WINGATE COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

**POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR – OUR POSITIVE APPROACH**

**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 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.

Parents and staff together must be clear of the

**NURSERY'S LONG-TERM AIMS FOR OUR CHILDREN**

* to have the motivation which will enable them to reach their full potential in all areas of development.
* 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 Nursery also provides **support**. 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.

**THE ORGANISATION OF THE NURSERY ENVIRONMENT MEANS THAT;**

* children know what is expected of them.
* each child can enjoy his/her own freedom without threatening the freedom or enjoyment of other children.
* the familiar structure and routine creates a calm, purposeful atmosphere.
* sensitive and observant adults ensure that each child's needs are met.
* mutual courtesy and kindness make it easy for everyone, children and adults, to play and work together.
* children may develop their own self-control and self-discipline.

**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.

**STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE DESIRABLE BEHAVIOUR**

The most effective strategy for reinforcing desired behaviour is to **reward** it. The most successful reward is **adult attention, positive attention** - smiles, hugs, verbal approval and time.

- name the child

- "describe" what it is we are pleased about to the child.

- share it with someone else or with the group.

- tell parents about "good" things - kind, polite, helpful things as well as work.

- spend time with a child who is working well, quietly concentrating, co-operating and

 being helpful.

**Limit negative attention!!** Lots of children prefer negative attention to nothing, and this will reinforce the behaviour which triggers it and reward children for behaving in undesirable ways.

Describe to the child very clearly and simply the undesirable behaviour we do not like and will not accept, and simultaneously;

* describe clearly and simply what we **do** want to see and hear.
* make changes in behaviour in small steps, praising and encouraging even slightest progress in the right direction all the time. Anticipate potential problem situations and eliminate or reduce practical difficulties before they arise. By observing what triggers difficult behaviour we can avoid it happening in the first place. It may be as simple as one child sitting next to another particular child.

**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 on the slide. Board games with just 2 players, then 4, then 6, help children to gradually be able to wait longer for a turn, or passing the "music bag" around a very small, then 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, they 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 than conflicts can be resolved without quarrels and fights if they are tackled together.

**THE RULES OF THE GROUP**

There are only a few broad rules, so that the children are able to cope with them and to believe in them. It is vital that all adults are clear about the consistent and confident enforcement of the rules and that everyone gives clear messages in an agreed way.

The children must be confident that if a particular behaviour is unacceptable then it is never acceptable.

**Rules** are;

1. We must **always** care for other people, their feelings, their property and the Nursery and **never** deliberately hurt or damage people or things.

2. We must **always** be kind and polite to everyone - children and adults.

3. We must **always** take care when climbing outside or using large apparatus that we **never** push anyone or crash into anyone.

4. We must **never** throw sand, indoors or outdoors.

5. Children **should not** be in the garden without an adult.

**"Do as I do..."**

The adults have a critical role to play, not only in enforcing rules, but also in providing the 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.

**CHANGING BEHAVIOUR**

**1. Immaturity and inexperience** can make some "good" behaviour difficult to conform to.

* Children who do not yet have a clear grasp of number and volume find it hard to estimate and take their "fair" share of e.g. play dough, snack or dominoes.
* The language used to describe acceptable behaviour at Nursery may be different or unfamiliar in style, vocabulary, accent, tone of voice or even different language. A child used to hearing "no" when she behaves inappropriately, may be confused by a complicated explanation of "why" we don't do things in a certain way. A complex series of instructions is also bewildering to a child whose comprehension is at a very early stage.
* Very young or immature children **cannot** sit still and pay attention for 20 minutes or more during a story session. It is developmentally inappropriate and unproductive.
* Exploration and Investigation come naturally to young children and this is a way that they learn. It’s our responsibility to ensure that the organisation of the environment makes this possible.
* When they come to Nursery, children may find that activities that are not allowed at home, like playing with water, finger paint or clay are encouraged. At the same time other rules, like not hurting people or not standing on the furniture still do exist. It can be very confusing.

**2. Children's co-operation vs. independence**

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.

**3. 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.

**4. Supporting change**

In an atmosphere of support and encouragement, children can be helped to change their behaviour.

- It must be clear to the child who is behaving in an unacceptable way that it is the behaviour that is unwelcome, not the child.

- A child's achievements must be recognised and praised to boost self-esteem and self-confidence, before helping him to move onto the next stage and change.

- We must leave the door open for children to change and not label them, as this may create self-fulfilling assumptions.

- Children need to know that if things go wrong, an adult will always intervene - this forms part of the security of the group.

- Being positive and helpful and helping children to believe in themselves can bring out the best in them, e.g. positive "Try doing it this way" instead of a negative "Don't do that".

- If an activity is abused or deliberately spoilt e.g. water spilled or blocks scattered, children must put things right, with help. This is learning about cause and effect - if a mess is created, it has to be cleared up.

- If a child is very angry and upset, a short period away from the other children and activities, "time out" with an adult who can give space, calm and maybe a cuddle, will help the child to come to terms with the situation.

**5. 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, as experts in their own child's background and behaviour. 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.

**6. 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, school doctor and nurse, educational psychologist, social worker, who could be approached for help. We also have the benefit of the Family Centre, who can work individually with parents if required. 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.

**7. Restrictive Physical Intervention**

Very occasionally, where a child’s behaviour is extremely challenging and other strategies have not worked, the use of appropriate physical intervention could be required.

Situations where this may be deemed appropriate might be;

* If a child’s behaviour poses a significant danger to himself or others
* If someone has been deliberately hurt
* If other children’s learning is being repeatedly interrupted

The intervention might include;

* Leading away from the situation by the hand or by placing a flat hand in the small of the child’s back
* Holding a child’s hand for a period of time to calm down and reflect upon behaviour
* The physical removal of the child to a place of calm and safety. In this situation, colleagues must be informed and wherever possible one other staff member should accompany.
* In the most serious situations it may be necessary for a member of staff to hold the child on their lap. It is vital that another staff member remains alongside to witness this intervention.
* A record of any restrictive intervention must be kept and details shared with the Headteacher and parents/carers as soon as possible.
* Staff members must be supported via prompt supervision after such an event.

**CONCLUSION**

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.

Latest Review of Policy; September 2023

Next Review of Policy; September 2025