

White paper

The missing standard: structuring pastoral mentoring in English schools

Why pastoral mentoring in English schools, support that reaches far wider than behaviour alone, has grown without structured courses or a training standard, and what Phil, a structured, evidence-informed mentoring app, changes for schools, mentors and pupils.

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August 2026

Executive summary

Schools across England, primary and secondary, run some form of one-to-one or small-group mentoring for pupils whose behaviour, engagement or emotional wellbeing needs more support than a class teacher or form tutor can give within an ordinary lesson. Yet unlike the National Curriculum that governs what is taught in the classroom, there is no national standard for what happens in a mentoring session, no agreed sequence of content, no shared minimum standard for who delivers it, and no consistent way of showing a governor, an inspector, or a parent what a course of mentoring actually covered.

This is not a fringe issue. Persistent disruptive behaviour is the single most common reason for suspension in England, and disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are suspended and excluded at several times the rate of their peers (DfE, 2025). Ofsted has, since 2019, inspected schools explicitly on pupils' personal development and on behaviour and attitudes, and from November 2025 has folded attendance and behaviour into one of the central evaluation areas on its new report card (Ofsted, 2025). Government has responded with programmes like Behaviour Hubs, which pair schools with strong behaviour cultures with those still building theirs (DfE, 2024). What government guidance has not done, because it is not really government's job to do, is specify what a good mentoring session contains, or set a training standard for the person delivering it.

Phil is built to close that specific gap. It is an app for schools, independent mentors and pupils that provides a ready-made library of five-week mentoring courses across twenty of the most common behaviour and wellbeing presentations in UK schools, each grounded in published DfE and Ofsted guidance and EEF evidence; a structured, mandatory way of recording every session, including a safeguarding step consistent with the culture Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) asks every member of staff to hold; and a reporting layer that turns a term's worth of mentoring into evidence a school can actually use, for governors, for Ofsted, for parents, and for the pupil's own continuity of support.

This paper sets out the evidence for the gap, what regulators and researchers say about it, and exactly how Phil addresses it, for the school, for the mentor, and for the pupil. Section 3 sets out, course by course, the specific DfE, Ofsted and EEF evidence and national statistics behind each of the twenty courses in the catalogue.

1. The problem: mentoring without structured courses

1.1 A role that grew without a standard

Structured pupil mentoring is not a new idea in English schools. Between 1999 and the mid-2000s, the Excellence in Cities initiative funded around 2,400 school-based "learning mentors", rising to roughly 3,000, specifically to support pupils at risk of underachieving or disengaging (Wikipedia: Excellence in Cities, drawing on DfES programme records; infed.org). Government's own evaluation at the time found the learning mentor strand to be among the most effective parts of the programme (HMI, Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones: management and impact). But the role was tied to time-limited, ring-fenced funding rather than embedded as a lasting national entitlement. As that funding wound down and wider school budgets tightened over the following decade, the standardised training and role definition that came with it was not replaced with anything equivalent, schools that still wanted to mentor pupils were left to design their own version of the role from scratch.

The result, two decades later, is that pastoral and mentoring roles have grown again, informally, and largely without a shared standard. Academic research into pastoral support staff working with pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs found that “despite the rapid increase in pastoral support staff numbers there are no clear national guidelines or qualifications for these roles”, and that teachers themselves repeatedly asked for more training to prepare them for pastoral work that sits outside their core subject training (Lawson & te Riele, in Pastoral Care in Education, 2021).

1.2 A course-content gap, not just a training gap

The absence of a shared standard is not only about who delivers mentoring, it is about what a mentoring session actually contains. A subject lesson follows a national curriculum with defined content, sequencing and assessment. A mentoring session, by contrast, is frequently improvised by whichever member of staff has been given the pupil, built around their own experience and whatever resources they can find, and rarely written down in a way another colleague could pick up and continue. Two pupils with an almost identical presentation, say, difficulty managing anger after a peer conflict, can receive entirely different content, over a different number of sessions, assessed against no shared objective, depending only on which member of staff is mentoring them and how much time they have that week.

This matters because school-wide behaviour approaches, on their own, do not work for every pupil. The Education Endowment Foundation's guidance report on improving behaviour in schools is explicit that “universal systems are unlikely to work for all students”, and that pupils who need more intensive support are better served by a personalised approach, the report cites structured tools such as daily report cards as a well-evidenced example (EEF, Improving Behaviour in Schools: Guidance Report). A personalised approach without structure, though, is not the same as a personalised approach with structure: EEF's own recommendation is for schools to be consistent and clear when embedding a new behaviour strategy, precisely because inconsistency is where personalised support tends to fail.

