



EquiScholars HQ Behaviour Policy

Vision

To create a **nurturing and supportive environment** where children and young people feel **safe, valued, and empowered** to grow and thrive. By integrating **compassionate, relational support, nervous system regulation, and equine-assisted learning**, we help learners develop **emotional resilience, self-awareness, and the skills they need to navigate life's challenges with confidence**.

Through **teaching physiological and behavioural concepts with the horse as a model**, learners gain a **deeper understanding of communication, body language, co-regulation, and emotional awareness**.

Mission

To build a **positive, inclusive, and emotionally safe community** where young people are encouraged to **explore their potential, build meaningful connections, and develop the tools** they need to flourish **academically, socially, and emotionally**. We believe that every learner is unique, and we tailor our support to ensure they feel valued, heard, and capable of success.

Values

S.T.R.I.D.E. – Our Core Values

Safety & Support – Creating a secure, nurturing environment where every learner feels valued.

Trust & Relationships – Building strong, meaningful connections through compassion and respect.

Resilience & Regulation – Supporting learners in developing emotional awareness and coping skills.

Individual Growth – Tailoring our approach to meet each child's unique needs and aspirations.

Discovery & New Experiences – Encouraging curiosity, exploration, and hands-on learning.

Engagement in Learning – Building a love for learning in a way that is inclusive and empowering.

Contents

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Background and context

Section 3: A Consistent Approach to Emotional Regulation and Support

Section 4: Support for Emotional Regulation and Well-Being

Section 5: Bullying

Section 6: Site Rules

Section 7: Supporting Emotional Regulation and Positive Engagement at EquiScholars HQ

Section 8: Reset and Reconnect

Section 9: Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy

Section 10: Leaving the Grounds

Section 11: Pastoral Support and Holistic Care

Section 12: Damage

Section 13: Police

Section 14: Malicious Allegations against members of staff

BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Section 1: Introduction

This policy has been developed collaboratively with our team, drawing on our extensive experience in **nervous system regulation, trauma-informed practice, and relational approaches to learning**. It aligns with the principles outlined in the **DfE Guidance on Behaviour & Discipline in Schools (2014)** while integrating a **holistic understanding of emotional regulation and co-regulation** to support children and young people effectively.

Section 2: Background and Context

Learners attending EquiScholars HQ may have faced challenges in mainstream education, including **difficulties with emotional regulation, nervous system dysregulation, or unmet special educational needs (SEN)**. Many may have struggled with attendance, experienced **low self-esteem**, or found traditional learning environments overwhelming. Some learners may also present behaviours that reflect underlying distress, unmet needs, or difficulties in relational safety.

At EquiScholars HQ, we recognise that **all behaviour is communication**—a reflection of a child's internal state and past experiences. Our role is to **co-regulate with each learner, helping them develop the tools they need to feel safe, connected, and engaged in their learning journey**.

One of our primary goals is to support learners in **building resilience, self-awareness, and confidence**, so that they can navigate social and educational environments with **greater ease and emotional regulation**. Where appropriate, we work towards **empowering learners to successfully reintegrate into mainstream education** or transition into a setting that best meets their needs.

Our Shared Commitments

We believe that **all learners and staff have the right to feel safe, valued, and respected**. Our environment is built on **trust, connection, and mutual respect**, and we strive to create a culture that builds:

- **Emotional Safety** – Understanding that regulation comes before learning and supporting CYP to feel safe in their environment.
- **Collaboration & Co-Regulation** – Working alongside learners to model and develop self-regulation skills.
- **Empathy & Understanding** – Recognising individual experiences and meeting each CYP where they are.

- **Respect for Individual Differences** – Embracing neurodiversity, lived experiences, and unique strengths.

- **A Growth Mindset** – Encouraging curiosity, adaptability, and a positive approach to learning and challenges.

