

Behaviour Policy for Young People with SEMH Needs

Aligned with Ofsted, NCFE, SEND Code of Practice, Equality Act, and KCSIE



This is a controlled document and, as such, will be kept read only. Any changes must be approved by the Author.

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BEHAVIOUR POLICY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEMH NEEDS

1. INTRODUCTION

Hatfield Wick Education is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all learners, particularly those with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. We believe that every young person has the potential to succeed and that it is our responsibility to provide the right conditions for them to thrive. Our behaviour policy is built on respect, understanding, and a commitment to meeting the needs of each individual through positive behaviour management strategies, grounded in the **CARES principles: Compassion, Accountability, Respect, Empathy, and Support**.

This policy aligns with the statutory guidance for behaviour and discipline in alternative provision (AP) as set out by the Department for Education (DfE) in the UK, including the following documents:

- DfE Behaviour and Discipline in Schools (2016)
- DfE Alternative Provision: Statutory Guidance (2013)
- Exclusion from Maintained Schools, Academies and Pupil Referral Units in England (2017)
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (2015)
- The Equality Act (2010)

Additionally, this policy incorporates the **Principles of the Positive Behaviour Framework (2015)**, which contribute to our approach in working with young people, particularly those with SEMH needs.

2. AIMS

The aims of this policy are:

- 2.1 To ensure a consistent approach to behaviour management within Hatfield Wick Education.
- 2.2 To provide clarity on expectations and support for positive behaviour for all young people, particularly those with SEMH needs.
- 2.3 To provide an inclusive environment that promotes the **CARES principles**, ensuring the dignity, safety, and well-being of all students.
- 2.4 To support the re-engagement of young people into full-time education and prepare them for further education, training, or employment.

3. KEY STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff Name	Role
Adam Smyth	CEO and Founder
Nicky McGurk	Director of Therapeutic Services & DDSL
Clay Calder	Director of Education & Head of School
Rosie Walker	Head of Therapeutic Services & DSL
Anna Jacobs	IPES Relationship manager and SEND link.
Katie Adams	Therapeutic Manager & DSL
Implementation Date	26.01.2026
Review Date	26.01.2027

4. PRINCIPLES

CARES360™ Therapeutic Approach

‘CARES360™ isn’t how we teach our kids – it’s how we build a culture where every child and young person can heal, connect and thrive.’

What is CARES360?

A whole-child, whole-provision framework

- **Therapeutic, person-centred framework:** CARES360 is designed to meet the complex emotional, social, and developmental needs of students who have experienced significant adversity or struggled to access learning in other settings for various reasons. It will however provide a framework for all learners.
- **Rooted in CARES values:** It promotes Compassion, Autonomy, Respect, Empathy, and Support across all relationships and systems in the provision environment.
- **Beyond behaviour management:** It shifts the focus from control and compliance to connection, emotional safety, and growth.
- **Shared language and strategies:** CARES360 provides staff with consistent tools and principles to support trauma-affected, neurodivergent, and emotionally vulnerable students.
- **Culture, not just curriculum:** More than a teaching tool, CARES360 redefines how we teach, relate, respond, and repair within the provision community.

Understanding the needs of our students: From trauma to trust

- High prevalence of trauma and adversity: Many students arrive with developmental trauma, attachment disruptions, and exposure to neglect, violence, or unstable caregiving. Some come to us with emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) or school trauma from trying to fit into a system that doesn't meet their needs.
- Common challenges presented: Emotional dysregulation, anxiety, PDA, school avoidance, and oppositional or withdrawn behaviour are frequent among our learners.
- Behaviour as communication: Behaviours seen as 'difficult' are often survival responses rooted in unmet emotional needs and a lack of safety.
- Mistrust of systems and adults: Due to repeated rejection or exclusion, many students are hypervigilant and expect adults to shame, control, or abandon them.
- Need for safety and relational repair: Healing begins when students experience consistent, attuned, and emotionally safe interactions that rebuild trust.

