Willow Vale
School

Relationship & Behaviour Policy

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Be Safe – Be Kind - Belong

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1. Introduction

"We function best in the context of 'felt safety' and in relationship with other people. Attuned and responsive other people." Louise Bomber, 2020

At Willow Vale School we recognise that our students have found aspects of their educational journey challenging and that understanding their story is an integral step in our work with them. It is our aim that our students are supported to build trusting and nurturing relationships with all staff to support their engagement in a personalised timetable of provision which leads them to their next steps. At the heart of our work is the belief that every student works best in relationship with attuned and responsive adults who are their advocate. We recognise that our students will make mistakes and will test relationships and boundaries. We are committed to supporting them by understanding their Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs, responding to crisis moments and offering restorative and relational approaches to enable them to repair when things have gone wrong.

We ask ourselves what success looks like for the student in front of us; when a student is not managing, we hold in mind that they are not managing yet. Just as when a plant or flower is not thriving, we change the environment not the species, so we reshape our offer of education and relational support to enable a student to flourish.

'Every relationship has the power to confirm or challenge all that's gone on before.' Louise Bomber 2007

We believe that:

Behaviour is a means of communication –we must ensure that all students are supported to communicate their needs safely and appropriately.
Students are more successful when their voices are heard, and their needs are understood and met allowing them to self-regulate and behave well. Their effort to manage themselves and their behaviour should be recognised and acknowledged by adults.

In supporting emotional development and self-regulating skills, students can learn to improve their behaviour. Many students at Willow Vale School find learning difficult: learning new behaviour is a task, just like learning to read or write.

Students need a personalised approach to support them to manage their behaviour and consideration must be given to sensory and emotional needs, past and current trauma, levels of stimulation and engagement.
As adults, we must consider the learning styles and needs of the students; we must also have realistic expectations about the rate of progress a student will make when learning to adapt or develop new behaviours.

Mistakes are part of the learning process, and we recognise that all our students are at various stages of the developmental process. We do not make a judgement about it – instead, we support and guide our students to get it right. We hold the belief that repeated positive experiences and holding the student in high regard are the foundations of our work with them.

We believe that 'empathy fuels connection' (Brene Brown) and that adults must be able to respond to the student in front of them, meeting them where they are at.

Every student should be supported to develop strategies to promote self-regulation through an emotion coaching approach (Appendix A). It is recognised that an evaluative approach is needed to fully understand and respond to incidents, identifying triggers and working alongside a student to determine successful de-escalation strategies (Appendix A).

Willow Vale School aims to offer a predictable, welcoming environment in which young people can work towards academic progress and a fulfilling place in society, whilst becoming more emotionally and socially independent. We believe that parents know their children best, and we are committed to working with them to identify the best way of providing support for everyone in the school. The concerns of parents/carers will be listened to, in a non-judgmental way and acted upon where possible so that the needs of their children are effectively met.

2. Aims of the Policy

To develop and sustain a positive culture in both learning and teaching.
To provide a welcoming and secure teaching and learning environment that is predictable, safe and calm and responsive to the needs of the students.
To model behaviours based on trust and mutual respect, enabling students to mirror them.

To support students in separating their emotions from their behaviour choices, developing their ability to regulate their emotions and reflect on their own actions.

To promote restorative approaches following any incidents, protecting relationships with trusted adults.

To provide a range of opportunities for success in all student timetables to raise self-esteem and promote learning.
To build and maintain a supportive dialogue between students, staff and parents.

3. Implementation of the policy

"Every child deserves a champion; an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be" *Rita Pierson, Educator*

Encouraging Positive Behaviours

All staff are responsible for modelling positive relationships consistently around the school. Holistic approaches to students' progress are essential, based on the understanding that students make optimum progress when staff are fair, flexible, trusting, respectful and consistently inconsistent* with their approach.

The values of the school for all stakeholders are:

- Be Safe
- Be Kind
- Be respectful - and through this develop a sense of belonging

Staff support students to meet these expectations through verbal commentary, and through this develop a sense of belonging, providing predictable and relational opportunities throughout their shared time and holding the student in unconditional positive regard.

