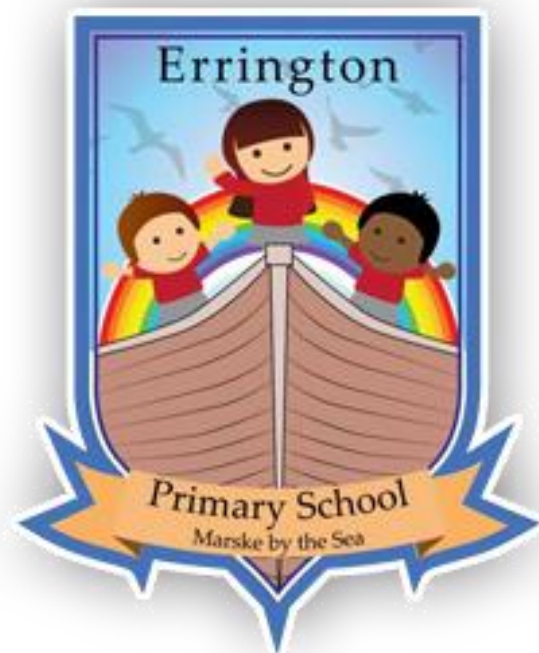


A whole school approach to improving behaviour through emotional regulation.



Written by Sophie Bennison, Mental Health Lead.

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This document is to be read in conjunction with the school behaviour policy and the mental health and wellbeing policy.

What are we doing?

At Errington Primary school, a child's wellbeing is at the very heart of all we do. As such, we have amended our behaviour policy to align with our school values and ethos. This has resulted in a whole school approach to improving behaviour through emotional regulation.

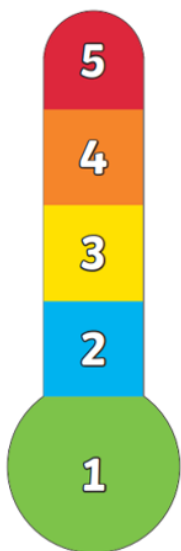
The main tool we are using to empower children to regulate their emotions is a behavioural support tool known as the Incredible 5-Point Scale, created by Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis (2003). It provides a visual representation of social behaviours, emotions, and abstract ideas. It is a simple scale used to teach social understanding. Kari stresses, that "the scale is about breaking social and emotional concepts into 5 parts. It is a teaching tool". The tool is recognised with a strong evidence base supporting its application. It has been recommended specifically for people with social communication needs such as ASD, however we feel that its simplicity and clarity make it a great fit for our whole school approach.

The core of our whole school approach centres around the visual of a 5-point thermometer scale. The graphic has been chosen for its simplicity and neutral design. Importance is placed upon the restorative, therapeutic emotional regulation which takes place at each stage.

Alongside the image, we need the pupils to understand and attach meaning to each of the numbers, recognising them as points on a sliding scale that we move through with our emotional regulation. Central to this principle is that children understand that ALL people move through these stages and that they are all useful and appropriate at the right time, but that problems occur if we spend too long stuck in one of the stages. An emphasis is placed on not seeing green as the goal, but understanding that blue and green are most beneficial to learning at school.

An example of the stages can be found below.

5-point scale of wellbeing and behaviour



Scale number	Example behaviours	Example bodily reactions
5	Emotional shutdown, meltdown, unresponsive to others, crying, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, loss of control, unable to focus, adrenaline release, trying to escape the situation, running away	Tense muscles, red face, breathing quicker, hot, shaking, needing to run, clenched fists, clenched jaw, heart pounding
4	Shouting, refusing to engage, verbally insulting, heightened anxiety, high alert, lack of focus	Quicker heart rate, warmer, fidgeting hands and feet, wanting to throw objects, muscles starting to tense, trying to walk away
3	Excited, silly, distracted, fizzy, fleeting attention, change in body language	Fidgeting hands and feet, not giving eye contact, distracted by noises, whispering to others, zoning out
2	Alert, ready, engaged, responsive	Giving eye contact, sitting calmly, steady heart rate, listening
1	Calm, relaxed, recharging	Sitting still, low energy, yawning, giving eye contact, listening

Remember, green is not the goal. All zones are ok, its about what we do with those feelings. |

Why are we doing it?

