

KINDERGARTEN BEHAVIOUR POLICY

SPRING 2017

This policy caters for the specific needs of the Kindergarten child's behaviour. It sits within the wider framework of the School Behaviour Policy as part of a whole school approach. Whilst the core principles of Steiner Kindergarten pedagogy form its basis, it promotes the Behaviour Policy's three fundamental concepts of Awareness, Honesty and Responsibility as its goal:

"The need for Imagination, a sense of Truth and a feeling of Responsibility - these three forces are the very nerve of education." Rudolf Steiner

This policy places the child at its heart. The child's sense of well-being is fundamental to their behaviour. A sense of belonging, feelings of warmth, safety, kindness and homeliness are the foundation for positive behaviour. Creating an environment that sets a warm tone and ambiance, which includes our manner of speaking and addressing the children out of warmth and kindness, is key. The more welcome, accepted, safe, listened to, valued the child feels, the more positive their behaviour and interactions will be.

It is therefore the Teacher's and adults' responsibility to respond to the children in a way consistent with this understanding. It is their responsibility to respond in a conscious way. The adult is to be conscious of how they speak, act, move as every gesture will have an effect on the child.

The child learns through imitation. This is a principle of Steiner kindergarten pedagogy: Seeing how adults act and behave will impact the child's own behaviour more powerfully than what we teach directly. Learning through imitation is rooted in the warmth and empathy of the Teacher as a 'loving authority figure'. It is out of a warm and empathic relationship that the child's will to follow the Teacher's example can take form. The Kindergarten child approaches their world through the physical senses and an identification with their surroundings. There is a strong desire to belong and a feeling of empathy for their environment to fulfil. Through the Teacher's conscious presence that warmly guides this process for the child, the child will feel a sense of belonging and connection, experience a world that is 'good' for them; it is a safe, warm and kind place to explore, to be curious, have fun and to be and express themselves, as kind and loving.

The Teacher, as a 'model worthy of imitation', serves as an exemplar in demonstrating their ability to show kindness and warmth, strengthening the connection with the child. From this deepening relationship the child will grow more resilient, feel more protected and secure in a way that is consistent with Attachment theory.

The Teacher's tone of voice does not convey harshness or imply criticism. Any form of judgement will stimulate the child's intellect prematurely, which is to be avoided at this age. The Teacher's voice is clear, directive and instructional in the expectations of behaviour towards the child. For example: "This is *not* what we do. This *is* what we do, like so..." The Teacher then models the expected behaviour, showing the child what is appropriate.

Punishment is never used. Punishment does not reform behaviour, but does undermine the child's self-esteem and self-expectations. The emphasis of this approach is always on inclusion, not separation.

Moreover, the use of sanctions implies judgement, whilst it is stressed that no judgements be made, because they stimulate the intellect of the child too early. In Kindergarten the child is not yet ready to receive an intellectualised view of their behaviour as being 'right' or 'wrong'. Instead, 'good habits' are instilled through repetition, rhythm and consistent adult modelling of expected behaviour.

The Teacher will always act to safeguard the children. If a child hurts another child, the Teacher will enable the child to understand that the hurt child is a friend and what being a friend means to each other. Friendship is made out of kindness, warmth, helpfulness and understanding for each other. In such a way, the Teacher will give the child a vivid picture of how friends behave towards one another in the warmth of the Kindergarten setting. It is explained simply that 'this is how it is, just so....'

For this reason, the adult need not seek any apologies. Creating a picture for the child of what friendship means, the Teacher allows the child to see for themselves that they have a friend in the other and awaken a recognition of their true friendship. From this recognition, the child may naturally wish to say sorry, having seen the truth of the situation. The child may then wonder how they can make up with the other. It is important that the child leads this inner process to be meaningful and sincere. It is the Teacher's task to prompt the child gently if needed without taking over the process.

MEDIATION AND FACILITATION: ADULT MODELLING USING DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

The Teacher may need to mediate or facilitate on behalf of the children. The adult may be able to supply the appropriate language to aid communication between them. A quarrel may have ensued where there was misunderstanding or lack of communication. The Teacher may suggest a new way of looking at the situation that leads to a solution. For example, "I think that this happened because X did not know that Y wanted it/ was using it"; or "I see that both of you want to play with it. I wonder what we can do?"

The use of descriptive language here is important. This is not merely to avoid the premature awakening of the intellect through judgement or criticism, but:

1. to allow the child to see and to recognise much more clearly what he/ she was doing (inappropriately)
2. to put language to it to enable the children to talk about it more easily (and, further, to realise that they could have solved their disagreement using words instead of getting physical)
3. to allow them to find their own solutions

During this process the child begins to recognise the value of communication. Words start to replace physical reactions in the emerging art of diplomacy.

