

WINGATE COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

BEHAVIOUR POLICY AND GUIDELINES

wingate
community
nursery
and outdoor
nature school

Introduction

Children's "behaviour" includes everything they do - their approach to work and play; the ways they relate to other people; their responses to all the experiences they encounter at school, at home and in the wider community.

Young children have to learn about appropriate behaviour in the same way as they learn other things in their lives, and as adult carers and educators it is important that we are clear about the kinds of behaviour we want our children to learn. In behaviour, as in all other areas of learning, the children's own parents are the key source of information and insight about their children, and the key to their children's development in this area in particular.

Aims for our Children

- To have the motivation which will enable them to reach their full potential within a safe, secure and caring environment.
- To treat themselves and other people, both children and adults, with respect.
- To be able to give and receive friendship and affection.
- To be able to express their feelings in ways which are acceptable to others.
- To contribute positively to the groups of people with whom they live - their family, the Nursery and the wider community.

For many of our children, Nursery is the first step into the wider world beyond home. This unfamiliar situation offers many new challenges to children's behaviour skills. There may be conflicts for children between behaviour which is expected or accepted at home and that which is expected or accepted at Nursery.

The safe and stable environment of the Nursery, with adults to guide and monitor their behaviour, offers children a framework within which to build for themselves patterns of group behaviour which will serve them all well in the future, in school, at home and beyond.

We work in partnership with children's parents. Parents are regularly informed about their children's behaviour by their key person. We work with parents to address recurring inconsiderate behaviour, using our observation records to help us to understand the cause and to decide jointly how to respond appropriately.

The Positive Approach

We are committed to a positive approach to behaviour and the prevention or avoidance of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour. Desirable behaviour which we aim to encourage among the children includes;

- Respecting themselves and other people.
- Helping to care for the Nursery environment and property, indoors and outdoors, including all living things.
- Accepting the authority of the adults in Nursery, and of their parents.
- Observing the rules of the Nursery, especially those relating to safety.
- Being willing to share and take turns.
- Showing kindness to others, especially younger, less able, or smaller children.

- Participating fully in play and learning activities.

The adults as role models

The adults have a critical role to play, as role models for the kind of behaviour we want to encourage among the children. Adults demonstrate, by their behaviour towards each other, how people within the Nursery are expected to interact. If adults are generous and thoughtful, support and help each other, they create a model for children to copy. By the way they handle equipment and care for the Nursery, adults demonstrate how they value it. In a group where everyone picks up books and returns equipment to the right place, and leaves activities tidy, ready for someone else, attitudes of care and respect are encouraged. In an environment in which kindness, politeness and sharing are the norm, children can be supported in developing the skills and attitudes which will help them behave in ways which are acceptable to other people and satisfying to themselves.

The skills children need

The supportive Nursery environment offers children the opportunities to practise:

Taking Turns

The task of waiting for "a turn", or for an adult's attention, is geared to each child's maturity. A very young or immature child may need one-to-one adult company while waiting for a turn. Games with just 2 players, then 4, then 6, help children to gradually be able to wait longer for a turn, at first in a very small group, before moving on to a bigger group. Sand timers make the passage of time visible and make waiting easier for young children to understand.

Sharing

Children who are used to owning all their toys at home can find it hard to understand that resources at Nursery are to be shared and may not always be there just for them.

Equipment and games which are more fun with 2 or more children, e.g. see-saw, picture lotto, domestic play, help children to appreciate the advantages as well as disadvantages of sharing.

Politeness

Some children already use words such as "please", "thank-you" and "excuse me", before they arrive at Nursery, but others need guidance and the example of adults to learn to use these phrases routinely and regularly as an expression of politeness and concern for other people. Children may need to learn to share food e.g. to pass pieces of apple around and not to take more than their share, but this may need an adult to help develop such social skills.

Making Choices

Children are supported in making choices and in living with the consequences of those choices. They are encouraged to talk through what they plan to do and how their plans have worked out.

Becoming aware of the importance of cause and effect in our behaviour can help children to understand the ways in which their own behaviour will influence the actions and attitudes of people around them. Therefore, opportunities to choose and express intentions are very important to children - they feel in control and responsible for themselves.

