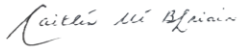
Our Lady of Fatima Special School

Roll No.	19266T
Principal Teacher	Glenda McKeown
Policy	Behaviour Management Policy
Date created and Implemented	28th May 2025
Date reviewed	30th September 2026
Approved by	
	Chairperson, Board of Management
Date for review	Annually

Aim and Rationale of the Policy

The aim of the Behaviour Management Policy at Our Lady of Fatima Special School is to create a positive, inclusive, and supportive learning environment. Our mission is to provide a happy and secure atmosphere where we value and develop the whole person, celebrating each student's uniqueness. Our ethos, grounded in Christian values—care, compassion, hospitality, trust, dignity, respect, and diversity—aligns with the NCSE Relate Framework which places regulation, connection, and inclusion at the centre of all behaviour supports.

NCSE Relate encourages us to reframe behaviour as a form of communication and dysregulation. This policy emphasises understanding and connection before compliance and prioritises removing barriers to engagement through Universal Design for Learning (UDL), co-regulation, and student voice.

Legislative and Policy Context

This policy is informed by national and international legislative frameworks:

- **Education Act 1998**
- **EPSEN Act 2004**
- **Children First Act 2015**
- **Equal Status Acts 2000–2018**
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 2005**
- **UNCRC and UNCRPD**

It also complements the Department of Education's **Understanding Behaviours of Concern (2024)** and the NCSE's **An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society (2024)** policy advice.

Related School Policies

- Code of Behaviour
- Staff Code of Conduct – DRAW Charter
- Bí Cineálta: Staff & Student Policy
- Parent-School Communication Policy

Key Shifts Based on NCSE Relate

We commit to the following paradigm shifts:

From	To
Managing behaviour	Understanding communication and meeting needs
Hypothesising function	Recognising stressors and environment impact
Changing behaviour	Changing environment to increase wellbeing
Rewards and compliance	Connection, regulation, and intrinsic motivation
Starting with individual interventions	Starting with universal, school-wide inclusive practices

Principles from NCSE Relate Embedded in Our Policy

- **Regulation First**: Prioritise co-regulation to help students return to a calm, engaged state
- **Student Voice**: Actively seek and respond to the perspectives of students
- **Unconditional Positive Regard**: Every student is worthy of dignity and respect
- **Neuro-affirmative Practice**: Celebrate neurodiversity; do not seek to 'fix' difference
- **Solution-Focused Thinking**: Focus on what is working and build from strengths
- **Universal Design for Learning**: Reduce barriers to participation proactively
- **Staff and Student Wellbeing**: Ensure both adult and student needs are addressed
- **Rights-Based**: Grounded in UNCRC and UNCRPD, honouring student rights

Our Approach

At Our Lady of Fatima Special School, we are committed to a relational, regulation-first approach as outlined in the NCSE Relate framework. We believe behaviour is communication, and that dysregulation—not defiance—is often at the root of behaviour that challenges. We view co-regulation as a shared responsibility, and prioritise proactive, compassionate, and inclusive responses.

Our approach includes:

- Embedding co-regulation in daily routines
- Recognising the impact of stressors (biological, cognitive, emotional, social, prosocial, and communication)
- Teaching and Modelling Emotional Literacy
- Providing safe, calm environments to support regulation
- Developing individualised support plans in collaboration with families and professionals

Behaviours of Concern

Behaviours of concern are classified into three broad levels based on intensity and impact:

Level 1 – Low-Level Challenges:

- Examples: Refusal to follow directions, minor disruptions
- Response: Positive reinforcement, consistent routines, clear visual supports

Level 2 – Moderate Challenges:

- Examples: Repeated disruption, emotional outbursts, persistent avoidance
- Response: Co-regulation, limit setting, visual and verbal de-escalation, sensory supports

Level 3 – Significant Challenges:

- Examples: Aggression, self-injury, destruction of property

- Response: Safety-first crisis management, individualised Behaviour Support Plans, post-incident restoration

In all cases, responses are student-centered, non-punitive, and focused on building understanding and capacity.

De-escalation and Crisis Management

Staff use a combination of verbal, non-verbal, and environmental strategies to de-escalate behaviours of concern:

Verbal Strategies:

- Calm, neutral tone of voice
- Minimal verbal prompts or directions
- Offering clear, structured choices
- Acknowledging emotions and affirming student safety

Non-Verbal Strategies:

- Open body language and supportive stance
- Use of visuals, proximity control, and sensory tools
- Creating calming spaces and reducing sensory input

Crisis Response Includes:

- Activating the “one voice” policy
- Removing the audience or creating a safe space
- Refraining from confrontation or negotiation
- Following the “Regulate–Relate–Reason” model by Dr. Bruce Perry

Once the crisis has passed, staff work with the student to reflect on what happened and identify ways to reduce triggers in the future. These moments are viewed as learning opportunities and are handled with empathy and care.

Whole-School Approach

Behaviour support is the responsibility of the entire school community. This includes:

- Ongoing staff professional development in regulation-first approaches
- Collaborative student support teams using a shared language
- Co-creation of support plans with families and clinicians
- Data-informed decision-making using functional assessment tools
- Reflection and review as a team practice

The Relate-Informed Structure of Behaviour Support

Our framework follows the Relate phases of support:

Preventative

- Consistent routines and predictable environments
- Visual schedules, sensory tools, and calming spaces

- Daily wellbeing check-ins and relationship-building practices
- Anticipatory supports (e.g., preparing for change or transitions)

Supportive

- Co-regulation through proximity, calm presence, and reduced language
- Use of “one voice” in crisis situations
- Immediate support through sensory strategies and time-in (not time-out)

Restorative

- Use of restorative conversations and reflection sheets
- Social stories or comic strip conversations
- Collaborative planning for future success

Implementation Strategies

- Behaviour Support Plans and Student Support Files
- Functional Behaviour Analysis and the use of Boxall Profiles
- Understanding behaviour as communication (escape, attention, tangible, sensory)
- Use of positive reinforcement and self-regulation teaching strategies
- Zones of Regulation, choice boards, and calming spaces

Crisis Management

- Verbal and non-verbal de-escalation strategies
- Proximity control, visual supports, low-arousal tone
- Environment control (e.g., remove audience, calm space)
- One-voice policy
- Post-incident recovery and reflection support

Physical Restraint

- Used only in crisis where there is imminent risk of harm
- Only trained staff using CPI-approved techniques
- Documented, time-limited, and used with utmost care
- Reviewed after each incident with appropriate reflection and parent consultation

(Please refer to **Resources** following Appendices)

Physical Restraint		
Should Always Be	**Sometimes**	**Should Never Be**
An act of care. For safety reasons. To manage behaviour in an emergency. Used with the least amount of force necessary for safety. For the shortest amount of time needed for the student to regain control.	Can lead to injury of the student or adults. Can lead to an increase in physical and emotional stress for student or adults. Can provoke a more intense physical reaction from the student or adults.	Punitive. Used unless the situation is an emergency and safety is compromised. Used as a teaching strategy.

