

7.1 BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Policy Statement

We believe that children and adults flourish best in an ordered environment in which everyone knows what is expected of them and children are free to develop their play and learning without fear of being hurt or hindered by anyone else. Children thrive when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and when there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour. We aim to work towards a situation in which children can develop self-discipline and self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement.

Children need to learn to consider the views and feelings, needs and rights, of others and the impact that their behaviour has on people, places and objects. This is a developmental task that requires support, encouragement, teaching and setting the correct example. The principles that underpin how we achieve positive and considerate behaviour exist within the programme for promoting personal, social and emotional development.

Parents/guardians are requested to show patience and understanding where the behaviour of any young child is concerned and to support staff with strategies to reduce any hurtful behaviour within the setting.

We must consider the well-being and safety of everyone that attends our setting - child or adult - and steps are and will be taken to ensure this is the case. Each child's learning and development should be enjoyed and not hindered by another child's unsuitable behaviour.

Procedures

We have two named staff (JUNE SLATTER and CAROLYN COTTRELL) that have overall responsibility for our programme to support personal, social and emotional development, including issues concerning behaviour.

- We require the named staff to:
 - keep themselves up-to-date with legislation, research and thinking on promoting positive behaviour and on handling children's behaviour where it may require additional support;
 - access relevant sources of expertise on promoting positive behaviour within the programme for supporting personal, social and emotional development; and
 - check that all staff have relevant in-service and step-on training on promoting positive behaviour.
- Staff provide a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents/guardians and one another with friendliness, care and courtesy and will not allow any form of bullying either verbally or physically towards anyone.
- Staff are aware that some children's behavioural problems may arise from that child's special needs.
- We expect all members of our setting - children, parents/guardians, staff, volunteers and students - to keep to the policy guidelines and expect staff to try and be consistent in positive discipline.
- We work in partnership with children's parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are regularly informed about their children's behaviour by their key person. We work with parents/guardians to address recurring inconsiderate behaviour, using our observation records to help us to understand the cause and to decide jointly how to respond appropriately. On some occasions a parent may be asked to stay at Playgroup with the child to help with their behaviour management or they may be asked to take their child out of the setting for a short time to allow a 'cooling off' period for all involved. The parent will be

expected to explain to their child the reason for this and then to work with the staff to ensure improvement with behaviour is made.

- Where this does not work, we use the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice to support the child and family, making the appropriate referrals to the Early Years Advisors (EYA)/Behaviour Support Team where necessary.

Strategies to use 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 was not acceptable and supporting children to gain control of their feelings so that they can learn a more appropriate response.
- We ensure that there are enough popular toys and resources and sufficient activities available so that children are meaningfully occupied without the need for unnecessary conflict over sharing and waiting for turns, but inevitably sometimes this still occurs.
- We provide a courteous and friendly atmosphere to encourage mutual respect between adult and child.
- 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.
- We acknowledge considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share and adults continually praise the children for good behaviour, thoughtfulness, helpfulness and respect for others.
- We take positive steps to avoid creating situations in which children receive adult attention only in return for inconsiderate behaviour.
- We may change a child's sessions to try and avert triggers that may cause unwanted behaviour. The learning and development of all children that attend our setting must be considered and on occasions, if a child's behaviour worsens when they are with another child, staff may feel that it would be beneficial to both these children as well as the others in the setting if they were to attend different sessions to each other.
- 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. Inconsiderate behaviour could include: physically hurting others; name calling; continually damaging property on purpose; etc. If no improvement is made or the behaviour continues or worsens the parent may be asked to remove their child from the setting for a short suspension period.
- We never send children out of the room by themselves.
- We never use physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking and children are never threatened with these.
- We do not use techniques intended to single out and humiliate individual children.
- We use strategies devised from the Norfolk 'Steps' behaviour training such as 'open and closed mittens' (please see De-escalation Strategies and Positive Handling) to escort a child, or to prevent physical injury to themselves, other children or adults or to prevent damage to property.
 - Details of such an event (what happened, what action was taken and by whom and the names of witnesses) are recorded on an incident form and brought to the attention of the setting manager. The child's parent is informed on the same day, asked to sign and given a copy of the incident report. A copy is also kept for our records.
- 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 shout or raise our voices unless someone is in danger of hurting themselves or others, or are likely to cause serious damage to property. We do not shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's inconsiderate behaviour.
- If a child 'hurts' another child or adult 3 times during a session, the manager can decide if parents should be contacted to discuss a way forward.

Children under three years

- When children under three behave in inconsiderate ways we recognise that strategies for supporting them will need to be developmentally appropriate and differ from those for older children.

