

# Behaviour Management Policy



November 2023

Review November 2026

At Oliver Thomas:

- We value the uniqueness of each child
- We want each child to feel good about themselves
- We celebrate difference

Aims:

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

Summary:

- 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.
- Children need to be empowered to handle their problems themselves and to experience each problem as a learning opportunity.
- Children need help and time to learn socialisation rules and to accept consequences, but consequences that leave their self esteem intact
- Children need help and support from practitioners to understand and control their often strong and deep feelings
- Children need to feel unconditionally valued and respected to develop a positive self esteem and sense of trust.
- Children need clear and consistent boundaries so that they are not confused and feel safe.
- We need to understand a child's behaviour, recognising that there may be a range or complexity of reasons underlying it.
- We need to use clear and positive verbal and body language to support children in managing their own behaviour.
- We need to listen to children and to hear what they say.
- We need to act as positive role models in relation to behaviour, acting in a professional manner at all times.
- 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.
- We need to make the setting emotionally warm, inviting and welcoming.
- We need to have realistic expectations of what children can manage so that they can experience some success in what they do.

- We need to communicate the policy to parents, carers, staff and all users of the nursery.
- We need to evaluate and review the behaviour policy every three years.
- See also the Positive Handling policy.

#### Principles:

- 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 with families and carers 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 both physically and emotionally and to 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. We would explain explicitly how the sand could go in to another child's eye and hurt the child and damage their eye. If they continued, despite us explaining the dangers, we would say to the child **'Nicola, you can choose to stop throwing the sand or you can play somewhere else.'** If the child continued to throw the sand, we would say **'Nicola, you have chosen to leave the sand. Let's choose together where to play next.'** We give children specific alternatives. We would then insist that Nicola leave the sand and find something else to do supporting her to find something else. 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. We support them closely through this process to ensure they are successful.

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 sweeping up the sand they have thrown. 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 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. **'Bella is your friend but she doesn't want to play at the moment, why don't we find someone else to play with'** 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 this.

Our bullying protocols are as follows:

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously our first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; practitioners will make their own judgements about each specific case.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them physically.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as 'banter' or 'horseplay' it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

Oliver Thomas creates an ethos of good behaviour where children treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. Values of respect for staff and other children, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and children who set a good example to newcomers.

We involve parents to ensure that they are clear that we do not tolerate bullying and are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied. Parents feel confident that we will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way that protects the child.

*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 and offer positive praise.

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 either physically or mentally, 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 come 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 hurts 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 possibly holding their hand and 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. We would explain why this behaviour was unacceptable: it hurts other children and can make them upset and cry.

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. 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. In this scenario we would ask the parent to cut their child's nails so that the harm caused by the scratching was minimised.

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?'** If children are unable to answer, we would answer for them providing explanations and then solutions, modelling the thinking behind deciding which is the right way to behave and why. This helps them to understand that there are different ways to behave and that there is always a 'next time' when they can improve and make a different choice.

*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 encourage anger to be regulated and talked through. Anger is often another feeling in disguise: hurt, upset, embarrassment, humiliation, frustration, insecurity etc.

We carefully supervise rough and tumble play. We understand for some children the need for this and are skilled at making sure no-one gets hurt when rolling together and exploring this often 'cub-like' behaviour.

*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. Praise when specific, tells children the right way to behave and why, offering a positive way of setting boundaries.

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 and self-regulating.

*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 school. 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, mentally 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 from external, expert agencies 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.

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 and carers. 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, special educational needs, 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 our SENDCo, the educational psychologist or behaviour support team and will follow this up if parents agree.

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 effect 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. 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 get down to the child's level, encourage appropriate eye contact (whilst being aware of cultural differences and special educational needs) 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 Positive Handling Policy.

*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 all users of the nursery.*

Copies of this policy will be made available to all parents and carers upon request and is available on our website. All practitioners will have a copy and the policy will be discussed with new staff members, students, volunteers and supply staff as part of the induction process. Visitors, supply staff, and other centre users will be able to access a copy to read from the office.

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

The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. 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 considered 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.