Physical restraint in crisis situations

If it appears that a behaviour is escalating to the point that it is placing the student or others at imminent risk of serious physical harm, this is a crisis situation that may require physical restraint.

Staff will use professional judgement to decide if the unique situation constitutes a serious and imminent risk to the safety of the individual and others.

Examples of crisis situations where there is an imminent risk to the student's safety or to that of others:

• A student is putting themselves in danger, for example running into a road or towards explicit danger.

• A student starts to self-injure by banging his/her head with force on a hard surface.

• A student starts to throw large items, such as computers or furniture at peers or adults.

• A student physically attacks another person.

What is not considered physical restraint?

Where schools are following the guidance and recommendation of the relevant professional, for example, in using a standing frame with a harness restraint to support a student with physical needs, using a school bus seatbelt/harness for safety during transportation, or using a weighted vest for deep pressure or other sensory processing interventions, it should be noted that this does not constitute physical restraint as defined in these guidelines. However, it is important that the use/involvement of all equipment is monitored and kept under regular review.

The following situations are not crisis situations and physical restraint should not be used:

- A student is upset and escalating but there is no physical danger.
- At the onset of a known sequence of escalating behaviours.
- A student is upset and refuses to leave a class or any area of the school when requested.
- A student issues verbal threats.
- An older student, who does not have an intellectual or learning disability, threatens to leave the classroom or the school and proceeds to do so - unless an imminent danger to health and safety is deemed to exist.
- A student is damaging property in the school but not endangering staff or students.

Seclusion

- Seclusion is placing a student involuntarily in any environment in which they are alone and physically prevented from leaving.
- Physical prevention from leaving can be through the use of a locked door, a blocked door, or an exit held closed by a staff member. Seclusion is also a situation where a student believes they cannot leave a space although no physical block is evident.
- Not permitted under any circumstances
- Recognised as punitive and counter to school values and legal expectations

What is NOT seclusion?

• Blanket restrictions (that apply equally to all students) regarding some restrictions on movement. For example, in the interest of student safety, there may be restrictions about leaving the school premises, break times and agreed parameters around the unsupervised activity of children.

• Proactive strategies that involve redirecting a distressed, overstimulated or overwhelmed student into a low stimulus environment as long as they are free to leave this space and this is an agreed strategy in their support plan.

• If a student independently takes themselves to a space or room. However, vigilance is needed to ensure they do not isolate themselves for extended periods of time.

Partnership with Families

- Engage families as co-creators of support plans
- Provide regular updates and opportunities for reflection
- Ensure that strategies used at school and home align where possible
- Share learning tools, visuals, and strategies for home use

Understanding Behaviour Through Behavioural Support Plans

We use Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) and functional assessments to identify the root causes of behaviour. These plans:

- Analyse behaviours using ABC (Antecedent–Behaviour–Consequence) records
- Identify stressors and triggers across domains (biological, emotional, cognitive, social, prosocial, and communication)
- Include clear, proactive strategies and co-regulation techniques
- Are developed collaboratively with parents, teachers, SNAs, and support staff

The Boxall Profile is used where appropriate to further understand students' developmental needs and inform our planning.

Teaching Appropriate Communication

Teaching communication is a key behaviour support strategy. We use:

- Visual supports (PECS, timetables, choice boards)
- Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems
- Social stories and comic strip conversations
- Explicit teaching of language for emotions and conflict resolution
- Teaching students how to request help, a break, or to communicate discomfort safely

Creating a Supportive Environment

A supportive classroom environment is created through:

- Clear visual routines and rules displayed in classrooms
- Flexible seating, sensory tools, and calm spaces
- Predictable schedules with transition cues
- A playful pedagogy that includes movement, curiosity, and enjoyment
- Student-centered approaches, offering real choices and voice in learning

Role of Parents

Parents are vital partners in supporting behaviour:

- Share insights into student needs and strengths
- Co-develop BSPs and strategies
- Reinforce regulation and communication strategies at home
- Celebrate progress collaboratively with staff

National Legislative Requirements

- **Education Act 1998**: Obliges schools to provide for students' moral, emotional, and intellectual development

- **EPSEN Act 2004**: Supports inclusive education and provision of Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- **Children First Act 2015**: Ensures the safeguarding of children and reporting of welfare concerns
- **Equal Status Acts 2000–2018**: Prohibits discrimination in education
- **Disability Act 2005**: Mandates reasonable accommodations
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 2005**: Provides for physical and psychological safety in schools

International Legislative Requirements

- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**: Emphasises every child's right to education, protection, and participation
- **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**: Affirms inclusive education as a human right

Duty of Care

Staff operate in loco parentis and have a duty to:

- Maintain a safe physical and emotional environment
- Supervise effectively, especially during times of dysregulation
- Act in the best interests of the child, balancing safety and dignity

Governance Responsibilities

- **Board of Management**: Ensures implementation and legal compliance
- **Policy Review**: Ensures this policy is updated annually and reflects current best practice
- **Training Oversight**: Ensures staff are trained in CPI, trauma-informed care, and co-regulation
- **Documentation and Incident Reporting**: Maintains records for transparency and review

Embedding in Policy

Embedding these legislative and relational approaches ensures that our policy is rights-based, neuro-affirmative, and inclusive. Staff act consistently across settings, modelling respectful and supportive behaviour for all students.