CARES360 in practice: Tools and strategies that transform

- Reframing behaviour through a trauma lens: We interpret challenging behaviour as expressions of unmet needs, fear, or dysregulation—not as defiance or disrespect.
- Responding with co-regulation, not compliance: Staff offer calm, attuned responses that model emotional regulation, rather than enforcing rigid rules or punishment.
- Collaborative problem-solving: Power struggles become opportunities for shared solutions that respect the child's voice and build autonomy.
- Predictable, emotionally safe environments: We create consistent routines and spaces where students know what to expect, reducing anxiety and promoting learning.
- Scaffolding independence: Students are supported to build self-awareness, emotional literacy, and executive function skills gradually and respectfully.

Carl Rogers' Person-Centred Therapy: The foundation beneath CARES360

- Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR): Accepting students without judgment allows them to feel safe enough to change and grow, countering shame and rejection.
- Empathy: By deeply understanding students' experiences from their perspective, we offer acceptance, emotional regulation and connection.
- Congruence: Being real, consistent, and emotionally honest helps traumatised students trust and feel secure.

- Respect for Autonomy: Empowering students with voice and agency addresses control-based anxiety and restores self-worth.
- Conditions for Growth: Emotional safety, trust, and authenticity are prerequisites for development and learning.

Linking Person-Centred Theory to CARES360: A seamless integration of values and practice

- Unconditional Positive Regard → Respect: By offering UPR, we counteract shame and labels, affirming each student's worth regardless of behaviour or history.
- Empathy → Compassion & Empathy: Deep understanding becomes a tool for co-regulation, emotional safety, and trust-building with dysregulated students.
- Autonomy & Empowerment → Autonomy: We honour student voice and choice, directly responding to control-based anxiety and trauma-driven behaviour.
- Congruence → Support & Authenticity: Consistency and emotional honesty create safety; adults model regulation, reliability, and trust.
- Conditions for Growth → Whole-Provision Culture: CARES360 embeds Rogers' core conditions into—UPR, empathy, and congruence—across staff, systems, and spaces.

CARES360 is our culture: Transforming systems, not just strategies

- **From behaviour management to relational safety:** We shift away from controlling students to co-creating safe, attuned relationships where growth can occur.
- **Shared values in every interaction:** CARES360 becomes the filter for how we greet, guide, teach, and repair relationships with students and each other.
- **Consistency across staff and settings:** Students feel emotionally safe when adults share language, expectations, and responses rooted in CARES principles.
- **Empowered staff, empowered students:** When adults feel equipped and supported, they're better able to co-regulate and model emotional resilience.
- **Culture that holds, heals, and grows:** CARES360 isn't just supportive for students—it reshapes the entire provisions ecosystem into a therapeutic community.

Modelling CARES360: Everyone's role – from Senior Leaders across all staff

- **Culture is co-created:** Every adult at Hatfield Wick—from teachers to LSAs to admin—contributes to the emotional climate students experience.
- **Relational consistency matters:** Students thrive when all staff communicate, respond, and regulate with CARES-aligned language and attitudes.

- **Modelling regulation and repair:** How staff manage stress, rupture, and restoration teaches students what safety and resilience look like in practice.
- **Micro-moments build trust:** A warm greeting, a calm de-escalation, or a respectful boundary can reshape a student’s internal narrative.
- **Collective commitment, shared impact:** When CARES360 is embodied by all, it creates a provision-wide ecosystem of compassion and coherence.

Building a healing-centred future

- **A provision where every child feels safe:** Through CARES360, we create an emotionally consistent environment where trust and safety come first.
- **Relational learning at the heart: Relationships**—not rules—form the foundation for growth, resilience, and academic engagement.
- **All staff as therapeutic agents:** Whether teaching, tidying, or listening—every adult models CARES360 in ways that shape lives.
- **From survival to flourishing:** Our aim is not just to manage behaviour—but to restore dignity, confidence, and a belief in possibility.
- **Culture change, not compliance:** We are cultivating a shared identity grounded in empathy, autonomy, and respect—not just policies.

