



STUDENT BEHAVIOUR AND RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

Understanding and Responding to Student Behaviour

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1. PURPOSE AND POLICY STATEMENT

Ember Learning works with secondary-aged students experiencing emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) and related needs. For many of these students, behaviour that may look like disengagement, refusal, or distress is not a discipline problem to be corrected. It is communication. Something has made school, or being asked to perform, feel unsafe, and the behaviour we see is often the clearest signal we get of that. Ember Learning also works with young adults via a mentoring framework to support them in preparation for adulthood.

This Policy sets out how Ember Learning understands and responds to student and mentee behaviour during sessions. It is deliberately non-punitive. We do not use sanctions, isolation, or exclusion as tools, because for this cohort those tools have often already been tried, have often already failed, and have often contributed to the original rupture with school. Repeating that pattern within alternative provision would undermine the purpose of the provision itself.

Our aim is not to extract compliant behaviour from a student or mentee. It is to hold a steady, predictable, low-pressure relationship with them long enough that engagement becomes possible again — while protecting the wellbeing of the teachers and mentors delivering that relationship.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all sessions delivered by Ember Learning to students and mentees referred by commissioning Local Authorities, Multi-Academy Trusts, private companies or schools. It sits alongside, and should be read together with, the following documents:

- Teacher Behaviour Policy (EL-TMBP-001) — sets out the standards of professional conduct expected of teachers, including the practical, in-session mechanics of managing disruption.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (EL-CPSP-001)
- Complaints Procedure (EL-CP-001)

Where a student's / mentee's behaviour raises a safeguarding concern, this Policy is subordinate to the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, which must be followed immediately.

3. PRINCIPLES

- The welfare of the student or mentee is paramount, including during moments of difficult or challenging behaviour.
- Every student and mentee is treated with dignity and consistency, regardless of how they are behaving in a given session.
- Behaviour is understood in context. We ask what a student's / mentee's behaviour is communicating, not only what rule it may have broken.

- Our response is calm, proportionate, and relational. Teachers and mentors are trained to de-escalate, not to confront.
- Consistency and predictability matter. Students and mentees should experience the same steady response whether a session is going well or badly.
- We take an active role in helping students build the skills to regulate themselves — self-regulation, impulse control, and respectful ways of relating to adults and peers — rather than only managing incidents as they arise.
- This Policy protects teachers / mentors as well as students / mentees. Teachers and mentors are not expected to absorb targeted verbal abuse indefinitely; ending a session or muting a student's or mentees audio are legitimate protective actions for the teacher and mentors, not only tools for managing the student and mentees.

4. EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS & MENTEES

Students and mentees are asked to engage with sessions as best they are able, and to treat their teacher/mentor and any peers in the session with basic respect. These expectations are kept deliberately light. Given the needs of our cohort, an expectation a student / mentee cannot meet on a given day is treated as information about that student's/mentee's current capacity, not as a breach to be sanctioned. Where a student/mentee struggles to meet these expectations, teachers/mentors actively support and model regulation, self-expression, and repair, rather than treating the lapse as a fixed trait.

5. UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO BEHAVIOUR

Teachers and mentors follow a graduated response, set out in full in Section 6 of the Teacher & Mentor Behaviour Policy (ET-TMBP-001). In summary:

5.1 Low-level disruption

Examples: inattention, minor rudeness, off-task behaviour. The teacher / mentor responds calmly, avoids escalating, and redirects the student / mentee positively. A brief factual note is included in the post-session report.

5.2 Concerning behaviour

Examples: persistent refusal to engage, verbal aggression, visible distress. The teacher / mentor remains calm, de-escalates using a quiet and measured tone, and does not attempt to counsel or interrogate the underlying issue. Where language becomes seriously abusive and de-escalation is not working, the teacher/mentor has the option to mute the student's/mentee's audio for a short period, both to allow the session to continue safely and to protect the teacher from continued targeted abuse, in line with the platform controls described in the Teacher & Mentor Behaviour Policy. The incident is reported to Ember Learning within one hour.