Monitoring and Review

- Track incidents and progress using reflection tools and behaviour logs
- SSE process used to assess impact of supports
- Policy reviewed annually in consultation with the school community and NCSE Advisors

This Policy embeds the principles, structures and resources of the NCSE Relate Framework, ensuring that our approach to behaviour is modern, inclusive, and sustainable

Appendices to Support Practice

The following tools from the NCSE Relate framework will support implementation:

Appendix 1: Phases of Support Template – Planning support across preventative, supportive and restorative phases

Appendix 2: Stressor Recognition and Reduction Tool – Identify and minimise daily stressors

NCSE Relate – A Regulation-First Approach to Reframing Behaviour and Supporting Student Engagement and Participation

Appendix 3: Getting to Know Me Profile – Amplify student voice and build understanding

NCSE Relate – A Regulation-First Approach to Reframing Behaviour and Supporting Student Engagement and Participation

Appendix 4: Solution-Focused Goal Setting Tool – Collaboratively create positive, actionable goals

NCSE Relate – A Regulation-First Approach to Reframing Behaviour and Supporting Student Engagement and Participation

Appendix 5: Reflective Practice Questions – Promoting team learning and professional growth

Appendix 6: Checklist - Actions to be taken in the immediate aftermath of an incident

Appendix 7: Checklist – ***Further*** Actions to be taken in the immediate aftermath of an incident

Appendix 8: Checklist of actions following an incident involving ***physical restraint***

Resource 1: Sample Record of Incident Involving **Physical Restraint**

Resource 2: Sample Staff **reflection form** following an incident of **Physical Restraint**

Resource 3: Guidance on engaging with parents following an incident of Physical Restraint

Resource 4: NCSE Record of Incident involving Physical Restraint Form

Appendix 1: Phases of Support Template

Phases of Support Template

What the student may be experiencing:		
Preventing	Supporting	Restoring

What the adult is doing:		
Preventing	Supporting	Restoring

Appendix 2: Stressor Recognition and Reduction Tool

STRESSOR TOOL

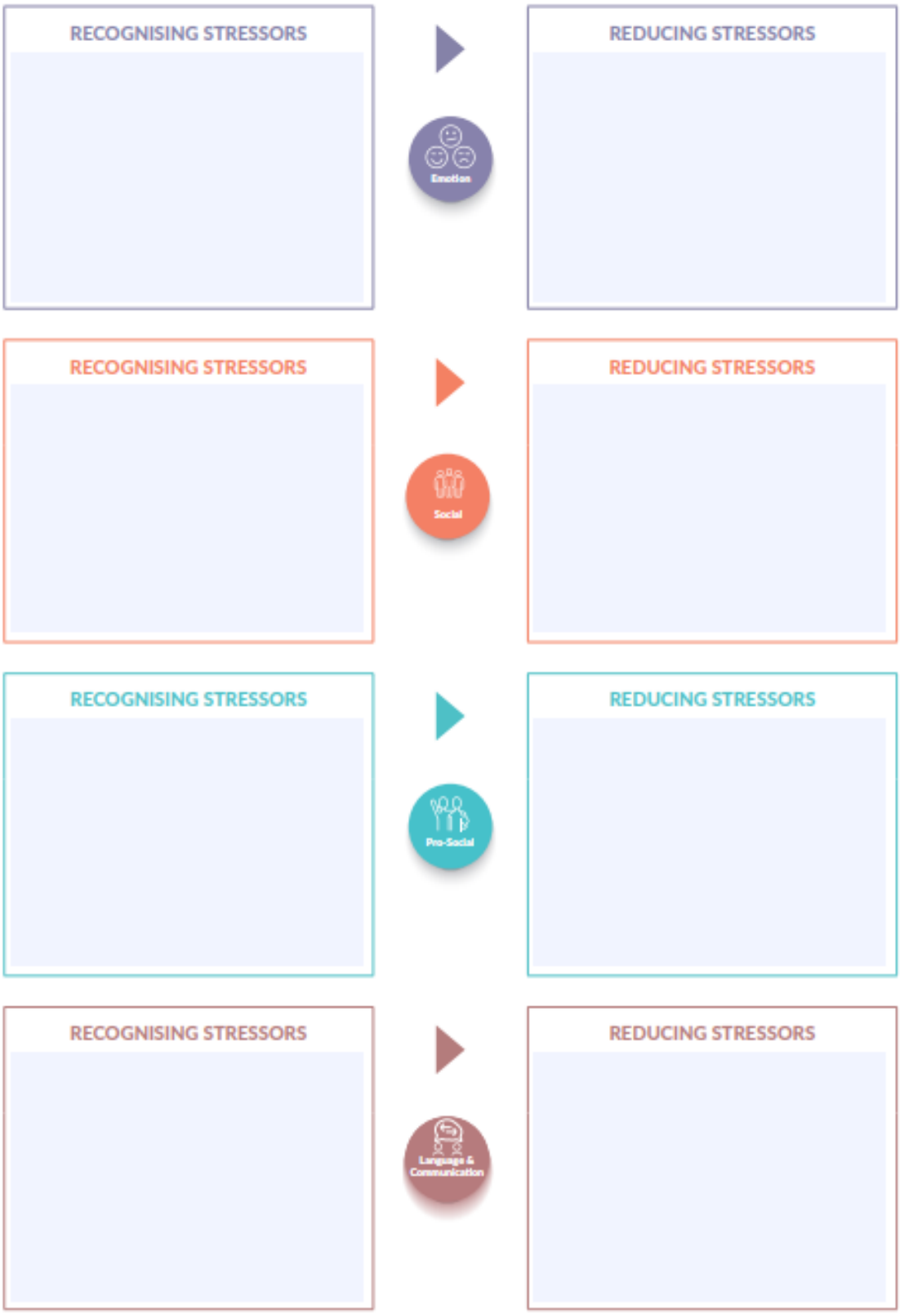
Recognising and reducing stressors is an important part of reframing behaviour. Start with the student's strengths and interests. Then fill out the potential stressors that you recognise through your own observations or what you have learned from the student, their parent/caregiver or other supporting adults. When you have recognised the stressors, consider how you might reduce some of them with consideration to the student's strengths and interests. Some will be outside of your control.

Student Name:	Student's Strengths and Interests	Date:

