



Ace Centre Nursery School

Behaviour Policy

Date to be reviewed: April 2026

Signed: Catherine Hayward (Chair of Governors) 

Lynn Jenkins (Headteacher)

Introduction

“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 neuronal 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

Part 1

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
- Building trusting and respectful relationships with children

Strategies for positive behaviour support

- Treat all children with respect
- Support and interact with children at their physical level e.g. sitting on the floor
- 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.
- 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 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.

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"

Further choices to support regulating behaviour.

Young children find it difficult to express themselves, will often find it difficult to share and will become upset. This is normal behaviour for most children at two years old or younger. This may mean a short spell away from other children and activities in the company of one adult. The child may need their key person to:

- Distract them or by encouraging them to take part in another activity.
- Give them an opportunity to spend time in a quieter space. This helps children to regulate their behaviour by being in a calming atmosphere which does not offer too many stimuli.

The child needs to know:

- That such behaviour will always be stopped
- The reasons why it is not acceptable to behave that way
- That the child is still wanted and valued
- That adult help will be available to help the child avoid such behaviour in the future
- That if the unacceptable behaviour arose from strong feelings of anger or frustration, there is nothing wrong with the feelings themselves, only the way in which they were expressed.

The use of rewards

We use praise to encourage children to try new challenges and to communicate those attitudes that we would like to see in their social and learning skills. We are conscious as a staff group that each time we praise something, we

reinforce the message: '*What we pay attention to is what we get more of*'. We give praise for the strategies that the child uses to approach a learning activity e.g. '*well done for trying your best to ...*'. This type of praise encourages children to try hard and build upon their learning skills. Staff are also aware of the need to reflect on unconscious bias, and this informs the way they manage behaviour. (We encourage staff to avoid gender stereotyping and discourage staff from saying 'Good Boy!' or 'Good Girl!')

We understand that it is important to have an overall view of the bigger picture with regards to behaviour in the school, and that identifying children who are consistently making excellent behaviour and choices, as well as those who are finding it difficult to self-regulate is important.

We believe precision feedback is effective when it is both deserved and informative. Attention is likely to be held through activities that are *intrinsically* motivating. *Extrinsic* rewards are used sparingly to encourage a learner to stay on task, as we recognise such rewards typically have limited impact once withdrawn.

Developing emotional literacy

We use a range of strategies to support children in understanding their boundaries, how to manage their feelings and how to put things right when they have gone wrong. This includes forced alternatives. We use a range of de-escalation strategies such as distraction to diffuse conflict.

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 their 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.

Adult should support by:

- *Asking each child to say, or to show, what happened.* By doing this each child expresses their 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).
- *Asking each child to tell you how they feel.*
- *Acknowledging 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 reasserting what is acceptable behaviour at Nursery School and say clearly if something is not OK.*
- *Inviting suggestions from the children about what they could do now.*
- *Asking 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. Adults can suggest that an apology may help but should not insist on an apology being made from the child as this can cause resentment, and a reluctant apology can raise a secondary issue.
- *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 previously 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.

Part 2

School responsibilities

All staff are responsible for the modelling of good behaviour through managing their own emotional wellbeing, promoting and establishing positive relationships and dealing with incidents around school in a way that is fair to all pupils regardless of age, ability, gender, race or faith.

The Headteacher is responsible for the overall management of behaviour, the monitoring of this policy and guidance, for the consistent application of the procedures, ensuring that staff understand and carry out their responsibilities and for providing appropriate staff training.

The Headteacher will also be involved in the management of serious incidents with children and parents. The Headteacher reports headline data for behaviour and exclusions to the Governing Body in line with the annual reporting schedule. Governors will review the behaviour data in line with the annual reporting schedule.

The governors are responsible for reviewing the behaviour principles, agreeing the policy and monitoring any significant behaviour concerns/trends including suspensions and exclusions.

All members of staff are responsible for supporting, managing, and monitoring the behaviour of all children in their key groups and for following the agreed procedures in all areas of school and off site. They are also responsible for communicating with parents/ carers regarding both positive and negative behaviours, creating STARR charts (see Appendix 1) and recording incidents on communication logs or the physical intervention spreadsheet as appropriate.

All members of staff are responsible for following the procedures and recording incidents using the agreed systems.

Procedures

In order to manage children's behaviour in an appropriate way we will:

1. attend relevant training to help understand and guide appropriate models of behaviour and be familiar with all aspects of the behaviour policy and related policies (physical intervention policy, staff code of conduct policy)
2. implement the setting's behaviour procedures including the stepped approach (See below)
3. have the necessary skills to support other staff with behaviour issues and to access expert advice, if necessary.

Stepped Approach

Step 1

We will ensure that EYFS and related guidance for 'behaviour management' is reviewed regularly and incorporated into relevant policy and procedures. All staff will receive training and support to address issues relating to behaviour including applying initial and focused intervention approaches (see below) and modelling strategies for self regulation.