All lessons encourage positive behaviours and choices. Students are challenged appropriately when expectations are not met and supported to make a different choice.

The curriculum is planned to ensure coverage of personal, social, emotional, and mental health challenges.

Staff are continually trying to 'catch students in,' using positive language to reinforce positive choices in school and personalising provision to meet the student where they are at.

Displays around the school are vibrant and show all students in a positive manner.

Positive interaction and communication with home and external agencies are conducted in a timely manner. Reviews are regular through Parents' Evenings and, when appropriate, multi-agency meetings.

The staff team will:

Ensure that the school is a place where everyone is accepted for who they are, we are tolerant and understanding of others' differences.

Endeavour to create strong, supportive and positive relationships with all students.

Strive to ensure a calm, purposeful and orderly learning environment.

Plan each activity to ensure the aims and instructions are clear.

Respond to students in a calm de-escalating manner and request a change of face when needed. Use an emotion coaching approach to ensure that a student's emotional state is attuned with, validated and responded to (Appendix A).

Receive regular training on de-escalation and risk assessing situations.
Respond to, and follow up on, incidents using the guidance in Appendix B.
Ensure that STAR charts are written to understand incidents and what behaviour is communicating.

Communicate as a team on a regular basis to ensure that student STAR charts are understood and contextualised, and the team are clear on the most effective strategies to support de-escalation.

Tutors ensure that each of their students have a Learning Plan and Risk Assessment and that these are reviewed and updated following STAR chart completion.

Person Centred Approach - *'Consistently Inconsistent'

Our students are individuals with their own life experiences at the time of joining Willow Vale School.

We recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach will not work for our students and that it is the responsibility of all staff to understand the things that we are 'consistent' in: our vision and approach in our work with our students as outlined in Section 1 of this policy, our modelling of positive relationships. This is coupled with the need for staff to be confidently 'inconsistent' in the strategies, provision and personalised support in place for students because it is in this inconsistency, we can facilitate the growth of our students Social Emotional and Mental Health needs. All behavioural incidents are logged on Arbor.

Uniform

All students are expected to attend school wearing Willow Vale uniform as below.

- Navy blue polo shirt*
- Navy blue sweatshirt* (optional)
- Plain dark coloured trousers, leggings or skirt - skirts must be of decent length and skintight leggings are not permitted
- Shoes/trainers are acceptable – no open toe sandals, Crocs or flip flops.

If students choose to wear the navy sweatshirt, they will need to wear the navy polo shirt underneath each day.

*These items are available to order with a Willow Vale logo through the Southwest Schoolwear shop (stocked in the Bridgwater shop) or through online orders that can be collected in the Taunton Shop. Alternatively, parents are welcome to purchase plain navy polo shirts and sweatshirts from High Street shops that are logo free.

Absconding

If a student is not in their lessons and their whereabouts is unknown, staff should complete a search of the site and rooms and inform the Site Lead. If they have left site, Admin should be notified and a call home made. A member of staff with a phone to follow the student at a safe distance and to establish their route. For older students, if they do not stop, the member of staff will stop following beyond the local roads in the immediate vicinity of the Centre and will not follow the student towards main roads. For younger children who are in danger of heading towards a main road, staff will use their professional judgement and training to de-escalate the situation to prevent access to a main road.
In both cases, the school will call the Police: 101 or 999 depending on the circumstances and risk.

Procedures for Damage to Property/Equipment

Students learn to be accountable for their actions, therefore if a student damages property or equipment, they will have the opportunity to work with the team in a restorative way to understand the impact of their actions. Families will be asked to pay a contribution towards the repair or replacement.

When damage to property occurs, staff are to record this on iAM Compliant and Arbor and inform SLT. A letter will be written to the parents/carers informing them of the damage and requesting either the full cost or a contribution.

Searching, Screening and Confiscation

Students are met on their arrival to school and expected to hand in mobile telephones and electronic devices. All Willow Vale Centres are non-smoking sites. We ask all parents to support this by ensuring that their children do not come in with smoking paraphernalia including vapes. If found, vapes/tobacco products will be confiscated and not returned to the student. Parents will be informed.

