



## **Behaviour Management Policy**

If this is not the place where tears are understood, where do I go to cry?

If this is not the place where my spirits can take wing, where do I go to fly?

If this is not a place where you accept me as I am, where can I go to be?

If this is not a place where I can try to learn to grow, where can I just be me?

William J Crocker

### **At Oliver Thomas:**

- **We value the uniqueness of each child**
- **We want each child to feel good about themselves**
  - **We celebrate difference**
  - **We don't like labels.**

### **The aim of our behaviour management policy is:**

To give a clear message and provide a common understanding about behaviour management to all members of the community who use the centre. It is normal for young children to have tantrums, to scream and shout and sometimes lash out, but a clear behaviour management policy put into action will help us to work together in helping children to manage their feelings and make sense of the world.

### **The principles underlying our approach to behaviour management are:**

- When children express their natural response to a situation they are not being deliberately 'bad.'
- Children's self-image and personal experiences can affect the way they behave and how they interpret the way others treat them.
- A positive approach to behaviour is more effective than a negative one.

- Children are unique and individual and this can impact on their responses and how they need to be supported.
- Children's behaviour is most closely influenced by the behaviours of significant people in their lives. It is crucial that practitioners and families work in partnership to support managing children's behaviour. A respectful, honest and open dialogue is crucial.
- Children need to learn in an environment where they can express themselves and where practitioners are willing to listen.
- Children should be involved in developing and have ownership of rules that they are expected to follow.
- Everyone has a right to feel safe and be treated fairly.
- Everyone has a responsibility to ensure the safety of others and treat them fairly.
- Behaviour management is best supported in an environment where respect for self, others and property and resources is valued.
- Respect is a two way process. In order to be given respect, one has to behave in a way that encourages this.
- In order for it to be effective, everyone who uses the setting must understand, acknowledge and follow the behaviour policy.
- This behaviour policy applies to everyone who uses the setting –children, parents, carers, practitioners, governors and visitors.

## **What we believe children need and what this looks like in practice.**

### **Children need to have opportunities to make choices to encourage them to learn about how to manage their own behaviour and how to take responsibility for other people and things.**

We help young children to make choices about their behaviour and understand the consequences of what they do. This can be very effective in helping children understand the acceptable limits and boundaries of their behaviour. It also gives children the opportunity to be in control.

For example, a child may be throwing sand at other children. Initially we would suggest alternatives such as throwing the sand up against a wall so that the child could see the effect without the possibility of hurting someone. If they continued, despite us explaining the dangers, we would say to the child '**Nicola, you can choose, stop throwing the sand or you will have to play somewhere else.**' If the child continued to throw the sand, we would say '**Nicola, you have chosen to leave the sand and play somewhere else.**' We would then insist that Nicola leave the sand and find something else to do. If she did choose to stop throwing the sand, we would acknowledge how well she was playing.

We give children fair choices and ones that they can easily carry out.

If a child is being destructive then they would be given a choice to stop as outlined above. If they choose not to then a practitioner would explain to them that they will have to 'make good' the mess they have made. For example, picking up the crayons they have thrown to the ground or mopping up the water they have purposely spilt. We help them in the task to make it manageable for them. The process would be low key, so as not to humiliate the child.

We are aware that children may want or need time on their own, by observing and talking to the child and discussing with other staff and parents/carers. There are set group times in the day where children are together to establish group identity and belonging, but the main school day is gives children choice and independence over where and with whom they play. We encourage children to be kind to each other but understand that at times they may want to play alone or with a specific friend or group. We support children in finding and maintaining friendship groups and finding solutions to perceived feelings of exclusion. **'Stella is your friend but she doesn't want to play with you at the moment, why don't we find someone else who might want to play with you'** is a response we often give to the child who declares **'she won't play with me, she's not my friend.'** However, if exclusion was felt to be persistent and targeted we would tackle it in line with our policy regarding bullying.

### **Children need to be empowered to handle their problems themselves and to experience each problem as a learning opportunity.**

Sometimes children will display inappropriate behaviour in order to get practitioner attention. If this is given then the child may continue to behave in this way .When we become aware of such behaviour we remain alert to it but as long as the safety of the child or that of others is not in danger then it may be appropriate not to react. Once the child stops the unwanted behaviour, we will acknowledge this.

