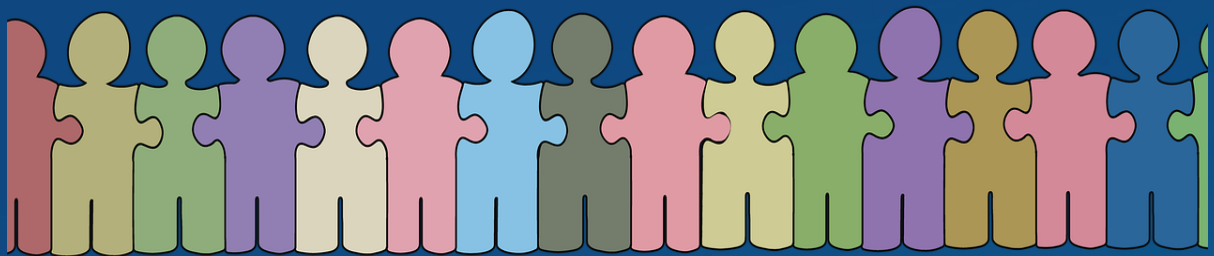# Reducing Exclusions Through the Lens of Belonging: A Toolkit for Schools and Educational Settings

South Gloucestershire Educational Psychology Service, 2024

Contents

Introduction

South Gloucestershire Educational Psychology Service has produced this evidence-based best practice guidance for schools in response to the need to support some of our most vulnerable children and young people to achieve positive life outcomes, and in doing so, reduce the number of school exclusions.

We have drawn up on a range of other policy documents and toolkits from other local authorities in the creation of this toolkit. In particular the 'Guidance for Developing Relational Policy' and the 'Inclusion Toolkit', the Bath & North East Somerset Council 'Trauma Informed Behaviour Policy Guidance' as well as the West Sussex work around 'Emotionally Based Non-attendance' which aided us in creating an assessment tool for those at risk of permanent exclusion.

We have also drawn upon the evidence and theory from the 'Square Pegs' book by Fran Morgan, Ellie Costello and colleagues. The work of Stephen Porges, Dan Hughes, Bruce Perry, Louise Bomber, Margot Sutherland, Heather Geddes, Ross Green, Bill Rogers, and Kathryn Riley have also been influential in shaping the content of this toolkit.

Section 1: School Exclusion in the UK

School exclusion affects an increasing number of young people in the UK. In 2022/23 there were 9376 permanent exclusions and 786,961 suspensions. We also know that some young people are disproportionately at risk of school exclusion. Data shows exclusion rate disparities affect[1]:

- Boys
- Children and Young people (CYP) eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).
- CYP with SEND (particularly those without EHCPs)
- CYP from some ethnic backgrounds (CYP from Gypsy, Roma, and Irish Traveller communities had the highest rates of exclusion in 2022-2023)

In South Gloucestershire, SEND Clusters were established with the aims of better meeting the needs of children at SEN support level and reducing school exclusion for children with SEND. Recent school exclusion data collected in South Gloucestershire suggests this focus continues to be important. At the time of writing this report (part way through the academic year 2023/24) fixed term exclusions (FTE) are already close to exceeding the number of FTEs reported in the last two years. In fact, the available data suggests that FTEs have increased in South Gloucestershire by 52% since 2018/19. Part way through the year, the number of permanent school exclusions have already exceeded figures from the last two academic years – and are now approaching pre-pandemic figures.

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[1] Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England (academic year 2022/23): https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england

What is the impact of school exclusion?

Rising exclusion figures are a significant concern within our education system. Research increasingly shows a range of negative outcomes are associated with the experience of school exclusion[2][3][4]
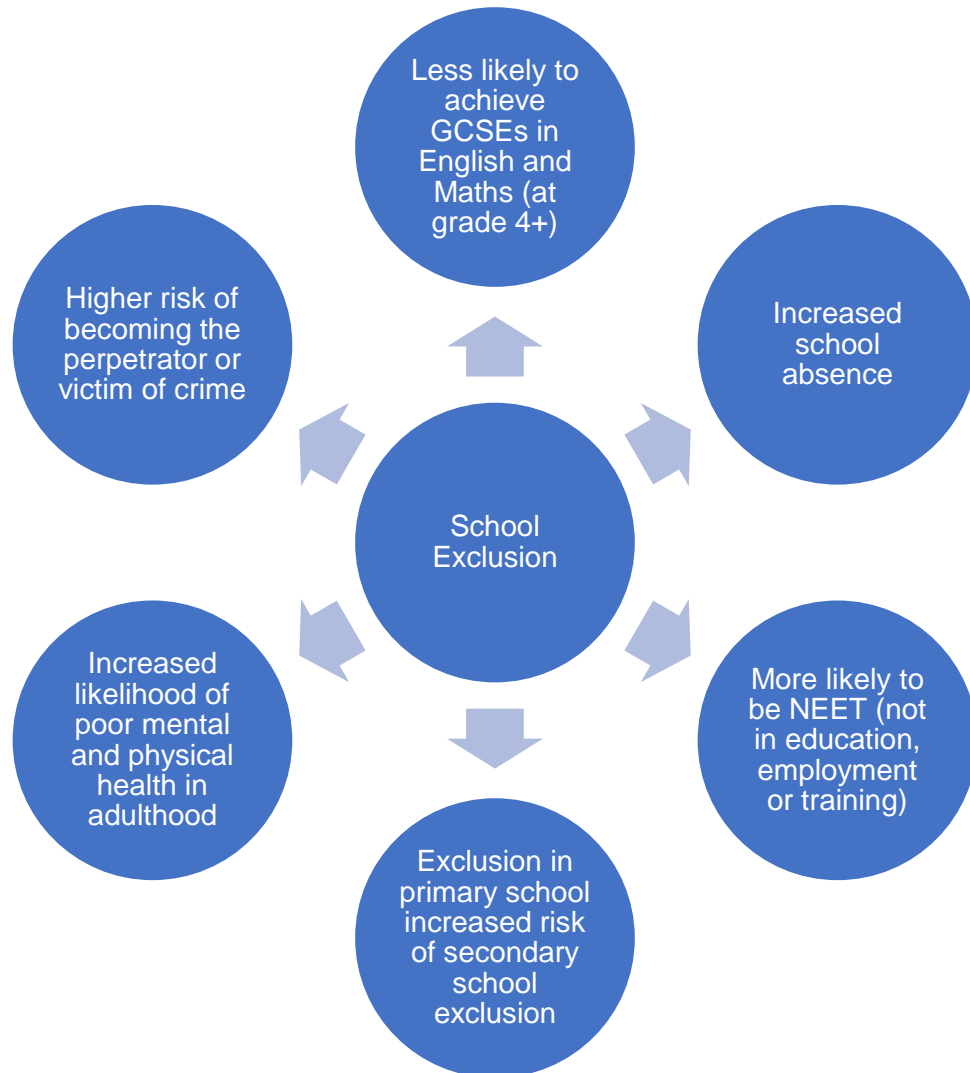
Figure 1 Negative outcomes associated with the experience of school exclusion

Research that has explored young people's views on school exclusion highlighted how exclusion creates feelings of mistrust towards school staff, a sense of their needs not being understood and feeling that they are unwanted within school[5]. The young people interviewed in this research experienced a variety of educational

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[2] Beynon & Thomson (2024)
[3] Obsuth et al. (2024)
[4] Timpson (2019)
[5] Caslin (2021)

provision following their exclusion – but none of them successfully reintegrated back into mainstream education.

Other research with young people has also discussed how exclusion increased their vulnerability to exploitation – young people were no longer connected to school; they spent long periods of time unsupervised and this in some cases led young people to find stimulation and connection elsewhere[6].

How can we reduce school exclusions?

This toolkit aims to provide approaches and strategies for supporting young people at risk of school exclusion. It is not possible to produce an exhaustive directory of all resources, services and good practice examples across the diverse and ever-changing field of inclusive education. However, this good practice toolkit aims to;

- provide an evidence-based and psychologically informed rationale as to why a focus on belonging to reduce exclusion must be a priority
- set out a Schools' Belonging Framework which we believe should inform educational systems, policies and practices
- encourage a whole-school planned approach to support belonging which is evident across all aspects of life in your setting
- encourage a targeted approach that aligns to APDR to support belonging for an individual child or young person
- Provide resources and tools to support the implementation of the Belonging Framework in a setting
- Provide 'quick links' to help all those supporting children and young people to find information about evidence-based approaches and links to useful resources and supporting agencies/services.

We understand that the use of school exclusion can be complex – and in many cases may reflect school leaders' motivation to create calm and safe school environments to support their school staff and their students to access high-quality education. However, in this toolkit we suggest strategies that move away from more traditional behaviour management systems which tend to use sanctions and segregation as a means of improving school behaviour. Instead, we draw upon theories of belonging and suggest more relational approaches may better support the needs of vulnerable young people. Our toolkit focuses on five key pillars aimed at increasing belonging and reducing exclusion:

Safety	Connection	Voice	Agency	Skills development

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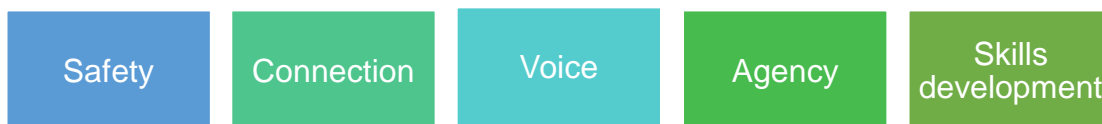
[6] Lamrhari et al. (2021)

These pillars are based on extensive research into belonging by Professor Kathryn Riley and Dr Ross Greene's work on school exclusion. More information about these five pillars is described in Section 3.