Step 2

We address unwanted behaviours using agreed and consistently applied initial intervention approaches. If the unwanted behaviour does not reoccur or cause concern, then normal monitoring will resume.

Behaviours that result in concern for the child and/or others will be discussed between the key person and SENCO/Headteacher. During the meeting, the key person will use their knowledge and assessments of the child to share any known influencing factors (new baby, additional needs, illness etc.) to place the behaviour into context. Appropriate adjustments to practice will be agreed and, if successful, normal monitoring will resume.

If the behaviour continues to reoccur and remains a concern, then the key person and SENCO/Headteacher should liaise with parents to discuss possible reasons for the behaviour and to agree next steps. If relevant and appropriate, the views of the child relating to their behaviour should be sought and considered to help identify a cause. If a cause for the behaviour is not known or only occurs whilst in the school, then the SENCO/Headteacher will suggest using a focused intervention approach to identify a trigger for the behaviour.

If a trigger is identified, then the SENCO /Headteacher and key person will meet with the parents to plan support for the child through developing focused interventions in an action plan. If relevant, recommended actions for dealing with the behaviour at home should be agreed with the parent/s and incorporated into the plan. Other members of the staff team should be informed of the agreed actions in the action plan and help implement the actions. The plan should be monitored and reviewed regularly by the key person and SENCO/Headteacher until improvement is noticed.

All incidents and intervention relating to unwanted and challenging behaviour by children should be clearly and appropriately logged (see below section on recording and monitoring).

Step 3

If, despite applying the initial intervention and focused intervention approaches, the behaviour continues to occur and/or is of significant concern, then the key person and SENCO/Headteacher will invite the parents to a meeting to discuss external referral and next steps for supporting the child in the school.

Possible outcomes may be to commence the Early Help process and seek specialist help for the child – this support may address either developmental or welfare needs. If necessary, it may also be agreed that the child should be

referred for an Education, Health and Care assessment. If the child's behaviour is part of a range of welfare concerns that also include a concern that the child may be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm staff should refer to the DSL and follow the Safeguarding and Children and Child Procedures.

Any advice provided by external agencies should be incorporated into the child's action plan and the lead person should make sure regular multi-disciplinary meetings are held to review the child's progress.

Managing unacceptable behaviour

All behaviour is a form of communication. We feel it is important to remember that a child who has "lost control" (disruption, throwing, swearing etc.) is demonstrating that they are not ok. They may be scared, hurt, confused, angry, anxious etc. It is important to confirm their feelings and let them know that it is our job to help. As already detailed, this is to be achieved through positive interactions between child and adult.

Sharing concerns with parents

When there are ongoing concerns about a child's behaviour, we share these at a team meeting. Part of that discussion is how to work in partnership with the parents and share information and discuss strategies that will support the child.

If a child has been marked at nursery, this will be shared with the parent through the accident form.

If the injury was caused intentionally, the child's key person will have a conversation with the parent of the injured child and inform them objectively and in confidence about the incident. They will reassure the parents that the incident was fully dealt with at nursery. Where possible the child who caused the injury will not be named to protect confidentiality.

Staff development and support

During staff meetings and briefings staff can discuss behaviour strategies and make contributions to behaviour risk assessments/positive handling plans, if required. Known risks are highlighted to ensure that staff use a uniform approach. Positive behaviour plans are shared with supply staff as part of induction.

Anti-bullying

Children have the right to play in a safe and supportive environment. It is the intention of Ace Centre Nursery School to help the child and the parents/carers to develop a good understanding of what is developmentally appropriate in a situation. This is to prevent any action being hurtful, repetitive, or becoming a power imbalance which could escalate. The behaviour policy is written to help us all to live in an anti-bullying community.

Children will not be called 'bullies' at Ace Centre Nursery School as we believe this is an unhelpful label and says that bullying is something you are rather than a behaviour choice you can change. The behaviour will be referred to as the action/or actions taken and related to the effect it has on the other child. It is important that children are not told to fight back as this will make matters worse. We will work with parents to ensure they understand our approach to relationships in nursery.

Response to extreme incidents/ suspensions

At Ace Centre Nursery School we believe that all children have the right to early years' education and as such a reduced offer will only be considered as a last resort or when the safety of the other children and adults in the school is threatened. When serious incidents occur or persistent disruptive behaviour is evident, time away from the nursery room to reset may be necessary.

Extreme physical behaviour and aggression or persistent disruptive and challenging behaviour may very occasionally lead to external pupil suspension. Only the headteacher has the power to suspend a child from school for one or more fixed periods, for up to 45 days in any one school year. The headteacher may also exclude a pupil permanently. It is also possible for the headteacher to convert a fixed-term suspension into a permanent exclusion if the circumstances are extreme and warrant this. This will be done in accordance with OCC regulations and guidance.