In addition, the following are prohibited from being brought into school:

- knives and any object that could be perceived as or used as a weapon;
- alcohol;
- illegal drugs;
- stolen items;
- If a student is found to have brought an item intended to cause harm into school, even if it is found to be imitation, it will be confiscated and parents and/or police will be called. Appendix C outlines procedure for use of a Wand search.

Influence of substances

Students are expected to attend school able to engage with their programme and not under the influence of a substance. If a member of staff believes that a student is under the influence of a substance, they will follow our process outlined in Appendix D.

Headteacher

The Headteacher has the ultimate responsibility for setting the standards of behaviour in school. The Headteacher is committed to ensuring that there is a purposeful working environment, that teachers can teach, and students can learn. The Headteacher will ensure that all staff have training to support students in modifying their behaviours and in the practice of restorative conversations and meetings to support reflection. The Headteacher must be kept informed of students' behaviour and attendance.

Suspensions and Exclusions

Prior to joining Willow Vale School, most students have experienced suspensions and/or permanent exclusions and the emotional damage caused by it. Willow Vale School will, where possible, use alternatives to fixed term suspensions, such as changing the environment for the student or adapting their provision in consultant with parents.

This may include moving the student to another site within the school if the Local Authority agree.

It is understood by all stakeholders that suspensions will be used as a last resort and in serious circumstances where a clear message is being given that, for a temporary period, the student is unsafe to be part of the school community, as their actions have been intentionally harmful and hurtful. The Headteacher has the right to impose the ultimate sanction of permanent exclusion in accordance with current legislation.

Management Committee

It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and to support the Headteacher and Leadership Team. In the extremely rare circumstance of a permanent exclusion then they will convene a 'Behaviour Committee' to hear exclusions, in accordance with current regulations.

Bullying

Willow Vale School has a separate Anti-Bullying Policy which explains in detail steps that we will take to deal with any behaviour that involves bullying.

4. Evidenced Based Approaches

Willow Vale School is working towards a trauma-informed approach, where there is a recognition that students can struggle to respond to their emotions safely, can become emotionally dysregulated, and the students need support to become re-regulated through co-regulation or supported self-regulation. Staff understand the importance of relating to the students' individual needs, which promotes strong professional relationships. During this process of regulation relationships are re-established through reconnection. Part of this process will also be to remind the students that there will be a consequence for their choice of behaviour, with an emphasis on ways in which the student can develop their response to dysregulation.

Strategies for supporting students' displaying challenging behaviours and displays of emotions are based on: an understanding of the functioning and development of the brain, the reminders of the link between choices and consequences, the role that trauma and adverse childhood experiences has on development and the importance of an emotionally available adult to support with the 4Rs –Relate, Regulate, Reconnect and Restore.

The Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics

Adverse Childhood Experiences

All staff will understand the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences. Staff will engage in continuous CPD (Continuing Professional Development) to support their understanding. ACEs play a significant role in the developmental phases of a child's life, and this will determine how we support our students through a person-centred approach.

PACE - *Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy*

Pace is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating, and behaving that aims to make children and young people feel safe. It was developed by a Clinical Psychologist, Dan Hughes, and focuses on building positive and trusting relationships, emotional connections and giving a sense of security and safety. It is based on the way that caregivers interact with children. It describes a way of relating to others or 'a way of being.' It pays attention to how we deliver messages to children and young people through our communication. The principles offer a useful framework from which we can develop attunement and strengthen our relationships with the children and young people we work with. Using PACE also helps adults to slow down their reactions, stay calm and tune into what the child is experiencing in the moment. It supports us to gain a better understanding of what the child is feeling. In tricky moments it allows us stay emotionally regulated and guide the child through their heightened emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. In turn, PACE helps children and young people to feel more connected to, and understood by, important adults in their life and ultimately, to slow down their own responses.