In the following section, we provide a brief overview of the importance of developing a sense of belonging and why we have chosen to develop this toolkit with belonging at the core.

Section 2: Why should we be prioritising school belonging?

The need to belong

Extensive research has established belonging as a fundamental human need[7]. Belonging to communities has supported humans over time to establish protection, affection, and shared resources. The importance of relationships has also been highlighted in a number of psychological theories. For example, Maslow (1943) in his 'Hierarchy of Needs' suggested humans needed to meet physiological, safety and belonging needs before they were able to build self-esteem and achieve 'self-actualisation' (i.e., achieving one's potential). Secure and positive relationships are also described as central to human motivation and wellbeing in other psychological theories (e.g., attachment theory and self-determination theory).
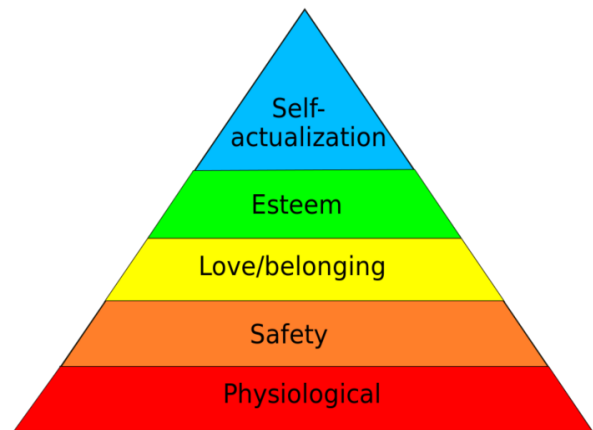
Figure 2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

School belonging

Schools hold a unique position in society as one of few shared social institutions that have the potential for creating a sense of belonging for CYP[8]. Children experience a sense of belonging when they feel[9]:

Accepted   Respected   Valued   Included
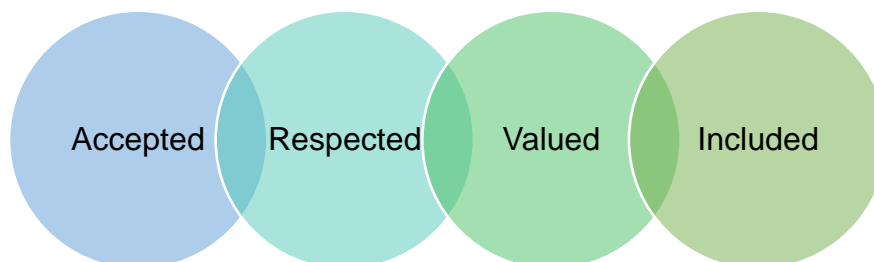
Definitions of school belonging[10] tend to emphasise the importance of:

    (1) school-based relationships and experiences
    (2) student-teacher relationships
    (3) students' general feelings about school

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[7] Baumeister & Leary (1995)
[8] Riley (2022)
[9] Goodenow (1993)
[10] Allen et al. (2018)

Riley (2022) also emphasises the need to consider children and young people's life outside of school – this recognises the need for schools to support families to feel welcome and to understand the realities of the community it is supporting.

> "Belonging can be seen as a transition from our being in a 'space' – somewhere without community, somewhere we are passing through – to the idea of a 'place', somewhere we are connected to in a meaningful way".
>
> Johnson (2023, p.170)

Why focus on school belonging?

Research has highlighted correlations between a sense of school belonging and several positive academic, behavioural, and mental health outcomes[11][12][13] (Figure 2). Steiner and colleagues (2019) also found that adolescent connectedness was associated with more positive physical and mental health outcomes in adulthood.

Figure 3 Positive outcomes associated with a sense of school belonging

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[11] Allen et al. (2018)
[12] Korpershoek et al. (2020)
[13] Riley (2022)

Government guidance regarding supporting mental health and behaviour in schools also identified belonging as a protective factor in building resiliency in children – *"school should be a safe and affirming place for children where they can develop a sense of belonging and feel able to trust and talk openly with adults" (DfE, 2018, p. 13).*
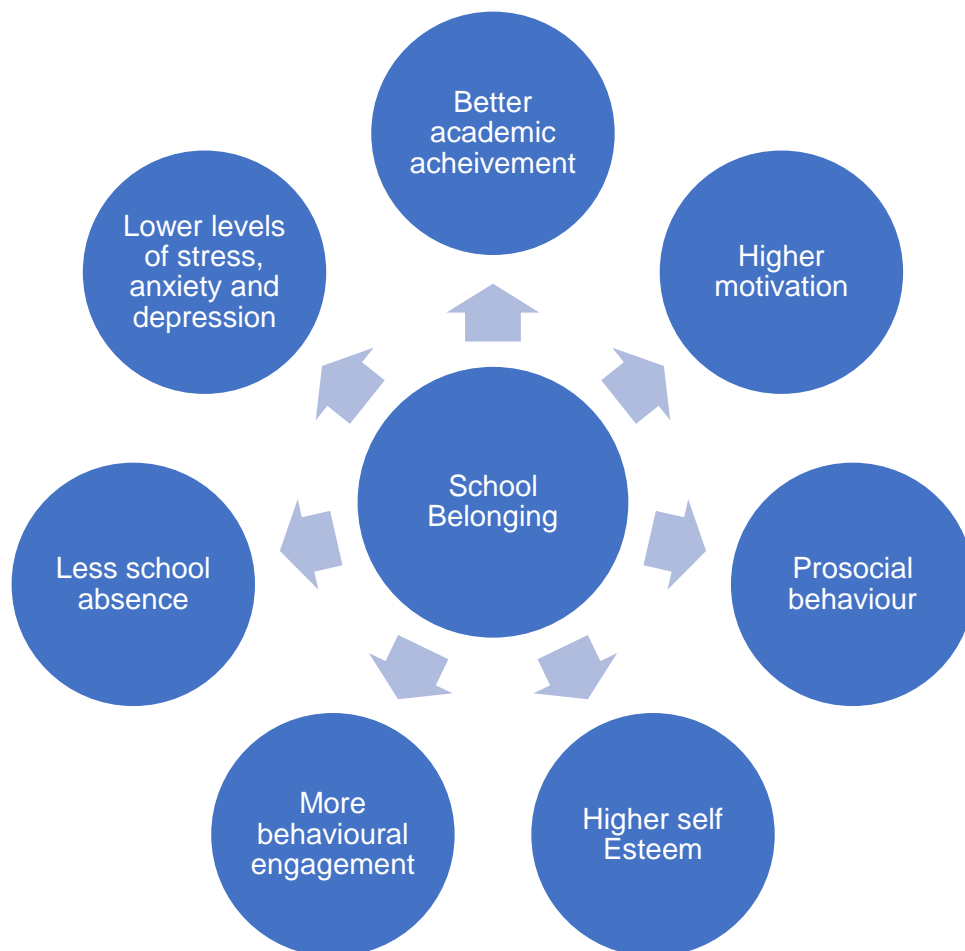
What happens when children do not feel they belong?

This research highlights great promise in terms of the important role of school. However, presently as many as 1 in 4 children and young people do not feel that they belong in school – and this figure is increasing[14]. Some of the starkest implications of this can be seen in research on ostracism – human brains react to even the briefest episode of ostracism in the same way the brain reacts to physical pain[15]. The following extract written by Kipling Williams for Kathryn Riley's book describes how feeling excluded can be expressed:

> "Ostracised individuals might go to great lengths to fit in with others, going along with the crowd, often doing things that are inconsistent with their values and beliefs. They might also become provocative, aggressive and violent, anything to get noticed. They know that externalising their anger will get them some control and acknowledgement, even if by doing so they become more disliked. Some do neither, and seek solitude instead, assuring further ostracism by giving no one a chance to include them"
> (Riley, 2022, p.32)

There is growing evidence that young people who experience feeling excluded from school are more likely to seek 'belongingness' elsewhere – sometimes in less prosocial institutions including involvement with extremism and gangs[16]

School belonging and school exclusion

Research tells us that young people who feel a sense of school belonging have better mental health, achieve higher academically, attend school more often and show more prosocial behaviour. Positive relationships also impact how people perceive and manage stress – if young people feel supported, they are likely to be more resilient in the face of school challenges.

Based on the research outlined in this section, we believe that school belonging is not only essential for young people's well-being and achievement – but is also likely to be protective against school exclusion.

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[14] Riley (2020)
[15] Riley (2022)
[16] Riley (2019)

How can we move from behavioural to relational responses?