Equality

The school expects all members of the school community to adhere to this policy consistently, fairly and without prejudice and with regard to the Equality Act 2010.

We may make reasonable adjustments for pupils. These will be recorded on an individual SEN positive handling plan outlining the provision needed for a particular individual. This may include the development of behaviour support strategies with the advice of external agencies e.g. Educational Psychologist, behaviour consultant.

- If appropriate, we may put in place a reduced offer in line with the county guidelines for pupils missing out (<http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/pupils-missing-out>).
- We may carry out a risk assessment based on prior behaviours where appropriate.

Physical Intervention

Physical intervention or the use of 'reasonable force' is only ever used to prevent a pupil injuring themselves or others or damaging property or in order to maintain calm and order. Staff are trained in de-escalation strategies to avoid the use of physical restraint or intervention. If physical intervention is used, it is recorded on the physical intervention reporting sheet and a copy is signed and given to parents (see Physical Intervention Policy).

Positive Handling

The school follows the DfE 'Use of reasonable force in schools' guidelines.

- Was it necessary?
- Was it reasonable?
- Was it proportionate?
- Was it in the child's best interest?

Reasonable force might be used during incidents where a child will:

- Harm themselves
- Harm others
- Damage property

Recording and Monitoring

Key persons are responsible for recording any incidents of unwanted behaviours on the record STARR charts. They will work with parents to develop a positive behaviour support plan where necessary, recording the preventative strategies and positive behaviours we would like to see. The STARR chart is used to unpick what the behaviours are telling us.

We log behaviour concerns on CPOMs when we work with outside agencies on supporting a child's behaviour.

Physical interventions are recorded on a physical intervention reporting form and uploaded to CPOMs.

Records are monitored by the SENCO/Headteacher to ensure consistency in recording and to see if any patterns of unwanted behaviour are occurring.

Respectful relationships and names

To support the development of respectful relationships at Ace Centre Nursery School, staff will use the name chosen by parents/carers for each child.

The reasons for this are:

- To help children develop their identity.
- To avoid confusion for the child and family
- To show respect
- To keep children safe

Children who are young need to know and expect people to call them by their own name. The youngest of children are still learning to respond to their own name. Using the child's given name will help children to identify with their name and to give them time to develop their own character and identify which is unique to them. It is a right of a child to be known by their given name.

We avoid giving or using nicknames. If a parent adds a shortened form of their child's name to the registration details or lets us know that they would like us to call their child by a shortened version of their name, then we can use that name to refer to the child.

Nicknames are to be avoided because they can cause confusion for the child. Research has shown that nicknames

can come to stand for how we see ourselves. Some nicknames can reduce children's confidence and self-esteem and occasionally be devastating to their development. They also can reflect how others see the person. Nicknames can become very powerful within a small group and can separate children from the group.

We avoid using terms of endearment. Terms of endearment can be seen to single out a group of children or individuals, so therefore may be seen as discriminatory. Children are very aware if some are called by a term of endearment and others are not. This could cause feelings of inequality amongst the children and/or be seen as favouritism by children, staff, or parents. Children need to know we give them equal attention by listening to them, spending time with them in purposeful play and experiences which encourage learning and development in their chosen interests. At no time should staff use terms such as 'I love you'. This is endorsed by the Oxfordshire County Council Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Appendix 1: STARR Observation Record (please see below)

STARR (Setting Trigger Action Response Record) Observation Record

How to use the information gathered from the STARR Observations Record:

When - Day and Time

Does the unwanted behaviour happen at the same time each day? (Could the child/young person be hungry, thirsty, tired, bored?)

Does the unwanted behaviour happen on the same day each week?

Where did it happen?

Does the unwanted behaviour happen more often during structured activities, unstructured/free play or tidy-up time? Does it happen more indoors or outside?

Is it at noisy times or quiet times?

What provoked it; What happened before?

Is there an obvious trigger, or pattern emerging to show what made the child/young person behave in this way? Is there a problem in sharing, change of activities, or understanding boundaries?

What did the child/young person do?

Is it always the same unwanted behaviour? (e.g. Hitting, pushing, biting, arguing)

What did you do?

How did staff respond?

How did you support the child/young person?

Did you support the child/young person away from the situation?

Did you distract the child/young person?

Did you ignore the child/young person?

Did you remove toys/equipment that caused the problem?

Review and Reflection

Has a pattern emerged?

Select one behaviour to work on first - one that is easy to change or one that is causing most disruption and put in an intervention for that individual child/young person, e.g. a Social Story to be read daily and shared with parents/carers, providing increased sensory/movement breaks, or changing their position in class.

Can the information be used to inform the EHCP outcome for SEMH?

Does the information need to be used in a referral to external agencies?

Behaviour Policy April 2025 APPROVED

Final Audit Report

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