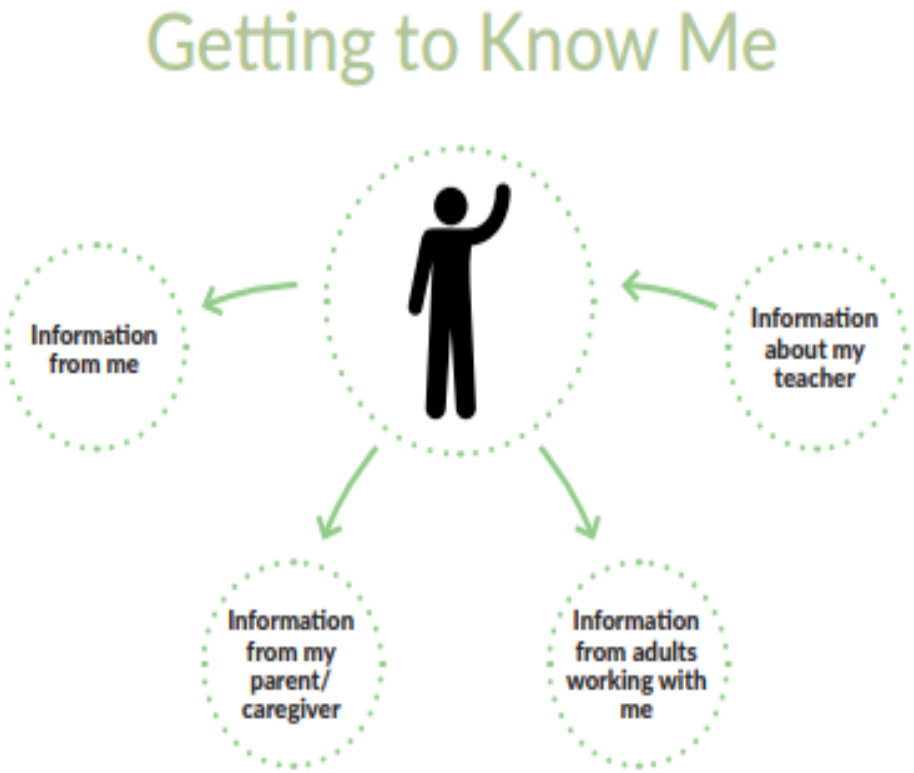
RECOGNISING STRESSORS		REDUCING STRESSORS
	Biological	

RECOGNISING STRESSORS		REDUCING STRESSORS
	Cognitive	

Appendix 2 (continued)



Appendix 3: Getting To Know Me Profile



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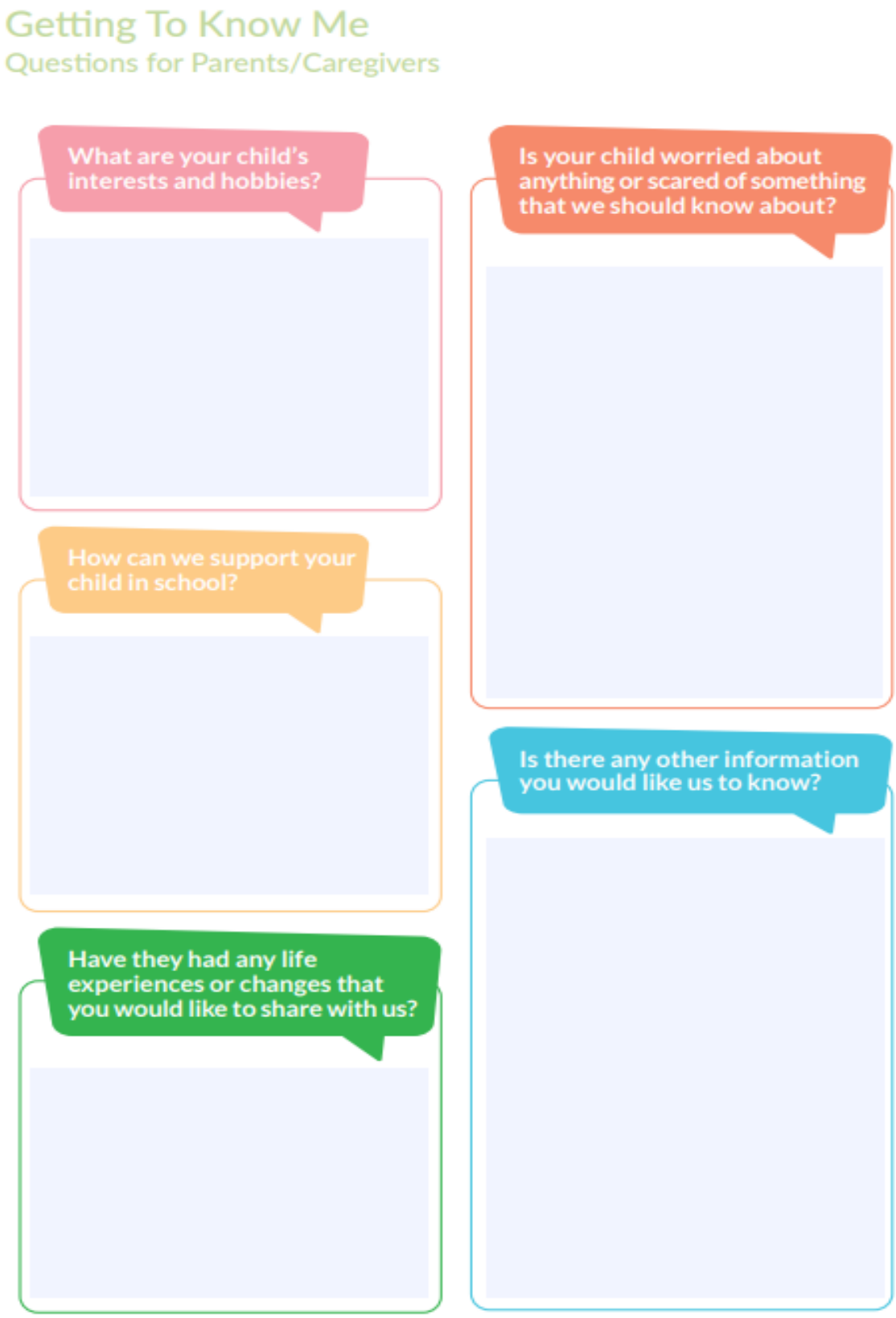