Positive relationships are key to helping young people feel accepted, respected, valued and included. Yet, traditional behaviour policies focused on consequences/punishment and isolation have continued to be popular within the UK education system. For young people whose needs make it hard to conform to all school rules and boundaries it can be very challenging to create the relational conditions all young people need to thrive. As many who work within schools or education will know - consequences, isolation and exclusion are often not effective at supporting the most vulnerable young people to adjust their behaviour – and can serve only to increase a young person's disconnection from school. Research suggests that exclusion is not effective in the long term because it does not address a child's underlying needs[17][18] . Traditional/behaviourist approaches tend to focus on observable behaviours and miss what is happening under the surface. These approaches also tend to not be helpful in terms of supporting young people to learn prosocial behaviours and skills.
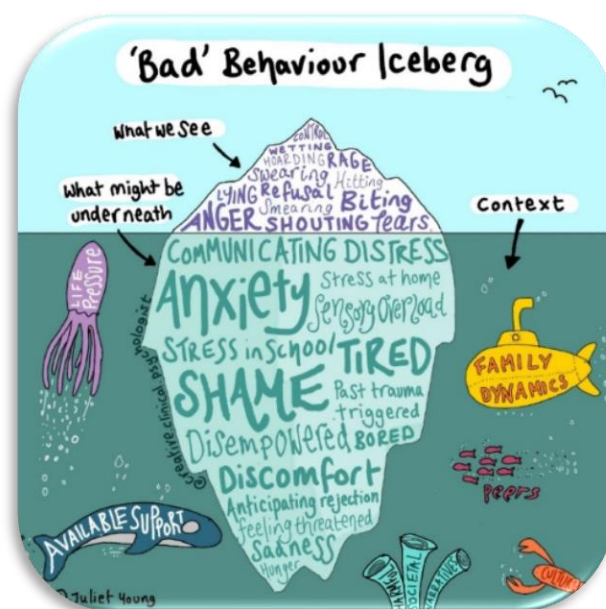
Figure 4 Iceberg model of behaviour

The table below provides a comparison between different approaches for supporting behaviour. Within this toolkit, we want to encourage school leaders and staff to consider how they could move towards more relational approaches – which are rooted in adults seeking to understand and empathise with young people.

[17] Caslin (2021)
[18] McCluskey et al. (2016)

Table 1 Comparison of different approaches for supporting behaviour (Popoola &
Sivers, 2023, p.80-81.

	Punitive/ rule-based model	Behaviourist/ consequence-based model	Relational/ developmental model
Students are…	Responsible for their actions.	Learning.	Developing, error prone and highly responsive to environment.
Main means of behaviour management is…	Fear.	Consequences.	Relationships.
Boundaries are to…	Indicate right and wrong.	Make standards clear.	Try to meet everyone's needs.
Rules should be…	Enforced without exception.	Clearly communicated.	Developed together and adapted when needed.
Behaviour is something to…	Control.	Manage.	Interpret.
Consequences are…	Sanctions and punishments.	Ways to shape behaviour.	A last resort, only used within a process of repair.
'Inappropriate' behaviour is…	Wrongdoing and deliberate.	Learned.	A sign of an unmet need, difficulty coping lack of knowledge.
The causes of difficulties are…	Lack of compliance and insufficient discipline.	Learned poor responses and lack of appropriate reinforcement.	Mostly in the environment, relationship-based and developmentally appropriate.
Solutions lie in…	The child.	Just in consequences.	Understanding what the behaviour tells us about the child and their need.
Students who don't manage should be…	Excluded or fixed.	Helped and given intervention.	Understood and included.
Policy effectiveness is measured by…	Compliance.	Behaviour change.	Well-being.

Section 3: Schools' Belonging Framework

The following section provides guidance on how to support school belonging using a variety of whole school approaches and individual practices with the overall aim at reducing school exclusions through a relational approach. This framework is based on five overarching 'pillars' *(informed by the evidence base and the work of Kathryn Riley and Ross Green)* to guide schools in creating a setting which places belonging at its core:

1. Safety
2. Connection
3. Agency
4. Voice
5. Skills development

Each of these 'pillars' will be introduced in turn in the following section alongside whole school approaches that work to enhance one or more of the five 'pillars' in schools. Work at this level often involves changing the culture within the school and how those at risk of exclusion are understood, responded to, and supported. Alongside whole school approaches individual/targeted practices will also be suggested for each of the five 'pillars'. It is important to note that evidence suggests that individual practices support students best when they exist within a whole-school culture that facilitates them[19]

A note on values

All of us have our own set of values, unique to us, and based on a multitude of factors such as our friends and family, our own childhood and personal experiences, and wider sociopolitical influences throughout the course of our lives. These influence how we make sense of the world and others and how we make sense of ourselves. Values are displayed or lived not obtained or possessed. Unlike goals, they are not 'achieved' so whilst we may use values, they are never used up; they are a continual available source of motivation and meaning no matter what situation we find ourselves in[20]. As well as each of us having values individually, whole school communities also portray, either explicitly or implicitly, a number of values. These should be co-produced with the whole school community and championed through leadership. Behaviour policies must be based on the shared values of the community to aid trust within the social context and empower group participation.

The Schools' Belonging Framework is based upon a number of values, such as the importance of good relationships and connection for young people, their underlaying need to feel cared for, advocated for, and valued, their need for dignity and mutual respect, and that through this young people live happier, more fulfilling lives and are more driven towards success.

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[19] Henderson and Smith (2022).
[20] Atkins, Wilson & Hayes (2019).

The five 'pillars' of the Schools' Belonging Framework

Based on the research evidence of Kathryn Riley and the work of Ross Green, the following five 'pillars' need to be considered at all levels of the school in order to support belonging. The five pillars are intended as a guide from which schools can help foster a sense of belonging for all children and staff, based upon research evidence.
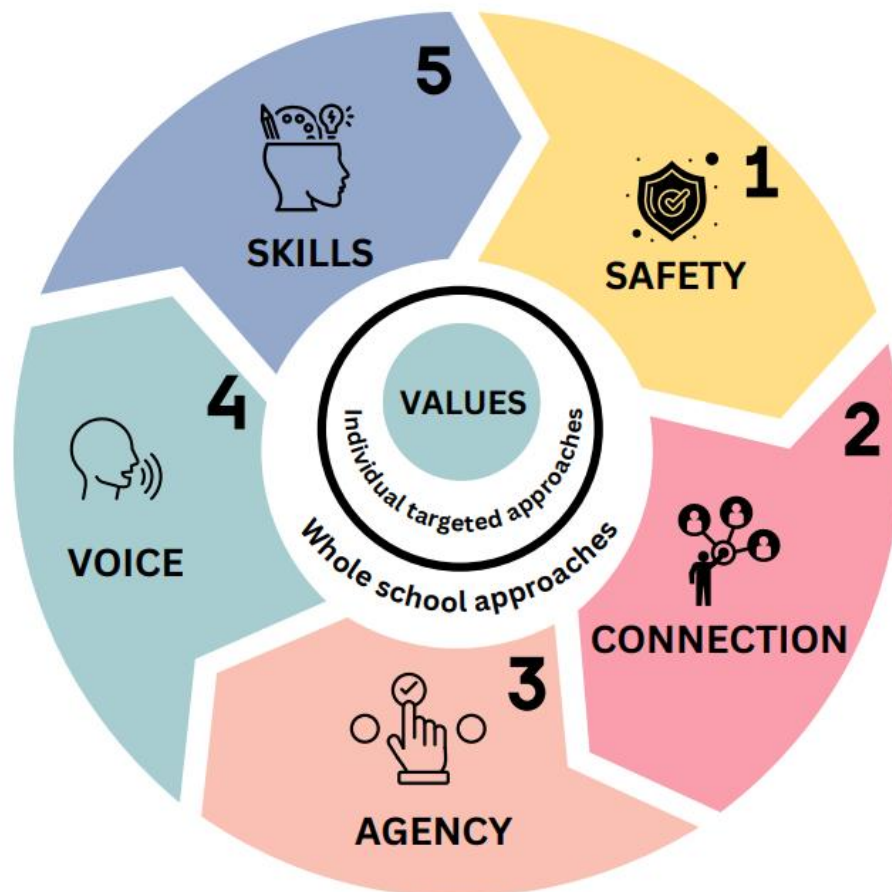

Figure 5 The school belonging framework demonstrates the five 'pillars', with values at the heart, and individual/targeted approaches alongside whole school approaches to facilitate each 'pillar'.

What follows will be an introduction to each 'pillar' within the School Belonging Framework, and a range of whole school approaches and individual practices schools might draw upon.
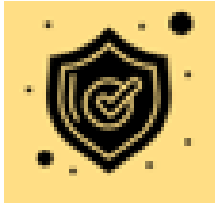
SAFETY

A feeling of safety is essential for children being able to learn and play and engage socially with others, and it is also an important prerequisite for children to begin to trust us. This makes ensuring children's sense of safety an all important task for schools who want children to learn and thrive academically and socially. Evidence from the research literature frequently identifies the need for children to feel safe in order to connect to the school context and feel a sense of belonging there. Some children require more support through relationships, support and structure to develop feelings of security and safety, so that they can begin to feel a sense of connectedness to their school.

Safety cues- all children, particularly those who have experienced trauma, are sensitive to cues in their environment telling them whether they are safe or unsafe. It is important for us to be aware of the messages we give around safety, not just through what we say, but our tone of voice and body language too.

Predictability- children, like adults, tend to feel more secure in situations where there is structure and where they know what to expect and what is expected of them. Children need to be prepared for unexpected changes, and staff need to respond to situations consistently to one another.