To help learners develop these skills, we provide a **nurturing and responsive environment** that promotes **self-confidence, co-regulation, and emotional well-being**. Our approach is flexible, supportive, and grounded in **polyvagal-informed practice** to ensure that every CYP feels heard, understood, and empowered in their learning journey.

We therefore promote the concepts of EquiScholars HQ's Rights and Responsibilities within our provision (see Appendix 1)

Section 3: A Consistent Approach to Emotional Regulation and Support

At EquiScholars HQ, we understand that **effective learning is only possible when a child feels safe, connected, and regulated**. Instead of focusing on "behaviour management," we take a **relational and trauma-informed approach**, recognising that all behaviour is communication and an expression of a child's internal state.

Our approach is built on four key principles:

- **Strong, trusting mentor-learner relationships** – Through **empathy, understanding, fairness, and co-regulation**, we create a foundation of **safety and connection** that allows each learner to thrive.

- **Positive reinforcement and emotional growth** – We celebrate **effort, progress, and emotional regulation**, recognising that small steps lead to long-term success.

- **Recognition of individual progress** – Success looks different for every learner, and we acknowledge each child's **personal growth, engagement, and resilience** rather than focusing solely on traditional measures of achievement.

- **Collaborative support** – We work alongside **families, schools, and other professionals** to ensure each child has a consistent, **holistic support system** tailored to their needs.

From the moment a learner joins EquiScholars HQ, **clear expectations of support and collaboration** are established with **parents, caregivers, and mainstream schools** (see Appendix 2). This shared commitment ensures that every child receives the **guidance, stability, and encouragement** they need to **develop emotional regulation, confidence, and a positive relationship with learning**.

Section 4: Support for Emotional Regulation and Well-Being

At EquiScholars HQ, we take a **relational and neurobiologically informed approach** to supporting children and young people in developing **emotional regulation, self-awareness, and resilience**.

Rather than focusing on behaviour management, we recognise that **all behaviour is a form of communication, rooted in nervous system responses and past experiences**. Our mentors provide **consistent, compassionate support**, helping learners **understand their emotions, build self-regulation skills, and develop positive coping strategies**. Through **equine-assisted learning and an understanding of physiological and behavioural principles**, we empower young people to **connect, regulate, and grow** in a safe and supportive environment.

To ensure each child's progress is recognised and supported, we provide **half-termly reports** that reflect their **engagement, emotional growth, and developing self-regulation skills**. These reports celebrate **small steps of progress**, highlighting strengths and areas where additional support may be needed. We work closely with parents, caregivers, and schools to ensure a **consistent and collaborative approach**, reinforcing each child's journey in a way that is meaningful and empowering.

Section 5: Bullying

At EquiScholars HQ, **every learner has the right to feel safe, respected, and valued**. We take a **zero-tolerance approach to bullying** in any form, including **physical harm, name-calling, or disrespectful behaviour**. Our ethos is built on **co-regulation, emotional safety, and relational support**, ensuring that all interactions are grounded in mutual respect.

All sessions at EquiScholars are **delivered 1:1**, providing a **high level of supervision** and minimising opportunities for bullying. However, should an incident occur, it is always addressed with a focus on **understanding, repair, and learning** rather than punishment alone.

Our Approach to Addressing Conflict and Harm

When an incident arises, we:

- **Support learners in recognising and understanding their emotional triggers** and responses.
- **Help them develop alternative strategies for expressing emotions and managing conflicts**.
- **Encourage empathy and accountability** through a **Restorative approach**, guiding the learner to reflect on the impact of their actions.

- **Involve the pupil's designated point of contact at their mainstream school** for more serious concerns, ensuring a **consistent and supportive response**.

In cases where a learner's behaviour compromises the **emotional or physical safety** of others, appropriate action will be taken. This may include **additional support interventions, or, in extreme cases, a temporary withdrawal from the site**.

Our **Anti-Bullying Policy** (Appendix 3) outlines these procedures in greater detail, reinforcing our commitment to a **safe, inclusive, and emotionally supportive environment** for all learners.

