



Kick Start Futures

Relationships Policy

Relationships First • Responsibility Always

Policy Date: August 2026

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1. Policy Statement

At Kick Start Futures, we believe that **positive relationships are the foundation of learning, wellbeing and personal growth**.

Many of the young people who join us may have found mainstream education difficult or experienced disrupted relationships with education. Our role is to create a place where they feel safe, understood and able to experience success again.

Our approach is **relational, restorative and trauma-informed**. We recognise that behaviour often communicates an emotion, difficulty or unmet need, and we seek to understand what is happening for a young person rather than simply reacting to their behaviour.

Understanding does not remove responsibility.

We maintain clear boundaries and high expectations, while providing students with the support they need to meet them.

At KSF, mistakes are opportunities to **reflect, repair and move forward**.

2. Our Approach

KSF brings the relational approach into a new environment where **education, football, teamwork and personal development** work together.

Our approach is built around five principles:

Relationships First

Young people learn best when they feel safe, respected and valued.

Staff invest time in getting to know students, understanding their needs and building genuine professional relationships.

High Expectations, High Support

We believe every student is capable of growth.

Expectations remain clear, but the support needed to achieve them may look different for each young person.

Fair does not always mean everyone receives the same; it means everyone receives what they need to succeed.

Understand Before Responding

We remain curious about what sits behind behaviour.

We ask:

What happened?

What might this young person be communicating?

What do they need to move forward?

Repair Rather Than Shame

Students will make mistakes.

Our response is not to humiliate or shame them, but to help them understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility and repair harm where possible.

A Fresh Start

A difficult lesson, morning or day does not define a student.

Once an incident has been addressed, students are welcomed back positively and given the opportunity to succeed again.

3. The Team Ethos

Being part of Kick Start Futures means being part of a team.

Football provides a useful example of something that matters far beyond sport:
individual choices affect the whole team.

A successful team requires:

- trust;
- communication;
- respect;
- responsibility;
- resilience;
- encouragement;
- recognising other people's strengths;
- learning from mistakes.

We use these principles throughout education, football and everyday life at KSF.

Students do not need to be good at football to belong to our team. **Every student has something valuable to contribute.**

We want students to learn that asking for help is a strength, supporting others matters, and success is greater when people work together.

4. Understanding Behaviour

Behaviour does not happen in isolation.

A student's behaviour may be influenced by:

- anxiety;
- trauma or previous experiences;
- SEND or neurodiversity;
- sensory needs;
- communication difficulties;
- frustration;
- low confidence or fear of failure;
- difficulties with emotional regulation;
- relationships;
- experiences inside or outside education.

Understanding these factors helps staff decide how best to respond.

It does **not** mean harmful or unsafe behaviour is ignored.

Our role is to combine **understanding with accountability**:

What happened, what was behind it, who was affected, and what needs to happen next?

This helps students develop greater awareness of themselves and the impact their choices have on others.

5. Building Relationships

Positive relationships are built through everyday interactions.

KSF staff will:

- welcome students positively;
- take time to listen;
- show genuine interest in them;
- remain calm and consistent;
- use humour appropriately;
- notice effort and progress;
- communicate respectfully;
- maintain clear and predictable boundaries;
- avoid language that humiliates or shames;
- model the behaviour we expect from students;
- repair relationships when things go wrong.

We recognise that trust may take time.

Staff should not interpret a student's reluctance to engage or trust adults as a reason to withdraw support. We remain consistent while respecting appropriate professional boundaries.

6. What We Expect from Students

We keep expectations simple.

At KSF we ask students to:

Be Safe

Look after yourself and others.

Be Respectful

Treat other people, their belongings and the environment with respect.

Be Part of the Team

Support others and allow everyone the opportunity to participate and succeed.

Take Responsibility

Own your choices and be willing to put things right when something goes wrong.

Keep Going

Mistakes and setbacks happen. What matters is what you do next.