Containing emotions- children need to learn that experiencing heightened emotions is a part of life and something that can be managed. Knowing that school staff are able to respond to emotional situations effectively and consistently without judgement helps provide children a sense that their feelings are manageable, and that they are ultimately safe. Children who experience emotional containment are also more likely to learn new ways to regulate their own emotions and resultant behaviours.
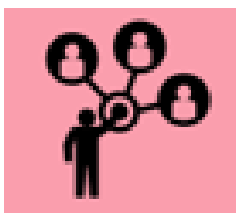
CONNECTION

As social creatures we all need to feel a sense of connection and have opportunities to feel connected to others. Without a sense of connection children are at risk of social isolation. Children learn and engage best when they feel connected to their peers, those teaching them, the school as a whole, and also the curriculum itself. Children need to feel that beyond *attending* school, they are '*a part*' of the school. This is at the core of the notion of belonging. Some children will need to form strong connections to particular key staff or a small group of adults within the school in order to feel a sense of connection. Children who have experienced less opportunities for meaningful connection will take longer to engage in reciprocal connected interactions. These children need our patience and kindness in order to learn *how* to connect.

Physical and emotional availability – staff need to be available to children both physically and emotionally. This means finding moments where the child can have your undivided attention and experience care, empathy, as well as shared joy.

Attuned, responsive, and playful- children need opportunities for shared enjoyment where adults emphasise their own humanity and reciprocate with children. They need to know that they are liked, understood emotionally, and important. Finding moments to express joy and have playful interactions with children also provides essential safety cues and supports *genuine* connection. Where staff promote these kinds of interactions, children are more likely to experience comfort and joy and a sense of belonging.

Repair- fostering strong connections also means responding well when things go wrong and finding ways to maintain and repair relationships. There needs to be an understanding that some children will really struggle to take an active role in repair; this needs to be modelled by the adults and be the adults responsibility.
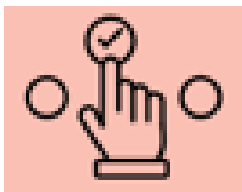
 AGENCY

Having a sense of agency (a belief that what one says and does will make a difference) is an essential component for supporting belonging in schools. Both staff and the children need to believe that they have a voice and are an important part of how the school operates in order to feel connected to the setting. Without a sense of agency, feelings of powerlessness and disconnection erode attempts we make to improve the schools culture, alongside our support of individual children.

Having an impact and valuing everyone- school leaders need to promote an environment where everyone can have an impact and feel valued. All staff need to feel valued for the unique skills they bring to the setting in order to feel connected to the setting. Children also need to feel valued and recognised as individuals based on their unique backgrounds and personalities. Schools also need to be aware of equality and diversity and how to promote the voice of marginalised groups so that everyone can feel a sense of belonging to the school.

Person centred planning- it is essential that children have some say in decisions made about them. When children are involved in plans made about them they are more likely to be an active part of the solution rather than resist our attempts to provide support. How this looks will differ depending on each individual child, and it is important not to assume what would be best before asking the child.

Family involvement- schools need to also support a connection to the wider community. Parents need to feel that they are working together with the school and that their participation is important.

VOICE

Children need to have a sense of being heard within schools at all levels if they are to feel that school is a place where they belong. The importance of the voice of the child and their right to have a say in decisions made about them have long been identified by research, policy, and guidance. Schools need to emphasise the importance of the child's perspective as well as the views of parents. It is also important to find ways to engage children and families best in expressing their views and to have systems in place for incorporating the views of children and families at the heart of school systems.

Eliciting child views- schools need to find creative means by which to promote the child's voice. They also need to be aware of ethically and developmentally appropriate means by which to engage children when gaining their voice. It is important that staff understand the value of the child's perspective and that no assumptions are made about the child's experiences without first attempting to gain their views.

Parents voice- as with the children, schools need to be sensitive to family circumstances, ethical considerations surrounding diversity and how best to engage families from a range of backgrounds. There needs to be systems in place for promoting the voice of families that allow for shared problem-solving and collaboration, that are proactive and solution oriented, and begin as soon as problems emerge.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The work of Ross Green *(see appendix 4 for more on Ross Greens work through Lives in the Balance)* has highlighted that for many children part of the reason why they struggle to find a sense of belonging within the school context is that they have not yet learnt the skills they would need to cope and to thrive within such environments. Children who have difficulties with executive functioning, for example, may struggle with learning within the classroom but also with regulating their emotions in both learning and play situations. Schools need to provide a social and emotional curriculum alongside the rest of the curriculum in order for all students to succeed. Many schools now provide a range of reasonable adjustments, whole school approaches and small group and bespoke interventions for children.

Emotional regulation- children need staff and school environments to provide them with skills for managing heightened emotional states in order to reduce the likelihood of inappropriate/unsafe behaviours. Children need to be taught skills for understanding and managing their emotions in order to thrive in life and also to cope within the school environment.

Social skills- being able to form positive social connections is of vital importance to all children. Some children will require more support with this than others. It is also important to acknowledge that the peer relationships look different for every child.

Executive functioning and learning- children also require staff to make appropriate adaptations to learning and provide additional support for key learning skills in order to thrive within the classroom. Some children who have difficulties succeeding in their learning will experience a sense of failing that may result in feelings of disconnection from school; ultimately feeling that school is 'not for someone like me'.

Whole school level approaches

The following tables provide a reference guide for implementation of the five 'pillars'. Table 1 indicates a range of whole school approaches that can be implemented at a universal level for all children/staff, and Table 2 indicates a range of individual practices that can be implemented at a targeted/individual level for children who struggle in particular.

It is important when deciding what approaches and practices your school will use to begin first with those wider approaches and a focus on shifting the culture of the school as a whole. Individual practices tend to flounder where they are not fully understood the entire staff team, and/or not supported by the school's ways of working as a whole.

Table 2 A summary of a range of whole school approaches

Approach/Practice	Description	Pillar/s	Impact and information/research	Implementation
Relational-based behaviour policy	A whole school approach that emphasises the central importance of relationships and co-regulation rather than rewards and sanctions.	Safety Connection Voice Skills	Informs a school culture led by relational approaches at every level. Helps children to feel safe, understood, and valued, as well as giving them new skills to manage their feelings and the resultant behaviours. More information: Relational Practice - Devon Behaviour regulation policy - Brighton and Hove Book - 'know me to teach me' See also the reference list within the toolkit for a number of studies that highlight the evidence base of the importance of belonging/school-based relationships.	See appendix 4 for how to develop a relational-based behaviour policy.

Reasonable adjustments	A prerequisite for all schools supporting the needs of any child with SEND.	Safety Connection Voice Agency Skills	Reduces the likelihood of larger problems developing through early problem-solving and intervention/adaptation in response to the child. More information: South Glos - Inclusion Toolkit EEF guidance report - behaviour	See the Send Code of Practice 2015. School leaders may need to provide support for staff
PACE	A relational approach for staff to use when working with children to support positive relationships and self-awareness.	Safety Connection	Facilitates secure attachments, supports positive relationships and self-awareness for children. More information: DDP Network - PACE Using PACE in schools	Implemented by all staff in schools.
Emotion coaching	Used in times of heightened emotions and resulting behaviour to guide and teach the child about emotions and how to respond effectively.	Safety Connection Skills	Children learn to understand their emotions and manage them more effectively. Staff are empowered to respond to emotional situations in a structured way. More information: Emotion Coaching Emotion Coaching - Research	Implemented by all staff in schools.

Restorative approaches	A conflict resolution approach based on repairing relationships after conflict rather than solely focusing on punishment.	Safety Connection Agency	Reduces instances of peer related conflict and empowers everyone to repair relationships and improve interactions in the future. More information: Restorative Practice | Oxfordshire Schools Restorative Approaches - Education Scotland Restorative Practice - Research	Facilitated by all staff in schools and/or pastoral staff facilitating restorative conversations.
Home/school partnership	Systems in place to support the home/school relationship. Parents are engaged with when problem-solving as a priority for the school.	Connection Voice Agency	Allows for more effective problem-solving and a greater investment in solution finding. Helps parental engagement/ investment in the school. More information: Home-school partnerships - Research Summary	Implemented at all levels and led by school leaders.

Executive functioning and metacognition support within the classroom	The *process* of learning is taught directly in a number of areas (E.g. organisation of the task, task initiation, memory, metacognition) rather than just the content of what is being learnt.	Safety Skills	improves children's ability to access learning materials, become more self-aware and more effective problem solvers. Evidence suggests executive functioning and metacognitive approaches within the classroom lead to accelerated learning. More information: Metacognition and Self-regulated Learning- EEF	The EP service can offer training in MELSA to support staff in meeting the learning needs of particular pupils. May be implemented at an individual level or class level.
DfE Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing	A universal whole school/setting approach to promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing based on 8 principles	Safety Connection Voice Agency Skills	The 8 principles are informed by evidence and practitioner feedback about what works and builds on what many schools and colleges are already doing across the country. There is emphasis on curriculum teaching and learning, student voice, staff development, identifying need and monitoring impact, working with parents and carers, targeted support and ethos and environment. Promoting children and young peoples emotional health and wellbeing	National Support: Senior Mental Health Leads Training Local support: Schools/settings can use a self-review tool to work towards the Mental Health and Wellbeing Award based on the DfE guidance. They can also access free Mental Health Training for school staff and one to one guidance around developing whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing and achieving the ward. Enquiries to mentalhealth@southglos.gov.uk

A note on Reasonable Adjustments

The Equality Act 2010 laid out the legal obligation of schools to provide reasonable adjustments for children and young people with SEND. Every child needs to be supported to reach the best outcomes, and for those with a disability this means making adjustments that minimise the impact of that disability on their school experience and success. It is important to remember that where a child's disability is not accommodated for by reasonable adjustments this may lead to breaches of school rules because the student's needs are not met. In these cases, a decision to exclude may be discriminatory (DfE, 2022-2023,p).

