



ACHIEVING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Policy statement

Acorn to Oak 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.

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 our programme for promoting personal, social and emotional development.

Aim

Our Aim is to promote good behaviour appropriate to the child's stage of development. We do this by defining acceptable standards of behaviour and use visual aids such as a 'Room Rules' and we ensure that children are clearly informed of the expected behaviours and boundaries. We encourage consistency when approaching both positive and negative behaviour. We will endeavour to develop and encourage appropriate behaviour through positive strategies, encouragement and explanation.

Named Person

We have a named person who has overall responsibility of behaviour management within Acorn to Oak and will support personal, social and emotional development, including issues concerning behaviour. The named behaviour management lead within Acorn to Oak is **The Nursery Manager**.

It is a responsibility of the named person 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. They are also tasked with accessing relevant sources of information and expert views on promoting positive behaviour within our setting for the support of the child's personal, social and emotional development. The named person is also required to check that all staff have relevant training on promoting positive behaviour.

- 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 the setting.
- 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 setting's Achieving Positive Behaviour Policy and its guidelines for behaviour.
- We expect all members of our setting - children, parents, staff, volunteers and students - to keep to the guidelines, requiring these to be applied consistently.



ACHIEVING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

- Working together as a team and being consistent in order to encourage children to resolve everyday conflicts for themselves.
- 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.

Promoting Positive Behaviour

- We ensure that there are sufficient activities available so that children are meaningfully occupied.
- We acknowledge 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 avoid creating situations in which children receive adult attention only in return for inconsiderate behaviour.
- Giving praise throughout the day.
- Giving stars, stickers and certificates.

Problem Prevention Strategies

- We will provide enough space and a variety of materials and activities to keep children engaged and stimulated.
- We will ensure that there is an established, consistent and a balanced routine. This includes giving children advance notice if the routine is to change in any way.
- We endeavour to support children's choices and interests.
- We plan for transitions and communicate with children and parents/carers.
- Waiting times will be kept to a minimum and should be active where possible.
- We accept that there are behavioural differences between children.
- We respect, acknowledge and discuss children's ideas, feelings and concerns.
- We will set reasonable limits and expectations.
- We will stop destructive and aggressive behaviour.
- We use observations in our planning.

Resolving Conflicts Strategy



ACHIEVING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

- Staff will approach the situation calmly and stop any hurtful behaviour.
- The children's feelings will be acknowledged and the feelings named.
- Staff will then gather the information of what happened.
- The problem will be re-stated.
- The children will be asked for solutions to the problem and encouraged to choose one together.
- Staff will give follow up support and stay nearby.

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 to 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.
- When children behave in inconsiderate ways, we help them to understand the outcomes of their actions and support them in learning how to cope more appropriately.
- We never send children out of the room by themselves, nor do we use a 'naughty chair' or a 'time out' strategy that excludes children from the group.
- We use a 'Cooling off' area for children that require a quiet space to relax.
- We never use physical or corporal 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 as an absolute last resort 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 Manager/ Deputy Manager and are recorded on an incident form.
- The child's parent(s) is/are 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 shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's inconsiderate behaviour.

Children under three years

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



ACHIEVING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

- 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 will remain 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 - such as a change or upheaval at home, or a frequent change of carers. 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 an automatic link 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 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, e.g., blowing up and shooting, 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 thought to the feelings of the person 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.



ACHIEVING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

- 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 never use negative language to a young child's rage as this 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. 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.
- 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 and 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. 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 English is an additional language and are unable 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.*



ACHIEVING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

- 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 a Behaviour Support Team where necessary.

Strategies to Manage Anger

Although children need to know that anger is a natural, healthy emotion, they also need to learn that like other emotions such as love, sadness and joy, anger needs to be expressed appropriately.

- We will try to never jump to conclusions or make any assumptions on the situation.
- We will use the children's names.
- Staff will bend down to the child's level and use eye contact, but they will not stare.
- Staff will remain calm, if the adult is relaxed it is more likely that the child will start to relax.
- We will communicate concerns, empathise, listen actively and acknowledge feelings "You are angry that we have to leave now".
- We use "I" messages, "I can see that...."
- We will simplify language, be clear and concise in the message that we are giving.
- We will use open questions and helpful language "tell me about what happened / I wonder how / What happens when..."
- We will be alert to non-verbal cues such as tense muscles, quickened breath etc.
- We will use empathetic statements.
- The ideal end result should be a positive outcome, so we try to focus on the outcome rather than the problem, applying curiosity to help the child arrive to a solution.

Practitioner Responsibilities

- To treat all children fairly and respectfully.
- To recognise each child as unique and an individual.
- Create a positive environment with realistic expectations.
- Empathise the importance of an individual within a group.
- Encourage relationships based on kindness, respect and understanding of the needs of others.

We will never ...

- Staff will never use negative or critical language.
- Any form of corporal punishment is absolutely forbidden and children will never be threatened with it.
- Staff will not shout at a child or raise their voice to a level that a child might confuse with that of 'shouting'.



ACHIEVING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

- Staff should never make accusations or blame children.
- Make assumptions or pre-judge before the facts are known.
- Staff will not use 'intense' or negative body language.
- Avoid using the word "naughty" use alternative language such as "inconsiderate".

We will always ...

- Show appreciation of the efforts and contribution of all.
- Focus on the positive and not the negative.
- Model positive behaviour.
- Praise Positive Behaviour.
- Acknowledge feelings.
- Use the child's name.
- Always refer to the behaviour and not the child.
- Avoid saying "no", instead use phrases such as "that is dangerous" or "be careful".
- Act consistently when dealing with negative behaviour.
- Always approach a situation in a calm manner.
- Only use a firm tone where it is appropriate and required.
- Ensure that you are always at the same level as the children.
- Use gentle body language.

Source material used in creation of policy:

*Pre School Learning Alliance Policies and Procedures for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
RBK Early Years Course Material.*