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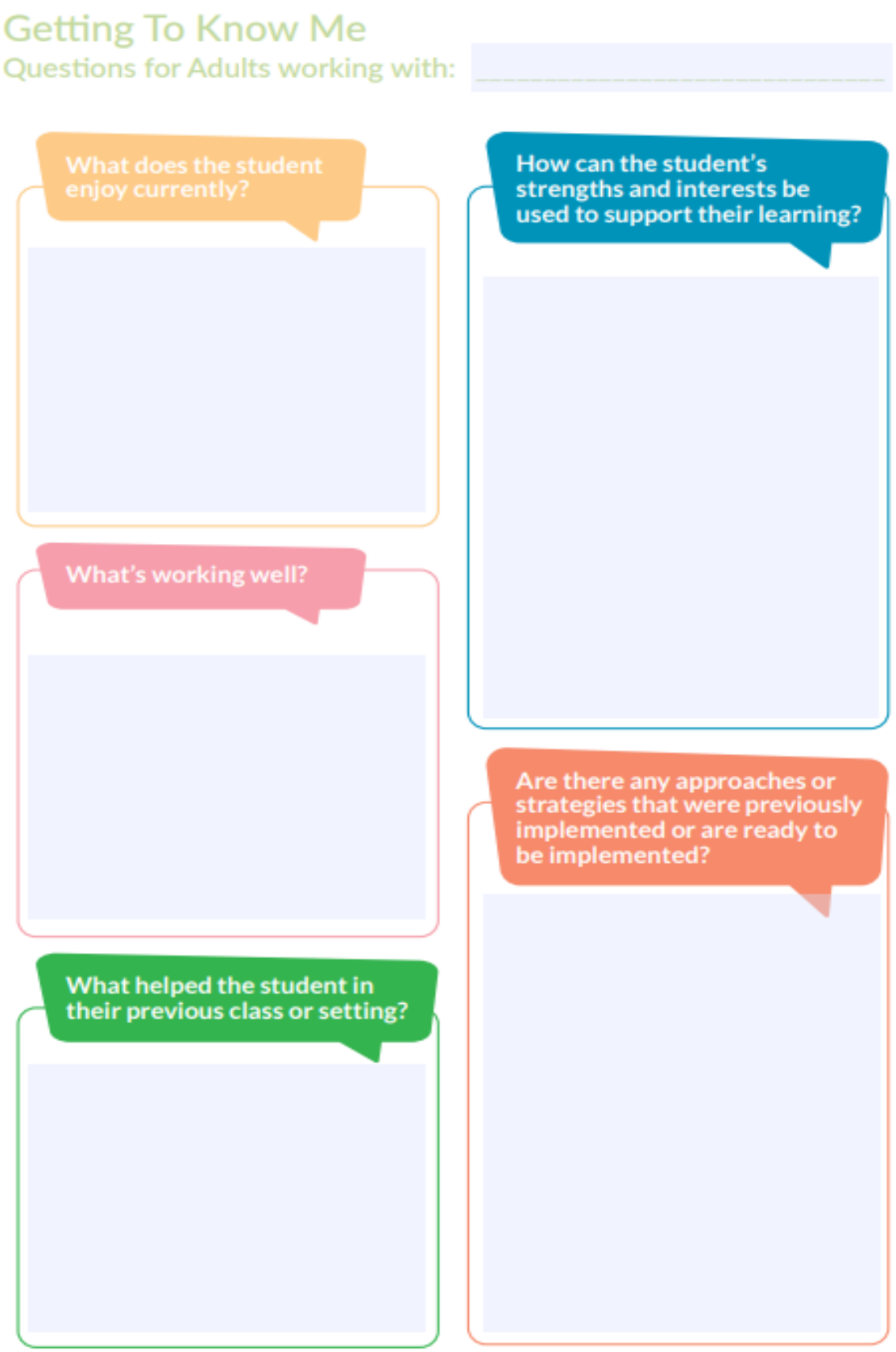

