



## **ACE Centre Nursery School**

### **Understanding & Supporting Behaviour Policy** **(including age-related anti-bullying)**

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the ACE Centre Nursery School governors

Held on : Autumn term 2022

Date to be reviewed: 31.12.23

Signed: Kate Barlow (Chair of Governors)

Lynn Jenkins (Headteacher)

“By building a child’s social and emotional capabilities we enable children to be happily engaged with others and with society, and to learn, to develop fully, to attain and to achieve. In essence, it delivers school ready, life ready, and child ready members of society” (The Allen Report)

**We aim to provide each child with a happy nursery school experience to support them to develop into resilient, self-aware, self-regulated, kind and independent children.**

We believe, and recent neuroscientific evidence demonstrates, that **warm, responsive relationships and interactions** build children's brains, and help them to learn to self-regulate their behaviour.

Children learn and behave best when provided with secure, nurturing environments and stimulating, engaging experiences which support the development of neural networks – they help to build brains. We believe that children flourish best when there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour. Children are more likely to behave positively when they feel secure, a sense of belonging and are supported to be highly involved, successful learners.

We believe that attachment relationships have a direct bearing on children's capacity to succeed in school. To be able to engage in learning a child needs to be able to take risks, to learn new things and face new challenges. A good learner needs to be able to manage frustration and anxiety, have good self-esteem, be willing to take risks and be able to ask for help when needed.

Teachers and other significant adults in a child's life can provide important attachments for children. The quality of practitioner-child relationships, emotional resilience and the ability to learn, to self-regulate and to develop social competence are inextricably linked.

We aim to:

- place the child at the centre of our thinking and practice
- create nurturing relationships to promote children's learning and behaviour and satisfy children's innate need to have a secure "sense of belonging"
- value children's contributions and efforts by giving specific praise so that they understand how they can positively contribute to their community
- manage transitions carefully and sensitively
- create additional infrastructures for children with emotional and behavioural needs

### Emotion Coaching

Research suggests that a relational rather than behavioural framework for supporting children's behaviour is more effective. A relational framework acknowledges that all behaviour is a form of communication and adopts a "no-blame" ethos

Emotion coaching is a relational framework which promotes universal well-being, learning and behaviour and can be especially helpful with children who have attachment difficulties or other vulnerabilities

Emotion Coaching is about helping children to become aware of their emotions and to manage their own feelings particularly during instances of "misbehaviour". It enables practitioners to create an ethos of positive learning behaviour and to have the confidence to de-escalate situations when behaviour is challenging.

Emotion Coaching focuses on building a child's self-regulation of their behaviour (internal regulation) rather than relying on external frameworks (sanctions and rewards) to regulate a child's behaviour

Emotion Coaching involves:

- Teaching children about the world of emotion "in the moment"
- Giving children strategies to deal with ups and downs
- Empathising with and accepting "negative" emotions as normal (but not the behaviour)
- Using moments of challenging behaviour as opportunities for teaching
- Setting boundaries within trusting and respectful relationships with children

#### Strategies for positive behaviour management :

- Treat all children with respect
- Get down to the child's level
- Acknowledge the child's feelings – give words to how they may be feeling. E.g. 'I can see you are really angry at the moment', or 'that would make me feel really sad too'.
- Praise positive behaviour. Be clear about what behaviour you are looking for.
- Find opportunities to praise something good, rather than focus on unwanted behaviour
- Ask 'perpetrator' to wait while you look after the 'victim' first when there has been unwanted behaviour.
- Be consistent – follow up adult requests.
- Give the child the opportunity to show you they can behave in an appropriate way. Offer choice to either show wanted behaviour or receive adult support / leave activity. 'I know you can show me...'
- Adults to model respectful interactions and behaviour towards people and things.
- Set out expectations and positive consequences for positive behaviour rather than reward unwanted behaviour with attention.

#### Dealing with particular situations

##### Disputes between children and helping children to resolve conflict.

In general, conflict is often viewed as something negative: people get hurt, things get damaged, and conflict disrupts the smooth running of the group. It is easy to feel that we must deal with it as quickly as possible and get on with more 'important' things. In practice this often means adults 'sorting things out'. Often, however, we find that we have not removed the feelings of conflict, nor have we helped the children find their own ways of resolving conflict peacefully and fairly.

Conflict can be disruptive, but it does not have to be negative. It can be a positive force for change and an opportunity to further children's understanding and to create harmony. There will be times when we see children arguing or fighting when we have to intervene immediately – when a child is in physical danger, or when her attempts to handle words or actions from other

children are not working. Other times we may be able to observe for a few moments what is happening: what the argument is about; what strategies the children are using. If the children cannot resolve the conflict themselves and we have to intervene this observation will give a fuller picture of what has happened and may suggest ways of approaching the problem.

However, we should always intervene before the children move on from an unresolved argument. If they are to reflect upon their actions, they must do so while the conflict is real and immediate to them.

- **Ask each child to say, or to show, what happened.** By doing this each child expresses his point of view and hears the other child's point of view (children will need to know, through past experience, or our stating it, that they will not get into trouble by telling us what they did).
- **Ask each child to tell you how they feel.**
- **Acknowledge what is important to each child.** We can do this by reflecting back some of what they said, eg. "You are angry because Fred took the spade you had first".
- **Gently but firmly reassert what is acceptable behaviour at Nursery School and say clearly if something is not OK.**
- **Invite suggestions from the children about what they could do now.**
- **Ask them to choose a solution which everybody will be happy with.** In the example above, Tom's solution was that Fred could have the spade when he had finished with it. Fred was dubious about this, but brightened when, a little later, Tom brought him the spade.
- **Remember to recognise and comment positively on any suggestions or actions from the children which help to resolve the situation.**

#### Responding to adult requests

Children are helped to understand that there are times when adults need them to cooperate and to follow instructions, learn routines and understand boundaries within the Nursery School setting. On these occasions, they will be supported to listen and respond positively to what the adult is asking them to do. The adult may assist the child in completing the task to ensure that they succeed in what they are being asked to do. The adult will ensure that they understand why the request has been made and that they are given specific praise for cooperating.

#### 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 understanding 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, such as anger or fear which sometimes overwhelm them.

We will support the children with managing these feelings, as they have not always yet developed the means to do this for themselves.

We are aware that the same problem may happen over and over before skills such as sharing and turn taking develops. Children will need repeated experiences with problem solving, supported by patient adults and clear boundaries. We help a child to understand the effect that their hurtful behaviour has had on another 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 are acceptable within limits. We do not consider this play to be '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.

Staff will tune in to the content of the play and may 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.

Staff will always intervene if a child is hurt by the actions of another, using the emotion coaching framework outlined above to help children to understand that it is not OK to hurt others, even if it is unintended, and to develop more appropriate responses to resolve a difficulty or conflict or to play together successfully.

### Steps in giving praise:

- Give your undivided attention
- Move close to the child and interact with them at their level
- Seek eye contact
- Touch the child gently on the arm
- Look pleased
- Be specific (describe what you like/admire)
- Use a warm, genuine tone of voice
- Seek the child's opinion
- Give pride to the child: "You deserve to feel proud of yourself"