- We recognise that babies and very young children are unable to regulate their own emotions, such as fear, anger or distress and require sensitive adults to help them do this.
- Common inconsiderate or hurtful behaviours of young children include tantrums, biting or fighting. Staff are calm and patient, offering comfort to intense emotions, helping children to manage their feelings and talk about them to help resolve issues and promote understanding.
- If tantrums, biting or fighting are frequent, we try to find out the underlying cause. Sometimes a child has not settled in well and the behaviour may be the result of 'separation anxiety'.
- We focus on ensuring a child's attachment figure in the setting, their key person, is building a strong relationship to provide security to the 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 below.

- 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 usually momentary, spontaneous and often without emotional 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 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.
- Our way of responding to pre-verbal children is to calm them through holding and cuddling. Verbal children will also respond to cuddling to calm them down, but we offer them an explanation and discuss the incident with them to their level of understanding.
- 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. "Buddy took your car, didn't he and you were enjoying playing with it. You didn't like it when he took it, did you? Did it make you feel angry? Is that why you hit him?" 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 Buddy, it hurt him and he didn't like that and it made him cry."
- We help young children develop pro-social behaviour, such as resolving conflict over who has the toy. "I can see you are feeling better now and Buddy isn't crying any more. Let's see if we can be friends and find another car, so you can both play with one."
- 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/guardians 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.

Ongoing behavioural problems

- An Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and / or an Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP) may be introduced to help manage the behaviour;
- Parental consent must be gained first and the parent will be expected to support the setting SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) in dealing with the behaviour and following the IEP and / or IBP;
- If no improvement is made within an agreed period, then the Local Authority SENCO or Early Years Advisor may be called upon for further advice.

Bullying

- We take bullying very seriously. Bullying involves the persistent physical or verbal abuse of another child or children and will not be tolerated. 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.

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 practise and reflect on considerate behaviour;
- we do not label children who bully as 'bullies';
- we recognise that children who bully may be experiencing bullying or abuse themselves, or there may be other circumstances causing them to express their anger in negative ways;
- 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/guardians 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/guardians 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.

If a parent reports that their child is being bullied by another child:

- a Playgroup representative (the child's keyperson, the manager or setting chairperson) will speak to the parent to find out exactly what the problem is and identify how it can be resolved;
- if it is felt by the parent that the problem has not been resolved, the chairperson must be informed and an informal meeting arranged between the chairperson, manager, parent and alleged child victim to discuss the allegation and to establish whether or not there has been a misunderstanding. At this stage, at no point will the child or parent be made to think that they are not believed;
- if it is established that the allegation is correct, the parent and child victim will be assured that the matter will be dealt with and a further meeting arranged to discuss developments;
- all staff will then be made aware of the allegations and asked to pay particular attention to the children involved and deal with and record any incidents that arise; again, staff will then try and resolve any problem quickly by using the strategies above and the parent will be kept up to date with what is happening;
- in every situation it is the behaviour that is unwelcome and not the child.

Alleged bullying by an adult (including staff or committee members, other parents/guardians or visitors):

- this should be reported directly to the manager and chairperson and an informal meeting arranged to discuss the allegation. The 'victim' should be spoken to (if this is a child, parental permission must first be sought) and asked about any such incidents to establish whether or not there has been a misunderstanding. At no point during this stage will the victim be made to think that they are not believed;
- if the matter is not resolved at this meeting and it is established that the allegation is correct, the victim will be assured that the matter will be dealt with quickly and confidentially and that they will be kept up to date with the investigation;
- the manager and chairperson will speak to the adult concerned to establish whether or not a misunderstanding has taken place between the alleged adult and the victim and if so a meeting between both parties will be arranged;
- this should rectify any worries, misunderstandings or problems but, if another allegation is made against the same adult - either by the same person or another - the manager or chairperson will investigate the matter further by observing the 'bullying' adult and keeping notes;
- other adults within the setting will be unaware of this surveillance;
- if the manager or chairperson feel that they are unable to identify or deal with the allegation, or if there is a cause for concern, advice will be sought from the Early Years Advisor.

Abusive Children

- If after all strategies have been exhausted, a child continues to be abusive and:
 - staff feel that the child is putting the safety of other children and/or adults at risk; or
 - other children are being withdrawn from the setting; or
 - numerous parents/guardians make complaints about the child's behaviour;
 - then a suspension period (usually 1 week) will be put into action. The chairperson, manager or administrator will inform the parent of the decision and give them a copy of the complaints' procedure.

It will be made clear to both the parent and child that when the child returns to the setting further abuse will not be tolerated.

Assault on Adults

If a child assaults a member of staff, then this will be entered into the incident book and the parent informed. After 3 assaults on staff the child may be suspended for a set period (usually 1 week). It will be made clear to both the parent and child that when the child returns to the setting we will work together and may involve an Early Years Advisor to help manage their behaviour and that further assaults will not be tolerated.

This policy was adopted by

Feltwell Playgroup

On

27.02.2026

Date to be reviewed

(on or before) 27.02.2027

Signed on behalf of the provider

J.I.

Name of signatory

Jonathan Irving

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)

Committee Chairperson