Section 6: Site Rules

At EquiScholars HQ, we create a **safe, respectful, and nurturing environment** where everyone can learn, grow, and thrive. These shared agreements help us build a space based on **trust, kindness, and mutual respect**.

Be kind – Show respect and care in your words and actions.

Support a calm learning environment – Allow others the space to focus and engage.

Move with awareness – Stay within designated areas and ask before exploring new spaces.

Listen and respond thoughtfully – Follow guidance from mentors with openness and respect.

Engage with curiosity and effort – Approach tasks with a positive mindset and a willingness to try.

Respect all beings – Treat people, animals, and property with care and consideration.

These agreements are woven into everything we do, ensuring that **everyone feels safe, valued, and supported** throughout their journey at EquiScholars HQ.

Section 7: Supporting Emotional Regulation and Positive Engagement

At EquiScholars HQ, we recognise that not all learners are familiar with structure and routine, and we support them in developing these skills through a compassionate and consistent approach.

Half-termly reports are used to celebrate each child's progress and engagement, ensuring their experiences remain positive and rewarding. We actively collaborate with parents/guardians and mainstream schools to acknowledge and reinforce their child's achievements in a meaningful way.

If a learner is finding it increasingly difficult to regulate their emotions or engage safely, we will work in partnership with their designated school to arrange a support meeting to explore strategies that best meet their needs.

In extreme circumstances, where a learner's safety or the safety of others is at risk, we may need to reassess their placement at EquiScholars HQ. Any decision of this nature will be made with careful consideration and in the best interests of the child.

Section 8: Reset & Reconnect

We believe in providing consistent support and presence for the child, rather than separation. Instead of "time out," we use **co-regulation** to guide the learner in developing their own tools for self-regulation. If a learner is experiencing heightened emotions, we gently shift the focus to a calming activity in a quieter space, always remaining alongside them to provide reassurance and guidance.

Section 9: Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy

At EquiScholars HQ, our approach prioritises **emotional regulation, co-regulation, and de-escalation** to ensure a **safe and supportive environment** for all learners and staff. **Physical intervention is only used as an absolute last resort** when all other strategies have been exhausted, and only in situations where there is an **immediate risk of harm** to the child or others.

Our policy aligns with **DfE guidance, including "Use of Reasonable Force" (2013)**, and follows current legislation, ensuring that any intervention is carried out **lawfully, proportionately, and safely**, always prioritising the **dignity and well-being** of the learner.

Our Approach to De-escalation

Before any form of physical intervention is considered, staff will use:

- ✓ **Negotiation and calm communication** to offer choices and reduce distress.
- ✓ **Diffusion strategies** to help the learner feel safe and understood.
- ✓ **De-escalation techniques** based on trauma-informed and Polyvagal Theory principles.
- ✓ **Containment within a safe space**, without physical intervention, where possible.

When Physical Intervention May Be Used

Physical intervention is only considered when:

- a) A learner is at immediate risk of harming another person.

- b) A learner is at immediate risk of harming themselves.
- c) A learner is posing a significant safety risk to a staff member.
- d) A learner is causing or attempting to cause serious damage to property that could result in harm.

All interventions must:

- **Be the least restrictive necessary** and used for the **shortest time possible**.
- **Follow recognised positive handling techniques** that safeguard the **learner's well-being**.
- **Be carried out by trained staff only**, ensuring the **learner's dignity and emotional safety**.
- **Be followed up with appropriate support**, including co-regulation, reflection, and restorative approaches.

Reporting and Communication

A **detailed written report** will be completed following any use of physical intervention, outlining:

- The reason for the intervention.
- The steps taken to de-escalate beforehand.
- How the intervention was carried out and its duration.
- The outcome and follow-up support provided.

Parents/Carers will be informed on the same day via phone or written notification.

The incident will be **reviewed internally** to ensure best practices were followed and to explore additional support strategies for the learner moving forward.

