

How Do We Support Children's Behaviour



We believe that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and where there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations of their behaviour.

Children need to learn to consider the views and feelings, needs and rights, of others and the impact their behaviour has on people, places and objects but at the same time know that their views will be listened to and valued.

Sometimes referred to as BRITISH VALUES, these are more simply defined as : Democracy, Rule of law, Individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance.

Learning to manage ones behaviour is a developmental task that requires support, encouragement, teaching and setting the correct example. Within all our activities we promote these values and support the children to develop an understanding of them. We do this by a whole setting approach and supporting the children to understand how they feel. That it is OK to feel this way, and learning the best way to deal with the emotion. In so doing children will be better placed to communicate their feelings, their needs and how best to self regulate and manage a situation. This is call EMOTIONAL COACHING.

Emotion Coached children and young people:

- *Achieve more academically in school*
- *Are more popular*
- *Have fewer behavioural problems*
- *Have fewer infectious illnesses*
- *Are more emotionally stable*
- *Are more resilient”*

(Gottman 1997)

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, acknowledgment 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.

Naughty Chair or Time Out

We recognise that some families may use “naughty chair/step” or “time out” strategies to deal with unwanted behaviour away from setting. However in setting we would try to support a child to deal with any given situation and to avoid unwanted behaviour. We do not feel that excluding a child from a situation that they find difficult to deal with helps them learn how to deal with a similar situation in the future. Instead we would deploy resources and staff to support that child. Should “time away” from an activity be considered appropriate the child would be supported by an adult throughout this period until they are ready to return.

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 and Managing Emotions

We take hurtful behaviour very seriously. Most children under the age of 5 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 5, hurtful behaviour is momentary, spontaneous and often without recognition of the feelings of the person whom they have hurt. The concept of "Bullying" is normally beyond a preschool child's level of understanding and is unlikely to be premeditated.

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. We offer 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. Then we can offer them an explanation and discuss the incident with them to their level of understanding.

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 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.

Bullying

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.

Bullying can occur in children 5 years old and over but is uncommon in children of preschool age.

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 practice and reflect on considerate behaviour;
- we do not label children who bully as 'bullies';
- 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.