

Behaviour Policy

Statement of intent

Our setting believes that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and where there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations and standards for their behaviour. These standards apply to all children and adults who may occasionally or regularly be part of school's activities both on and off site of the school.

The Montessori philosophy aim to teach children to behave in socially acceptable ways and to understand the needs and rights of others. We wish to state clearly that without exception bullying is always unacceptable at the School. Every child has the right to be happy and secure at school and to be supported when he/she feels vulnerable. The maintenance of good standards of behaviour is the responsibility of the school staff, children and parents.

Methods

All staff have a responsibility for supporting personal, social and emotional development, including issues concerning behaviour. We ensure all staff are kept up to date with legislation, training, research and thinking on promoting positive behaviour and on handling children's behaviour where it may require additional support. We recognise that codes for interacting with other people vary between cultures and require staff to be aware and respectful of these in the setting. We require all staff, volunteers and students to provide a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents and one another with friendliness, care and courtesy.

We familiarise new staff and volunteers with the setting's behaviour policy and its guidelines for behaviour.

We expect all members of our setting – children, parents, staff, volunteers and students to keep to the guidelines, requiring these to be applied consistently.

We work in partnership with children's parents. Parents are regularly informed about their children's behaviour by their key person. We work with parents to address recurring inconsiderate behaviour, using our observation records to help us to understand the cause and to decide jointly how to respond appropriately.

For guidance there are sets of rules for general health and safe playground behaviour. The standards of behaviour expected for the children in all school activities is based on an agreed code of conduct, set out as our ground rules. This is interpreted through class discussion which is appropriate to the children's age and understanding.

Good behaviour must always be acknowledged. This will usually be at a personal level or through peer recognition. Any behaviour which falls below the standards set will be discussed with the individual. It must be made clear what constitutes unacceptable behaviour.

In dealing with any unacceptable behaviour it is essential for staff to ensure that children understand why their behaviour is unacceptable and their own responsibility in the matter.

To do this it will be necessary to discuss the situation with the child either immediately or later. In extreme or repeated situations, other staff and parents may be brought into discussions. Where there is repeated or serious concern about a child's behaviour, parents must be informed and their support sought.

It is recognised that the reasons for bad behaviour are often complex and that high emotions can make immediate resolutions difficult. It may be appropriate in some circumstances to remove a child from the immediate situation. This must be done if it is in the child's own interest or for safety of the child or others. This should not be seen as a sanction.

Strategies with children who engage in inconsiderate behaviour

We require all staff, volunteers and students to use positive strategies for handling any inconsiderate behaviour, by helping children find solutions in ways which are appropriate for the children's ages and stages of development. Such solutions might include, for example, acknowledgement of feelings, explanation as to what was not acceptable, and supporting children to gain control of their feelings so that they can learn a more appropriate response.

We ensure that the environment facilitates that children are meaningfully occupied without the need for unnecessary conflict over sharing and waiting for turns.

We acknowledge considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share.

We support each child in developing self-esteem, confidence and feelings of competence.

We support each child in developing a sense of belonging, so that they feel valued and welcome.

We avoid creating situations in which children receive adult attention only in return for inconsiderate behaviour.

When children behave in inconsiderate ways, we help them to understand the outcomes of their action and support them in learning how to cope more appropriately.

We do not use techniques intended to single out and humiliate individual children.

We use physical restraint, such as holding, only to prevent physical injury to children or adults and /or serious damage to property.

We do not shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's inconsiderate behaviour.

Children under three years

When children under three behave in inconsiderate ways we recognise that strategies for supporting them will need to be developmentally appropriate and differ from those for older children.

We recognise that very young children are unable to regulate their own emotions, such as fear, anger or distress, and require sensitive adults to help them do this.

Common inconsiderate or hurtful behaviours of young children include tantrums, biting or fighting. Staff are calm and patient, offering comfort to intense emotions, helping children to manage their feelings and talk about them to help resolve issues and promote understanding.

Rough and tumble play, hurtful behaviour and bullying

Young children sometimes engage in play that has aggressive themes – such as superhero and weapon play; some children appear pre-occupied with these themes, but their behaviour is not necessarily a precursor to hurtful behaviour or bullying, although it may be inconsiderate at times and may need addressing using strategies as above.

We recognise that teasing and rough and tumble play are normal for young children and acceptable within limits. We regard these kinds of play as pro-social and not as problematic or 'aggressive'.

We will develop strategies to contain play that are agreed with the children, and understood by them, with acceptable behavioural boundaries to ensure children are not hurt.

