

Learning Behaviour Policy September 2023



**'Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing, and rightdoing, there is a field.
I will meet you there.'** Rumi

Rationale

'Children when given support are capable problem solvers and solution finders. Conflicts are occasions for hope; the children and adults learn together that diverse points of view need not lead to unresolved frustration and anger. Instead, conflicts and disputes can actually be a starting point for honest exchanges that lead to stronger and gratifying relationships. Conflict situations contain rich possibilities for learning, including respect and understanding difference. We need to come from the premise that children don't 'misbehave' but make mistakes. If we see children's explorations of the world as 'mistakes' not 'wilful misbehaving' then we can respond more constructively.

To respond to children's social mistakes as opportunities for new learning not events that require punishment.'

You Can't Come to my Party Conflict Resolution with Young Children
Betsy Evans 2002

Aims

- To have a shared understanding with staff, parents and children about learning behaviour in order for us all to respond in a consistent way to different behaviours
- To provide adults with a set of practical tools and strategies that can help us respond to and manage times of conflict and strong emotion
- Through Conflict Resolution and Emotion Coaching strategies we will encourage children to learn how to resolve their conflicts independently
- Children and adults to take responsibility for their behaviours and have the courage to express their feelings and request getting their needs met effectively

Our Values

Respect

We take care of ourselves, each other, the environment and our ways of life. We are mindful of our rights and needs and those of others. We build positive relationships.

Equality and Inclusion

We celebrate individuality and diversity. We treat people fairly. We recognise every person in our community is a unique human being with unique life experiences that contribute to a rich learning environment. We have a willingness to understand and connect with each other. We challenge our own thinking and that of others in relation to equality and inclusion.

Emotionally safe environment

The Centre is a calm and nurturing environment where everyone trusts that they will be supported and have their feelings validated. We recognise the importance of being resilient and enabling everyone to have the courage to learn new ways, take risks and cope with challenges.

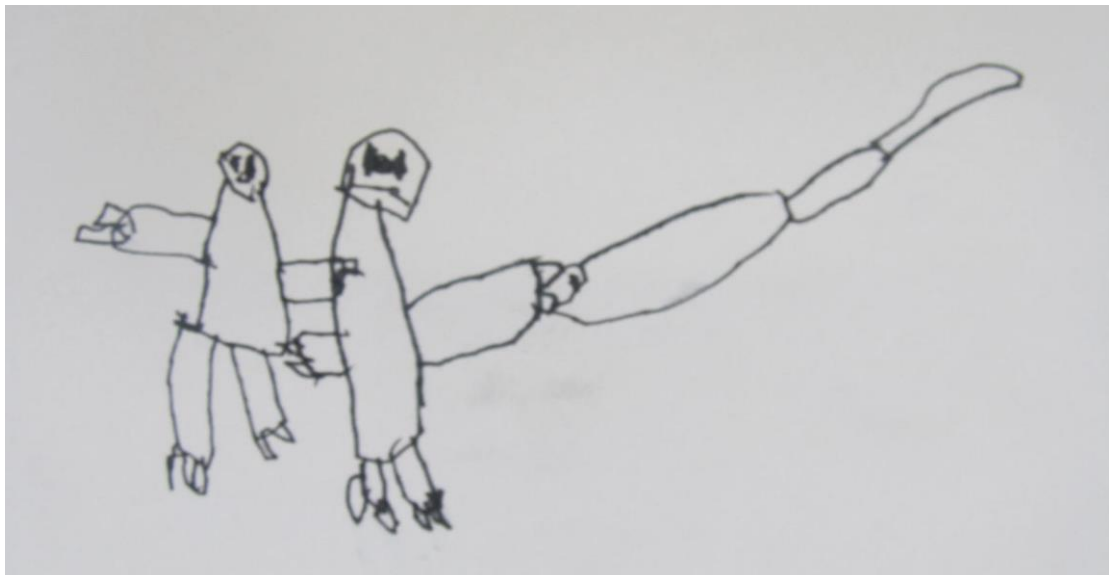
Communication

The Centre recognises the equal importance of verbal and non-verbal communication. We are committed to 'active listening' using all our senses to interpret the meaning of what people are expressing. We are mindful of the language we use and the impact it has on each other.

Authenticity

Being here enables us to be ourselves. We are aware of our own feelings and give genuine, honest and compassionate responses to others.

Creating a place that says 'you matter'.



Respect

We let everyone know that the Centre belongs to our whole community. Adults model using positive behaviours and language, active listening and social interaction giving ourselves and others time to stop and think. Negotiation skills are learnt through Conflict Resolution, Emotion Coaching and the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Development' (SEAD) approach. We recognise that these approaches and principles are a way of being and underpin our behaviour policy.