Students may need different levels of support to achieve these expectations, and staff will make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

7. Adults Set the Tone

The responsibility for creating a relational culture begins with adults.

Staff are expected to:

- remain calm even when a student is not;
- avoid power struggles;
- listen before reaching conclusions;
- separate the behaviour from the person;
- use language that protects dignity;
- recognise their own emotional responses;
- provide clear choices and boundaries;
- seek support when situations are escalating;
- model apology and repair when they get something wrong.

Being relational does not mean avoiding difficult conversations.

Sometimes the most supportive thing an adult can do is calmly challenge behaviour, maintain a boundary and help a student understand why something needs to change.

Warm relationships and clear boundaries should exist together.

8. Belonging

Every young person attending Kick Start Futures should know:

You belong here.

Students will not be defined by:

- previous exclusions;
- difficult days;
- SEND;
- academic attainment;
- behaviour;
- mistakes they have made.

We recognise strengths, celebrate progress and help young people develop a more positive understanding of themselves.

Our aim is for students to experience KSF as a community where they are known, valued and encouraged to contribute.

9. Regulation Before Restoration

At Kick Start Futures, we recognise that a young person who is highly anxious, angry or dysregulated may not be ready to reflect on what has happened.

Our priority is therefore to help the student become calm and safe before attempting a restorative conversation.

Staff will use the following simple approach:

Notice → Connect → Regulate → Reflect → Repair → Return

Notice

Recognise changes in behaviour, mood or communication and consider what may be happening for the student.

Connect

Approach calmly, listen and avoid escalating the situation through confrontation or unnecessary demands.

Regulate

Provide appropriate support, which may include:

- time with a trusted adult;
- a quieter space;
- movement or physical activity;
- sensory or regulation strategies;
- reduced demands for a short period;
- time and space to regain control.

Reflect

Once calm, support the student to understand what happened and consider their choices.

Repair

Where somebody has been affected, help the student take responsibility and repair the situation or relationship.

Return

Welcome the student positively back into learning or the group.

Once something has been addressed, **we move forward**.

10. Responding When Things Go Wrong

Staff responses should be calm, proportionate and appropriate to the individual student and situation.

Where possible, staff will:

1. **Connect first** – check what is happening and whether the student needs support.
2. **Remind** – calmly reinforce the expectation.
3. **Redirect** – provide a clear choice or opportunity to change direction.
4. **Regulate** – provide time or support where dysregulation is affecting the student's ability to make safe choices.
5. **Restore** – once ready, discuss what happened and what needs to happen next.

Not every incident requires every stage.

Staff should use professional judgement rather than following a rigid behaviour ladder.

11. Restorative Conversations

Restorative practice is central to KSF.

When something has gone wrong, our focus is not simply:

"What rule was broken?"

We explore:

- **What happened?**
- **What were you thinking or feeling at the time?**
- **Who has been affected?**
- **How have they been affected?**
- **What needs to happen to put things right?**
- **What could help next time?**

Restorative conversations should take place when everyone involved is sufficiently calm to participate meaningfully.

They may be brief conversations or, for more significant incidents, structured restorative meetings.

An apology may form part of repairing harm, but students will not be forced to make an insincere apology simply to complete a process.

The aim is genuine **understanding, responsibility and repair**.

12. Recognition and Encouragement

We want students to receive far more recognition for what they are doing well than attention for what has gone wrong.

Staff will actively notice and recognise:

- effort;
- engagement;
- kindness;
- teamwork;
- resilience;
- honesty;
- progress;
- helping others;
- managing emotions;
- taking responsibility;
- trying again after a setback;
- academic and practical achievement.

Recognition may include:

- specific verbal praise;
- positive feedback to families;
- certificates or awards;
- celebration of individual progress;
- privileges or agreed rewards;
- recognition within the KSF community.

Recognition should be genuine and linked to the student's own progress rather than comparison with others.