4.1 Our behaviour policy is guided by the following principles, which are aligned with the **Positive Behaviour Framework and our CARES principles:**

- 4.1.1 **Relationship-Centred Approach:** Positive relationships between staff and students form the foundation of behaviour management. Staff work to develop trust and understanding, fostering a sense of belonging and respect.
- 4.1.2 **Strength-Based Perspective:** We focus on recognising and building on the strengths, abilities, and potential of each young person rather than focusing on deficits. This helps to promote self-worth, resilience, and positive self-identity.
- 4.1.3 **Trauma-Informed Practice:** We acknowledge that many young people with SEMH needs may have experienced trauma. Our approach is sensitive to the potential impacts of trauma, and we aim to provide a supportive environment that promotes healing and avoids re-traumatisation.
- 4.1.4 **Empowerment and Participation:** Young people are actively involved in the development of their behaviour plans and interventions. We encourage self-reflection, helping them to take ownership of their actions and make positive decisions about their behaviour.
- 4.1.5 **Restorative Practices:** Rather than focusing on punitive responses, we prioritise restorative practices that aim to repair harm, rebuild relationships, and encourage accountability in a supportive manner.

- 4.1.6 **Consistency with Flexibility:** While we maintain consistent expectations for behaviour, we also recognise that young people with SEMH needs may require flexibility in how these expectations are met. Individual circumstances are considered, and personalised support is provided.
- 4.1.7 **Proactive and Preventative Approaches:** We place an emphasis on anticipating and preventing behavioural issues before they escalate. This may include early intervention strategies, identifying triggers, and creating supportive environments.
- 4.1.8 **Collaboration with Families and Agencies:** We work closely with parents, carers, and external professionals to ensure a holistic and coordinated approach to behaviour management that supports the young person across all aspects of their life.
- 4.1.9 **Promoting Well-Being and Mental Health:** The emotional and mental well-being of our students is central to our approach. We seek to create an environment that fosters emotional safety, positive mental health, and a sense of community.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 **Staff:** All staff at Hatfield Wick Education are trained to manage behaviour in a consistent, calm, and positive manner. They are responsible for fostering a supportive environment, implementing personalised behaviour plans, and modelling appropriate behaviour.
- 5.2 **Young People:** We expect young people to engage with the support provided, make positive choices regarding their behaviour, and take responsibility for their actions with the understanding that help is available when needed.
- 5.3 **Parents/Carers:** Parents and carers play a vital role in supporting their child's development and behaviour. We encourage regular communication and collaboration to ensure consistent support across home and school settings.

6. POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR STRATEGIES

- **Individual Behaviour Plans (IBPs):** Young people may require an Individual Behaviour Plan tailored to their needs. This plan will be developed in consultation with the young person, parents/carers, and relevant professionals.
- **Restorative Practices:** We encourage reflection and resolution after behavioural incidents. Restorative conversations allow young people to understand the impact of their behaviour, take responsibility, and restore relationships.
- **Incentives and Rewards:** Positive behaviour will be recognised and celebrated through a system of rewards. This could include verbal praise, certificates, positive phone calls home, and tangible rewards such as extra free time or activities.

- **De-escalation Techniques:** Staff are trained in de-escalation techniques to manage challenging behaviour calmly and safely, minimising distress and reducing the need for physical intervention.

Clear Expectations and Boundaries

Expectations should be communicated in a way that is accessible and understandable to the student. For some students, this may involve using visual aids, social stories, or simplified language. Repetition and reinforcement of these expectations may also be necessary, and expectations should be realistic based on the student's abilities.

Positive Reinforcement

Rewards and recognition should be individualized based on the student's preferences and motivators. For example, students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may respond better to certain sensory rewards or structured activities. Verbal praise should be specific and aligned with the student's ability to understand the feedback.

Restorative Practices

Restorative conversations may need to be simplified or broken down into smaller steps for some students. Visual supports, role-playing, or the involvement of a familiar adult can help students understand the impact of their actions and how to repair relationships. Some students may need extra time or alternative methods to process the conversation.