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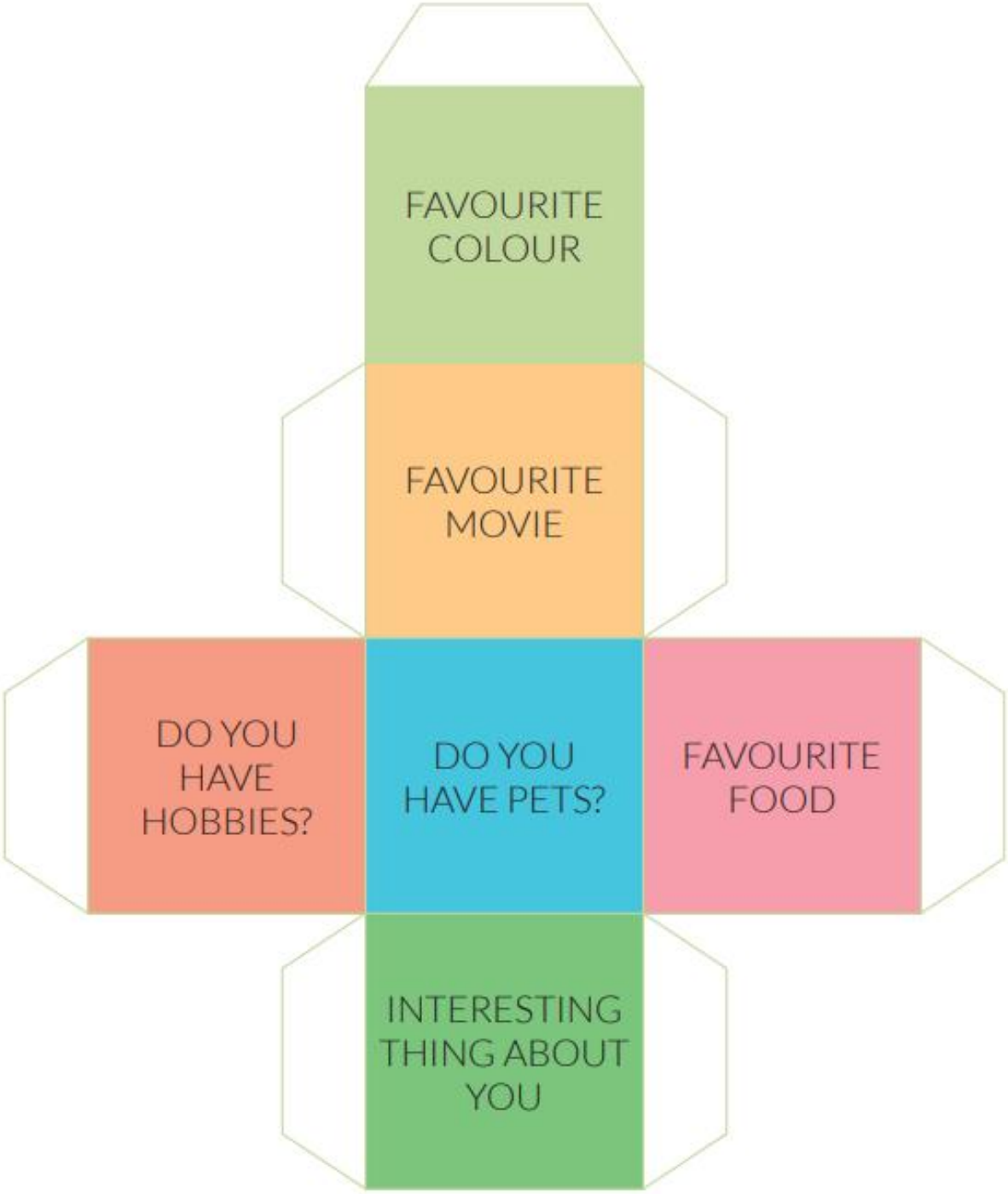
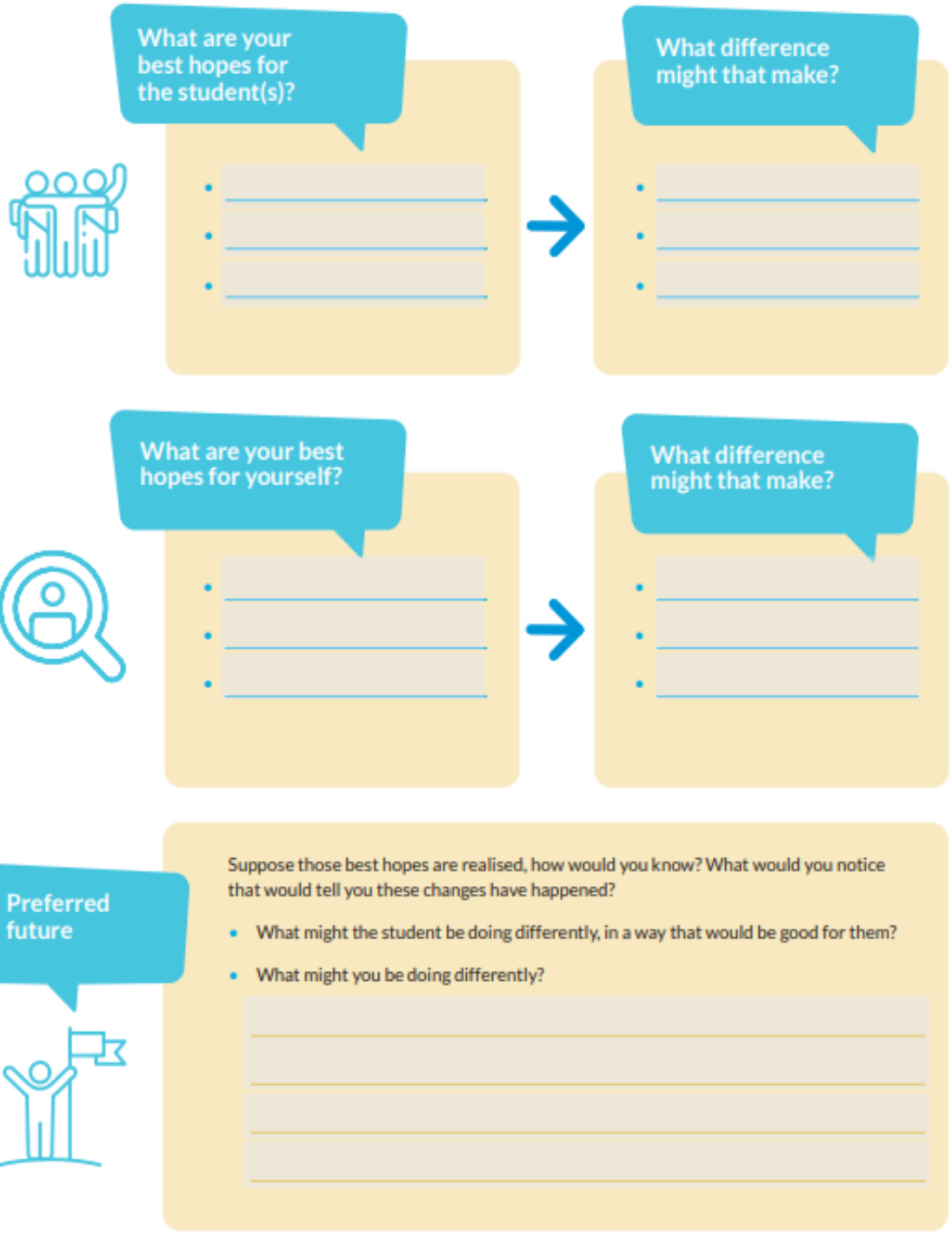
Getting To Know My Teacher