A few examples of reasonable adjustments could include:

- o Adjusting the seating arrangement for a visually impaired student
- o Providing movement breaks for a child with ADHD
- o Adults adapting their response for a child with Tourette's syndrome
- o Allowing a child with sensory processing needs to transition between classes 5 minutes early
- o Providing ear defenders for a student with sensitivity to noise
- o Providing a laptop for students with difficulties writing

Individual/targeted level practices

The following table summarises a range of individual practices schools can use to support children at a targeted/specialised level. Schools will vary in their choice of individual practices. Whichever individual practices are employed by schools they need to sit within a wider relationally informed school culture to have the greatest impact.

Table 3 A summary of individual/targeted level approaches and strategies

Approach/Practice	Description	Pillar/s	Impact and information/research	Implementation
ELSA	Emotional literacy support assistants provide targeted, goal-oriented support around developing children's social and emotional skills.	Safety Connection Skills	Children develop their social and emotional skills in a range of areas tailored to each individual. Schools are more able to support the SEMH needs of children. More information: ELSA Network ELSA Research	Implemented by trained ELSAs. The EP service offers training each year for new ELSAs.

Nurture groups	A short term small group intervention for children with SEMH needs led by two members of staff.	Safety Connection Skills	Improves social and emotional skills and prosocial behaviours are seen at school and home as well as the classroom. More information: Nurture Groups - Information and Research.	Refer to Nurture Groups for further guidance.
Key adult	Used to support children individually who may have attachment related needs, focusing on safety and connection.	Safety Connection	Supports children with attachment related needs to form positive attachments in schools. More information: Please see references and further reading on attachment and belonging.	Implemented for some children with SEMH needs, who may have experienced trauma. Support services can provide training on attachment and the key adult approach.
Meet and greet	A consistent adult is made available to meet a child each morning to support their transition into school.	Safety Connection	Children are more confident coming into school and reduces levels of anxiety during transition. More information: Please see references and further reading on attachment and belonging.	Implemented for some children who experience anxiety around school.
Safe Spaces	Provides a quieter environment children can access when becoming overwhelmed within school.	Safety	Children are more able to cope with the demands of the school day. More information: Self Regulation Spaces	Safe spaces are made available for individual children who require additional support.

			Creating Safe Spaces	
Enhanced transition	Dependent on the child's age this may include additional visits to a new classroom/school, and/or visual approaches such as a transition book.	Safety Connection	Helps to reduce the levels of stress children experience during transition and supports new connections. Transitions - EEF Transitions - Research Supporting Transitions	Should to be tailored to individual children's needs.
Co-regulation plans	Provides a plan for supporting children to regulate their emotions that staff can follow.	Safety Connection Skills	Staff are more equipped to respond to a range of heightened emotions. Children know what to expect when they become distressed. More information: Information about Co-Regulation Please see also sections on Emotion Coaching and Zones of Regulation.	Please refer to appendix 3 for more information and resources on co- regulation plans

Circle of friends	A process for developing shared understanding of difference with a class in order to support social acceptance of a particular individual.	Connection Safety	Creates a positive impact on pair relationships and improves social acceptance. More information: Circle of Friends - Inclusive Solutions Circle of Friends-Research	Implemented with a class (usually with a individual child focus) by an appropriately trained staff member (such as an ELSA).
Person Centred Practice	Schools seek the views of children and include them in meetings about their support, placing them at the centre of problem solving and decision making.	Voice Agency	Promotes a child's sense of agency and improves their buy in to the plan. Needs to be adapted to the child's level of development and preferences. More information: Person Centred Planning - Inclusive Solutions Putting children at the centre - Save the Children resource	

Creative approaches for gaining child views (E.g. Drawing The Ideal School/3 things about me/the magic wand question etc)	There are a range of play-based and/or creative means by which a child or young person's views can be explored. These need to be adapted to the child's current levels of development and preferences.	Voice Agency	Evidence suggests that collaborative problem-solving which includes the child's voice is an important part of finding solutions. More information: See above information on person centred practice.	Please refer to appendix 1 for resources for gaining child views.
Paths/maps	Person-centered planning approach aimed at exploring the child's dream and wishes and developing an action plan based on a number of goals.	Voice Agency	Promotes the child's sense of agency and voice and provides a creative and collaborative structure to problem solving. More information: See above information on person centred practice.	The EP service can provide support in using a range of creative problem-solving approaches including PATHS/MAPs.
Peer mentoring	Children are matched to form one to one supportive friendships, positive role models.	Connection Skills	Supports peer connection and conflict resolution. More information: Peer Mentoring - Research	Implemented at an individual or group level.

Sociograms	Aimed at exploring social inclusion/exclusion /rejection. Usually employed at a class level.	Connection	Can help identify children within a group which may be experiencing social rejection or who are isolated. More information: Sociograms	Refer to Sociograms for guidance on the use of sociograms. These could also be supported by the EP service.
Lego Therapy and/or other social skills groups	A play-based intervention focusing on developing collaborative play skills.	Connection Skills	Improves children's skills in a number of areas such as turn taking, listening, problem solving and sharing. More information: Lego-based Therapy - Information Lego-based therapy - Research Lego-based Therapy - Evidence	Often aimed at younger children with social communication needs or who are autistic.
Zones of regulation	A resource that can be used to support individual children developing their emotional understanding and regulation skills. Can also be implemented at a whole school level.	Safety Connection Skills	Helps children understand their emotions and find ways to manage difficult feelings more effectively. More information Zones of Regulation - Research Zones of Regulation - Video discussing evidence base	Implemented by school staff at an individual or whole school level.

The Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (AllsUP) by Ross Green	A means of identifying lagging skills that may prevent a child from meeting the cognitive, emotional and/or behavioural demands of school	Skills	Improves collaborative problem solving and skills development for children in a number of areas. More information: Research – Lives in the balance	Implemented by a member of staff/EP trained in the approach.

A note on transitions

During times of transition careful thinking is required in order to support children with SEND. Considering the above 5 pillars, transitions must be a central consideration of schools and staff in order to ensure children's sense of belonging remains strong during any change to their educational provision. Schools need to work hard to identify and respond to times where children may be at risk of losing some of the robustness of their connections, feelings of safety, and sense of agency and purpose in school.

Key times when children may need additional support:

o When children transition from primary to secondary school
o A child who changes school through a managed move process or because they move house
o When there is an unexpected change of class teacher
o When a child is permanently excluded from school

Key tips for supporting belonging around transitions:

o Be aware of those transitions which are less apparent. It is common to provide additional support when children move from primary to secondary school but other transition times are important too.
o When multiple settings are involved in a transition, fostering a sense of school belonging remains everybody's responsibility. It requires good communication of the child's needs and how best to support them.
o Consider the importance of building new connections where there is a new context and helping the child find a sense of safety/security within this new environment.
o Consider new ways in which the child's voice and agency will need to be fostered, particularly where children transition to a much larger setting with more people. E.g. primary to secondary.
o Consider whether the child would need to employ skills within their new environment that they did not have to do demonstrate previously and how they can be supported with this.

Please refer to the Belonging Support Plan within the Tools and Resources section, which may be used as a planning tool to support children during transitions.

Section 4: Steps to Creating a Belonging Support Plan – Assess, Plan, Do, Review

Assess – gather information

Supporting individual students begins with early identification and providing them with the right support at the earliest opportunity. It is important that there is a shared understanding and awareness of any indicators for future exclusion, so that CYP at risk of PEX can be identified as early as possible and effective support can be put in place. It may be that young people present with few or many different indicators of risk.

In order to recognise the possible indicators of being at risk of PEX it is important that staff members remain curious about the CYP's behaviour and try to refrain from making assumptions. Research evidence links a number of life experiences with increased risk of later exclusion from school. There is also a growing body of research evidence that identifies factors which can mitigate potential risk for exclusion. These are known as 'protective factors'. It is important to consider key elements in their child's situation that could be seen as helpful alongside the risks in order to gain a holistic understanding of the situation.

