



09. Equality of Opportunity Policy

Achieving Positive Behaviour

Aims of Policy

We at Seer Green Pre-School believe 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 aim to teach children to behave in socially acceptable ways and to understand the views and feelings, needs and rights of others. The principles guiding management of behaviour exist within the programme for supporting personal, social and emotional development.

Methods

We will meet this aim through the following procedures:

1. **The Pre-School Manager** has overall responsibility for our programme for supporting personal, social and emotional development, including issues concerning behaviour. They will keep up to date with legislation and research and thinking on promoting positive behaviour and on handling children's behaviour where it may require additional support. They will access relevant sources of expertise on promoting positive behaviour when necessary. They will check that all staff have relevant in-service training on promoting positive behaviour. We keep a record of staff attendance of this training.
2. We recognise that codes for interacting with other people vary between cultures and require staff to be aware of – and respect – those used by other members of the setting.
3. 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.
4. We familiarise new staff and volunteers with this policy and its guidelines for behaviour.
5. We expect all members of our setting - children, parents, staff, volunteers and students - to keep to the guidelines, requiring those to be applied consistently.
6. We work in partnership with parents, who 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 decide jointly how to respond appropriately.
7. We aim to use positive, proactive strategies to promote positive behaviour in children and set those strategies within our programme for personal, social and emotional development. These include:
 - Supporting each child in developing self-esteem, confidence and feelings of competence.
 - Supporting each child in developing a sense of belonging in our group, so that they feel valued and welcome.

- Acknowledging considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share.
- 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.
- Acknowledging children's considerate behaviour towards another who is hurt or upset.
- Helping older children set the group's guidelines for considerate behaviour.
- Providing activities and games that encourage cooperation and working together.
- Ensuring 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.
- Avoiding creating situations in which children receive attention only in return for inconsiderate behaviour.
- 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.
- Use various behaviour strategies, which are discussed among staff, and adopted until improvement is observed, or reviewed and changed to what best supports an individual child's current behaviour needs.

We praise and endorse desirable behaviour using a number of incentives including stickers, rights respecting board and certificates for kind and respectful behaviour.

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 explanation rather than personal blame.

We do not:

- Use or threaten to use physical punishment.
- Send children out of the room by themselves, nor do we use a 'naughty chair'. Where appropriate, children may be redirected to another activity if it is in the best interests of everyone.
- Use techniques intended to single out or humiliate individual children, such as ridicule or sarcasm.
- Remove toys or activities that are the focus of a conflict as a 'punishment' or means of teaching children to share.
- Use physical restraint, such as holding, unless to prevent physical injury to children or adults and/or serious damage to property. If restraint is required, details will be documented and parents will sign.
- Shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to children.

Kinds of behaviour that require positive intervention

We make a distinction between three kinds of behaviours that require support or intervention in order to achieve the considerate and socially acceptable behaviour that we expect of children according to their age and developmental maturity or whether they have any special educational needs or disabilities. These behaviours are:

Inconsiderate behaviour – This includes behaviours such as taking toys from another child, not waiting for a turn, pushing, being uncooperative, disrupting a game, hitting out against another. They are characterised by developmental immaturity whereby children are not at the stage where they can manage frustration or anger themselves, they may not have the language to express themselves, or may not understand and be able to keep to social roles. These behaviours are seen as mistakes that the child is making on the way to developing socially acceptable ways, particularly of dealing with conflict. We regard the child to be a learner of what is acceptable and in need of support, explanation, encouragement, positive modelling and guidance – just as in learning any other skill.

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' even if the behaviour is worryingly aggressive. For most children under five, hurtful behaviour is momentary, spontaneous and often without cognisance of the feelings of the person whom they have hurt. Some children may engage in hurtful behaviour because they are deeply unhappy and they require support and care. However, hurtful behaviour has an impact for the child on the receiving end which is significant, and this is also taken into consideration when responding to incidents of hurtful behaviour.

Bullying – We take bullying very seriously. 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. This is rarely the case for children under five.

Strategies with children who engage in inconsiderate behaviour

When young children behave in inconsiderate ways we recognise that strategies for supporting them will need to be developmentally appropriate.

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 to learn to do this. Common inconsiderate or hurtful behaviour 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 – such as a change or upheaval at home, or 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 at the Pre-School, their Key Person, is building a strong relationship to provide security to the child.

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 other feelings so that they can learn a more appropriate response.

Staff offer comfort to both children in a dispute and encourage them to find a solution to their problem.

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 praise children for their efforts and achievements in resolving a dispute or learning a social skill, such as waiting their turn.

Hurtful behaviour

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 the biological and cognitive means to do this themselves is still underdeveloped in very young children.

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 or retaliatory 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 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 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 to 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 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, as well as Persona Dolls for the older cohort. 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 the 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 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.
- The child may have insufficient language or mastery of English to express him or herself and may feel frustrated.

Where this does not work, we use the Code of Practice to support the child and family, making the appropriate referrals to a Behaviour Support team where necessary. Records will be made in the Discrimination book where appropriate.

