

Achieving and promoting positive behaviour

Policy statement

Our Preschool believes that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and where there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour. We believe our children should be free to play and learn without fear of being hurt or unfairly restricted by anyone else.

As children develop, they learn about boundaries, the difference between right and wrong, and to consider the views and feelings, needs and rights, of others and the impact that their behaviour has on people, places and objects. The development of these skills requires adult guidance to help encourage and model appropriate behaviours and to offer intervention and support when children struggle with conflict and emotional situations. In these types of situations key staff can help identify and address triggers for the behaviour and help children reflect, regulate and manage their actions.

We aim to teach children to behave in socially acceptable ways, and to understand the needs and rights of others. We aim to have consistent boundaries which govern the conduct of the group and the principles guiding management of behaviour exist within the EYFS Framework for Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

Procedures

We recognise that codes for interacting with other people vary between cultures and require staff to be aware of, and respect, those used by members of the Preschool. 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, volunteers and students with our behaviour policy and guidelines.

We work in partnership with parents and inform them of any behavioural incidents as appropriate. We work with parents to address recurring inconsiderate behaviour, using our observation records to help us to understand the cause and decide jointly how to respond appropriately.

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 there are enough popular toys and resources and sufficient activities available so 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 in our group, 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 never send children out of the room by themselves, nor do we use a 'naughty chair'.
- ☞ We never use physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking. Children are never threatened with these.
- ☞ We do not use techniques intended to 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.
- ☞ Details of such an event (what happened, what action was taken and by whom, and the names of witnesses) are brought to the attention of the Preschool Leader and are recorded in the child's personal file. The child's parent is informed on the same day.
- ☞ In cases of serious misbehaviour, such as racial or other abuse, we make clear immediately the unacceptability of the behaviour and attitudes, by means of explanations rather than personal blame.
- ☞ We do not shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's inconsiderate behaviour.
- ☞ After consultation with parents, use a time out system for children aged over 2 years, of around 2 minutes when they will be removed from the play area to a quiet area. During this 2 minutes the child's key person will explain why they have been taken away from the play area. This system will be used consistently by all staff.

Where this does not result in an improvement of behaviour we will ask parents for permission to seek outside help.

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 babies and 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.
- ☞ If tantrums, biting or fighting are frequent, we try to find out the underlying cause - such as a change or upheaval at home, or frequent change of carers. Sometimes a child has not settled in well and the behaviour may be the result of 'separation anxiety'.
- ☞ We focus on ensuring a child's attachment figure in the Preschool, their key person, is building a strong relationship to provide security to the child.

Rough and tumble play and fantasy aggression

Young children often 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 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 an 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 they experience. 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. "Adam took your car, didn't he, and you were enjoying playing with it. You didn't like it when he took it, did you? Did it make you feel angry? Is that why you hit him?" Older children will be able to verbalise their feelings better, talking through themselves the feelings that motivated the behaviour.
- 👉 We help young children learn to empathise with others, understanding that they have feelings too and that their actions impact on others' feelings. "When you hit Adam, 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. "I can see you are feeling better now and Adam 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 Preschool;
 - their parent, or carer in the Preschool, 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 may have insufficient language, or mastery of English, to express him or herself and may feel frustrated;
 - the child is exposed to levels of aggressive behaviour at home and may be at risk emotionally, or may be experiencing child abuse;
 - 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.

Biting

Many children go through a stage of biting other children and staff. We know this is an emotive subject and when this occurs, particularly if a child bites regularly, the following procedure will be followed:

- The victim will be comforted by their key person and any required medical treatment given.
- The perpetrator will be taken from the play area and told, in a manner appropriate to the child's age that the behaviour was unacceptable. The child will not be shouted at and only one member of staff, preferably the child's key person will deal with this.
- Sanctions will be applied as stated in the behaviour management policy.
- Staff will use their written observations and knowledge of the child to try to pinpoint trigger points and reasons.
- The incident will be reported in the accident book

Parents of both children will be informed.

Bullying

We take bullying very seriously. Bullying involves the persistent physical or verbal abuse of another child or children. It is characterised by intent to hurt, often planned, and accompanied by an awareness of the impact of the bullying behaviour.

A child who is bullying has reached a stage of cognitive development where he or she is able to plan to carry out a premeditated intent to cause distress in another. If a child bullies another child or children:

- We show the children who have been bullied that we are able to listen to their concerns and act upon them;
- We intervene to stop the child who is bullying from harming the other child or children;
- We explain to the child doing the bullying why her/his behaviour is not acceptable;
- We give reassurance to the child or children who have been bullied;
- We help the child who has done the bullying to recognise the impact of their actions;
- We make sure that children who bully receive positive feedback for considerate behaviour and are given opportunities to practise and reflect on considerate behaviour;
- We do not label children who bully as 'bullies';
- We recognise that children who bully may be experiencing bullying themselves, or be subject to abuse or other circumstance causing them to express their anger in negative ways towards others;
- We recognise that children who bully are often unable to empathise with others and for this reason we do not insist that they say sorry unless it is clear that they feel genuine remorse for what they have done. Empty apologies are just as hurtful to the bullied child as the original behaviour;
- We discuss what has happened with the parents of the child who did the bullying and work out with them a plan for handling the child's behaviour; and
- We share what has happened with the parents of the child who has been bullied, explaining that the child who did the bullying is being helped to adopt more acceptable ways of behaving.

All members of staff have responsibility for our programme for supporting personal, social and emotional development, including issues concerning behaviour. The Manager has overall responsibility for behaviour management. Her roles include:

- Keeping herself up to date with legislation, research and thinking on promoting positive behaviour, and on handling children's behaviour where it may require additional support.
- Accessing relevant sources of expertise on promoting positive behaviour within the EYFS framework.
- Checking all staff have relevant in-service training on promoting positive behaviour.
- Implementing the setting's behaviour procedures including the stepped approach.

