

Self-Regulation and Behavioural Responses Policy

Policy Statement and Ethos

At Woodhams Farm Day Nursery we believe that children flourish best when they feel safe and secure, and have their needs met by supportive practitioners who act as good role models, show them respect and value their individual personalities. Our approach to behaviour is non-judgemental, curious and empathetic.

Children are supported through co-regulation, where adults and children work together towards a common purpose, including finding ways to resolve upsets from stress in any domain and return to balance leading onto a path to self-regulation. We actively promote British values and encourage positive and caring behaviour at all times, providing an environment where children learn to respect themselves, other people and their surroundings.

We implement the early years curriculum supporting children to develop their personal, social and emotional development. This involves helping children to understand their own feelings and others and beginning to regulate their behaviour. We support children to do this through working together with parents, having consistent approaches, structure, routine and age/stage appropriate boundaries appropriate to the emotional development of the child. We help build confidence and self-esteem by valuing all children and giving lots of praise and encouragement.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Biting
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

We understand that certain behaviours are a normal part of some young children's development, for example, biting. We also recognise that 'behaviour' is often a way of children communicating their feelings or making known that they have an unmet need. We encourage all staff working with children to accept their responsibility for implementing the goals in this policy and to be consistent, accessing training in this area where needed. We have a named person who has overall responsibility for promoting positive behaviour and behaviour support.

Named Person

The named person for promoting and supporting children's emotional well-being and behaviour is **Lou Webb**

It is their role to:

- Advise and support other staff on any concerns about a child's emotional well-being and / or their behaviour
- Liaise with the setting's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) to ensure the full picture is being taken into account in any given situation
- Along with each room manager will keep up to date with legislation and research relating to self-regulation, emotional well-being and children's behavioural responses
- Support changes to policies and procedures in the nursery
- Access relevant sources of expertise where required and act as a central information source for all involved
- Attend regular external training events, and ensure all staff attend relevant in-house or external training for children's emotional well-being behavioural responses.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

- We work in partnership with parents by communicating openly about their child's development and sharing observations of their emotions and behavioural responses.
- We inform parents if their child's behaviour has escalated, or if their child has been upset. We do not wait for a significant escalation, but keep parents informed on a day to day basis.
- When we communicate with parents about their child's behaviour or emotions, we do so with sensitivity and compassion.
- We may ask parents to meet with staff to discuss their child's behaviour, so that if there are any difficulties, we can work together to ensure consistency between their home and the nursery. In some cases, we may request additional advice and support from other professionals, such as the local authority, external specialists or an educational psychologist
- If any parent has a concern about their child, a member of staff (usually the key person alongside the manager or SENCo or named person for emotional well-being and behaviour) will be available to discuss those concerns. Working together can ensure children feel confident and secure in their environment, both at home and in the nursery.
- All concerns will be treated in the strictest confidence.
- We keep confidential records on any incidents that have taken place. We inform parents and ask them to read and sign any incidents concerning their child.
- Through partnership with parents and formal observations, we make every effort to identify any behavioural concerns and the causes of that behaviour.

- From these observations and discussions, we will implement an individual behaviour support plan where a child's behaviour involves inappropriate actions towards other children and staff, for example hitting, kicking etc.
- The manager will complete risk assessments identifying any potential triggers or warning signs ensuring other children's and staff's safety at all times. In these instances, we may remove a child from an area until they have calmed down, or we may redirect the other children away if necessary.
- Where we believe that a child's behaviour may be indicative of a special educational need or disability, we will share this with parents and take appropriate steps towards referral e.g. to portage or the GP.

Records

We keep the following records to support our work in this area:

- Incident forms
- Observation forms e.g. ABC charts and detailed observations to identify triggers
- Developmental assessments
- Records of professional conversations with others e.g. the Local Authority
- Reports and assessments from other professionals

When a child transitions to school or another setting, we will work with parents to share information with the new setting so that the child has access to needed support.