We recognise that fantasy play also contains many violently dramatic strategies – blowing up, shooting etc., and that themes often refer to 'goodies and baddies' and as such offer opportunities for us to explore concepts of right and wrong.

We are able to tune in to the content of the play, perhaps to suggest alternative strategies for heroes and heroines, making the most of 'teachable moments' to encourage empathy and lateral thinking to explore alternative scenarios and strategies for conflict resolution.

Hurtful behaviour

We take hurtful behaviour very seriously. Most children under the age of five will at some stage hurt or say something hurtful to another child, especially if their emotions are high at the time, but it is not helpful to label this behaviour as 'bullying'. For children under five, hurtful behaviour is momentary, spontaneous and often without cognisance of the feelings of the person whom they have hurt.

We recognise that young children behave in hurtful ways towards others because they have not yet developed the means to manage intense feelings that sometimes overwhelm them.

We will help them manage these feelings as they have neither the biological means nor the cognitive means to do this for themselves.

We understand that self-management of intense emotions, especially of anger, happens when the brain has developed neurological systems to manage the physiological processes that take place when triggers activate responses of anger or fear.

Therefore we help this process by offering support, calming the child who is angry as well as the one who has been hurt by the behaviour. By helping the child to return to a normal state, we are helping the brain to develop the physiological response system that will help the child to be able to manage his or her own feelings.

We do not engage in punitive responses to a young child's rage as that will have the opposite effect.

Our way of responding to pre-verbal children is to calm them through holding and cuddling. Verbal children will also respond to cuddling to calm them down, but we offer them explanation and discuss the incident with them to their level of understanding.

We recognise that young children require help in understanding the range of feelings experienced. We help children recognise their feelings by naming them and helping children to express them, making a connection verbally between the event and the feeling. 'John took your car, didn't he, and you were enjoying playing with it. You didn't like it when he took it, did you? It made you feel angry, didn't it'.

We help young children learn to empathise with others, understanding that they have feelings too and that their actions impact on others' feelings –e.g. 'When you hit John, it hurt him and he didn't like that and it made him cry'.

We help young children develop pro-social behaviour, such as resolving conflict over who has the toy e.g. 'I can see you are feeling better now and John isn't crying any more. Let's see if we can be friends and find another car, so you can both play with one.'

We are aware that the same problem may happen over and over before skills such as sharing and turn-taking develop. In order for both the biological maturation and cognitive development to take place, children will need repeated experiences with problem solving, supported by patient adults and clear boundaries.

We support social skills through modelling behaviour, through activities, drama and stories. We build self-esteem and confidence in children, recognising their emotional needs through close and committed relationships with them.

We help a child to understand the effect that their hurtful behaviour has had on another child; we do not force children to say sorry, but encourage this where it is clear that they are genuinely sorry and wish to show this to the person they have hurt.

When hurtful behaviour becomes problematic, we work with parents to identify the cause and find a solution together. The main reasons for very young children to engage in excessive hurtful behaviour are that:

- they do not feel securely attached to someone who can interpret and meet their needs - this may be in the home and it may also be in the setting;
 - their parent, or carer in the setting, does not have skills in responding appropriately, and consequently negative patterns are developing where hurtful behaviour is the only response the child has to express feelings of anger;
 - the child is exposed to levels of aggressive behaviour at home and may be at risk emotionally, or may be experiencing child abuse; and
 - the child has a developmental condition that affects how they behave.
- Where this does not work, we use the Code of Practice to support the child and family, making the appropriate referrals to a Behaviour Support Team where necessary.

Working with children

All children need freedom to experiment, learn, develop and to be valued and respected as individuals.

At no time and in no way is a child labelled by using negative words or deeds.

Parents & Carers

At all times the teaching staff will endeavour to work with parents and/or carers in partnership to aid the child's development.

Teaching Staff

Staff are expected to:

- treat each other with respect and follow the guidance given in their contract.
- present a good role model for the children in their care.
- provide stimulating and appropriate activities to prevent boredom which may cause some forms of difficult behaviour.
- to convey to the children that it is negative behaviour that is unacceptable and not the children themselves.

One of the great benefits of the Montessori approach is that children have the opportunity to learn how to behave in a social situation from other children slightly older than themselves. Staff also maintain an ethos of positive guidance at all times. Here are some techniques that we use when dealing with challenging behaviour:

1. Positive intervention and distraction.
2. Modelling good behaviour.
3. Practising social skills through drama and role play.
4. Talking things through.
5. Spending time at the Peace Table to resolve conflicts or simply reflect.
6. Observing other children with adult.
7. Time and space to calm themselves down with help if needed.