At EquiScholars HQ, we remain committed to **minimising restrictive practices** and building a **culture of safety, trust, and emotional regulation** for all.

Section 10: Leaving the Grounds

Safety and Supervision at EquiScholars HQ

EquiScholars HQ is a **safe and secure environment**, with a **designated main entry point** for all learners and visitors. Upon arrival, learners are familiarised with the site layout and safety procedures to ensure they feel secure and supported.

Response to a Learner Leaving the Site

If a learner attempts to leave the site, we will prioritise their **emotional safety and well-being** by:

Using established relationships and trust to encourage them to return.

Remaining calm and supportive, avoiding any escalation.

Engaging in non-confrontational communication to reassure the learner and help them regulate.

If a learner **leaves the site and refuses to return**, or if staff **lose sight of them**, we will take the following immediate steps:

1 **Contact the Police** to ensure the learner's safety.

2 **Inform parents/carers** as soon as possible.

3 Request that parents/carers **inform us immediately** if the learner returns home and, where possible, support their safe return to the provision.

Our priority is always to ensure that **learners feel safe, supported, and able to re-engage without fear of blame or punishment**. Every effort will be made to explore the reasons behind the incident and provide **additional emotional regulation support** as needed.

Section 11: Pastoral Support and Holistic Care

At EquiScholars HQ, we recognise that **a learner's well-being is shaped by their experiences both within and beyond our provision**, including challenges at home, in the community, or in school. Our approach is **relational and neurobiologically informed**, grounded in an understanding of **nervous system regulation, emotional safety, and co-regulation**.

By creating a **predictable, supportive environment**, we help learners **develop the tools they need to regulate, engage, and thrive**. Through **equine-assisted learning and a deep understanding of physiological and behavioural principles**, we empower young people to **build resilience, strengthen self-awareness, and navigate life with confidence**.

Each **mentor** is responsible for the **pastoral care and emotional support** of their learners, working closely with the **Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Managing Director** to provide a **consistent, nurturing environment**.

Building Strong Support Networks

To ensure that learners receive the best possible care, we:

Maintain close collaboration with schools, families, and external agencies, ensuring a joined-up approach to support.

Regularly communicate with key professionals, offering a shared understanding of the learner's needs.

Recognise and respond to life stresses, adapting our approach to support emotional regulation and engagement.

Mentor Responsibilities

Each mentor is expected to:

Be familiar with their learner's background, strengths, and areas of concern, allowing them to provide **responsive, individualised support**.

Recognise signs of stress, change, or emotional dysregulation, responding with **co-regulation strategies and a compassionate approach**.

Support the learner in building resilience and coping strategies, helping them navigate challenges in a way that builds **confidence and self-regulation**.

By embedding **strong relationships, emotional awareness, and holistic support**, we ensure that learners feel **safe, understood, and empowered** to progress in their journey at EquiScholars HQ.

Section 12: Damage

In the case of a learner causing property to be damaged on our Alternative Provision premises, the parents/carers may be asked to contribute to the cost of the repair or replacement of the property. This decision will be made at the discretion of the Managing Director after careful consideration of the circumstances.

Section 13: Police

Police intervention will be sought in circumstances where the learner has caused excessive damage to the building, has assaulted a member of staff or other students, has failed to respond to de-escalation techniques or is in grave danger of harming their self.

Police may also be called when there is persistent harassment, which could result in a crime being committed, could interfere with the normal daily routine or threaten the good order of the site(s).

Section 14: Malicious Allegations against members of staff

An investigation will be held to determine circumstances of the allegation. Carers will be contacted and informed of any restorative work or sanctions when determined.

Appendix 1

Rights and Responsibilities at EquiScholars HQ

At EquiScholars HQ, we believe in building a **safe, supportive, and empowering** environment where every learner feels valued, respected, and understood. Our approach is rooted in **co-regulation, emotional safety, and relational learning**, ensuring that children and young people (CYP) develop the skills needed to navigate challenges with confidence and resilience.