Equality and Inclusion

Thinking is challenged to understand and embrace differences in gender, language, culture, ethnicity, religion, special needs and disabilities. Home visits and Family Support help us understand the unique 'family culture' of every child and family within the setting. The child's voice is heard using words, symbols, Makaton, non-verbal language and the expertise of language support staff. Diversity is acknowledged through the celebration of festivals, books and other resources, displays and Learning Diaries.

Emotionally safe environment

We have clear boundaries and a consistent daily routine. Quiet spaces are available to withdraw to if necessary. The calming effect of music is recognised. We appropriately express and make sense of our emotions by using 1:1 support within our key person approach. Emotional literacy is extended by naming and exploring words, symbols and social stories and is embedded into the curriculum. We allow ourselves and others to have the courage to explore different ways of problem solving by being allowed to 'give things a go' and make mistakes. Consistent approach adopted through use of Conflict Resolution and Emotion Coaching.

Communication

We have an 'open door' policy. We greet parents/carers and children positively every day, both at the front door and in each room. We show that we value each others' contributions through active listening and turn taking in conversation, letting people know when we have understood them. We communicate through positive body language, gesture, facial expressions and eye contact when appropriate. Positive language specifies what we want children to do rather than what we don't want them to do. For example; 'Jump from here, the ground is

soft.' We provide reasons where appropriate. For example, 'I am worried that you may hurt yourself on the hard step if you jump from there'.

Conflict Resolution

The Six Mediation Steps

Approach calmly

Breathe. Place yourself between the children on their physical level.

Use a calm voice and gentle touch.

If an object is involved in the conflict say something like, "I'm going to hold this while we talk about the problem." If the object is too big, put a hand on it.

Acknowledge feelings

Give recognition to the feelings children are expressing by using simple descriptive words. For example, "You look upset?"

Make sure the children have 'emptied out' their feelings before moving onto the next stage.

Gather information

Ask the children open ended questions that will help you find out exactly what the problem is. Questions like, "What's happening?" or 'What's the problem?' are useful at this stage. Avoid 'questions that start with 'why' as these can be received as confrontational and don't necessarily provide the information that will help resolve the conflict.

Repeat children's words back to them to help them clarify their thoughts.

Check out that you have understood what they have said to you.

Remember you are there to help them recognise and resolve conflict, not make judgements. Your role is 'neutral facilitator'.

Restate the problem

Say back to the children what you understand the problem to be.

Use words like, 'so, the problem is.....'

Use the details the child has described.

Ask for solutions and choose one together

Say something like, 'what do you think we can do to resolve this problem?

Listen and give time for the children to think of their own ideas. Respect and explore all the ideas even if some of them seem unrealistic. If children say they can 'share' explore this idea further so that everyone is clear how the sharing will happen.

Be prepared to give follow up support

When children have reached a solution check that they are both ok with it.

Summarise what is going to happen by saying something like, 'so, you're going toand you're going to....' Then acknowledge that the children have solved their problem by saying words to the effect of, 'you did it! You

solved the problem.' This helps to build children's confidence in their capabilities as problem solvers.

Emotion Coaching

This links in to the second stage of Conflict Resolution – Acknowledging Feelings, and can be where Conflict Resolution needs to take a different direction when children find it difficult to 'let go' of their feelings. It is also used when children are upset or angry but there has been no conflict eg. when children miss a parent/carer. Here practitioners explore feelings and support children to manage and understand them. Here are the steps –

Empathy - Try to feel and understand how your child is feeling..

- Adults *gently* mirror the child's emotion in their facial expression.
- Adults make utterances eg ooh, aah, oh dear etc in order that voice tone can communicate empathy and validation.

Adults name emotions - In a calm, slow and low voice use script such as 'Something is not right/has gone wrong' and 'I'm here to help'.

- Once adults are confident that they have identified what the child is feeling, they start to name and validate the feeling.
- Try to avoid using 'you' as much as possible as this can sound accusatory eg. 'I think you are feeling cross.....very cross...and sad...

Adults validate emotions - Tell your child that it is ok to feel what they are feeling eg. 'It's ok to feel cross. I'd feel cross if I really wanted chocolate and couldn't have any'. By doing this you are provided support that will help your child to regulate their emotions.

Limit Setting - Keep going with all the above steps until your child has 'let go' of their emotions and **calmed down**.

- Give a **reason** for their emotions, asking questions so that they only need to shake or nod their head eg. 'Did you want that chocolate? I couldn't get you any because....'

Co-regulate - Continue to talk with your child – get them to think about you as well and that you have felt like they do but have learnt that you can't always have what you want and it's ok to be disappointed! eg. 'I really understand why you were so angry. Do you remember when I got sad when I ran out of money at the shops and I couldn't get what I wanted, but I remembered we were going to see Nanny after so I felt happy again'.