1.3 The cost of leaving it unstructured

The pressure this creates is visible in the national data. In the autumn term of 2024/25 alone, English schools recorded 335,671 suspensions and 3,715 permanent exclusions, a suspension rate of just over 4 per 100 pupils (DfE, Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England: Autumn term 2024/25). Persistent disruptive behaviour remains the most common single reason given. The burden falls unevenly: pupils eligible for free school meals are suspended at more than four times the rate of their peers (9.73 per 100 versus 2.11), and pupils on SEN Support or with an Education, Health and Care Plan are suspended at more than four times the rate of pupils with no identified SEN (11.09 and 10.31 per 100, against 2.46) (DfE, 2025).

At the same time, the staff being asked to provide pastoral and mentoring support are already stretched. DfE's own Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders survey found that 86 per cent of teachers and leaders reported experiencing work-related stress, with workload the leading cause and pupil behaviour a major contributing factor (DfE, Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders: Wave 4, 2025). Asking already-stretched staff to design, deliver and document mentoring from scratch, session by session, with no shared content to draw on, is not a sustainable way to meet a need that the data shows is significant and unevenly distributed.

2. What Ofsted, the DfE and the evidence base say

2.1 Ofsted: behaviour and personal development are inspected, not optional

Under the Education Inspection Framework that has applied since 2019, Ofsted has judged schools separately on behaviour and attitudes and on personal development, the latter defined explicitly as extending “beyond the academic, technical or vocational” to cover a pupil's character, resilience, independence and confidence (Ofsted, Education Inspection Framework). From November 2025, Ofsted's new report-card model goes further, combining attendance and behaviour into one of its central evaluation areas, graded on a five-point scale from Urgent Improvement to Exceptional, an explicit acknowledgement that attendance, behaviour and wellbeing are linked, and that a school's ability to support pupils through difficulty is now judged on its own terms, not folded quietly into an overall headline grade (Ofsted, Education Inspection Framework: Report Cards, 2025).

A structured mentoring offer speaks directly to both of these areas. It gives a school something concrete to describe when an inspector asks how pupils who struggle with behaviour or engagement are supported, and, because Phil's course content addresses named presentations such as anger management, peer conflict and bullying, anxiety and avoidance, and school avoidance, it maps naturally onto the personal-development themes of resilience, confidence and self-regulation that inspectors are asked to consider.

2.2 DfE: mentoring named, but never specified

The Department for Education's core behaviour guidance, *Behaviour in Schools* (February 2024), is explicit that some pupils will need more support than a whole-school behaviour policy provides on its own, and names mentoring, alongside engagement with parents, local partners and other professionals, as an example of that additional support (DfE, *Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff*, February 2024). What the guidance does not do, deliberately, is specify what that mentoring should contain, how long a course should run, or what training a mentor needs, those decisions are left entirely to the school.

Government's flagship behaviour improvement programme, *Behaviour Hubs*, illustrates the same pattern from a different angle. Launched in 2021 and running for three years, it paired schools with strong behaviour cultures with schools still developing theirs, supported by a taskforce of behaviour advisers and a set of training modules on managing high-challenge behaviour, attendance, SEND and leadership (DfE, *Behaviour Hubs programme; Evaluation of the Behaviour Hubs Programme: Interim Report*, November 2024). It reached several hundred schools with direct, peer-to-peer support, a genuinely valuable intervention, but one built around whole-school culture and system design, and, like *Excellence in Cities* before it, delivered as a time-limited grant programme rather than an embedded, permanent capability every school can draw on without waiting for a funding round.

Safeguarding sits alongside this rather than inside it. *Keeping Children Safe in Education* requires every member of staff to receive safeguarding and child protection training at induction and at least annually thereafter, so they can recognise and respond appropriately to a concern (DfE, *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, 2024). That is a culture of vigilance the whole school holds, not mentoring course content, and not a substitute for it. A mentor can be fully KCSIE-trained and still have no structured course content, no consistent way of recording a session, and no shared standard for what "good" mentoring looks like week to week.