Dice Game



Appendix 4: Solution-Focused Goal Setting Tool

Solution-Focused Goal Setting



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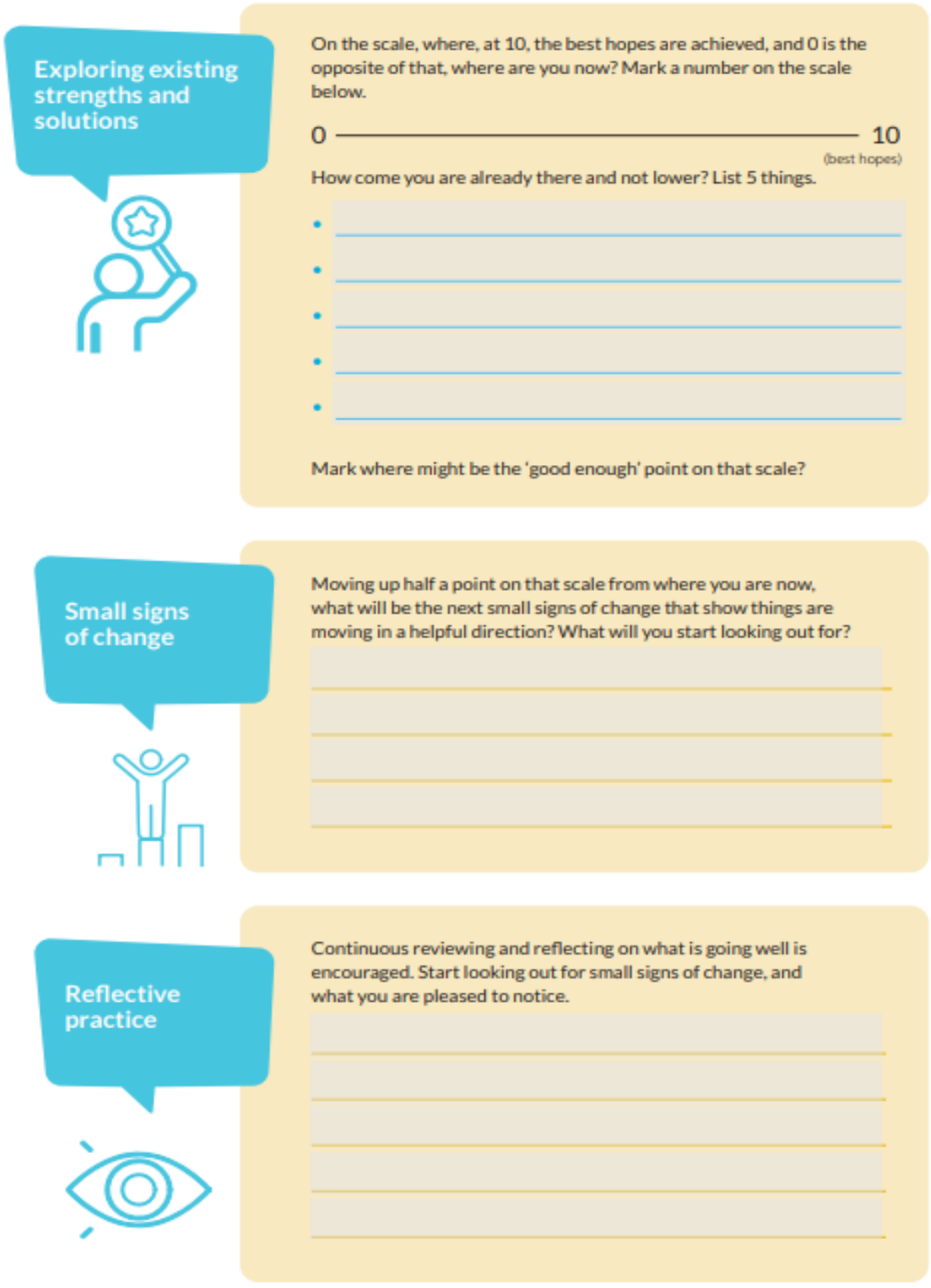
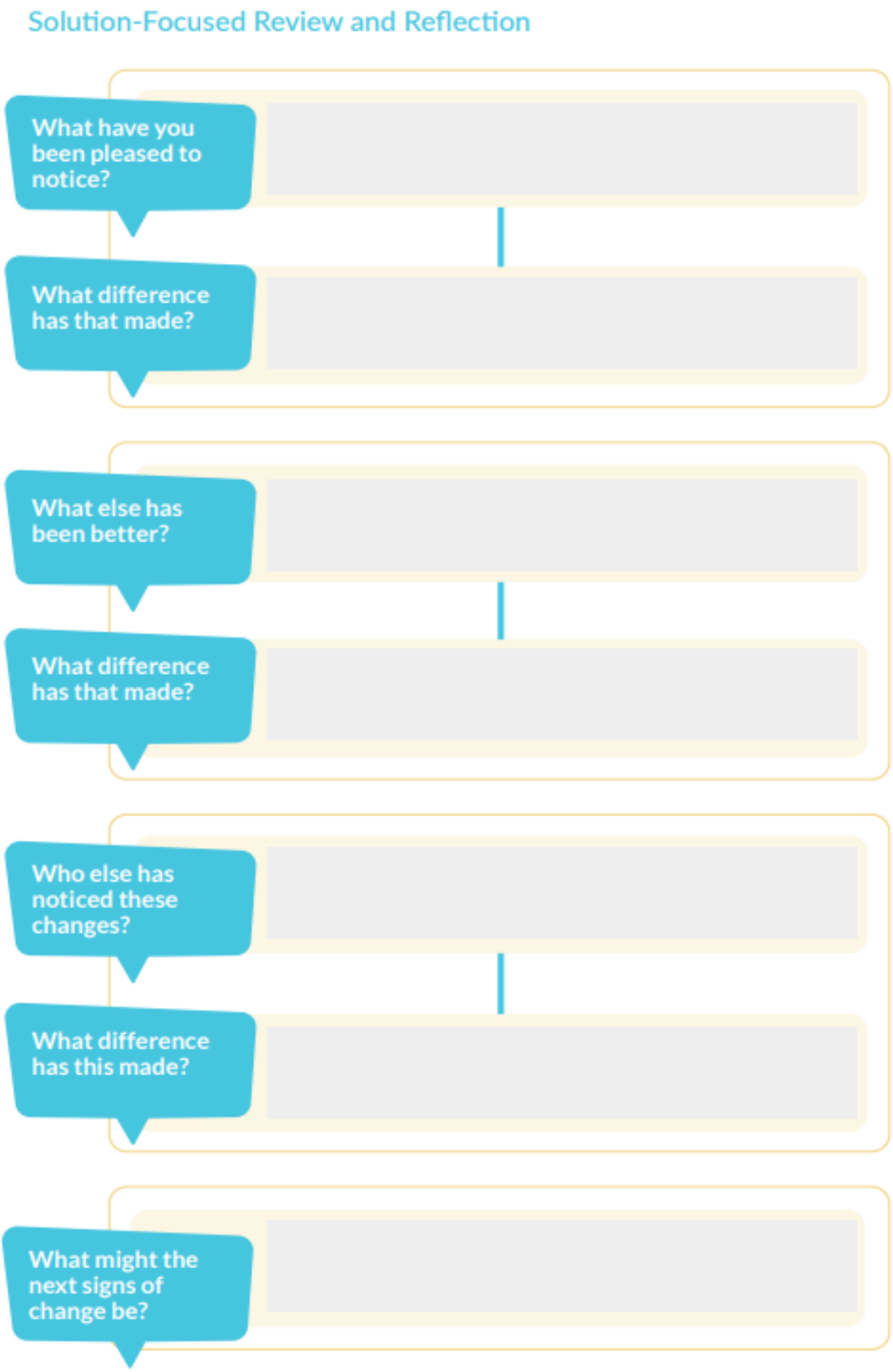


Appendix 5: Reflective Practice Questions



Appendix 6: Checklist

Actions to be taken in the immediate aftermath of the incident:

Action	To be carried out by:	Completed (Tick)
Check that all parties involved are safe.		
Ensure any injuries are cared for (e.g., medical attention if necessary).		
Clear the area of bystanders.		
Remove peers if possible.		
Have a supporting adult remain with the student involved (a preferred person if possible).		
Give the student space and time to regain composure. Keep language to a minimum.		
When possible, guide the student to a self-regulation space. Show care in a practical way e.g., offer a drink, access to a calming activity, space to pace.		
Inform the parents/guardians that an incident has occurred and make initial arrangements for a follow-up meeting.		
Inform the school principal. Inform the Board of Management/ETB of the school.		
If possible and where appropriate, the student(s) involved should remain in school for the remainder of the day with opportunities to engage in positive activities with preferred staff. At the earliest appropriate time, make efforts to repair the impacted relationships. Try to re-establish routines. Make things as clear and predictable as possible.		
If at all possible, all staff members involved and those who observed the incident complete the Record of Physical Restraint before the end of the working day (see Resource 1).		