13. Responses and Consequences

A restorative approach does **not** mean there are no consequences.

Consequences should help students understand that choices have an impact and that being part of a community brings responsibilities.

Where appropriate, responses may include:

- completing or repairing something that has been damaged;
- restorative conversation or meeting;
- temporary removal from an activity;
- completing learning at another time;
- additional support or supervision;
- contacting parents/carers;
- reviewing an individual support or risk plan;
- discussion with the commissioning school;
- temporary changes to activities or timetable where necessary for safety.

Consequences should be:

reasonable • proportionate • related to what happened • explained clearly

They should never be designed to humiliate, frighten or shame a student.

14. Football and Relationships

The same expectations apply on the pitch as in the classroom.

Football can create strong emotions, competition and frustration, making it a valuable opportunity to practise:

- teamwork;
- communication;
- managing disappointment;
- accepting decisions;
- resilience;
- leadership;

- respect for opponents and teammates;
- winning and losing appropriately.

Coaches and education staff will model these behaviours.

Unsafe tackles, deliberate aggression, discriminatory language or behaviour intended to intimidate others will be addressed immediately.

Where appropriate, a student may temporarily step away from football to regulate before returning.

Football is part of the learning at KSF, not separate from it.

15. Serious or Unsafe Behaviour

Some behaviour requires an immediate response to protect students, staff or others.

This may include:

- serious violence or aggression;
- possession of a weapon or dangerous item;
- significant threats;
- serious bullying;
- discriminatory abuse;
- sexual harassment or harmful sexual behaviour;
- significant damage to property;
- drugs or alcohol;
- leaving the provision where this creates significant risk;
- behaviour presenting an immediate safeguarding concern.

The immediate priority will always be **safety**.

Depending on the circumstances, KSF may:

- remove students or others from immediate danger;
- seek additional staff support;
- contact parents/carers;
- inform the commissioning school;
- implement or review a risk management plan;
- contact emergency services or other agencies where necessary.

Safeguarding concerns will be managed through the **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

Serious behaviour does not remove our relational approach. Once everyone is safe and regulated, we will still seek to understand what happened, repair harm where possible and identify what support is required next.

16. Physical Intervention

De-escalation and relationship-based approaches will always be prioritised.

Physical intervention will only be used where it is lawful, absolutely necessary, reasonable and proportionate, and never as a punishment.

Any significant physical intervention will be recorded, reported and reviewed in accordance with the **Physical Intervention Policy**.

17. Working with Families and Commissioning Schools

Positive relationships with families and commissioning schools are important to helping students succeed.

Where concerns arise, KSF will communicate openly and work collaboratively to understand:

- what has happened;
- whether there are emerging patterns;
- what is working well;
- what additional support may be required;
- whether strategies or plans need to change.

We aim to involve families **before difficulties become crises**, wherever possible.

Our focus is always on finding a way forward that supports the student while maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the wider KSF community.

18. SEND and Reasonable Adjustments

Kick Start Futures recognises that some students may need additional support to understand expectations, regulate emotions or manage relationships successfully.

Staff will consider:

- SEND and communication needs;
- sensory needs;
- emotional regulation;
- trauma and previous experiences;
- individual support strategies;
- reasonable adjustments.

Expectations around **safety, dignity and respect remain important for everyone**, but the support provided to meet those expectations may differ.

Fairness does not always mean treating everyone in exactly the same way.

19. Student Voice

Students should have a voice in decisions that affect them.

We will encourage students to:

- identify what helps them regulate and learn;
- contribute to their support plans;
- reflect on strategies that work;
- discuss concerns openly;
- contribute ideas about KSF and its community;
- recognise their own progress.

Where difficulties arise, students will be given an appropriate opportunity to explain their perspective.

Being heard does not mean that every decision will go the student's way, but it does mean their views will be listened to and considered respectfully.

20. Bullying, Discrimination and Harmful Behaviour

Everyone at KSF has the right to feel safe and respected.