The Routine of the Session

Knowing what will happen within the Nursery and their own group helps to give children a feeling of ownership of their group. It creates a stable and familiar environment in which they

feel secure and recognise what is expected of them. It also helps them to develop a feeling of commitment to the well-being of the group and to be aware of their own role in this.

Handling Conflict

Children can learn techniques for handling conflicts. They need help to recognise the source of the conflict initially. It is important for adults not to make value judgements about the situation, but to help both sides to see the situation from someone else's viewpoint. They may need help to recognise that there is nothing wrong with what either of them wants to do, but they have different ideas.

Once they have been helped to see the nature of the problem, children will often be willing to become involved in looking for a solution. If they cannot suggest a way out themselves, the adult may suggest alternatives and help them to make a decision, then gradually withdraw.

If one child in the conflict has been hurt or upset, the adult will need to help the perpetrator to make amends - saying "sorry" is sometimes not possible and in any case meaningless, but a hug or a smile can work wonders for improved relationships. A solution to a problem which children can reach together will be much easier for them to accept than one imposed from outside by an adult. It also provides a useful message that conflicts can be resolved without quarrels and fights if they are tackled together.

Strategies with children who engage in inconsiderate behaviour

- 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, acknowledgement of feelings, explanation as to what behaviour was not acceptable and supporting children to gain control of their feelings so that they can learn a more appropriate response.
- When children behave in inconsiderate ways, we help them to understand the outcomes of their action and support them in learning how to cope more appropriately.
- We ensure that there are enough resources and sufficient activities available so that children are meaningfully occupied without the need for unnecessary conflict over sharing and waiting for turns. We offer opportunities for activities where children learn to take turns and share.
- We acknowledge considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share and reinforce, acknowledge and celebrate it.
- We support each child in developing self-esteem, confidence and feelings of competence.
- We support each child in developing a sense of belonging in our group, so that they feel valued and welcome. Staff role model respectful interactions with children, families and visitors.

- We avoid creating situations in which children receive adult attention only in return for inconsiderate behaviour and use positive behaviour as an example, acknowledging desired behaviour.
- When children behave in inconsiderate ways, we help them to understand the outcomes of their action and support them in learning how to cope more appropriately.
- We **never** use physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking. Children are **never** threatened with these.
- We **do not** use techniques intended to single out and humiliate individual children.
- We use physical restraint, such as holding, only to prevent physical injury to children or adults and/or serious damage to property. Details of such an event (what happened, what action was taken and by whom, and the names of witnesses) are brought to the attention of the Head Teacher and are recorded. The child's parent is informed on the same day.
- In cases of serious misbehaviour, such as racial or other abuse, we make clear immediately the unacceptability of the behaviour and attitudes, by means of explanations rather than personal blame.
- We do not raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's inconsiderate behaviour.

Children's co-operation vs. independence – a balancing act

If children are exuberant, active, full of fun, seeking new challenges and excitement everywhere, their energies need channelling into demanding challenges, both physical and intellectual. Some adults who are not very confident of their own authority feel challenged and uneasy when faced with children who are reluctant always to conform to their requests, but a balance must be achieved. Whilst the behaviour of children cannot be allowed to spoil the pleasure and learning of others, total unquestioned obedience is not always a good thing. We want our children to grow up with the judgement and independence to consider requests and commands and sometimes to say "no", as there may be times in their lives when they need to resist invitations and inappropriate approaches from peers or adults, and have the confidence to refuse.

Sometimes it is appropriate to discuss rules and behaviour with all the children together and invite their comments so that they feel a sense of responsibility for the whole group.

Behaviours which cause concern

Some kinds of behaviour may indicate that the child has a problem, in which case plenty of clear, accurate information through objective observations is needed to make considered judgements about the reasons for the behaviour.

Several kinds of behaviour may give adults cause for concern:

- Age inappropriate behaviour e.g. tantrums, biting, sexual awareness.
- Disruption or damage to other children's activities caused repeatedly and deliberately.