We know that all behaviour is communication, often communicating a need that children do not recognise. We understand the importance of noticing the bodily reactions we have as we move through the sliding scale, and how we can regulate our emotions to ensure we are ready to learn.

We know that consistency of approach is very important for children and in times of emotional need, the more simple and clear the steps are, the easier they are to process. If we teach and model the same method right from the start of school, then we hope this will become embedded over time where we hear both adults and children using the same language to describe how they are feeling. We will also share this with parents so that consistency can be continued at home, inviting parents to use the same language and pictures of the 5 point scale to help communicate with their child about feelings and emotional regulation. Parents may choose to create their own Wellbeing Toolkit at home around the same 5 choices as described in further detail below.

What does it look like in action?

Whole School Approach

There will be 5-point scales displayed in classrooms and communal areas such as libraries, computer suite, STEAM room, and hall. All members of staff are familiar with the scale of emotional regulation and will model the scale with all learners, not just those with SEND or SEMH needs. All children are taught about mental health and recognise that every person has mental health. Children understand that mental health can be good or poor, and all people fluctuate along this sliding scale at different points of the day, month, year and in their lifetime. All staff in school have a small, laminated scale on their lanyards so it is readily available when working with young people. Some teachers may use small scales on pupils' desks to use more easily during lessons.

The use of this model will require extensive learning to develop the understanding needed to use it. This will take place through our Whole Child Curriculum, which encompasses all aspects of emotional wellbeing. The 5-point scale is used at an age-appropriate level in each class, adapting language to be accessible to all. Children will learn about how each stage makes our bodies feel, and will know that these bodily reactions are indicators of movement through the scale. Children will also learn an array of emotional regulation techniques they could try at each stage.

Headstarters will receive further training on how they could refer to the scale when supporting their peers. Additionally, Headstarters know when to get an adult to help, and understand when it is ok for them to help their friends.

In addition to the 5-point scale, Wellbeing Toolkits will be placed around school, including classrooms and libraries. These Wellbeing Toolkits are intended to be used by children when they recognise their indicators of moving through the scales.

Whilst these toolkits will have similar contents, they will be tailored to be appropriate to the ages of children using them. These toolkits could be used by children who have been asked to take a Time Out, or those who feel their bodily reactions changing. Some children might

prefer privacy when using the toolkit or taking a time out, in these instances children may wish to make use of privacy screens which will be available in each classroom. The toolkit will contain 5 choices to help a person (pupil or adult) to regulate themselves to a lower number on the scale. These choices will be labelled as 'Breathe', 'Move', 'Distract', 'Create' and 'Touch'. Time will be needed to teach children how to use each element of the toolkit successfully. The scale and wellbeing toolkit is for EVERYONE in class and is not to be seen as belonging to an individual. This reinforces that we all, including adults, need to regulate ourselves at times.

Wellbeing Toolkit (example contents)

Breathe (breathing exercises, bubbles)

Move (action cards, walk to the bathroom, controlled lifting of weighted ball)

Touch (fidget, squishy, brush)

Create (playdough, draw, build)

Distract (watch, puzzle, listen to a song, drink of water)

Groups

Some children in school may find the concept of the 5-point scale a difficult one to understand at first, requiring further time, explanation and modelling of this at a time when they feel calm and receptive. It may be beneficial for these group sessions to be led by a familiar adult with a confident approach towards the concept. This is an area where we will draw on staff with more specialist skills. It may be appropriate for children to be grouped from across classes for this intervention.

Individuals

It is expected that a small number of our children, most probably those with an identified SEND need, will require individual support to both understand and access the concept of the 5 point scale. For these children, the scale can be completed with trusted adults who know the child well. This can then form part of a behaviour plan alongside other SEND documentation. In this instance, it would be best for the child to have their own copy of the 5 point scale, documenting how the child feels at each of the 5 points and also how they would look to others at these times. This would allow adults to support the child as they recognise behaviours suggesting regulation time is needed. For these children, it is anticipated that further support will be required to help the child identify when they are moving through the scale and when a regulation activity would be beneficial and why.