There may be times when children engage in conflict and we do not intervene straight away. This is because we feel it important to see if the children involved can solve the conflict on their own, using some of the strategies they have learnt. This includes both a child being able to self regulate their behaviour by, for example, stopping themselves from hitting someone or by a child practising assertiveness techniques they have learnt such as saying **'stop it, I don't like it.'** As adults, both self regulation and assertiveness are important skills to have gained. Of course, if either child were being hurt, we would intervene.

## **Children need help and time to learn socialisation rules and to accept consequences, but consequences that leave their self esteem intact**

Just as children do not learn to walk or read overnight, neither do they learn to manage their behaviour overnight. Learning and change take time and comes in stages. Our role is to be consistent, patient and to celebrate small stages of success. A child who only lashes out 3 times on Tuesday when they lashed out 5 times on Monday has succeeded in reducing this behaviour!

There are times when children may need close practitioner supervision. This is done with a sound knowledge of the child and in specific situation. For example, if a child repeatedly hurt others, they may have to be closely supervised. This would mean that they would have to stay with a practitioner throughout a given time who would support them in focussing on specific activities. Sometimes we insist that a child spends some time alone to calm down and think about their actions. It is never for more than 5 minutes. We use a timer so children know there is a beginning and an end. There is no specific place for this to happen and we do not have a 'naughty chair'. It would normally involve standing or sitting with a practitioner, holding their hand and possibly talking through the incident so that the child can begin to understand their feelings and those of others, and consider alternative responses. Challenging behaviour is mostly dealt with where it happens. For example, if a child is consciously riding bikes into other children, we would firstly give them a choice to stop and if they continued, we would insist they stay with us, hold their hand and draw their attention to how sensibly other children were using the bikes.

If children engage in behaviour that is physically or emotionally hurtful to others or destructive to the environment, we will support them in making things better. This has to be done in a way that is meaningful and developmentally appropriate for the child. For example, if a child scratches another child we would ask them to think about how they could make the victim feel better. This may be by giving a hug, getting them a tissue to dry their tears, going with them to have first aid or saying sorry. Merely insisting a child says sorry is not always the best way for a child to learn about the consequences of their actions as it can result in the child thinking that as long as they say the word they can then carry on with the behaviour.

We will seek to find out causes of physical conflict by asking the children and/or speaking to colleagues. If it is unprovoked then attention will primarily be given to the victim. If it is a result of provocation or dispute, then attention is paid to getting both parties think about how things could have been negotiated peacefully.

When supporting children in managing the consequences of their actions, it is done in a quiet, calm and supportive manner. We will not humiliate the child, for example, by shouting at them, or talking loudly in earshot of the child and others about their behaviour. Instead we support them to project their feelings and explore their actions

by asking questions such as **'what would have happened if?'**, **'why do you think I stopped you from doing that?'** and **'what could you have done instead?'** This helps them to understand that there are different ways to behave and that there is always a 'next time' when they can improve.

## **Children need help and support from practitioners to understand and control their often strong and deep feelings**

It is important for children to let others know how they feel and that we acknowledge their right to be angry, sad etc. We help children to do this by introducing the words they need through discussion and stories, role play and by suggesting ways in which they can resolve conflict peacefully. **"Stop it, I don't like it"** is a very effective statement that tells others how they feel and **"yes, I can play in the home corner"** lets children know they have a choice in what they do at nursery rather than being told by other children.

We accept children's feelings by talking them through ...**"I can understand that you are angry because somebody has broken your model"** ...and help them by suggesting ways to deal with it...**"shall I help you to collect all the pieces and we'll mend it together?"** Anger is acceptable, hurting the bodies and feelings of others and being destructive is not. We offer activities such as banging clay and stomping to loud music as an alternative way to release anger. We also promote and carefully supervise rough and tumble play.

## **Children need to feel unconditionally valued and respected to develop a positive self esteem and sense of trust.**

We explain to children what they have done that has pleased us...**"I like it because..."** **"I am really pleased with the way you..."** **"I think that's brilliant, you have..."** We also seek the child's opinion without giving our own opinions by saying things like ... **"I see that you have painted some lines on your picture, what do you think about it?"** We praise through words, using signs, using facial and body language, sharing with parent/carers and recording things in a child's special book. Group times give the opportunity to praise and congratulate in front of other children, where appropriate. Praise and encouragement helps a child feel good about themselves and helps them to realise that attention is given for positive behaviour rather than inappropriate behaviour. We praise children often.