2.3 The evidence: structure works, and inconsistency undermines it

The Education Endowment Foundation's guidance report on improving behaviour in schools sets out six recommendations across three areas: preventing misbehaviour before it happens, responding effectively when it does, and, critically, being consistent and clear when a new approach is introduced, since an inconsistently applied strategy is one of the most common reasons a behaviour intervention fails to show benefit (EEF, *Improving Behaviour in Schools: Guidance Report*). The report's evidence for personalised, structured tools such as daily report cards is good; its caution about universal, one-size-fits-all approaches for pupils who need more support is equally clear.

Elsewhere in education, where mentoring is a mature profession, the standard the EEF implicitly calls for already exists. The Chartered College of Teaching has built a *Mentoring Development Certificate* and a *Chartered Teacher (Mentor)* status specifically for staff mentoring trainee and early-career teachers (Chartered College of Teaching, *Mentoring Development Certificate; Chartered Teacher (Mentor) Status*). The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC), described by its own accrediting body as the dominant standard across UK public-sector coaching and mentoring, operates a published competence framework and a five-year renewable quality award for training providers (EMCC Global, *Accreditation and Competence Framework*). Both show that the profession knows how to define, train for, and accredit mentoring rigorously. Neither framework, however, was built for, or has been widely adopted by, pupil-facing pastoral mentoring in schools. The infrastructure exists for mentoring teachers. It does not yet exist, in any equivalent form, for mentoring pupils.

3. Why these twenty courses

Phil's catalogue was not built as a generic list of "common behaviour issues". Each course was chosen because it corresponds to a presentation that DfE or Ofsted guidance names directly, that EEF evidence supports a structured response to, or that shows up clearly in national data on suspensions, exclusions, absence or bullying, and each is written to reflect the approach that guidance recommends, not just its subject matter. The list below sets out, course by course, the evidence behind the choice.

- 1. Physical aggression — Persistent disruptive behaviour and physical assault are the two most common reasons for suspension in England (DfE, 2025). Grounded in: DfE Behaviour in Schools; Ofsted behaviour and attitudes.
- 2. Defiance and non-compliance — EEF evidence: consistent, relationship-based responses outperform blanket sanctions for defiant behaviour. Grounded in: EEF Improving Behaviour in Schools; DfE Behaviour in Schools.
- 3. Emotional regulation — DfE guidance asks staff to consider whether behaviour reflects an underlying difficulty regulating emotion, not just wilful misconduct. Grounded in: DfE Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools; Ofsted personal development.
- 4. Peer conflict and bullying — 21% of pupils in Years 7–13 reported being bullied in the past 12 months (DfE National Behaviour Survey, 2024/25). Grounded in: DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying; Ofsted behaviour and attitudes.
- 5. Verbal disruption — Ofsted found low-level disruption can cost pupils up to an hour of learning time a day where it is not addressed early. Grounded in: Ofsted Below the Radar (2014); DfE Behaviour in Schools.
- 6. Anxiety and avoidance — Persistent absence stood at 17.63% in 2024/25, rising to 33.3% for pupils with an EHCP (DfE, 2025). Grounded in: DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance; DfE Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools.
- 7. Low-level disengagement — The same Ofsted finding on cumulative lost learning time, from disengagement rather than open disruption. Grounded in: Ofsted Below the Radar (2014); EEF evidence on self-monitoring and goal-setting.
- 8. Disrespect to authority — Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour towards an adult is among the most common reasons recorded for suspension (DfE, 2025). Grounded in: EEF evidence on staff-pupil relationships; DfE Behaviour in Schools.
- 9. Social withdrawal — DfE guidance treats withdrawal as a possible sign of an underlying difficulty worth understanding, not a discipline issue. Grounded in: DfE Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools; Ofsted personal development.
- 10. Property damage and destructive behaviour — Shares the dysregulation pattern behind physical aggression, with its own restorative repair element. Grounded in: DfE Behaviour in Schools; Ofsted behaviour and attitudes.
- 11. Anger management — A standalone or follow-on course for frustration and relational anger, distinct from the physical-incident focus of Module 1. Grounded in: DfE Behaviour in Schools; Ofsted behaviour and attitudes.
- 12. Truancy and school avoidance — Addresses disengagement-driven absence specifically, distinct from the anxiety-driven avoidance covered in Module 6. Grounded in: DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance; Ofsted behaviour and attitudes.
- 13. Vaping and nicotine use — A quarter of 11 to 15-year-olds have tried vaping and 9% vape currently, up from 6% in 2018 (NHS England, 2024). Grounded in: NHS Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England (2023); DfE guidance on vapes in schools.
- 14. Young carers: balancing care and school — Around 120,000 young carers aged 5 to 17 in England, against 39,000 identified in the school census, so most are not known to their school. Grounded in: Children and Families Act 2014, s.96; ONS Census 2021; DfE Mental Health and Behaviour.
- 15. Online safety, cyberbullying and digital wellbeing — A third of 8 to 17-year-olds using social media feel pressure to be popular online all or most of the time (Ofcom, 2026). Grounded in: Ofcom Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes; KCSIE (online safety); DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying.
- 16. Exam and academic pressure — DfE advice treats anxiety around assessment as a recognised driver of behaviour and absence, not a motivation problem. Grounded in: DfE Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools; Ofsted personal development.
- 17. Sensory regulation for neurodivergent pupils — NICE asks schools and services to take the physical environment into account, considering individual sensitivities to noise, lighting and personal space. Grounded in: NICE CG170, recommendation 1.1.9; Equality Act 2010; DfE SEND Code of Practice.
- 18. Bereavement and loss — A common experience of childhood that schools are expected to respond to, and one where the wrong response does harm. Grounded in: DfE Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools; Childhood Bereavement Network.
- 19. Safeguarding: exploitation and county lines awareness — KCSIE names child criminal exploitation,