Unstructured times of day

Some children struggle to regulate their emotions during unstructured times of the day, such as play time and lunch time. There will be quiet areas available for children both inside and outside at these times. The Yellow Room will be staffed during each lunchtime with adults who can support children to regulate if these unstructured times prove to be tricky. Children will be able to visit this area if they feel their bodily reactions escalating, or dinner staff might ask a child to visit the quiet area if they notice unhelpful behaviours. Children will carry a small bean bag on their way to the Yellow Room which acts as a signal to staff. The beanbag and walk itself is therapeutic and calming, meaning there is likely to be a de-escalation before the child even reaches the Yellow Room. Once children have had support to regulate their emotions, by use of the 5-point scale and Wellbeing Toolkit, they can return to the outdoor area. It is important that children recognise that this is not an alternative to going outside when they don't want to go on the playground, but it is a resource to support children with their wellbeing. To assist with this, an outdoor quiet area will provide children with a slightly calmer area to play, including building, reading, blankets, and puzzles as an alternative to the hustle and bustle of the playground. These calm areas will complement the lunchtime Nurture group, as some children may find they can manage the playground when they have short breaks to regulate. The Nurture group provision will continue for those who need it.

What will happen if a child is having difficulty regulating their emotions?

We hope in the fullness of time that children become more confident and independent in recognising as they move through the emotional stages, and will request to use the wellbeing toolkit in these instances. However, school staff will always be alert to supporting children with their emotional needs and may prompt a child to use the wellbeing toolkit if they notice an escalation. It may be appropriate for the adult to share this verbally with the child, or it may be less inflammatory to use a non-verbal cue such as pointing to the scale image. These instances would be discussed and agreed in advance, when the child is calm and regulated. We always listen to pupil's choices and ensure their voice is heard in any behaviour management ideas.

What if the child is using the wellbeing toolkit as an alternative to lessons rather than to support an emotional need?

Praise and modelling will support children in understanding the purpose behind the wellbeing toolkit, although it is expected that children will begin with a natural curiosity to the activities/equipment available. It may be beneficial to have some sessions where children can explore the contents. If a child has chosen (or been guided to) the Wellbeing Toolkit, it is recommended that they use the equipment with a time limit e.g. "Let's try this for 5 minutes and then we can try again". It is recommended that

when a child is repeatedly choosing to use the Wellbeing Toolkit that this is recorded to help identify any patterns that may be triggering this response.

What if the Wellbeing Toolkit doesn't work?

At Errington, the Yellow Room is the designated space for emotional wellbeing and therapeutic work with children and parents. This is where all therapeutic sessions take place with the Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) we work with, as well as the weekly lunchtime drop-in service, which is staffed by Shawn Ridgeway, our Education Mental Health Practitioner (EMHP) from Inside Out. Children can use this space with a familiar adult for emotional wellbeing, emotional literacy, or further regulation time.

This work can also take place in the courtyard / quad area where the chickens live, or even in our Outdoor Classroom area where the wildflower garden is. We understand the benefit that the outdoors can have in improving our mental health and want to use this space in supporting our children. If a child has found that regulating their emotions within the classroom setting is too challenging, then a familiar and trusted adult will accompany the child to the Yellow Room where they can take the time they need to regulate with both privacy and dignity. Within the Yellow Room there will also be a Wellbeing Toolkit to access, although alongside this there are further options linked to the outside space such as nurturing our plants, spending time with the chickens or engaging in physical activity.

What next?

The above steps outlined are designed to support the majority of pupils in our care, however there may be specific pupils who require more specialist support. In this case, support can be sought from the mental health huddle which takes place with the MH Lead and the MHSTs used in school every three weeks.

More information about the MHSTs we use and the Mental Health support systems in place can be found in the Mental Health and Wellbeing policy or by asking our Mental Health Lead, Sophie Bennison.