Stepped approach

Step 1

- We will ensure that EYFS guidance relating to 'behaviour management' is incorporated into relevant policy and procedures;
- We will be knowledgeable with, and apply the setting's procedures on Promoting Positive Behaviour;
- We will undertake an annual audit of the provision to ensure the environment and practices supports healthy social and emotional development. Findings from the audit are considered by management and relevant adjustments applied.
- Ensure that all staff are supported to address issues relating to behaviour including applying initial and focused intervention approaches (see below).

Step 2

- We address unwanted behaviours using the agreed and consistently applied initial intervention approach. If the unwanted behaviour does not reoccur or cause concern then normal monitoring will resume.
- Behaviours that result in concern for the child and/or others will be discussed between the key person, the behaviour coordinator and Special Educational Needs Coordinator (S.E.N.D. Co-ordinator) or/and Preschool Leader. During the meeting, the key person will use their knowledge and assessments of the child to share any known influencing factors (new baby, additional needs, illness etc.) in order to place the behaviour into context. Appropriate adjustments to practice will be agreed and if successful normal monitoring resumed.
- If the behaviour continues to reoccur and remain a concern then the key person should liaise with parents to discuss possible reasons for the behaviour and to agree next steps. If a cause for the behaviour is not known or only occurs whilst in the setting then the S.E.N.D. Co-ordinator will suggest using a focused intervention approach to identify a trigger for the behaviour.

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- If a trigger is identified then the S.E.N.D. Co-ordinator and key person will meet with the parents to plan support for the child through developing an action plan. If relevant, recommended actions for dealing with the behaviour at home should be agreed with the parent/s and incorporated into the plan. Other members of the staff team should be informed of the agreed actions in the action plan and help implement the actions. The plan should be monitored and reviewed regularly by the key person and S.E.N.D. Co-ordinator until improvement is noticed.

Step 3

- If, despite applying the initial intervention and focused intervention approaches, the behaviour continues to give occur and/or is of significant concern, then the behaviour coordinator and S.E.N.D. Co-ordinator will invite the parents to a meeting to discuss external referral and next steps for supporting the child in the setting.
- It may also be agreed that the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or Early Help process should begin and that specialist help be sought for the child if deemed necessary – this support may address either developmental or welfare needs. (See Supporting Children with SEN policy 9.2) If the child's behaviour is part of a range of welfare concerns that also include a concern that the child may be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, follow the Safeguarding and Children and Child Protection Policy (1.2).
- Advice provided by external agencies should be incorporated into the child's action plan and regular multi-disciplinary meetings held to review the child's progress.

Initial intervention approach

- We use an initial problem solving intervention for all situations in which a child or children are distressed or in conflict. All staff use this intervention consistently.
- This type of approach involves an adult approaching the situation calmly, stopping any hurtful actions, acknowledging the feelings of those involved, gathering information, restating the issue to help children reflect, regain control of the situation and resolve the situation themselves.
- Periodically the effectiveness of the approach will be checked.

Focused intervention approach

- The reasons for some types of behaviour are not always apparent, despite the knowledge and input from key staff and parents.
- Where we have considered all possible reasons, then a focused intervention approach should then be applied.
- This approach allows the key person and behaviour coordinator to observe, reflect, and identify causes and functions of unwanted behaviour in the wider context of other known influences on the child.
- We follow the ABC method which uses key observations to identify a) an event or activity (antecedent) that occurred immediately before a particular behaviour, b) what behaviour was observed and recorded at the time of the incident, and c) what the consequences were following the behaviour. Once analysed, the focused intervention should help determine the cause (e.g. ownership of a toy or fear of a situation) and function of the behaviour (to obtain the toy or avoid a situation) and suitable support will be applied.

Use of rewards and sanctions

- All children need consistent messages, clear boundaries and guidance to intrinsically manage their behaviour through self-reflection and control.
- Rewards such as excessive praise and stickers may provide an immediate change in the behaviour but will not teach children how to act when a 'prize' is not being given or provide the child with the skills to manage situations and their emotions. Instead, a child is taught how to be 'compliant' and respond to meet adult's own expectations in order to obtain a reward (or for fear of a sanction). If used then the type of rewards and their functions must be carefully considered before applying.
- Children should never be labelled, criticised, humiliated, punished, shouted at or isolated by removing them from the group and left alone in 'time out' or on a 'naughty chair'. However, if necessary children can be accompanied and removed from the group in order to calm down and if appropriate helped to reflect on what has happened.

Use of physical intervention

- The term physical intervention is used to describe any forceful physical contact by an adult to a child such as grabbing, pulling, dragging, or any form of restraint of a child such as holding down. Where a child is upset or angry, staff will speak to them calmly, encouraging them to vent their frustration in other ways by diverting the child's attention.
- Staff should not use physical intervention – or the threat of physical intervention, to manage a child's behaviour unless it is necessary to use "reasonable force in order to prevent children from injuring themselves or others or damage property" (EYFS).
- If "reasonable force" has been used for any of the reasons shown above, parents are to be informed on the same day that it occurs. The intervention will be recorded as soon as possible within the child's file, which states clearly when and how parents were informed.
- Corporal (physical) punishment of any kind should never be used or threatened which could adversely affect a child's well-being.

Further guidance

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DfE 2014)

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Pickering Pre-School Playgroup held on 31st August 2023.

Date to be reviewed – Before end of August 2024.

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of signatory – Richard Allenby (Chairperson).