- Deliberate and considered damage to property, as opposed to accidental damage as a result of excitement, carelessness, clumsiness or inquisitiveness.
- Physical or verbal abuse - whilst the immediate priority must be given to supporting and comforting the victim, the child who habitually displays this form of behaviour will give rise to great concern.
- Quietness is sometimes overlooked as a problem, but a child who is too quiet and withdrawn or passive needs to be given extra attention.
- Attention seeking - children who constantly seek attention are generally not getting enough of it for some reason, but adults need to find ways of giving it in response to desirable behaviour, rather than rewarding behaviour that is clearly just for attention.
- "Aggressive" play is often not actually aggressive, but acting out violent scenes, maybe involving weapons, which children have seen on television, and which is about aggression. The children may even be co-operating together in recreating a shared experience, allocating roles and agreeing the action.

Working with parents

If some aspect of a child's behaviour is of serious concern to the staff, then the Headteacher will discuss it with the parents. When parent's insights are added to those of the staff, the combined picture of the child's behaviour both at home and at Nursery may lead to a joint parent/Nursery strategy to help the child. Such strategies must always be carried through and regular supportive progress reviews held with parents.

Additional help

Sometimes the combined efforts of staff and parents may not be sufficient to help a child to make the necessary changes. In this case, if the parents are agreed, outside help may be necessary. The Nursery has good relationships with all support services - health visitor, educational psychologist, One Point, who could be approached for help. Seeking outside help is not a failure, but a responsible approach by adults to ensure that support which is available in the community is used to benefit a child who needs it.

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.

Staff monitor this kind of play and put in interventions as appropriate.

- 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

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 that sometimes overwhelm them.
- We will help them manage these feelings as they have neither the biological means nor the cognitive means to do this for themselves.
- We understand that self-management of intense emotions, especially of anger, happens when the brain has developed neurological systems to manage the physiological processes that take place when triggers activate responses of anger or fear.
- Therefore we help this process by offering 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.
- We do not engage in punitive responses to a young child's rage as that will have the opposite effect.
- We recognise that young children require help in understanding the range of feelings they experience. We help children recognise their feelings by naming them and helping children to express them, making a connection verbally between the event and the feeling. "Sophie took your doll, didn't she, you were enjoying playing with it. You didn't like it when she took it did you? Did it make you feel angry? Is that why you hit her?" Older children will be able to verbalise their feelings better, talking through themselves, the feelings that motivated the behaviour.
- We help young children learn to empathise with others, understanding that they have feelings too and that their actions impact on others' feelings. "When you hit Sophie, it hurt her and she didn't like that, it made her cry".

- We are aware that the same problem may happen over and over before skills such as sharing and turn-taking develop. In order for both the biological maturation and cognitive development to take place, children will need repeated experiences with problem solving, supported by patient adults and clear boundaries.
- We support social skills through modelling behaviour, through activities, drama and stories. We build self-esteem and confidence in children, recognising their emotional needs through close and committed relationships with them.
- We help a child to understand the effect that their hurtful behaviour has had on another child; we do not force children to say sorry, but encourage this where it is clear that they are genuinely sorry and wish to show this to the person they have hurt. When hurtful behaviour becomes problematic, we work with parents to identify the cause and find a solution together.
Where this does not work, we use the Code of Practice to support the child and family, making the appropriate referrals to a Behaviour Support Team and other agencies, for example SALT, where necessary.

Bullying

We take bullying very seriously. 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 predetermined intent to cause distress in another.

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 ensure that children who bully receive positive feedback for considerate behaviours and are given opportunities to practice and reflect on considerate behaviours.
- We do not label children who bully, as 'bullies'.
- We recognise that children who bully may be experiencing bullying themselves, or be subject to abuse or other circumstances causing them to express their anger in negative ways towards others.
- 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 parents of the child who did the bullying and work out a plan for handling the child's behaviour.
- 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.

Conclusion

By a whole school approach to developing and maintaining appropriate behaviour patterns, we hope to create a stimulating learning atmosphere within school to which the children will respond positively. This will support children in responding to their everyday life situations outside of school with appropriate behaviour.

Nursery exists to help all children to develop to their full potential in all areas. This includes opportunities to build up social skills and to learn behaviour that will enable each child to go out into the wider community with confidence.

In Nursery, children are learning what they can do, and are encouraged to feel that this is their Nursery where they are individually valued and to which they each make their own special contribution. Within this secure and nurturing framework, both children and adults are free to grow and develop happily, with high self-esteem, confident, independent and emotionally strong.