Some children find praise hard to cope with. They may feel embarrassed being enthusiastically praised in front of a large group for example. In such instances, praise would still be given but in a subtle and individual way, such as putting a thumb up. (A sign for 'good'). We also praise children's attempts *towards* positive behaviour,

are specific about what is being praised and do it straight away. For example, if we notice that a child raises their arm to hit someone in anger and then stops we would acknowledge their feelings and praise them for managing to stop themselves hitting out.

## **Children need clear and consistent boundaries so that they are not confused.**

In order to feel safe and secure, we recognise that there are certain behaviours that are not acceptable. These include bullying, racism, biting, hitting, spitting at, swearing and name calling. We do accept that such behaviours occur in society and we cannot 'promise' that children will never encounter them at the centre. Children at this age are still learning about how to deal with their emotions and social situations and may use such behaviours. However we all agree that no one should be allowed to hurt another person either physically or with words and we support children in discussing and learning to apply these boundaries. We are consistent about challenging unacceptable behaviours so that children are aware of clear boundaries. If necessary we ask for support if we feel we need it.

Sometimes there may be a time gap in dealing with challenging behaviour. If a child behaves inappropriately and then runs off, it will be counterproductive to chase them as this just gives them added attention. Instead we may subtly alert another colleague to apprehend them and then deal with the situation or to wait a few minutes until the child has given up the chase and then go to them and deal with it. Depending on the developmental stage and personality of the child, the way in which this is done and followed up may be different.

We have developed a simple code of conduct that we teach the children to help them be clear about behavioural expectations. We call it 'Helping Hands' and it says:

**We are kind ~ We listen to each other ~ We share and take turns ~  
We are helpful ~We are careful**

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## **What we believe practitioners should do and what this looks like in practice.**

### **We need to understand a child's behaviour, recognising that there may be a range or complexity of reasons underlying it.**

We can often see or predict when an incident is about to happen by observing or through knowledge of the child. The key person keeps in close communication with parents. If a child's behaviour is causing concern, we will observe them closely to see if certain situations trigger it. We discuss this with parents/carers to see if they share our concerns. We recognise that things happening at home or at school can affect children's behaviour such as the birth of a new baby, family arguments, sleepless nights or worry about moving to a new school so it is important to explore all possibilities. We may seek advice from other colleagues in the centre. If further understanding is needed we will discuss with parents the benefits of seeking the advice of relevant professionals such as the educational psychologist or behaviour support team and will follow this up if parents are in agreement.

The key person can provide play opportunities or discussion to help a child work through their feelings and make sense of their experiences. For example, a child may be building with blocks and another child tries to join in on the construction. The first child clearly wants to work independently and the children begin to argue. We would intervene and support the second child in starting a construction of their own. We may also suggest that when both children have finished, they work together on a joint model

We keep up to date with policy and new developments by reading and attending courses.

### **We need to use clear and positive verbal and body language to support children in managing their own behaviour.**

The words we use can have a strong affect on children. If a child has acted inappropriately, we talk about how the behaviour has upset us. We use 'I' messages to show how we feel about unwelcome behaviour... Instead of saying, "**Don't Push,**" we would say "**I feel worried when you push because someone may get hurt.**" We talk about behaviour we want to see rather than inappropriate actions... Instead of saying, "**don't run inside**", we ask children to use "**walking feet.**" We speak calmly but firmly when dealing with situations. We rarely shout as we believe this only teaches children to shout. We will use firm but appropriate language to express our own feelings about challenging behaviour. We tell the child that the behaviour

has made us feel upset or angry. In particularly challenging situations, for example if a practitioner has been bitten, it is appropriate to say to the child that we (the adult) are so upset that we need some time alone and ask a colleague to deal with the situation.

We are mindful of our body language as this can convey powerful messages. We try to get down to the child's level, encourage appropriate eye contact (whilst being aware of cultural differences) and keep a relaxed stance. Towering over a child can be threatening and controlling.

### **We need to listen to children and to hear what they say.**

We are sensitive to individual children's ways and ability to communicate and they may use means other than spoken language such as signing, facial expressions, communication cards and body language. We need to give children time to answer when spoken to or recognise their right not to respond at that time. We need to physically get down to the child's level and gain eye contact if the child is happy with this. It may be useful for us to repeat to the child what they have said to make sure that they have fully understood..."**so you want a turn on the swing and Nicola won't get off. Is that right?"**

### **We need to act as positive role models in relation to behaviour, acting in a professional manner at all times.**

Children are watching and copying us all the time. We act in a way that helps them to see appropriate ways to behave in a group. We are respectful towards others, treat property and living things with care and give help when needed. If children see us picking up coats or toys that have been left on the floor for example, they are more likely to do the same. When with children and families, we speak in a calm, clear way. Children need to know that adults can be wrong sometimes and we are not afraid to apologise.