5.3 Serious incidents

Examples: disclosure of abuse or immediate risk, a student / mentee in crisis, illegal activity observed on screen. The teacher / mentor ends the session calmly, without alarming the student / mentee, and contacts the DSL immediately. A full written incident report is completed within one hour of the session ending. This is handled under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

5.4 Ending a session early

A session may be ended before its scheduled end time where a student's/mentee's behaviour poses a safeguarding risk, or is so disruptive or distressing that the session cannot continue despite genuine de-escalation attempts. This is always a last step, never a first response, and is always followed by a report and DSL notification.

6. SUPPORTING TEACHER & MENTOR WELLBEING

Managing difficult or distressing behaviour is part of a teacher's / mentors role, but it is not something teachers / mentors are expected to absorb alone or indefinitely. Following any concerning or serious incident, the teacher / mentor has access to a debrief with the DSL, and any pattern of repeated distressing behaviour toward a specific teacher / mentor is reviewed by the DSL, who will consider whether a change (for example, reassigning the student to a different teacher, or adjusting session format) is needed to protect the teacher's / mentors wellbeing. Reporting a difficult incident is treated as good practice, not as a sign a teacher / mentor has failed to manage a student / mentee.

7. NO EXCLUSIONS OR SUSPENSIONS

Ember Learning does not exclude, suspend, or remove a student / mentee from provision as a sanction for behaviour. Many of the students referred to us have already experienced exclusion from a mainstream setting, and for some, that experience forms part of why they are with us. Using removal from provision as a consequence would recreate the same rupture we are trying to help a student move past, and is inconsistent with our model.

8. PERSISTENT OR ESCALATING CONCERNS

Where concerning behaviour becomes a recurring pattern, or is escalating in severity or disruption to a small-group session. For a Student, or a Mentee under 18, this conversation will be with the parent or carer and the commissioning body. For a Mentee aged 18 or over, this conversation will be with the Mentee themselves and the commissioning body; a parent or carer will only be involved with the Mentee's consent, or where the Mentee lacks capacity, in accordance with Clause 3A of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. This is a collaborative review of whether the current provision, session structure, or pace is meeting the student's / mentees needs, not a disciplinary process and not a route to removing the student. It may result in adjustments such as a change in group composition, a temporary move to 1:1 delivery, or a revised pace, always agreed with the Student's parent/carer (or, for a Mentee aged 18 or over, with the Mentee themselves) and the commissioner rather than imposed.

In rare cases, this review may conclude that Ember Learning's model is not the right fit for a student's / mentee's needs. Where that happens, Ember Learning will work jointly with the parent/carer (or, for a Mentee aged 18 or over, with the Mentee themselves) and commissioner to identify and transition to a more suitable form of provision. This is a decision about fit, reached collaboratively, and is never made unilaterally by Ember Learning as a consequence of behaviour.

9. RECORDING AND MONITORING

Every student session generates a post-session report noting attendance, engagement, and any behavioural or welfare observations. Every mentee session generates a post-session notes section to enable the mentor to provide key details from that session. The DSL reviews patterns across these reports over time, so that a recurring concern, for the student or the teacher, is identified from trends, not only from a single incident.

10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Teachers / Mentors: apply this Policy during sessions, in accordance with the practical guidance in the Teacher & Mentor Behaviour Policy, and report promptly and honestly, including when they themselves have found a session distressing.
- DSL (Jack Bradley): reviews patterns of behaviour across students, leads any suitability conversation with parents/carers and commissioners, supports teachers / mentors following

difficult incidents, and ensures the safeguarding threshold is applied correctly where behaviour and welfare intersect.

- Commissioning bodies: are kept informed of any escalating pattern and are partners in agreeing any change to provision.

11. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This Policy should be read alongside the Teacher & Mentor Behaviour Policy (EL-TMBP-001), the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (EL-CPSP-001), and the Complaints Procedure (EL-CP-001).

12. REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there is a significant change in legislation, guidance, or the operational context of Ember Learning. Responsibility for maintaining and reviewing this Policy sits with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Policy Owner:	Jack Bradley, Director
Date Adopted:	1 September 2026
Next Review Due:	1 September 2027 (or earlier if a trigger event occurs)
Approved by:	Jack Bradley, Director, 1 September 2026