including county lines, as a specific safeguarding issue every member of staff should be alert to. Gr DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education; Home Office county lines guidance.

- 20. Moving up: primary-to-secondary and other school transitions — The move between phases is a recognised point of drop in attainment, attendance and wellbeing, and the one transition every pupil makes. Grounded in: EEF evidence on transition; DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

Two national data points sit behind that list particularly directly. First, persistent absence, missing 10% or more of sessions, stood at 17.63% across autumn and spring 2024/25, more than 60% above the pre-pandemic rate of 10.53%, and reached 33.3% for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (DfE, Pupil Absence in Schools in England, 2024/25), the single clearest justification for the two attendance-focused courses, Modules 6 and 12, treating anxiety-driven and disengagement-driven absence as genuinely different problems rather than one “truancy” category. Second, a fifth of pupils in Years 7 to 13 report being bullied in a given year (DfE, National Behaviour Survey, 2024/25), the direct evidence base for Module 4, built specifically around DfE’s own anti-bullying advice rather than a generic conflict-resolution template.

This is also why the catalogue does not stop at “behaviour” in the narrow, disciplinary sense. Ofsted’s personal development judgement, and the DfE advice on mental health and behaviour that sits behind it, are explicit that behaviour is often the visible symptom of something else, anxiety, low mood, disengagement, or a skills gap in regulating emotion or reading social situations. Five of the first twelve courses (Emotional regulation, Anxiety and avoidance, Low-level disengagement, Social withdrawal, and Truancy and school avoidance) exist specifically because the evidence treats these as distinct presentations needing their own structured response, not sub-categories of a single generic “bad behaviour” course.

3.1 A structured core, not a ceiling

The twenty courses above are not intended to be exhaustive, and Phil does not present them as such. A fixed, evidence-grounded catalogue is a foundation for consistent mentoring, not a claim that every pupil’s need will map neatly onto one of twenty categories. Some pupils present with a need that sits outside all twenty, a specific SEND-related barrier, a family circumstance, a presentation the catalogue does not yet name, and mentors are expected to recognise that rather than force-fit a pupil into the nearest available module.

Where a pupil’s need is not met by the current catalogue, mentors are encouraged to use their own professional judgement and bring in supplementary resources, adapted activities, or a different approach entirely, alongside or instead of the structured course content, recording what they actually delivered in the same session log, so it remains part of the pupil’s evidenced record either way. This mirrors what the DfE’s SEND Code of Practice asks of support for pupils with additional needs generally: personalised provision built around the individual, not one model applied uniformly to everyone (DfE, Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, 2015), and what the EEF describes, in its guidance on SEND in mainstream schools, as a repertoire of strategies used flexibly in response to individual need rather than a fixed script (EEF, Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools: Guidance Report, 2020). The same applies across age ranges: the courses are written to be pitched by the mentor to the pupil in front of them, in a primary school or a secondary one, with the wording of an activity a matter for the person delivering it rather than fixed by the app.

The catalogue is also not static. As section 4.1 sets out, new courses are published as content rather than as an engineering project, and Phil expects, and plans, to keep extending the catalogue as schools identify gaps, as new evidence emerges, and as national guidance is revised, in the same way DfE’s own behaviour and attendance advice has itself been updated repeatedly over the past decade.

