. They are an additional opportunity to develop pro-social skills and for different peer groups to mingle and build relationships.

For any pupil that has accrued three Detour cards, their alternative activity is not punitive, but aims to be restorative. They will work with a key staff member to reflect on the challenges of the week, try to unpick what has upset them or what they found difficult to manage. They will explore strategies to support more positive engagement the following week. Where the pupil is able, this may involve revisiting the previous unsuccessful situations and working out what they could do or say next time to ensure a positive outcome. They can also review their current behaviour strategies to assess whether they are still appropriate or need amending and they can explore different ways to ask for help. We focus on our Growth Factors, the character traits we are looking to strengthen while respecting that mistakes are part of learning. As a community we are supportive of those who are still learning to self-regulate but everyone should feel safe at school.

Sometimes after disrupted learning, pupils are keen to make amends with their group or an individual within school and these avenues will be explored and encouraged where appropriate. This one-to-one session should reassure the child, rebuild connections and scaffold future success.

## Positive handling

In certain situations, it becomes necessary to use a safehold technique to ensure the safety and well-being of a pupil and of those around them. This will be managed by staff who are Team Teach trained and qualified and is described in more detail in the school's Positive Handling Policy. Team Teach is a system of positive behaviour management which focuses on de-escalation strategies and acknowledges that positive handling of any pupil is a last resort.

Government Guidance Document no: 097/2013 'Safe and effective Interventions' states that reasonable force may be used to prevent pupils:

- Causing injury to themselves or others
- Committing a criminal offence, including behaviour that would be a criminal offence if the pupil were not under the age of criminal responsibility.
- Causing damage to property
- Causing disruption by engaging in behaviour which is seriously prejudicial to good order and discipline.

Our intention will always be to use the minimum of force for the minimum amount of time. If a pupil has been held during the day, parents, and carers will be informed as soon as is practical and safe after such an event, but always on the same day. All incidents will be fully recorded by the staff members involved and an online Incident Report will be sent to the social workers of children who are looked after within 24 hours.

School staff will debrief after any incident, exploring ante-cedents and relevant factors. It may be necessary to update the pupil's Individual Risk Assessment and Pupil Profile with this information.

After any positive handling incident, a return to school meeting may be held to include home, school and any key services involved with the pupil. Serious incidents, especially those that have had significant impact on the wider school community, may warrant a fixed term exclusion before returning to school, in such cases the return to school meeting would be held on the day of return to the school community. Should a child on the Child Protection Register be excluded from school, then the relevant authorities will be notified.

After any sanction the aim is to learn from the experience and move forward. The pupil must feel welcomed back into school. Each day is a fresh start and the focus returns to rebuilding relationships, positive reinforcement, praise and encouraging the development of our core values, kindness, responsibility and hard work.

Once again when we welcome a pupil back to school, our attention as a staff moves toward what we want to see and hear, rather than dwelling on past mistakes.

## The role of Parents and Carers

Parents and Carers have an important contribution to make in supporting their child to uphold our community values. By working together, we can create and maintain a safe learning environment for all and achieve the best outcomes for our young people.

We want all our families to feel a sense of belonging to our school community. We have a carefully structured admissions process that allows time for discussion and information gathering. We want parents and carers to be familiar with our Growth Factors and to fully understand the ethos of our school and how we can work together effectively in the best interests of their child.

As part of this process parents and carers discuss and sign a Home-School-Pupil agreement that clearly outlines what can be expected from all three parties, home, school and pupil. This agreement is fundamental before we can begin working with any pupil and their family or carers. It includes for example, the explicit expectation that we can work together to ensure pupils attend school regularly and that we are contacted in the event of school absence. Parents and carers also agree to support all school policies and uphold school values such as the wearing of uniform, safe and appropriate use of mobile phones and maintaining positive and open communication with us which we believe is the cornerstone of effective home-school links.

We do expect that parents and carers ensure their children arrive at school without contraband such as smoking paraphernalia, vapes, or items that could be considered a weapon. We have a duty of care to keep everyone safe and

where we have cause for concern we will not search any pupil. In most instances, especially after repeated infringements, we will call home for the pupil to be collected or if it is deemed necessary, for example in the case of a weapon, we will call the police.

Families will be invited to school at least once per term, either for formal meetings such as the annual person-centred review, or to participate in an activity or event organised by and for the pupils themselves. We welcome communication from families, we recognise that working together and maintaining good communication will achieve the best outcomes for pupils.

### Links with other policies

Anti bullying  
Safeguarding  
RVE  
Pupil wellbeing  
Use of restraint  
ALN  
Exclusion  
Equality, diversity and inclusion

### Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains up to and effective. The monitoring and review process will include regular staff training, incident analysis and feedback from stakeholders.