We have developed a profiling tool to help identify underlying risk factors and protective factors associated with school exclusion, based on research evidence. We recommend using this as your initial assessment tool to identify what lies beneath the presenting dysregulated behaviours putting the CYP at risk of exclusion. The **'Profiling Tool' can be found in the 'Tools and resources' section**.
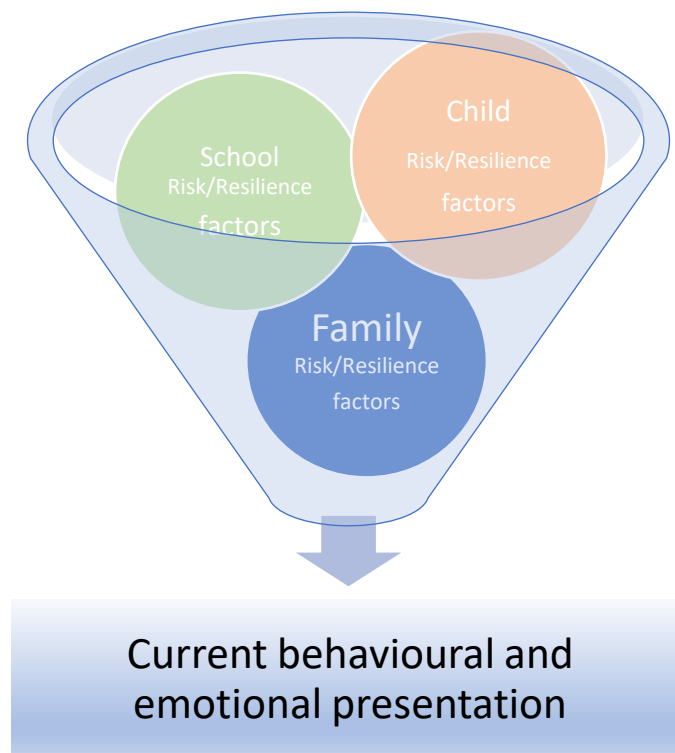
Tips for assessment and planning:

Gather the Team: The most important first step at the assessment and planning stage, is to gather together the people who will be best placed to gather information and problem-solve.

  ❖ Who knows the child best (school and home)?

  ❖ Who is in a position to make necessary changes?

  ❖ Who will be providing the support? Who comes into contact with the child every day?

  ❖ Any external professionals who can contribute information and support problem-solving (e.g., EP, Social Care, Families Plus, YOT)

Plan – interpret the information and create a plan

Information needs to be gathered from a range of sources (e.g., child, family, school, other professionals) to support school staff to create hypotheses about a student's underlying needs. This will provide a more holistic overview of the various interacting factors that are important to understanding the young person. These should then inform the school support plan and actions to be taken. The profiling tool can be found within the 'Tools and Resources' section of this document).

Once there is an established hypothesis about the student's presenting needs (informed by information gathered using the profiling tool) we recommend developing a **Belonging Support Plan** (which can also be found in the 'Tools and Resources' section alongside the profiling tool).

The Belonging Support Plan is based on the five pillars from the School's Belonging Framework and details how to foster a sense of belonging for the student. These are:

- Safety
- Connection
- Voice
- Agency
- Skills development

Do - Implementing the agreed plan

The support plan implemented will be unique to the individual circumstances of the student, family, and school, and based on the Belonging Support Plan agreed actions. For some students, the Belonging Support Plan will need to be more detailed. For those at significant risk of PEX it will be necessary to involve professional agencies to support the assess, plan, do, review, process. This needs to

be done in a timely way, rather than when the behaviour has become so critical that there is little time to carry out thorough assessment and plan next steps.

Tips for implementing the plan:

- ❖ Everyone's roles and responsibilities as part of the plan should be clear.
- ❖ There will need to be an understanding within the wider school staff team so that the Belonging Support Plan is not undermined.
- ❖ Ongoing problem-solving meetings which involve key staff will help identify further issues as well as sharing effective strategies and identifying the way forward.
- ❖ Actions agreed during the planning stages need to be regularly reviewed and will require adaptations as things progress. Weekly problem-solving meetings between key staff would be recommended initially, alongside regular contact with parents and the child.

Review

It is essential that any plan is regularly reviewed. The frequency of reviews will be determined and agreed by those involved based on the outcomes and anticipated progress in response to the plan. This could range from weekly to termly reviews although for a student at risk of PEX weekly may be needed. There should be set dates for reviewing how any support plan is progressing with key people identified and invited to attend. It is essential that the child/young person and parents are actively involved in the review. The review should identify and celebrate any progress made and review whether further information has come to light to help inform future steps. These next steps can include:

• Consolidating and maintaining the current Belonging Support Plan,

• Setting new targets and/or actions for the young person, school and parents.

• Identifying that further consultation with other agencies needs to occur which may, if necessary, lead to a referral to other services.

Summary – Steps to Creating a Belonging Support Plan

Staff begin to develop concerns about child's presentation in school

ASSESS:
Call a meeting of key staff, any other professionals involved and parent(s)/ carer(s) to discuss concerns and complete the **Profiling Tool** together or with parents separately first

ASSESS:
Key adult to meet with child and discuss situation from child's point of view

PLAN:
Call a further meeting of key staff to develop the **Belonging Support Plan** using the proforma. Clarify everyone's responsibilites

DO:
Carry out the agreed actions and ensure all staff understand the plan.

REVIEW:
Agree the review dates during the planning meeting; weekly to start with would be recommended

Section 5: Tools and Resources

The following section contains several key tools and resources for schools to draw upon, including:

1. The '**Relational audit tool'**: this is a tool schools may use to develop their systems as a whole to be informed by relational approaches
2. The '**Understanding individual risk of exclusion profiling tool'** (also referred to as the 'Profiling Tool')**:** this is the tool used to explore a child who may be at risk of exclusion and to develop an understanding of why this may be the case.
3. The '**Belonging Support Plan':** this is the tool used to develop a plan for supporting a child who may be at risk of exclusion or who needs additional support such as during a transition.

Resource one: The Relational Audit tool

The following audit tool is intended for schools and settings to explore next steps for development in relational approaches in a number of areas. It is recommended that the audit is completed by a member of SLT and shared with the wider SLT, or by a number of SLT members together. It may also be appropriate for schools to share the completed audit tool with their link EP and plan next steps for development together.

Please rate you're setting in relation to the prompts below under each area either red, amber, or green. Please note any additional comments in the final column including any evidence linked with the rating. Finally, summarise next steps based on lower scores or key areas.

(*This tool is based on the work of the Devon 'guidance for developing relational policy and practise' audit tool alongside the Bath and no Northeast Somerset 'trauma informed behaviour policy guidance'' audit tool*).

South Gloucestershire Educational Psychology Service relationally informed audit tool for schools and settings.

Name of school:
Name of person completing audit:
Date:

	Red	Amber	Green	Notes/evidence
1.School ethos, policy, values				
Does the school have a clear set of values/beliefs and are they modelled, promoted and facilitated by school leadership and school policy?				
Do the school's values reflect the importance of relationships, an understanding of trauma, and the needs of all children including those with SEND?				

Does the school's behaviour policy reflect a relationally informed understanding of behaviour?				
Are the beliefs and values shared with all members of the community and celebrated through activities and displays?				
Are the beliefs and values expressed through everyday interactions, teaching practice, systems and processes?				
Are beliefs and values established through a collaborative process involving children, school staff, governors and the wider community?				
2.Staff development, knowledge, and understanding across the school				
Do all staff understand the effect of trauma on child development and of attachment theory?				
Are all staff able to recognise the potential signs of a child with attachment difficulties? Does this understanding inform their response to children who display persistent disruption in the classroom?				
Are there opportunities for some members within the school to				

become experts in trauma/attachment and support other members of staff?				
Are there systems in place to support new staff members and NQT's to understand trauma and attachment?				
Are all staff able to name the 5 pillars (named within this toolkit- safety, connection, voice, agency, skills) linked with developing relationships and supporting belonging? Are all staff aware of how these should influence their practise at a school, class, and individual level?				
3.Removing barriers and supporting diversity				
To what extent are all staff aware of the barriers to inclusion and those children who are most vulnerable to exclusion? E.g. boys, those with SEND/ACES and those from particular ethnic backgrounds?				
How well is data (attendance, exclusion, attainment, participation etc) pertaining to vulnerable groups collected, analysed and utilised to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities?				

To what extent are all teachers aware of their responsibility and have the expertise to meet additional needs through good Quality first teaching?				
How well does the school actively challenge racism through anti-racist policies, systems, curriculum and practice?				
How well does the school respect, value and celebrate diversity of social identity, ethnicity, gender or sexuality and to what extent is this shown through the actions of all members of staff, curriculum content, whole school initiatives, celebrations and the school environment?				
Does the school environment support all children to feel safe? Does the school environment have areas where students can connect in a variety of ways? Is there a dedicated space children can access during unstructured times (break/lunchtime) which provides additional structure and safety?				
4.Supporting co-regulation and setting limits				

Are all staff aware of the link between children with sensory needs, social communication differences, those with executive functioning needs, and the resultant difficulties with self-regulation of feelings/behaviour?				
Are all staff aware of the link between children with attachment difficulties and resultant difficulties with self-regulation of feeling/behaviour?				
Are all staff trained in de-escalation approaches in the classroom?				
Are there systems to support individual children with Co-regulation?				
Are there approaches for developing emotional awareness across the school, for individuals, as well as support for parents?				
Is there consistency across the staff team on setting limits to behaviour and relationally informed responses to unsafe behaviours? Is this outlined within the schools behaviour policy?				
5.Supporting individual children				
Are there clear systems in place for identifying risk of exclusion and understanding the needs of				

children whose behaviour is of concern?				
Are there clear links between pastoral and SEN teams and regular opportunities to discuss children whose behaviour is a concern collaboratively? Do school systems emphasise that behaviour is linked with SEN?				
Are there clear systems for provision mapping for children whose behaviour is of concern? Based on an understanding of how to support children's sense of belonging?				
Are there additional measures taken during times of transition to support children who present with attachment difficulties and/or whose behaviour is of concern?				
Are there designated safe spaces within the school that children can access when dysregulated? Do all staff know where these are and who can access these?				
Is there regular review of support plans for individual children and supervision for staff supporting the most vulnerable children?				
6.Working with parents, professionals, and involving children				

To what extend do parents feel welcome, valued and listened to?				
Do school systems support open communication between the school and parents?				
How well are parents utilised and valued with regard to their child's experience of school?				
Are there staff who are skilled in eliciting the voice of the child?				
Does the school provide regular opportunities for children to express their views and feel listened to?				
Are children given opportunities to be involved in decision making processes in a way that works best for them?				
Are partner agencies involved to problem solve and inform proactive action plans or are agencies involved at crisis point when action planning may be too late?				
Are partner agencies utilised in training, on-going staff development?				
7.Supporting staff well-being				
Are there opportunities for staff to connect with colleagues, such as				

exercise, well-being or relaxation groups? How well are relationships between staff developed and supported?				
Do staff feel able to express their views and feelings about their work?				
Do staff have control over their working practices?				
How well do systems and processes support staff to feel valued and respected?				
Do all staff have opportunities for professional development?				
How well are staff supported in their work through supervision, line management, coaching and mentoring?				