None of this is an argument against having a core. A defined catalogue matters precisely because the alternative, no shared course structure at all, is the problem this paper opened with: two pupils with the same presentation currently receive two entirely different mentoring experiences depending only on which member of staff they happen to see, with no way for an establishment to know whether either pupil received something evidenced (Lawson et al., Pastoral Care in Education, 2021). A common core of twenty courses gives every mentor in an establishment a shared, evidenced starting point, so that flexibility sits on top of a consistent baseline of provision rather than replacing it, a combination consistent with how Ofsted expects good practice to work more broadly: a consistent entitlement for every pupil, adapted by staff exercising their own professional judgement for the pupil in front of them, not one or the other (Ofsted, Education Inspection Framework). In practice, that means every pupil at a Phil school is guaranteed the same evidenced starting point, and no pupil is limited to it.

4. How Phil addresses the gap

Phil is not a replacement for a school's safeguarding procedures, its behaviour policy, or the professional judgement of its staff. It is the structured layer that currently does not exist between those things and an individual mentoring session, delivered through an app that mentors use to run every session, pupils use to see their own progress, and admins use to pull reports, the courses, the consistent record, and the reporting that turns mentoring from an improvised good deed into a documented, evidenced part of a school's pastoral offer.

4.1 A ready-made course library, not a blank page

- Twenty courses covering the behaviour and wellbeing presentations most commonly seen in UK schools, physical aggression, defiance and non-compliance, emotional regulation, peer conflict and bullying, verbal disruption, anxiety and avoidance, low-level disengagement, disrespect to authority, social withdrawal, property damage and destructive behaviour, anger management, truancy and school avoidance, vaping and nicotine use, young carers, online safety and digital wellbeing, exam and academic pressure, sensory regulation for neurodivergent pupils, bereavement and loss, exploitation and county lines awareness, and moving up between schools, set out course by course, with the evidence behind each one, in section 3. Each is structured as five weekly sessions with a defined objective, activity set and resources.
- Every course is grounded in the evidence and guidance referenced in sections 2 and 3, DfE behaviour guidance, Ofsted's personal-development themes, and EEF's evidence on effective, personalised support, so a school can show its mentoring content is not improvised, but traceable to the same guidance its behaviour policy already draws on.
- The catalogue is designed to grow: new courses can be published without a developer, a redeploy, or an app-store update, so a school's own emerging needs, a new module for a specific cohort, for example, can be added as content, not as an engineering project. It is a starting point, not a ceiling, see section 3.1 on why a structured core and room for mentor judgement are not in tension.

4.2 Consistency, whoever is mentoring

- Every mentor, whether a full-time pastoral lead, a subject teacher taking on mentoring alongside their timetable, or an independent mentor working with one school, delivers the same structured course content, closing the gap where two pupils with the same presentation currently receive two entirely different experiences.
- A mandatory step on every session record, flagged or not flagged, keeps every mentor, regardless of experience, engaging deliberately with safeguarding on every single session, consistent with the culture of vigilance KCSIE asks every member of staff to hold. Phil does not monitor, triage or act on this content; that responsibility, and the school's own safeguarding procedure, remain entirely the school's, exactly as KCSIE requires.
- A pupil is never limited to one mentor's memory of their progress. A CompletionReflection captures, in the mentor's own words, how the pupil engaged, how effective the course was, and what's recommended next, visible to the establishment's admin and to any mentor who later picks up that pupil, so continuity of support survives a staff change, a mentor's absence, or a pupil moving between courses.

4.3 Evidence a school can actually use

- An Establishment mentoring list gives any mentor, and any admin, a single view of who is mentoring whom: pupil, course, which session they are on, and whether a certificate has been issued, grouped under the mentor and filterable by academic year, term or mentor, replacing a mental list or a personal spreadsheet with something the whole establishment can see and rely on.
- The same list exports to PDF or a spreadsheet, which is what a governor meeting, a parents' evening or an Ofsted conversation needs: what has been covered, pupil by pupil, across the whole establishment, including completed mentors' reflections, built without ever exposing session ratings, narrative notes or safeguarding content, so it is safe to hand over without a separate redaction step.
- An Individual mentee report lets a mentor, an admin, or, where the school and mentor choose to grant it, a parent or carer see a single pupil's progress at any point in a course, not only once it is finished, so a pupil's engagement is visible and evidenced throughout, not just retrospectively.