Empathy and Active Listening

Active listening for SEND students may require patience and an understanding of non-verbal cues, especially for students with communication difficulties. For non-verbal students, alternative communication methods (e.g., sign language, communication devices, or picture exchange systems) should be used to ensure they feel heard.

Consistency and Predictability

SEND students often thrive on routine and predictability, so consistency is especially important for them. Visual schedules, timers, and predictable routines can help reduce anxiety and support positive behaviour. When change is inevitable, preparing the student in advance through social stories or visual reminders can ease transitions.

Role Modelling

SEND students may benefit from explicit role modelling where behaviours are broken down into clear steps. Videos or live demonstrations of expected behaviours can be helpful, particularly for students who struggle with abstract concepts.

Encouraging Responsibility and Autonomy

Assigning responsibilities should be tailored to the student's abilities. For some students, tasks may need to be broken down into smaller, manageable steps with clear instructions. Providing choices within their capability fosters independence and confidence.

Logical Consequences

Consequences should always be adapted to the student's level of understanding. For example, a student with cognitive delays may need a more immediate and direct consequence tied closely to the behaviour, with an explanation provided in simple terms or visuals. The focus should remain on teaching rather than punishment.

Encourage Self-Reflection

Self-reflection can be challenging for some SEND students. For those who struggle with verbal expression, providing structured prompts, visual aids, or even using feelings charts or emotion cards can help them reflect on their behaviour and emotions in a more accessible way.

Positive Peer Influence

Some students with SEND may need extra support in developing social skills. Peer-mediated interventions or social skills groups can be beneficial, allowing students to practice positive behaviours in a structured environment. Pairing SEND students with positive peer role models can also foster appropriate social interaction.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning can be particularly important for students with SEND who may have difficulty with emotional regulation and social interactions. SEL programs should be differentiated based on the student's needs, using visual supports, concrete examples, and repetition to teach concepts like empathy, self-control, and social problem-solving.

Effective Communication

Communication strategies need to be adapted to the student's communication level. For students with communication difficulties, using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) methods, simplified language, or even gesture-based communication can be effective. It's essential to ensure that communication is two-way, allowing students to express their needs and feelings in a way that suits them.

At Hatfield Wick Education every child receives a CARES Champion. The purpose of the CARES Champion is to establish strong, positive, home-provision communication so that we can best meet the needs of our students. The CARES Champion will have weekly phone calls with parents/carers, except on weeks of One Plan meetings or EHCP reviews. The intent of the support is to create a sense of community and belonging that they may not have had before, one which instils the values that we do what we say we do – care!

Building Resilience and Coping Skills

Teaching coping skills may need to be scaffolded with step-by-step instruction. For example, teaching breathing exercises might involve visual demonstrations or physical prompts. Some students may benefit from sensory-based coping strategies, like using fidget toys, weighted blankets, or other tools that help them self-regulate.

Mentorship and Support Networks

For SEND/SEMH students, mentorship might include additional adult support from trained special educators, therapists, or specialists who understand the student's unique needs. Peer mentorship programs can also be beneficial when carefully structured and supervised.

We offer ELSA therapeutic services in the form of interventions and canine therapy is offered in short bursts. In addition to this, we have links with Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language professionals.

7. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SEND STUDENTS

- **Individualised Approach:** Every SEND student is different, so a personalised approach that considers their specific diagnosis, strengths, and challenges is key. This may involve using Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) to ensure that interventions are aligned with their needs.
- **Patience and Time:** Behaviour change often takes longer for SEND students, so patience and consistent reinforcement over time are essential. Progress should be celebrated incrementally, no matter how small.
- **Multi-Disciplinary Collaboration:** Collaboration between educators, therapists, parents, and other professionals is often necessary to implement these strategies effectively and ensure that behaviour supports are holistic.

By applying these positive behaviour strategies with adaptations for SEND students, educators and caregivers can create a supportive and encouraging environment that promotes learning, emotional growth, and positive social interactions.

8. ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

We understand that young people with SEMH needs may exhibit challenging behaviour as a response to their emotional and mental health difficulties. When addressing such behaviour, we adopt a non-judgmental, supportive approach that seeks to understand the underlying causes.