Appendix 7: Checklist

Further actions:

Action	To be carried out by:	Completed (Tick)
Maintain regular contact with all involved: parents, students, school staff to ensure the wellbeing of all concerned.		
Hold a review meeting with relevant staff to review the incident and to plan for the future (see Staff Reflection Form in Resource 2). This will inform the drafting or review of the Support Plan.		
Conduct a follow-up meeting with parents/guardians to review the Incident Report and the staff reflection forms. This meeting should be documented and any changes to the Support Plan agreed, recorded and added (with all the above forms) to the Student Support File.		
Make parents aware of appropriate avenues to follow should they have concerns following the meetings.		
Make staff members aware of the services provided by EAS (Employee Assistance Service "Wellbeing Together").		
Inform the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), if necessary, and adhere as appropriate to the Child Safeguarding Statement.		
Inform any outside agencies which may be required, (e.g. HSA, Gardaí).		
Consult with outside agencies as appropriate (NEPS, CNDT, HSE etc.).		
Register the incident in the school's incident report book.		
Report the incident to the NCSE.		

Appendix 8: Checklist

Checklist of actions following an incident involving physical restraint:

Incidents involving physical restraint can be very distressing to all concerned, including observers.

A structured review process, without apportioning blame, is required to restore wellbeing and calm and to prevent it happening again. See Resource 1 and 3.

The purpose of the review is:

- To ascertain the facts that led to the incident, with particular focus on what the student was communicating by their behaviour.
- To review the student's individual support plan including their communication, sensory, and environmental support needs.
- To reflect on and learn from any patterns linked to the incident, e.g. setting, staff, demands and frequency of behaviour.
- To investigate alternative strategies to eliminate risk of re-occurrence of the behaviour and to minimise risk of the use of physical restraint in future.
- To rebuild relationships with all involved.

Resource 1:

Sample Record of Incident involving Physical Restraint

(In line with a rights based approach the language used in this record needs to be objective, factual and non-judgemental)

Student | Location

Date of incident: | Time | Duration

Name of other students and any staff directly involved and who observed the incident:

1. DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT

2. DESCRIBE WHAT WAS HAPPENING IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT
(e.g., activities that the student was engaged in; behaviours of other students; changes to the environment or the usual routine, etc.).

3. DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE INCIDENT
(staff responses, reactions of students, any other consequences)

Please complete the following (tick all applicable boxes):

4. CATEGORIES OF BEHAVIOUR

(i) Imminent danger of:		(ii) Injury to:	
Injury to self	☐	a) Self	☐
Injury to peer	☐	b) Peer	☐
Injury to staff	☐	c) Staff	☐

5. STAFF RESPONSE (Interventions used):

6. Date of development/review of Student Support Plan **Date:** _____

Signed _____ **(Principal)** **Date:** _____

Signed (Staff _____ **(Member)** **Date:** _____

Resource 2:

Sample Staff reflection form following an incident of physical restraint[1]

For use by individual teachers for self-reflection to inform future actions and/or

For use by groups of teachers for staff reflection at a meeting to inform future actions

(The language used in this record needs to be objective, factual and non-judgemental)

Events leading to the incident - Describe what was happening before the behaviour started to escalate. What was the student doing? What do you think might have triggered the behaviour? How were other students reacting to the student?

Behaviour of the student - What did you notice about the student's behaviour that alerted you that they were struggling to cope? Think about the way they looked, for example, facial expressions, physical signs, language.

What message do you believe the student was trying to communicate during this incident?

[1] Adapted from Physical Restraint and Seclusion Guidelines for Registered Schools in New Zealand

What did you try before the restraint? - Describe the alternative techniques and interventions tried to prevent the emergency, including a description of the de-escalation strategies you used. What was the response of the student?

The restraint method used - Describe the nature of the physical restraint. Include the type of restraint, the duration and the number of people that participated.

Monitoring - Describe how the student's physical and emotional distress was monitored while they were restrained.

After the restraint ended - Describe the mood of the student following the restraint. What help and support were they offered or did they request.

How about you? - How are you feeling and what support do you need? How about others?

Next Steps? - Plan for maintaining/repairing relationships with the student: What could be done differently in the future to prevent the need for restraint? E.g. review of environment, communication skills, learning needs, health check, sensory needs, emotional wellbeing etc.

This process should inform a review of the student's support plan, in consultation with the student, parents/guardians, and a review of whole school policy and practice.

Resource 3:

Guidance on engaging with parents following an incident of physical restraint

If it has been necessary for school staff to use physical restraint with a student, it is essential to inform the parent/guardian as soon as possible (at a minimum before the student goes home) by phone. This should be followed up with a written report and a meeting with the parents.

Incidents where physical restraint has been used can be upsetting for parents, the student and staff alike. It is important, during all interactions after an incident that all parties treat each other with respect and focus on child-centred solutions.

When a follow-up meeting with parents is convened, the agenda should include:

- A discussion of the incident:
  - What led to the incident?
  - What happened during the incident?
  - What happened after the incident, including any injuries to the student or staff member?
- A discussion of possible causes of the incident and future planning.
- Agreed minutes of the meeting.

The principal should open the meeting with a statement that acknowledges what has happened and the stress it may have caused all parties. The principal will set out that the best interest of the student is the focus of the meeting for everyone present.

It is important the parents are given adequate time to discuss the incident as they may have suggestions that can be incorporated into a support plan for the student to avoid future incidents.

If not already in place, thought should be given to enhancing home-school communications, for example a home-school diary. This will allow for communication on issues that may impact on behaviour such as a bad night's sleep, heightened sensory issues and medication changes.

If a parent is unhappy about how the school responded to the incident, they should be made aware of the school's formal complaints procedure.

Resource 4:

NCSE Record of Incident involving Physical Restraint Form

(In line with a rights-based approach the language used in this record needs to be objective, factual. and non-judgmental)

No personal details of person/s involved should be included in this report.

School details			
School Name			
School roll number			
Student details			
Age of student			
Confirmed Special Educational Need, (if applicable)			
Details of incident			
Date		Time	
Location			
Duration			
Description of the incident			
DESCRIBE WHAT WAS HAPPENING IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT (e.g., activities that the student was engaged in; behaviours of other students; changes to the environment or the usual routine, etc.).			

DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE INCIDENT (staff responses, reactions of students, any other consequences)	
Any other details deemed relevant in relation to the incident	
Report completed by	
Designation	
Date	
Report should be forwarded to the following dedicated email account: bocreports@ncse.ie	