In cases of hurtful behaviour, 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.

Details (what happened, what action was taken and by whom and the name of witnesses) of hurtful behaviour incidents that give cause for concern are brought to the attention of the room leader and are recorded and dotted in our specific incidents file. The child's parent is informed on the same day. For serious incidents, the Pre-School Manager or Deputy Manager should also be informed at the earliest possible opportunity.

Bullying

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.
- Intervene to stop the child who is bullying from harming the other child or children.
- Explain to the child doing the bullying why her/his behaviour is not acceptable.
- Give reassurance to the child or children who have been bullied.
- Help the child who has done the bullying to recognise the impact of their actions.
- Make sure that children who bully receive positive feedback for considerate behaviour and are given opportunities to practise and reflect on considerate behaviour.
- Do not label children who bully as “bullies”.
- Recognise that children who bully may be experiencing bullying themselves, or be subject to abuse or other circumstances causing them to express their anger in negative ways towards others.
- 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 of the child who did the bullying and work out with them a plan for handling the child’s behaviour.
- Share 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.
- Use the Code of Practice in cases where the above does not work to support the child and family, making the appropriate referrals to a Behaviour Support team where necessary.

In cases of bullying behaviour that is racially motivated or focused towards a child’s disability or gender, we make clear immediately the unacceptability of the behaviour and attitudes, by means of explanations rather than personal blame.

Details (what happened, what action was taken and by whom and the names of witnesses) of bullying behaviour incidents that give cause for concern are brought to the attention of the Pre-School Manager and are recorded in the specific incident file. The child’s parent is informed on the same day.

Rough and tumble play and fantasy aggression

We provide additional focus on these kinds of play, that sometimes lead to inconsiderate or hurtful behaviour.

Young children often engage in play that has aggressive themes – such as superhero and weapon play. Some children appear preoccupied with these at times, but their behaviour is not necessarily a precursor to bullying, although it may be inconsiderate or even hurtful at times and may need addressing using the strategies above.

We recognise that teasing or rough and tumble play are normal for young children and acceptable within limits. We regard these kinds of play as pre-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 violent dramatic strategies – blowing up, shooting etc. and that themes often refer to ‘goodies and baddies’ and as such offer opportunities to explore concepts of right and wrong or alternatives to blowing up or shooting.

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.

Involvement of parents / carers or outside agencies

Whilst most behaviour is addressed within the Pre-School through the above positive learning approach, there will be times when staff need the support of parents and / or carers. This may be where a child exhibits continuous behavioural challenges which are not improving with the above techniques, or where staff feel a child would benefit from outside input from other agencies (with parents' / carers' consent).

In this case, staff will always approach parents and / or carers in the first instance, to put together a plan to best meet the child's needs within the setting, and promote positive behaviour.

Where this plan is unsuccessful, further steps may need to be taken. These may include the involvement of an outside agency, either as a one off consultation or an ongoing referral, to support the child's needs. In extreme cases, where parents and / or carers are unwilling to engage with the Pre-School after several meetings, it may be necessary to escalate the concern to outside agencies or, in extreme cases, to exclude the child from the Pre-School if their behaviour is determined by the Pre-School Manager to be a health and safety concern for the other children.

Ultimately, through staff observations and discussion, it is the Pre-School Manager who has the responsibility to highlight where challenges arise and to approach these discussions with parents and / or carers. Where this is unsuccessful, and prior to further action being taken, a discussion with the Trustee Chairperson and an anonymous discussion with Early Years Advisors should be held to assess the situation and next steps. Where it is believed for the safety of staff and children in the setting that exclusion of the child is the right approach, the Trustee Chairperson will provide support to the Pre-School Manager to take the appropriate action. As staff and trustees, we are here to provide a positive environment for all. Whilst exclusion is never a first approach, it should be seen as a necessary step if we cannot provide the support the child needs to participate in a positive environment, and is a vital step to ensure other children and staff remain exposed to positive behaviours.

As with all the policies for Seer Green Pre-School, the Operational Plan should be referred to for the specific details of day to day operations of the Pre-School. In addition, any issues which arise in the course of a child's time with the Pre-School and that are related to a child's health and wellbeing, parent's or staff's concern, or the overall care and safety of our children, staff, parents and equipment will be dealt with in a professional and confidential manner in order to arrive at an appropriate outcome.

This policy was adopted on (date) _____

Signed on behalf of Seer Green Pre-School (Chairperson) _____

This policy was reviewed as indicated below:

2007 created

2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 reviewed and updated as required

July-Nov 2017 reviewed and updated

June-July 2018 reviewed and updated

May 2019 reviewed and updated

October 2019 reviewed and updated

June 2020 reviewed and updated

June 2021 reviewed and updated

July 2022 reviewed

June 2023 reviewed

September 2024 reviewed and updated

UNCRC related articles:

Number 15

Every child has the right to meet with others and to join in groups, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Number 19

Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.