Bullying, harassment, discriminatory behaviour, sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour will not be dismissed as "**banter**" or an inevitable part of growing up or playing sport.

Staff will challenge:

- racism;
- sexism;
- homophobia, biphobia and transphobia;
- discrimination relating to disability or SEND;
- sexualised comments or behaviour;
- intimidation or harassment;
- repeated targeted behaviour towards another person.

Responses will consider both the needs of the person who has experienced harm and the support or intervention required for the student responsible.

Safeguarding concerns will be referred immediately through the appropriate safeguarding procedures.

Further detail is contained within the **Anti-Bullying Policy** and **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

21. Ending a Placement

Our priority is to maintain placements wherever this can be achieved safely and successfully.

A difficult incident will not automatically result in a placement ending.

Where serious or repeated concerns arise, KSF will work with the student, family and commissioning school to consider:

- what is contributing to the difficulty;
- what support or reasonable adjustments have been tried;
- whether the student's needs have changed;
- whether additional professional involvement is required;
- what needs to change for the placement to remain successful.

There may, however, be exceptional circumstances where a temporary suspension or ending a placement is necessary because risks cannot be safely managed or KSF can no longer reasonably meet the student's needs.

Any such decision will be made by the **Education & Provision Lead**, in consultation with the commissioning school and other relevant parties.

The reasons and next steps will be clearly communicated and recorded.

22. Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for creating and maintaining the relational culture described in this policy.

Staff will:

- build positive professional relationships;
- maintain clear and consistent boundaries;
- model respectful behaviour;
- recognise and encourage positive choices;
- respond calmly to difficulties;
- use restorative approaches appropriately;
- avoid humiliation, sarcasm and shame;
- make reasonable adjustments;
- record significant incidents;
- share emerging concerns with colleagues;
- seek support when they need it.

Consistency does not mean every student receives an identical response. It means **our values and expectations remain consistent while our support responds to individual need.**

23. Leadership Responsibilities

The Education & Provision Lead will ensure that:

- this policy is understood and applied consistently;
- staff receive appropriate training and support;
- significant incidents are reviewed;
- patterns of concern are identified;
- individual plans are reviewed where necessary;
- families and commissioning schools are involved appropriately;
- relational and restorative practice remains central to KSF culture.

The Directors will provide appropriate oversight and ensure the policy remains effective.

24. Recording and Reviewing Incidents

Not every minor difficulty requires formal recording.

Significant incidents, safeguarding concerns and patterns of behaviour will be recorded appropriately.

Records will be used to help identify:

- triggers or patterns;
- successful strategies;
- emerging safeguarding concerns;
- additional support needs;
- whether risk assessments or support plans require review.

Records should be factual, proportionate and respectful.

25. Training

Staff will receive appropriate training to support the KSF approach.

This will include, as relevant:

- restorative practice;
- relational approaches;
- trauma-informed practice;
- SEND and neurodiversity;
- de-escalation and regulation;
- safeguarding;
- physical intervention where required.

Our aim is for staff to understand not simply **what to do when behaviour becomes difficult, but why a particular response is likely to help.**

26. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through:

- student voice;
- staff feedback;
- incident patterns;
- attendance and engagement;
- feedback from families and commissioning schools;
- review of individual student progress.

The policy will be reviewed annually or sooner where changes to legislation, guidance or KSF practice require it.

27. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Attendance Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Health & Safety Policy.

28. Our Commitment

At Kick Start Futures, **relationships come first, but responsibility always matters.**

We believe young people are more likely to change when they feel understood rather than judged, supported rather than shamed and given the opportunity to put things right.

We will maintain high expectations while recognising that some students need greater support to achieve them.

Football teaches us that mistakes happen. What matters is how we respond, how we support the people around us and how we prepare for the next opportunity.

At KSF, we want every student to know:

You belong here.

Your choices matter.

You can put things right.

You can always move forward.