- 8.1 **Early Intervention:** Where possible, we aim to identify and address potential triggers before they escalate into more serious behavioural incidents. This may involve adjustments to the learning environment, additional support from staff, or referrals to external services.
- 8.2 **Use of Sanctions:** Sanctions will only be applied when restorative practices and other interventions have not resulted in improved behaviour. Sanctions will be proportionate, appropriate to the individual's needs, and designed to support future positive behaviour. These may include temporary timeouts, restricted access to certain activities, or supervised reflection time. (See further detail below)
- 8.3 **Exclusions:** Exclusion from Hatfield Wick Education will only be considered as a last resort, in line with statutory guidance, and following extensive consultation with all

relevant parties. The decision to exclude or terminate the contract will take into account the young person's SEMH needs, the wider safeguarding impact and the impact of the exclusion on their welfare.

9. APPLYING SANCTIONS WITHIN HWE

Sanctions for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) must be carefully considered and tailored to the individual needs of the student. The goal of sanctions should be to teach appropriate behaviour rather than to punish, particularly for SEND students who may not fully understand the consequences of their actions or may have difficulty controlling their behaviour due to their challenges.

Here are some **appropriate sanctions** for SEND students, considering their needs and the importance of supporting their emotional and behavioural development:

Time-Out or Cool-Down

- **Appropriate Use:** A time-out or cool-down period can give the student time and space to regulate their emotions in a safe and quiet place. This is not meant to be a punishment but rather a strategy to help the student calm down and regain control of their behaviour.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** Ensure that the time-out area is supportive and free from additional stressors. Consider using visual aids or sensory tools to help the student calm down.

Restorative Practices

- **Appropriate Use:** Restorative practices focus on helping the student understand the impact of their behaviour and how to make amends. For example, if the student damaged property or hurt someone's feelings, the sanction could involve helping to repair the damage or offering an apology.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** Some students may need extra support to understand the restorative process. Visual aids, social stories, or role-playing may help them grasp the concept of making amends.

Loss of Privileges

- **Appropriate Use:** If a student engages in inappropriate behaviour, they may lose a specific privilege, such as access to a preferred activity or reward. However, this sanction should be closely tied to the behaviour and used sparingly.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** Ensure that the loss of privilege is reasonable and proportionate to the behaviour. For students with SEND, losing privileges for extended periods can cause frustration or confusion, so it's important that the consequence is short-term and that the student understands how they can earn the privilege back.

Reflection Time

- **Appropriate Use:** Reflection time allows the student to think about their behaviour and what they could do differently in the future. This can be a structured time where the student fills out a reflection sheet or discusses their actions with an adult.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** For students with communication difficulties, you may need to use simplified language, pictures, or visual aids to help them engage in self-reflection. Some students may benefit from drawing or using feelings charts instead of written reflection.

Logical Consequences

- **Appropriate Use:** Logical consequences are directly related to the behaviour. For example, if a student makes a mess, the logical consequence is helping to clean it up.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** Make sure the student understands the connection between their behaviour and the consequence. Provide step-by-step instructions, if necessary, and offer support if the student struggles with completing the task on their own.

Modified Classroom Responsibilities

- **Appropriate Use:** If a student has displayed inappropriate behaviour, they may be temporarily assigned modified or additional responsibilities within the classroom. For example, they might help organise materials or assist with a group activity as a way to practise cooperation and responsibility.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** Ensure that the tasks are within the student's ability and do not add unnecessary stress. The tasks should be framed positively, as an opportunity to contribute and build skills.

Supervised Breaks or Alternative Activities

- **Appropriate Use:** When a student struggles to control their behaviour, they may be offered a supervised break or an alternative activity. This can help to prevent further escalation of behaviour.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** Tailor the break or alternative activity to the student's needs. For example, a sensory break or access to calming activities might be more appropriate for some students with sensory processing difficulties or autism.

Communication Home

- **Appropriate Use:** Informing parents or carers about behavioural incidents can help maintain consistency between home and the provision. A positive communication approach should be used to engage parents in supporting the student's behaviour.

