

Therapeutic Thinking at Linslade Lower School

Therapeutic Thinking is our school's approach to behaviour, relationships, and wellbeing. It is based on the understanding that all behaviour is a form of communication and that children and young people may express unmet needs, emotions, anxieties, or difficulties through their actions. Rather than focusing solely on sanctions or punishment, Therapeutic Thinking aims to understand the reasons behind behaviour and support pupils in developing the skills, resilience, and self-regulation needed to succeed.

Through **Therapeutic Thinking**, we strive to create a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment where pupils feel understood, supported, and empowered to learn. By recognising behaviour as communication, prioritising relationships, using positive language, engaging in restorative practice, and applying educational consequences, we help pupils develop the emotional and social skills they need to thrive both in school and beyond.

Behaviour is Communication

A core principle of Therapeutic Thinking is that **behaviour communicates a message**. When a pupil displays challenging behaviour, staff seek to understand what the behaviour might be telling us. This involves considering factors such as emotional wellbeing, relationships, environmental triggers, developmental needs, and past experiences. By understanding the root cause, staff can respond in ways that help pupils learn more effective ways of communicating and managing their emotions.

Connect Before Correct

Strong, positive relationships are at the heart of Therapeutic Thinking. Staff aim to **connect before correcting**, recognising that pupils are more likely to respond positively when they feel understood, valued, and safe. This means approaching situations with empathy, curiosity, and calmness, building trust before addressing inappropriate behaviour. Connection helps reduce conflict, supports emotional regulation, and creates opportunities for meaningful learning.

Positive Rephrasing and language

Therapeutic Thinking encourages the use of **positive rephrasing**. Rather than telling pupils what not to do, staff focus on clearly communicating the behaviour they want to see. For example, instead of saying "Don't run," staff might say "Please walk." Positive language provides clear expectations, reduces

confrontation, and helps pupils understand the desired behaviour. Consistent positive rephrasing contributes to a supportive and respectful learning environment. *See attached 'Positive Use of Language' document.*

Restorative Conversations

Following incidents, a **restorative conversation** provides an opportunity for reflection, repair, and learning. Once everyone is calm and ready, staff support pupils in exploring:

- What happened?
- What were they thinking and feeling at the time?
- Who was affected and how?
- What could be done differently next time?
- What do we need to do to make things right?

The focus is not on blame but on understanding, accountability, and developing strategies for future success. Restorative conversations help strengthen relationships and encourage personal responsibility. *See attached 'Restorative Practice' guide sheets.*

Educational Consequences

Within Therapeutic Thinking, consequences are designed to be **educational or protective**. Protective consequences are solely actions to ensure no further harm occurs in the short term.

Educational consequences aim to help pupils learn from their actions and develop better choices for the future. Consequences should be logical, proportionate, and linked to the behaviour. Examples might include repairing damage, practising a skill that was difficult, completing missed learning, or participating in a restorative conversation. Educational consequences help pupils understand the impact of their actions while maintaining dignity and supporting growth.