Key interventions when children make 'social mistakes'.

Behaviour	Possible interventions
A child who appears angry	<p>See the Conflict/ Resolution steps and/or Emotion Coaching</p> <p>Try and establish what need is not being met, what has 'gone wrong' for the child.</p>
A child who hurts other children/ adults and other aggressive behaviour.	<p>Key person, where possible to be the initiator in exploring the feelings of the child.</p> <p>Key person to observe, note and share with the family/carer situations when the child is most likely to display this behaviour.</p> <p>Identify times when the child does not behave like this in order to inform understanding by using an ABCC diary (see below).</p> <p>Consider and discuss with colleagues what the child may be communicating through this behaviour. 'Frustrated, threatened, helpless, acting out.'</p> <p>When appropriate use of 'Stop' and/or visual cards.</p> <p>Do not get children to say they are 'sorry'. Saying sorry can be meaningless and will often be used by children to excuse behaviour without understanding or caring about the hurt they have caused. Instead use the language of empathy and information sharing eg. 'Oh their hand is really hurting. We need to check they are OK. They may need a cuddle. I need a cuddle when my hand hurts'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give all the attention to the child/ adult who has been hurt first before addressing the needs of the other child. • Give space for them to calm down before trying to resolve the situation. • Understand the child's level of emotional development and preferred communication. • Use SEAD approach to explore scenarios and feelings.
Using inappropriate language (swearing)	<p>Share the concern with the family/carer</p> <p>Say things like 'You need to use your kind words.'</p> <p>'When you say those words I feel hurt.'</p> <p>Initially, ignore the words and reframe them.</p> <p>Identify where the words are coming from, for example; repeated language that the child has heard, coming from a place of anger or frustration.</p> <p>Being clear about the language that we use in Nursery.</p>

<p>Controlling behaviour. A child who will dominate or take over the group or activity</p>	<p>Key person to observe, note and share with parents and carers when the child is most likely to display these behaviours. Contrast when the child is at ease and relaxed with others. Recognise that children who display these behaviours often feel powerless themselves and need to be provided with opportunities to have some control/responsibility in a positive way.</p>
<p>Not tidying up</p>	<p>Establish and reinforce tidying up routines. Make it fun – turn it into a game eg. race to clean the table! Give reasons for the need to tidy up, 'the hedgehog group need this table for the fruit'. Recognise that transitions maybe difficult and the child may need 'take up time'. Be specific. Give the child an achievable and specific tidying job. Give positive praise and revisit the centre's ethos for taking responsibility for our environment in review/circle time. Positive modelling, commenting on what you are doing. 'I'm tidying the cars away. Shall we tidy the cars away together?'</p>
<p>Not taking turns or sharing</p>	<p>Role modelling Explore through group times using puppets or role play how to share Conflict Resolution and Emotion Coaching. Ensure there are enough resources so that children can realistically share Model negotiation skills Visuals/timers Recognise child's developmental stage</p>
<p>A child who runs away</p>	<p>Most children who run away are looking for adult attention Remain calm and do not run after them Keep a watchful eye to make sure they are not in danger Be confident that they will return to you- welcome them back in a neutral way Discuss the safety implications as part of follow up Invite them to return and offer them distraction activity</p>

ABCC diary

We record using the above acronym to help us find out why children exhibit certain behaviours –

Antecedent – What happened before the behaviour? What was the trigger?

Behaviour – What was the behaviour?

Consequence – What happened next? eg. What intervention was used (Conflict resolution/Emotion Coaching etc.) and how did the child respond.

Communication – Why? For what purpose might the child have been behaving this way.

Further interventions for other behaviours

Shy behaviour. A child who is quiet, hides behind an adult or a more assertive peer.	Allow time for the child to watch an activity or routine first to be sure of what might happen and how it might feel. The child is also likely to watch for the range of emotions which might be displayed and how these are responded to by others, adults and child.
Withdrawn behaviour. A child who is not likely to join in socially or express emotions freely.	Do not pressure; trying to force a child to take part or do something is likely to make the child more withdrawn and possibly fearful. Use what you and the family knows about the child's interests and social links with the adults and children to encourage more frequent relaxed and joyful moments.

Inclusion Development Programme supporting children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. DCSF 2010

Impact of Covid

We are mindful that both children and adults have been deeply affected by the Covid pandemic. This has impacted on well-being, behaviour and socialising. Staff have been trained in 'Trauma Informed Practice' to help support children with anxiety, parental separation and getting back to routines including using many of the strategies above. Our curriculum includes activities such as mindfulness and yoga to help support children with these feelings and help build a firm foundation for learning.