Restorative Practice

Wherever possible, we seek a restorative approach to all incidents. This process does not assign blame but encourages the students to look at their own and others' behaviours with a view to providing a positive outcome for all involved. Following an incident, staff will encourage students to engage in a restorative meeting. This will only take place when all parties are ready. Once agreed, a restorative meeting may then be arranged at which the student is encouraged to think about the following:

- What happened
- How they felt at the time
- Who was affected by what happened?
- How they feel about it now
- How can we repair it.

By using this approach, students are taught to reflect and take responsibility for their own actions. It is not who is right or wrong, but how we approach the challenge. ***Repair not Blame.***

Willow Vale Centres

Willow Vale School provides education for students across 7 sites in Taunton, Bridgwater and West Somerset. All sites ensure a consistent approach to student arrival in the mornings, including a student welcome, breakfast and time with trusted adults.

Restrictive Physical Intervention

The Willow Vale School behaviour and relationship policy requires all staff members to work with students in such a way that restrictive physical intervention is used as a last resort, and/or in emergency situations to step in and step out to safeguard the students. All staff will use methods of discussion, guidance, and negotiation to support our students, with communication playing a key role.

Willow Vale School utilises Team Teach or Price as an approach and will work towards one of these in the future. Techniques seek to avoid injury to the service user, but it is possible that bruising or scratching may occur accidentally, and these are not to be seen necessarily as a failure of professional technique, but a regrettable and infrequent "side-effect" of ensuring that the service user remains safe. Incidents of restrictive physical intervention are recorded on My Concern and a phone call is made to parent/guardian. This is completed on the day of the incident. (Appendix C).

Situations may arise in school whereby the police need to be called; SLT will be informed if this is the case. This policy acknowledges our legal duty under the Equality Act, 2010 alongside the need to safeguard students and staff and support those students with special educational needs.

5. Staff Team

We recognise that working alongside students with SEMH can be both hugely rewarding and emotionally demanding. We actively encourage staff to take care of their own wellbeing and advocate for them to strive for a healthy work life balance so that they can support our students to thrive. We offer Supervision through a qualified practitioner. All Senior Leaders are available to staff and work across the whole school.

Appendix A - SEMH Toolkit :

Arrival to Centre and transitions:

- Meet and greet with familiar adult(s) - key adult if in crisis.
- Offer routine to include food/drink and chance for attunement.
- Connect with student maintaining invisible thread between you.
- Offer exit strategy to a room or situation: an alternative place to be or a different activity to soothe.
- Every day, every hour, every lesson, every minute a fresh start.

Responding to escalation:

- Adapt provision to respond to the need and the student in front of you.
- Use of distraction techniques.
- Tactile or physical 'doing' activity for students demonstrating physical behaviours.
- Limit choices and direct them: X or Y
- Use 'thanks' not 'please' to create an expectation not a request.
- Use a visual to support processing.
- Give take up time for the student to process your request.
- Pick your battles, avoiding secondary behaviours (e.g. eye rolling, tutting)
- PLACEful interactions: play (humour/fun), liking (positive high regard), acceptance (separate the person from the behaviour), curiosity (I wonder – remaining out of judgement), empathy (alongside and with the student).
- Make things a game – use of challenge: can you do this? Encouragement.
- Signpost safe spaces.
- Maintain line of sight if student needs physical space.
- 'Rescue now, reflect later'
- Give certainty: Now, Next and building to Then, Later.

Attunement and Self-Awareness

- Meet the student where they are at.
- Flexible and adaptable in approach and response to students avoiding rigidity: what does success look like for the student in front of me?
- Staff awareness of body language: open, predictable.
- Staff awareness of self: position self away from exits, consideration given to height – not towering over or too close to student.
- Allow students to leave a space if they are physically dysregulated and maintain line of sight of student.
- Change of face when needed.
- Reciprocal games and activities: throw and catch, follow the leader drawing, turn taking.
- Offer an outlet: 'Tell me'
- Mirror and match (but don't exceed) intensity/volume/body language so a student feels heard.
- Hold In Mind 'I thought of you when....'

Communication With Others:

- Build relationships with parents/significant people in life of student.
- Plan for change in advance e.g. change of staff, significant event coming up for the student or timetable change.
- Restorative approaches when relationships have been tested led by the adult.