The use of physical force or hitting to manage behaviour is both morally unacceptable and illegal. There are clear government guidelines on when minimal physical force may be necessary, such as if a child is seriously harming someone else, causing serious damage or putting themselves at risk. This is dealt with in our physical restraint guidelines.

### **We need to discuss and share concerns or issues that we or parents/carers may have, being fully aware of the need for confidentiality where appropriate.**

The way in which children and adults behave can be an emotive issue. We do not discuss the children's or their families' issues in front of children or other parents. We respect the sensitivity of families' private affairs and we only need to know relevant information that affects the way we work with a child.

It is not always easy helping a child to grow and develop. If parents/carers have any concerns or worries we hope they will share them with us. Similarly, if we have concerns from our observations within the nursery we will share them with parents. It is vital to involve parents as soon as any concerns arise, even if they are minor. The child's key person is normally the first staff member parents should approach and often small difficulties can be solved in this way. If concerns continue, members of the senior management team may be asked for advice. There may be times when it is felt that a child is best helped by using individual strategies over and above what is normally used in the nursery. This would be done by devising an '*individual behaviour plan*' which would be drawn up between parents, key person and the special educational needs coordinator. Such a plan is designed to support the child and is only drawn up with the parents/carers consent and with their constant involvement. We meet on a regular basis to share any concerns and strategies being used with individual children to ensure a consistent approach from all of us in the nursery. We remain aware of the need for confidentiality in these meetings.

### **We need to make the setting emotionally warm, inviting and welcoming.**

We recognise that if children feel a sense of belonging they will feel more emotionally secure and thus be better able to manage their feelings appropriately.

We recognise the importance of the beginning and ending of a session and try to greet and say goodbye to all children by name. We aim to help all children to separate from their carer with confidence and settle happily.

We work hard to keep the environment tidy, bright and attractive for the children and users of the centre. We select varied resources and visual images enabling all children to identify with things in the setting. We hope that this will encourage everybody to treat the environment with care and pride.

## **We need to have realistic expectations on what children can manage so that they can experience some success in what they do.**

We are aware of the complexities of child development and that all children develop at different rates. We are also aware of research that shows that gender differences can influence the way children behave. For example, we may expect that one child may be more than capable of sitting on the carpet to join in a 10 minute group activity but that another child would find it very difficult and it would not be a realistic expectation for them to do that. As adults, if we are expected to do something that is far too challenging for us, we may go into 'fight or flight' mode. This is the same for children. We have high but realistic expectations for all children. And, like all children, they will be different.

## **We need to communicate the policy to parents, carers, staff and users of the centre.**

Copies of this policy will be made available to all parents and carers upon request and kept in the parents policy file. All practitioners will have a copy and the policy will be discussed with new staff members. Visitors, supply staff, and other centre users will be able to access a copy to read from the office. A summary of how we support children in managing their behaviour is included in our brief guide that is given to students and volunteers.

## **We need to evaluate and review the behaviour management policy.**

The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis as set down in the centres development plan. Upon review, comments and suggestions will be invited from parents and carers, governors and staff. These will be discussed by those involved in policy review and possible changes made. Training needs will be identified. The revised policy will be presented at a governors meeting, disseminated to all interested parties and then put into place

## **Equalities Statement.**

In developing this policy and in monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of behaviour management, we have taken into account equalities issues as outlined in our equalities policy. Whilst adhering to the principles laid down in this document, we see each child as an individual. We are sensitive to the fact that cultural and social background, learning styles, life experiences, individual needs and media influences can affect behaviour. Responses to individual children's behaviour may, on the surface, appear slightly different because of this but the underlying principles and

consistency remain the same. We use both our professional judgment and consultation with parents/carers to identify specific strategies or behaviour plans.

**If our systems don't have a place where a child fits, there's something wrong with the system, not the child.'**

William G. Defoore. 'Anger.'

**Agreed by governors Summer 2012**

**To be reviewed by Governors Summer 2016**