KINDERGARTEN RULES

In exactly the same manner, all Kindergarten rules of conduct are expressed as descriptive: they are never moralising. The Teacher may determine their own Kindergarten rules, but here are some examples:

- Hands are for work and play
- Feet are for walking indoors / running around outdoors
- Our mouths are for sharing kind words and speaking the truth

These 'rules' are all descriptive in nature, simply describing what is so, stating what hands and feet are naturally intended to do. There are no 'should's or 'should not's. Direct confrontation with the child is avoided by working in this way. No conflict of interests is generated.

CREATIVE DISCIPLINE

The power of imagination is the Philosopher's Stone of creative discipline. Young children may feel restricted as they enter the world. They naturally want to push against boundaries and be free to do what they want. In the formal structure of school, the child's will for autonomy is often accentuated.

Imagination offers release from this potential struggle between child's own willing and Teacher's 'loving authority'. Through imaginative imagery and stories, the Teacher creates a picture of the world as a place filled with wonder, mystery and beauty. Seeing the world as a source of 'Goodness' enables the child to feel safer and deepen a sense of belonging. The child's sense of wellbeing sponsors their behaviour.

As though dreaming, Kindergarten Children think in pictures. Imagery populates their inner landscapes, giving personal meaning to the outer world. Using our imaginations, we can diffuse many conflicts between children, or with authority, by creating an imaginative story or narrative to accompany the Teacher's request that works directly within the child's pictorial sphere of understanding.

Using stories, songs and imaginative imagery, Teachers can ease children through transition times, which can often be a trigger for unwanted behaviour.

When children struggle to tidy up, perhaps the Teacher can suggest that Dusty gnome is having an important guest; while the children are outside playing, the children hurry to set the room to rights and set an extra place for Dusty's guest in the home corner.

As though they are sleeping, we do not expect children to be able to reflect on their behaviour or think consciously about what they do. They are not always aware of their behaviour at this age. Children often behave in certain ways without thinking. They may react automatically to something that they hear or see. For example, someone mentions having an itch and all the children start scratching. With this in mind, we tell the children what to do rather than what not to do.

The Teacher that understands this unconscious aspect of child behaviour can appeal to the child's imagination in a conscious effort to distract the child from any disruptive behaviour. Moreover, kindling the child's imaginative powers encourages deeper resilience and empathy. Children may become more resourceful and creative in problem-solving, while they find it easier to understand how others might feel.

PRAISE AND REWARD

Praise and reward are not always helpful, since they can encourage over-reliance on someone or something outside of the child and do not provide a learning experience. Rewards may addict the child to seeking external approval. The child may adapt their behaviour to secure the attention or recognition they are looking for. Because there is no way of guaranteeing the adult response at all times, the child may become increasingly insecure in their adult attachment.

A lasting sense of achievement comes from within. Where praise is used, be honest, descriptive and say something about how it made you feel. Where there is an empathic, warm relationship between the Teacher and child, often a warm smile or enthusiastic listening ear is enough to celebrate an achievement.

HUMOUR

Humour is an integral part of Kindergarten life. It allows space for breathing out and can bring a sense of release and lightness where there might be tension. Humour nourishes the child's feeling of life, giving strength in trying times. Humour is a useful tool as an outlet for exuberance and high energy, or for engaging a child who is losing focus. The Teacher needs to be sensitive as to when to bring the children back in, before they lose control.

RHYTHM AND REPETITION

Rhythm is the touchstone of Kindergarten life. Everything that the children do is part of a natural rhythm that mirrors the world of nature. The children celebrate the different qualities of the Four Seasons through the passing of the year. Eating a different grain each day of the week gives each day its own significance. There is a familiar routine to the day's activities. This enables the children to know what to expect during each part of the day. They feel safer and more secure knowing what is happening through the Kindergarten day.

Sleeping and awakening provide the basic rhythm for the child's day. During the daytime the child encounters new experiences that their brain processes during the night time. During deep sleep the child is assimilating new information and growing in mind and body.

'BREATHING' AS AN EMOTIONAL REGULATOR

The cycle of sleep and wakefulness characterise what is termed the process of 'breathing' in Steiner Kindergarten. Breathing (in this context) may be summed up as the principle of moving back-and-forth between passive and active states. This might mean moving from painting quietly at the table to playing outside with your friends, and then coming in again to listen to a story, before going for a walk.

The child's ability to negotiate between higher and lower levels of stimuli can signify their innate capacity to self-regulate emotionally. This is often evident in children's struggle to adapt to a new activity, during transition times. In psychological terms, this phenomenon is known as the child's 'Vagal Tone', which is responsible for how long it takes for the child's parasympathetic nervous system to calm them down successfully, after becoming aroused. This is how Teachers can consistently use Rhythm and Breathing to strengthen the child's 'Vagal Tone' in support of their wellbeing and behaviour.