Use of emotion coaching script/commentary:

Always seeking to give the message that 'I will keep you safe if you cannot help yourself to stay safe and keep others safe.' 'I am sorry things are difficult today. I am glad you are here.'

Use of an emotion coaching approach:

Tune In – am I self-regulated? observe, listen, watch.

Connect – notice, meet the child where they are at, mirror/match the mood and volume as you connect.

Recognise – "I can see you are – **label the emotion as it presents"**

Validate – "I'm sorry you are feeling that way. I would feel like that….."

Empathise – "I can imagine that……. Let's……. I wonder if……I am guessing……."

Problem Solve – What should we do next?

Appendix B - Responding to an incident:

Staff always begin with de-escalation techniques and tailor them to the student and situation in front of them. (Appendix A)

Staff work as a team, requesting a change of face from a nearby adult when de-escalation is not working to minimise likelihood of a student reaching crisis.

If a student reaches crisis, a known member of staff is available, giving commentary when needed, stepping back but remaining present until the student begins to de-escalate.

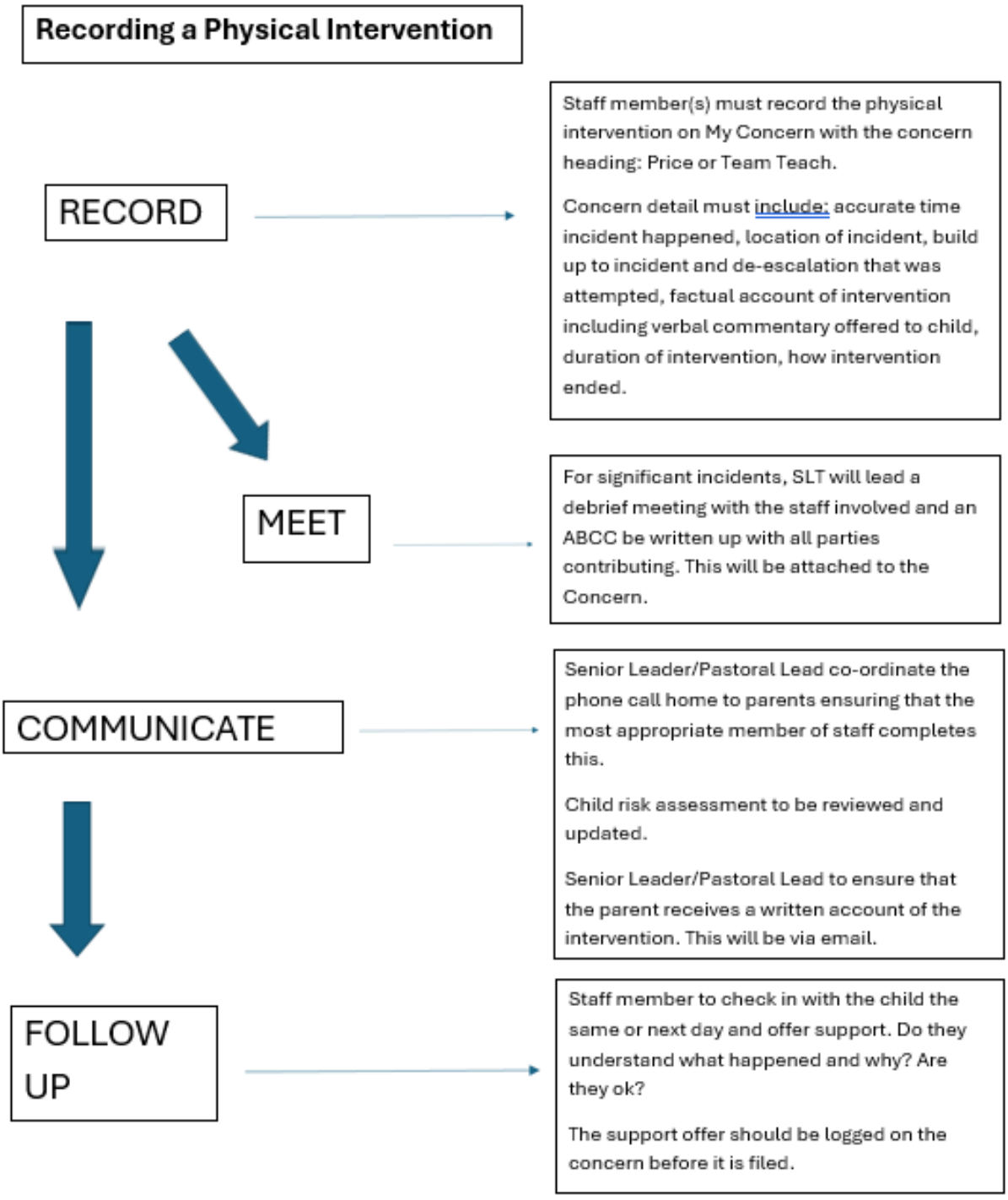
We recognise that time and space may be needed by the student and retain line of sight to ensure safety, being 'present', maintaining open, soft, predictable body language giving non-verbal safety cues.