- **Adaptation for SEND:** Ensure that communication home is constructive and focuses on problem-solving. Parents of SEND students often appreciate proactive and collaborative communication that helps them support their child's behaviour.

Redirection

- **Appropriate Use:** Redirection involves steering the student away from inappropriate behaviour and guiding them toward a more appropriate activity or behaviour. This can be done verbally or by physically guiding the student to a different activity.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** For some students, redirection might need to be accompanied by visual cues or gestures, especially for students who struggle with verbal instructions. Offering alternative choices can also empower the student to make a positive change.

Reparation Tasks

- **Appropriate Use:** If a student's behaviour has caused harm or disruption, they may be asked to contribute to fixing the situation in a constructive way, such as helping to repair an item they damaged or assisting in cleaning up a mess they created.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** Support may be needed to help the student understand and complete the task. It's essential to frame the task in a way that doesn't feel like punishment but rather an opportunity to make things right.

Important Considerations for SEND Sanctions

- 1.1.1 **Proportionality and Fairness:** Sanctions should always be proportionate to the behaviour and take into account the student's SEND. Avoid overly harsh or punitive sanctions, as these can be counterproductive and may exacerbate behavioural difficulties, especially in students with SEMH needs.
- 1.1.2 **Understanding the Behaviour:** It is crucial to understand the reasons behind the student's behaviour. For many SEND students, challenging behaviour can be a form of communication, indicating frustration, sensory overload, anxiety, or confusion. Any sanction should be coupled with efforts to understand and address the underlying cause of the behaviour.
- 1.1.3 **Focus on Teaching and Learning:** Sanctions should be seen as opportunities to teach new skills, coping mechanisms, and better ways of responding to challenging situations. They should be supportive rather than punitive, helping the student to develop better behaviour over time.
- 1.1.4 **Consistency with Flexibility:** While consistency in behaviour management is essential, there must also be flexibility to adapt sanctions to individual needs. What works for one student may not work for another, and sanctions should be personalized where necessary.
- 1.1.5 **Inclusion and Positive Relationships:** The goal of sanctions should always be to promote inclusion and build positive relationships. Sanctions that isolate or

alienate SEND students can be harmful to their emotional well-being and can hinder their social development. It's essential to maintain a supportive and inclusive environment where the student feels valued and understood.

In summary, sanctions for SEND students should be individualised, proportionate, and focused on teaching positive behaviour rather than punishing negative behaviour. They must be delivered with care and consideration for the student's specific needs, helping them to learn and grow while minimising the impact of their challenges.

10. SAFEGUARDING

All behaviour management practices at Hatfield Wick Education are conducted with the safeguarding of young people in mind. Any concerns arising from a young person's behaviour that suggest they may be at risk of harm will be immediately reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), in accordance with our safeguarding policy and statutory requirements.

11. BULLYING

Hatfield Wick Education takes a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. All incidents of bullying, including cyberbullying, will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly, in line with our anti-bullying policy. We work proactively to foster an environment where bullying is not tolerated, and all young people feel safe and respected.

12. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This behaviour policy will be reviewed annually by the safeguarding team, in consultation with staff, young people, parents, and external agencies as appropriate. Regular monitoring will ensure that the policy remains effective and responsive to the needs of young people with SEMH needs.

13. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

- 13.1 Hatfield Wick Education is committed to promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of our behaviour policy. We will make reasonable adjustments for young people with disabilities or additional needs to ensure they are not disadvantaged by our behaviour management systems.
- 13.2 We are dedicated to upholding the rights of all young people, as outlined in the Equality Act (2010), and ensuring that our policy does not discriminate on any grounds, including disability, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.
- 13.3 This policy reflects Hatfield Wick Education's commitment to fostering positive behaviour, in alignment with the **Positive Behaviour Framework (2015)**. It is tailored to meet the unique needs of young people with SEMH challenges and promotes an inclusive, supportive, and nurturing environment. Our **CARES principles: Compassion, Autonomy, Respect, Empathy, and Support** as always are at the heart of this policy.

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15. LEGAL NOTICE

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