TIME OUT IS NOT USED

Children will not be sat alone out of sight of the group i.e. in the cloakroom or in another room or outside. Separating the child from the rest of the class may make the child feel isolated and vulnerable. The child may also feel guilty or judged for a wrong-doing. Internalised guilt may show up as shame, fear or even anger, which will perpetuate unwanted behaviour.

If a child is not managing and is continually disruptive, despite attempts to engage through creative discipline and differentiation, then they may sit or work with an adult in sight of, but apart from, the group e.g. washing up, sweeping or sitting at the table. The Teacher or Teaching Assistant can use this time to reconnect with the child and more clearly understand the disruptive behaviour.

If a child's behaviour indicates that he / she is becoming over-stimulated, they may benefit from a sensory break. An outdoor activity with an adult that is suited to the child's needs can de-escalate the behaviour. Here is an opportunity to build the empathic bond between child and adult; allowing the child to experience this in a positive light will make it much more effective.

The Teacher thus avoids using any language or gestures towards the child that may imply judgement. Judgement can awaken in the young child an intellectualised view of behaviour. The concepts of 'right and wrong', 'good and bad' are mental constructions. There is no moral to be imparted.

Once a child has internalised a model of behaviour comprising 'good' and 'bad', 'right and wrong', they may prematurely experience the world as conflicted, and their warm empathic relationship with adults as only conditional. If a child learns that they are viewed as 'bad' or 'wrong', then they may learn to live up to this description, becoming a self-fulfilling expectation.

DIFFERENTIATION

Successful differentiation can prevent many behaviour issues. When a child struggles to engage in learning, or any set activity, *differentiation is always the first step*. The Teacher will adapt the learning experience to meet the child's individual learning needs. For example, A and B are struggling to sit through the story, so they may need an active role or a job to do. Whereas C knows the story really well and is growing bored with it; perhaps he could tell the story or enact a puppet show.

SEND

When a child demonstrates a repeated pattern of disruptive behaviour that does not respond to any of the recommended approaches, including differentiation, the school will assess the child for Special Educational Needs or Disability that is causing the behaviour. The Teacher will liaise with parents and the School SENDCo who will carry out an assessment using the Devon Assessment Framework to identify any additional needs.

THE THREE LEVELS OF RESPONSE

This table summarises the Three Levels of Response to disruptive behaviour in line with the wider School Behaviour Policy. The Teacher may refer to this table for general guidance.

1. Low-level disruption:	2. Mid-level disruption:	3. High-level disruption:
<p>Examples, during structured times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chatting • Calling out • Off task classroom behaviour; reluctance to comply with Teacher's requests 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive behaviour e.g. kicking, hitting, etc. • Rude language or unkind words • Defiance • Refusal to transfer from classroom to garden, or from garden to classroom • Leaving classroom without permission • Throwing things • Un-tidying kindergarten! • Breaking things 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying incident (persistent unkind behaviour with the intent to hurt) • Violent behaviour e.g. Using object to hit / Consciously and deliberately causing hurt • Total refusal to do as asked (where what is asked is reasonable, age appropriate and understood) • Any serious incident

<p>Actions: Some low-level disruption is expected at this age. In responding to low level disruption avoid confrontation or power struggles by endeavouring to engage children through imagination and redirection.</p> <p>Teacher represents a 'loving authority'.</p>	<p>Actions: Teacher actively intervenes to keep children safe. How they intervene is crucial: working from a sense of warmth, the Teacher works with the child to show them that "This is how we do things. Watch me.", modelling the correct behaviour, avoiding judgement and instead working in partnership.</p> <p>Using imagination to diffuse conflicts / re-direct unwanted behaviour</p> <p>'Natural consequences' i.e. "When we break something, we mend it"</p>	<p>Actions: Teacher actively intervenes to keep children safe.</p> <p>Note: Kindergarten Restraint Policy applies in all circumstances.</p> <p>One-to-one time to sitting / working with adult</p> <p>Teacher may allocate supporting staff to work with or supervise child to keep children safe.</p> <p>Teacher works alongside Inclusion Lead / SENDCo to understand the underlying need behind the behaviour.</p> <p>Therapeutic stories Child study</p> <p>In exceptional cases, internal or external exclusion.</p>
<p>Involvement: Teacher, Teaching Assistant</p>	<p>Involvement: Teacher, Teaching Assistant, Parents informed</p>	<p>Involvement: Teacher, Teaching Assistant, Inclusion Lead, SENDCo, Parents informed</p>