Resource two: The Profiling Tool for Understanding Risk of Exclusion

Section A: Pupil Characteristics

Pupil characteristics **(A yes in one or more of these factors is identified in the research as increasing risk of exclusion)**		
Name:	YES	NO
On SEND register *pupils with SEMH have the highest rate of exclusion. Pupils with SpLD and MLD and ASD also have high rates of exclusion		
Family living on low income *Typically measured by eligibility for Free School Meals		
Secondary aged pupil *Suspensions and PEX peak around age 14		
Ethnicity *Gypsy/Roma heritage; Mixed White and Black Caribbean ethnicity; Black Caribbean ethnicity; Traveller of Irish Heritage are at increased risk of exclusion		
Gender: Male *Male pupils have a higher permanent exclusion rate than female pupils and the suspension rate is almost double for male pupils that for female pupils		
Notes:		

Section B: Underlying Risk factors

	Level of concern				
Traumatic Experiences	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Loss and bereavement, may be multiple and traumatic					
Losing a parent/caregiver through divorce, death or abandonment					
Has experienced abuse (physical/sexual/emotional)					
Note on key items:					
Protective factors:					
Home Environment	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Difficulties with behaviour/boundaries at home					
Insecure patterns of attachment - difficulties with forming relationships with adults (controlling/ rejecting/ connection-seeking/ lack of boundaries with new people/ overfamiliar with strangers)					
Parental substance use/abuse/addiction					

Parental experiences of education were negative and may have led to difficulties/wariness around to engaging with education professionals					
Lack of role models for education or employment					
Parental mental ill-health					
Parent conflict at home/ domestic violence					
Someone in the family has gone to prison					
Young carer responsibilities					
High risk behaviour in the community- including alcohol misuse and offending behaviour and periods in secure care/custody					
Sibling bullying					
Child Looked After (now or in the past)					
Adopted or fostered					
Social Care involvement: Has there been CIN/CP Plan. If so is this current or historic? Are there ongoing concerns?					

Note on key items:

Protective factors:

Relationships/belonging	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Lack of role models for education/employment					
Being bullied -scapegoated by other peers					
Seems to have few friends/ friendship issues- socially isolated					
Seeking group acceptance and relationships through risk taking behaviors					
Poor relationship with teacher/s					

Note on key items:

Protective factors:

- o E.g. positive peer relationships have helped the child as they enter foster care.
- o Has friends at school, has positive relationships with teachers

	Level of concern				
Presentation in school	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Frequent episodes of emotional and behavioural dysregulation *E.g. Number of CPOMS negative points/behaviour points/IR referrals					

	High	Med	Low	Not an issue	Not known
Poor attendance					
General learning difficulties					
Low levels of literacy					
Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) (Note: May need to be assessed as there is a link between SEMH and SLCN)					

Note on key items:

Protective factors:

	Level of concern				
Health and neurodiversity	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Poor general health					
Mental Health concerns (i.e., appears anxious/depressed/self-harm/suicidal thoughts)					
ADHD/ASC (diagnosed or on waiting list)					
Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder					
Brain injury					

Note on key items:
Protective factors:

Section C

School policy and practice	Level of protection				
Yes to the below offers a high/med level of protection	**High**	**Med**	**Low**	**Not an issue**	**Not known**
Individual support is in place i.e., key adult and accessed by the student. Student values this relationship.					
There is a positive relationship between parent/carer and the school					
The school has relational policies in place (that is, the school does not use a 'Zero-Tolerance' behaviour policy i.e., RTL)					
There is a strong pastoral support system and team where pupils' learning and emotional needs can be addressed					

Restorative Justice approaches are used (Such approaches require students who have broken school rules to face the consequences of their actions directly, rather than simply inflicting punishments which have no relation to their behaviour)					

Note on key items:

Summary of Risk Factors, which will need to be targeted and reduced

Child	School	Home

Summary of Resilience Factors, which will need to be strengthened and harnessed

Child	School	Home

Formulation & Integration

Child

School   Home

Please note: see the Belonging Support Plan (below) for further guidance on formulation as well as next steps for planning support.

Resource three: The Belonging Support Plan

How to use the Support Plan:

Step one: Consider the key factors indicated while using the profiler (above) use and use these alongside the prompts within Section 1 to create a hypothesis about the underlying reasons for the difficulties observed.

Step two: once a discussion of the underlying reasons for the difficulties observed has been had, complete Section 2 using the prompts below in the 5 areas (Safety, Connection, Voice, Agency, Skills development) to influence the discussion and note actions in each area.

Please note: further advice around setting up the team and sharing/reviewing the belonging support plan can be found in the assess plan do review section within the toolkit.

The Belonging Support Plan

Name of Pupil:	Name of Key Adult:
Date of first plan:	Review dates planned:

SECTION 1

Formulation:
How can we make sense of what is happening? What difficulties may underlie the behaviour we see?
What key elements from the profiling tool may be important? (Consider these at a child/family/school level).

Strengths/Interests and protective factors
What are the child's strengths, skills and qualities?
What positives were identified in the screener, and how might we encourage these?
What does the child enjoy and what interests them? When are they at their best? What helps them?
When have they been successful in the past and what is working well now?

Safety: A feeling of safety is essential for children to begin to trust us and engage in our attempts to include them. Some children require more support through relationships, support and structure to develop feelings of security and safety, so that they can begin to feel a sense of connectedness to their school.	Action plan
Safe spaces: • Where will the child go? • Will they need someone to be there? If so, who will meet them? • How will they be supported to know when they need to use the space? • How will they signal to an adult they need to use the safe space? • How will the school policy be adjusted to facilitate this? • Are there certain trigger times of day the child needs a safe space? • Do they need a safe space for lunch/break/unstructured times? • How can the environment be adapted to help the child feel safe? • How can we increase the predictability and consistency of routines in order to support the child? **Note:** There should be no restrictions or limits placed on the amount of times this space can be used throughout the day. **Note:** Use of the space should be monitored, logged in some way, so that patterns can be analysed.	

Safe people: • How will the child be helped to feel safe by the significant adults? What safety cues will be helpful? • How will other adults in the team help the child to feel safe? • How will you support the child to develop trust? How will predictable and reliable support be provided? • What does the child need to know in order to feel safe? How will this be communicated so that the child understands? • How can we ensure the child knows they're being held in mind? • How will the child be soothed? Does the child need a responsive co-regulation plan (see appendices for example)? • How can we show the child that we can handle any emotional experience they display? How can we make them feel safe to experience a range of emotions in our presence?	
Connection: Meaningful connections with others promote feelings of safety, trust and belonging. For some children there is a need for a higher level of connection within school. This includes meeting the child's basic needs, enabling them to experience comfort and joy and showing them that they are liked.	**Action plan**
• How will the significant adults provide meaningful connection with the child? • What needs to happen to ensure that the child experiences attuned and responsive connection? • How will other adults in the team connect with the child?	

- How will the development of positive peer relationships be promoted?
- What activities may help the child to develop their sense of belonging in school?
- What will happen to ensure that relationships are repaired (see appendices for example restorative conversation pro forma)?
- How will the child know that they are liked?
- What activities may foster shared enjoyment?
- How can we let the child know we are emotionally available to share things with?
- How can we help the child when things go wrong to support repairing relationships and making things better? (It is important the onus is on adults to foster repair, not the child)

The significant adult/adults – Team around the child
- Who is best placed to be the significant adult/adults?
- Who will be part of the wider team of adults supporting the child?
- Does the child need someone to be available to them throughout the day?
- It is helpful for the team to be composed of adults from each tier of the school organisation.

Parents/carers can also be part of the team.

Voice: Children/families need schools to understand them and know who they are as individuals and communities. Where children feel heard and valued by the school, they are more likely to be driven to find their place within the school community.	Action plan
• What does the child's behaviour tell us about how they're feeling? • Who in the school knows the child well, their strengths/interests beyond the difficulties? How do we communicate our understanding of the skills/personal attributes of the child to them? • How do we include the child in forming intervention plans? Do we need to give more opportunities for the child to have their view heard? • How can we encourage the voice of children through creative means? What adaptations are needed for those with SEND to share their views? • What parts of the school are dedicated to the voice of the students/wider community? • How do we celebrate difference in our school? What else can we do to make visible our local community? • How will an understanding of the child be shared with other adults in school be? How will they respond to incidents based on this understanding?	