4.4 Built around how schools actually work

- Works for a single independent mentor with one pupil, for a department of pastoral staff in one school, or for a multi-academy trust standardising mentoring across every one of its schools, the same structured content and reporting scale with the establishment, not against it.
- A three-week, no-card-required pilot lets a school trial the full offer with a small cohort before committing, and every pupil, mentor and session record created during the pilot carries over unchanged if the school converts.
- Optional parent and carer engagement, controllable by the mentor or the school's admin, and, when switched off, invisible rather than merely restricted, lets home involvement be part of the model where it helps, and stay entirely out of the picture where it would not.

5. The benefits, made explicit

5.1 For schools and establishments

- Evidence for Ofsted and governors, a documented, DfE- and evidence-referenced mentoring offer to point to under the new attendance and behaviour evaluation area and the personal-development themes inspectors already assess, without building a case file by hand.
- A consistent standard across every mentor, no dependence on one experienced member of staff's personal approach, every mentor, however new to the role, works from the same structured, evidence-grounded course.
- Reduced burden on already-stretched staff, ready-made session content, resources and take-home activities remove the need to design mentoring from scratch, directly addressing the workload pressure DfE's own workforce survey identifies as the leading source of staff stress.
- Continuity of support that survives staff turnover, CompletionReflections and case load reporting mean a pupil's mentoring history is not lost when a mentor leaves, is absent, or a pupil is reassigned, a genuine answer to the "no clear national guidelines" gap identified in pastoral-support research.
- A safeguarding-conscious record without becoming a safeguarding system, a mandatory flag on every session keeps vigilance active without Phil ever displacing the school's own KCSIE-mandated procedures, Designated Safeguarding Lead, or professional judgement.
- Governance-ready reporting in minutes, not hours, roster, caseload and coverage exports in PDF, Excel or Google Sheets remove the need to manually compile mentoring evidence ahead of a governor meeting, a parents' evening, or an inspection.
- Scales from one mentor to a whole trust, the same platform serves an independent mentor, a single school, or a multi-academy trust standardising mentoring provision across every school it runs.
- A lower-risk way to start, a genuinely free, three-week pilot with no card required lets a school test the model with real pupils before making any financial commitment.

5.2 For pupils

- Consistent, structured support regardless of who is mentoring them, the same evidence-grounded course content and pace, whichever member of staff or independent mentor they are working with.
- Support that continues even when their mentor changes, a written reflection on their engagement and progress travels with them, so a new mentor picking up their case starts from what is already known, not from nothing.
- Visible, tangible progress, a live progress bar and an automatically issued completion certificate give pupils a concrete sense of what they have achieved, session by session, not just a vague sense that "things got better".
- Individualised, not one-size-fits-all, support, twenty distinct courses addressing different presentations mean a pupil struggling with anxiety and avoidance is not given the same content as a pupil working through peer conflict, directly reflecting EEF's evidence that personalised approaches outperform universal ones for pupils who need more support.
- Family involvement on the pupil's own terms, home engagement can be switched on where it helps a pupil's progress, and left off, invisibly, not just restricted, where home involvement is not appropriate or wanted.
- Privacy by design, a pupil's mentoring content is never exposed to a wider audience than necessary, safeguarding notes and session narrative stay with the mentor and the establishment's admin, never surfaced

to parents or reproduced in establishment-wide reporting.

6. Conclusion

England has spent two decades building an increasingly explicit expectation that schools support pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development, most recently formalised in Ofsted's decision to make attendance and behaviour a standalone, graded evaluation area from November 2025. What has not kept pace is the infrastructure for the mentoring that so much of this support depends on: no shared national standard for what a mentoring session should contain, no training standard comparable to the one the profession has already built for mentoring teachers, and, as the pastoral-support research cited in this paper puts it plainly, no clear national guidelines or qualifications for the staff doing this work.

Phil is built to be that missing layer: a structured, evidence-grounded library of mentoring courses; a consistent, safeguarding-conscious way of recording every session regardless of who is mentoring; and reporting that turns a term of mentoring into evidence a school can actually use, for governors, for Ofsted, for parents where appropriate, and, most importantly, for the pupil's own continuity of support. It does not replace a school's judgement, its safeguarding procedures, or its staff. It gives them mentoring courses to work from, and a record worth keeping.

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Phil · structured support, real growth. This paper is provided to inform discussion with schools and establishments and does not constitute legal, safeguarding, or inspection advice.