To create a thriving learning environment, we uphold the following **Rights and Responsibilities**:

Rights

Every learner, staff member, and mentor at EquiScholars HQ has the right to:

- **Feel safe and supported** – Emotionally, physically, and socially.
- **Be seen, heard, and valued** – Their thoughts, feelings, and experiences matter.
- **Learn in a way that works for them** – At their own pace, with respect for individual needs.
- **Express emotions without fear of judgment** – With guidance on how to regulate safely.
- **Be part of a community built on trust and respect** – Free from shame, fear, or exclusion.
- **Access positive, co-regulated support** – Rather than punitive responses to distress.

Responsibilities

With these rights come shared responsibilities. We all commit to:

- **Creating a safe and respectful space** – By being kind, considerate, and understanding.
- **Practicing empathy and curiosity** – Looking beyond behaviour to understand emotions and needs.

- **Supporting each other's regulation** – Helping to co-regulate rather than isolate.
- **Communicating with respect** – Using words, actions, and body language that foster connection.
- **Being open to learning and growth** – Recognising that we are all on a journey of self-discovery.
- **Respecting the needs of others, including our horses** – Understanding that relationships, whether with people or animals, are built on trust and mutual care.

By embracing these **Rights and Responsibilities**, we cultivate an environment where **learners feel safe, connected, and empowered to grow**, both emotionally and academically.

Appendix 2

EquiScholars HQ's Commitments

We will:

Prioritise emotional safety and well-being

Recognising that **nervous system regulation** is essential for learning, we will create a safe and predictable environment where learners feel secure, respected, and valued.

Use a relational approach to co-regulation

We do not use punishment or isolation; instead, we remain **present and attuned** to each child's needs, supporting them in developing self-regulation skills.

Recognise all behaviour as communication

We will look beyond outward behaviours to understand **underlying needs and emotional states**, responding with empathy and appropriate support.

Build strong, trusting relationships

We will build positive connections with learners through **understanding, fairness, and consistency**, creating an environment where they feel safe to explore and grow.

Promote engagement over compliance

Learning at EquiScholars HQ is **child-led, experiential, and adaptable**, ensuring each learner can progress at their own pace without feeling pressured to conform to traditional expectations.

Celebrate progress and resilience

We acknowledge and reinforce **effort, growth, and small steps forward**, rather than focusing on rigid definitions of success.

Work collaboratively with families and schools

We will maintain **open, honest communication** with parents, caregivers, and schools to create a **consistent support network** around each child.

If a child requires additional interventions or adjustments, we will work in partnership to explore the best possible outcomes.

Respect neurodiversity and individual needs

We embrace **diverse learning styles, sensory needs, and emotional experiences**, adapting our approach to support each CYP effectively.

Support transition and reintegration

Where appropriate, we will help CYP **build the skills and confidence** to transition into mainstream or specialist education settings, ensuring they feel equipped to succeed.

Parental/Carer Commitments

We ask parents and carers to:

Work in partnership with us to create a **consistent approach** between home and EquiScholars HQ.

Communicate openly about their child's needs, progress, and any challenges that may arise.

Encourage emotional regulation strategies at home to reinforce the skills learned in our provision.

Trust the process – Growth and regulation take time, and we work at a pace that meets each child's individual needs.

Mainstream School Commitments

We ask referring schools to:

Acknowledge that mainstream settings may not always meet every learner's needs and work with us to create **bespoke transition plans** if reintegration is the goal.

Respect our trauma-informed and co-regulation approach, understanding that punitive behaviour policies may not align with our ethos.

Provide relevant background information to ensure we can tailor our support effectively.

Maintain regular communication with us and the learner's family to ensure continuity of care and support.

By upholding these shared commitments, we can ensure that **every child at EquiScholars HQ is met with understanding, patience, and the support they need to develop resilience and a positive relationship with learning.**