

# Fairfield Playbox Pre-School

## **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **Statement of intent**

Playbox Preschool believes that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and where there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour. We have a policy of POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT – praising children whenever possible – encouraging considerate behaviour and quietly but firmly discouraging unacceptable behaviour.

### **Aim**

We aim to teach children to behave in socially acceptable ways and to understand the needs and rights of others.

### **Methods**

- The preschool Manager has overall responsibility for issues concerning behaviour.
- They are required to:
  - keep 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.
  - ensure all staff have relevant training on promoting positive behaviour. We encourage staff to attend courses run by Achieving for Children.
- We recognise that codes for interacting with other people vary between cultures and require staff to be aware of - and respect - those used by members of Playbox.
- We require all staff, volunteers and students to provide a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents and one another with friendliness, care and courtesy.
- We familiarise new staff and volunteers with the preschool's behaviour policy and its guidelines for behaviour.
- We expect all members of our preschool - children, parents, staff, volunteers and students - to keep to the guidelines, requiring these to be applied consistently.
- We work in partnership with children's parents. Parents are regularly informed about their children's behaviour by the Manager or their Key Worker. 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.

## **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 was not acceptable and why, and supporting children to gain control of their feelings so that they can learn a more appropriate response. It might also include use of the "I'm ok, you're ok" approach from transactional analysis described in the appendix.
- We try to 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.
- We acknowledge and praise considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share.
- 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 try to avoid creating situations in which children receive adult attention only in return for inconsiderate behaviour.
- We never send children out of the room by themselves.
- 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 damage to property. Details of such an event are recorded in our Incident book and brought to the attention of the Manager or Key Worker who informs the child's parent 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 shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's inconsiderate behaviour but we try to communicate by our expression and tone of voice that we are not pleased with their behaviour.

## **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 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. Distraction is often used to help defuse difficult situations.
- Common inconsiderate or hurtful behaviours of young children include tantrums, biting, pushing or fighting. Staff should remain calm and patient and try to help children to manage their feelings and talk about them to help resolve issues and promote understanding.

### **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 try to develop strategies to contain play that are within acceptable behavioural boundaries to ensure children are not hurt.
- 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.

### **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 cognisance 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 is difficult for the two and three year old child. 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.

- 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 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 experienced. 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. 'Adam took your car, didn't he, and you were enjoying playing with it. You didn't like it when he took it, did you? It made you feel angry, didn't it, and you hit him'.
- 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 Adam, 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 Adam 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 the 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, in small and large groups. 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 encourage children to say or to show they are sorry, 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.
- Hurtful behaviour such as biting, pinching or hitting is noted down in our incident book. This allows us to see if a pattern of behaviour becomes established and what may trigger it.

## **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 to another therefore it is unlikely that a child of two or three is a bully.

However, we do find that occasionally one child does seem to pick on a particular child and this has to be watched and we intervene to stop a child from being harmed. We often find that the child who is 'bullying' seems to particularly like or admire the other child and is not able to 'make friends' in an appropriate way. We have to try to show the child how to be friendly without being over enthusiastic in their attention making behaviour. We also have

to try to explain the situation to the other child, who is often more able to make friends in an appropriate manner.

- The Manager or Key Worker discusses 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
- The Manager or Key Worker shares 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.

**This policy was last reviewed on 29.01.26**

**Signed on behalf of the Management Committee by Alan Clatworthy (Chair)**

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**Appendix**

Eric Berne initiated the principle within Transactional Analysis that we are all born 'OK' -- in other words good and worthy. Frank Ernst developed these into the OK matrix, (also known as the 'OK Corral' after the famous 1881 Tombstone shootout between the Earps and the Clantons). These are also known as 'life positions'.

		<i>You</i>	
		You're OK	You're not OK
<i>I</i>	I'm OK	Get on with others	Get rid of them
	I'm not OK	Get away from them	Get nowhere

**I'm not OK - You're OK**

When I think I'm not OK but you are OK, then I am putting myself in an inferior position with respect to you.

This position may come from being belittled as a child, perhaps from dominant parents or maybe careless teachers or bullying peers.

People in this position have a particularly low self-esteem and will put others before them. They may thus have a strong 'Please Others' driver.

**I'm OK - You're not OK**

People in this position feel themselves superior in some way to others, who are seen as inferior and not OK. As a result, they may be contemptuous and quick to anger. Their talk about others will be smug and supercilious, contrasting their own relative perfection with the limitation of others.

This position is a trap into which many managers, parents and others in authority fall, assuming that their given position makes them better and, by implication, others are not OK.

These people may also have a strong 'Be Perfect' driver, and their personal strivings makes others seem less perfect.

### **I'm OK - You're OK**

When I consider myself OK and also frame others as OK, then there is no position for me or you to be inferior or superior.

This is, in many ways, the ideal position. Here, the person is comfortable with other people and with themselves. They are confident, happy and get on with other people even when there are points of disagreement.

### **I'm not OK - You're not OK**

This is a relatively rare position, but perhaps occurs where people unsuccessfully try to project their bad objects onto others. As a result, they remain feeling bad whilst also perceive others as bad.

This position could also be a result of relationships with dominant others where the other people are viewed with a sense of betrayal and retribution. This may later get generalized from the bullies to all other people.

### **So what?**

Understand how you frame yourself and others as being OK and note how you respond to this. Then think about the other person and how they are framing it.

Note how some combinations work together, for example where one person has the position of 'I'm OK/You're not OK' and the other person has 'I'm not OK/You're OK'. In such matching positions the relationship may well be stable and both will gain some comfort of confirmation from this.