If there is a risk to the safety of the student or another person (staff or student), the Site Lead and, if required, SLT, is made aware of the situation to give guidance.

Following an incident, the staff debrief with one another and complete an STAR chart to ensure a rigorous understanding of the incident and identification of any triggers.

Later, a trusted adult will speak with the student to support reflection and aid staff understanding of what can be adapted. Risk Assessment will be updated where necessary.

Appendix C – Process of Recording a Physical Intervention:



Appendix D – Wand searches:

Willow Vale School is committed to ensuring that Centres are safe places for all students and staff. Mobile telephones and electronic devices are collected in on arrival to ensure that students can focus on their learning and to prevent staff and students from being photographed, filmed or live streamed. Students are prohibited from bringing in knives and any object that could be perceived as or used as a weapon, alcohol, illegal drugs, stolen items.

A wand search procedure may be used:

- when a student is found to have repeatedly failed to hand in their mobile phone and/or electronic device.
- when a student is found to have photographed, filmed or live streamed from the Centre.
- when a student has brought in a weapon or something that could be used as a weapon.
- when there are concerns about a student carrying or using weapons outside of Willow Vale School.
- when there are contextual safeguarding concerns.
- at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Where a regular wand search is considered necessary, the following process will apply:

- Parents will be contacted to discuss the need for the regular Wand search.
- The student's arrival time at the Centre will be agreed and two members of staff will be available to meet the student.
- The Wand search will be conducted in a room away from other students, staff and visitors.
- The student will be asked to consent to the wand search. If the student refuses to consent to the Wand search, they will not be admitted to the Centre. This will be treated as an unauthorised absence.

Appendix E - Process when a student is suspected to be under the influence of a substance:

1) Share concerns with a colleague giving precise nature of concerns.

2) Two members of staff to meet with the student to determine:
   a) Is the student safe to be in school?
   b) Is the student safe to be around peers?
   c) Is the student safe to be around staff?

3) In the meeting, staff to observe how the student is presenting:
   a) Are they engaged and responsive to the conversation?
   b) Are they able to sit and remain focused?
   c) Are their behavioural signs that the student is under the influence of something? – are pupils dilated, are they unusually sleepy, are they unusually aggressive or giggly?

Format of meeting with student:

Staff will explain that the meeting is happening because concerns have been expressed over how they are presenting in the Centre/class.
Staff will determine if the student is feeling well and if they have slept the night before.

Staff will ask if the student has taken drugs/alcohol prior to arriving at school.
Staff will make the assessments as indicated in 2 & 3.

Once the meeting is complete, staff will discuss and conclude the likelihood of the student being under the influence of a substance as HIGH or LOW.

OUTCOMES:

HIGH risk – parent contacted, student sent home and I coded. Staff to liaise with parent for a meeting. Consideration will be given to whether an SDAS (Somerset Drugs Alcohol Service) referral should be made.

LOW risk – student will remain under close supervision of the staff team and, if concerns persist, they will be met with again to repeat the process. Parents will be contacted to share concerns.