Agency: Children need to believe that what they do and say makes a difference. The school helps develop their skills and provides them with opportunities to enact their agency.	Action plan
- How will the child be included in the planning stages? - How will things be adapted so the child feels part of the process of finding ways forward? - How will the child's views be gathered and how will these influence the plan? - How can the unique skills/qualities of the child be celebrated? - How can we communicate to the child that we value them as a person in their own right? - How can we help develop the child's skills and celebrate this with them? - How can staff supporting the student be supported themselves?	

Skills Teaching: The student's presentation in school may also link to undeveloped skills (in emotional regulation/understanding, social skills, speech and language, impulse control and focus, and learning) and that they will need support to develop their skills in order to cope in this environment and find a sense of belonging there.	Action plan *(This will include actions/interventions intended to teach new skills in the above areas of difficulty)*
- How can we help the child manage any difficulties they may have with impulse control/focus? - How can we support the child should they have difficulties coping with changes of routine? - How can we help the child if they have executive functioning related difficulties? Does the child struggle with initiating tasks, organising tasks, knowing how to follow the steps in a multi-step task in their learning? - How can we support the child's working memory and attention to detail in their learning? - How can we support the child with social perspective taking to improve their social relationships? - What can we do to support an understanding of non-verbal cues for a child that does not automatically understand these? - Does the child have sensory processing needs which are not fully understood/met? What can we do to further understand these and support the child? Does the child have the language skills to express themselves? How can we support this? - How can we support the child to understand and regulate their own emotion? Does the child have difficulty knowing how they feel?	

Appendices

Appendix 1: resources for eliciting child voice

The Big Book of Blob (Wilson and Long, 2018)

Blobs are illustrations of Blob characters in a range of different contexts which can be understood by adults and children. The illustrations explore a range of different physical and social settings, activities and emotions. Some explore very familiar contexts (e.g. a lunch hall or classroom) whilst others are more abstract. Adults can ask children questions about their interpretations of the pictures to explore student's views, experiences and sense of belonging in various contexts.

Using the below link schools can access a range of 'blob' resources. Commonly used visuals include the 'blob tree', the 'blob classroom' and the 'blob playground'.

Blob Shop - Home of the Blob Tree Communication Tools. | blobshop

Using the chosen visual, introduce the 'blob' people to the child. (A script such as *"I'm going to show you a picture of the blob people, some of them are having a good time, others don't seem to be having as much fun. I wonder if we could look at it together and think about the 'blob' people. I'm going to ask you some questions too"* could be used).

Questions might include:

''Which Blob do you feel like?''

''Which Blob would you like to be?''

''Which Blobs would you like to be friends with?''

''Which Blob seems happiest or saddest and why?''

''Which Blob interests you the most and why?''

This could also be a helpful tool for supporting the co-production of policy, practises and spaces which support belonging with children.

Drawing the ideal school (Williams and Hanke, 2007)

Drawing the ideal school is a tool used to gather pupil's perspectives on their ideal school to inform plans for provision and intervention. The ideal school is based on the 'Drawing the Ideal Self' (Moran, 2001) technique and Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955). CYPs are asked to draw a picture of the school they would most like to go to and the school they would least like to go to. This activity can also be undertaken using Lego or play equipment (E.g. Acting it out using puppets). They are asked questions to elicit the child's experiences of school, classrooms, their peers, teachers and themselves as a pupil. The facilitating adult can then make a plan with the child and adults around them to increase the child's positive

perceptions and experiences of their own school. This tool can be a useful tool for exploring, understanding and developing children's sense of school belonging.

Guidance on drawing the Ideal School:

1. Using a pen/pencil/colouring pencils and two sheets of plain paper as the child to first draw 'the kind of school you would not like to go to' on one of the sheet of paper. It is helpful to remind the child that this is not a real school but an imagined one. Encourage the child to make a quick drawing rather than a detailed one and remind them there are no right or wrong answers.
2. Whilst the child is drawing provide some questioning to help their thinking and also ask them what they are drawing and why. Questions such as:
   o What would the classroom be like in this school?
   o What would the children be doing in this classroom/school?
   o Can you tell me three things about the children?
   o What would the adults be doing in this school?
   o Can you tell me three things about the adults?
   o How would you feel in this school?
3. Once complete repeat the same process but with the child drawing their 'Ideal school' (may choose to use the language of "*now let's draw the best school in the world",* or *"now let's draw the kind of school you would like to go to"*). Similar questions can be asked about the ideal school drawing as shown above. During the conversation it is important to write notes of anything the child shares and to record exactly what the child says in their own words.
4. It is important to ask the child's permission to share the drawings and anything discussed before talking to other colleagues about the ideal school task. Once agreed, the notes from the conversation along with the drawings can be used to facilitate planning.

For a detailed summary of how to complete the ideal schools activity please see:

 Drawing-the-Ideal-School.pdf (nelincs.gov.uk)

For further information on the ideal school approach please see:

Drawing the Ideal Safe School: an optimistic approach to returning to school - edpsy.org.uk

A prompt sheet for use of the approach with Lego can be found here: "Ideal Classroom" with Personal Construct Psychology and Lego® - Prompt Sheet Faye Morgan-Rose (theidealclassroom.co.uk)

The Miracle Question

This solution focused technique encourages CYPs to share their views about where they are now, their hopes and dreams for the future. They are asked to imagine that

a wizard has cast a spell overnight and, when they wake up, all of their hopes and dreams have come true, and all of the things causing them difficulties have disappeared. Questions include:

- What would be the first thing you noticed that made you realise the wizard had cast a spell while you were asleep?
- What would be different?
- What would you be doing?
- What would other people notice?
- What would they say?

Additional information

There are a wide range of tools and resources for gathering the views of children and young people. Here is some further information about other approaches that could be used along with links to useful resources.

Solution focused questions

A variety of solution focused questions can be used to gather the views of children/young people on a number of topics, including their sense of school wellbeing and belonging. Scaling questions, miracle questions, exception questions and strengths-based profiling can be used to encourage CYPs to come up with their own solutions which utilise their own strengths and resources. The NSPCC has a very useful toolkit which includes many solution-focused activities and resources to use with children: Solution-focused practice toolkit: helping professionals use the approach when working with children and young people (nspcc.org.uk) .

Card sorts

In this activity, students are asked to sort a number of cards into groups or categories. Card sorts provide a structure to support discussions eliciting CYP's voice. Card sorts can be created on any topic that a young person is experiencing. For example, ordering things which support a CYP's sense of belonging in school. Categories used to support CYPs with card sorting might include 'always like me' 'often like me' 'sometimes like me' 'never like me'.

School wellbeing cards Risk and Resilience Card set (Dr. Jerricah Holder)

The School Wellbeing cards are a card sort activity which support the exploration of a young person views and experiences of school. They are based on resilience research and capture both risk factors associated with school avoidance or unhappiness at school and strength and protective factors which promote school attendance and wellbeing. The School Wellbeing cards are suitable for children aged 7+. They are often used with children experiencing EBSA.

School Wellbeing Risk and Resilience Card Set (schoolwellbeingcards.co.uk)

RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Activities

This tool could be used to offer CYPs the opportunity to review their timetable and places around school, identifying which lessons and areas are associated with a lot, some, or no sense of safety/connection, or associated feelings like safety or acceptance. Using a red, amber and green code can be useful.

Please also see 'Mapping the Landscape of Fear' Landscape-of-Fear-Primary.pdf (westfieldsjuniorschool.co.uk)

School Belonging Scale

A scale to support understanding about a child's level of school belonging.

School Belonging Scale (figshare.com)

Appendix 3: developing co-regulation plan template

The below template (from the Devon 'Guidance for developing relational practice and policy' toolkit) can be used when creating a co-regulation support plan for students. Please refer to [Guidance for developing relational practice and policy - Support for schools and settings (devon.gov.uk)](devon.gov.uk) for further guidance on how to develop coregulation plans on page 62.

State of Regulation	Potential Displayed Behaviour	Agreed Response for Regulation
Calm Safe / Socially engaged		
Mild stress Alert / Aroused / Agitated		
Dysregulated Mobilised / Immobilised		
Crisis Unsafe		

Appendix 4: references, further reading and useful links

Links
The Timpson Review

For evidence of exclusion rates please refer to the Timpson review here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5cfe7d8de5274a0906be72c8/Timpson_review.pdf

Lives in the balance

For further information on the work of Ross Green, as well as videos and research evidence please see Research – LIVES IN THE BALANCE.

Please also refer to the following links for Ross Greens assessment of 'lagging skills and unsolved problems' ALSUP:

https://livesinthebalance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ALSUP-2020.pdf (ALSUP)

https://livesinthebalance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ALSUPGuide2020_0.pdf (ALSUP Guide)

Writing a Relational-based Behaviour Policy

Please follow the attached link to find further information on how to write an outstanding behaviour policy by Paul Dix.

Paul%20dix%20How-to-Write-an-Outstanding-Behaviour-Policy-2016

Further reading
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