Proactive Strategies

We use the following strategies to support children in developing their self-regulation skills and inhibitory control:

Reasonable Developmental Expectations

We recognise that sometimes adult expectations of children's behaviour is not realistic for their stage of development. With this in mind, we take the following approach:

Sharing

For very young children, sharing is a difficult concept. Particularly for babies, toddlers and young pre-school aged children, there must be enough resources for children to play and engage with the environment without having to wait for long periods of time to be able to access toys, resources and activities. This helps to prevent unnecessary conflict.

For older pre-school aged children, adults sensitively provide support for turn-taking, recognising where this may be challenging for some children and helping them to find solutions through emotion coaching strategies such as validation and problem solving.

Sharing may be appropriate for older children, but it is also important to acknowledge that sometimes children may want to play independently and would prefer not to have others join in with an activity they are doing. We respect the rights of children to make choices about who they play with and support them in social interactions including negotiation, compromise and being clear about their play and social interaction preferences.

Waiting / Group Times / Lunchtimes

Mostly, as children get older, they will learn how to engage in waiting for something they want and learn how to sit for short periods of time, for example for group activities. For babies and toddlers, this can be very challenging. We recognise this and ensure our practice is developmentally appropriate.

This means that group times for singing and stories emerge spontaneously through the day rather than being planned for specific times. Children may be encouraged to join group times, but are not required to do so. It is more beneficial for them to be engaged in something they are interested in and enjoying, rather than required to sit for periods of time before they are ready to do so which can lead to frustration and 'behaviour'.

We recognise that practices such as 'lining up' to wait to go outside or transition between activities or spaces may not be possible for very young children. It may be appropriate for older children (3+) to learn how to do this. However, we are mindful that for some children this will still be challenging, for example due to sensory needs or impulse control. Where this is the case, we recognise this and make accommodations where possible (e.g. by enabling a child to go first, continue playing rather than coming to line up, having access to a quiet space during transitions, providing physical space for them).

When very young children are hungry, activities such as waiting become even more challenging. We do not make very young children wait for food and drink until everyone is seated (unless there is a health and safety reason for this, e.g. staffing presence).

Connection-Based Practice

Babies, toddlers and pre-school children thrive on relationships based in professional love, warmth, sensitivity, consistency and predictability. We provide plenty of 1-1 and small group time for children to spend time with their key person and trusted adults. Our key person system enables staff to build positive and strong relationships with children and their families. Where possible, feeding and personal care routines are carried out by the child's key person.

Our priority is always to help children to feel safe, happy and secure. We provide children with comfort and support in times of stress. This includes moments when they are showing through their behavioural responses that they are dysregulated or stressed.

We do not ever punish or ignore 'behaviour'. We recognise that supporting children's behaviour means supporting their emotional well-being, communicating with them effectively, and developing a meaningful understanding of their current situation and challenges. We recognise that rewards and punishments can work against our principles of connection-based practice, and therefore we do not use these in our nursery.

Communication Preferences

Children communicate in a variety of ways. Our role is to learn about different communication styles and preferences, and to understand what children may be trying to communicate through their behavioural responses.

We use a variety of communication tools including:

- Verbal language
- Body language
- Sign
- Eye contact (recognising this isn't comfortable for all children)
- Visual communication tools e.g. pictures and timelines

We recognise that it can be challenging for children to communicate when they are feeling dysregulated, and we look to co-regulate and de-escalate a situation so that a child feels calm and regulated before we attempt to have a conversation with them about an incident that has taken place or how they are feeling.

Neuro-affirming Approaches including Sensory Environment and Needs

We recognise the individuality of all our children and work to enable children to access an environment that is supportive of their neurotype.

In practice this means:

- Using affirming language rather than a 'deficit' model of language - while also recognising the importance of providing accurate information so the family can access the needed support, including diagnosis and help from external professionals
- Ensuring our environment feels safe for children with sensory needs through accommodations or changes to the environment itself where possible
- Creating an environment that isn't over-stimulating or overwhelming

- Working to support neurodivergent children to make progress and experience well-being without basing this on neurotypical 'norms' that may not be appropriate or may cause additional stress and anxiety for the child
- Enabling children to express their play preferences, and respecting and facilitating these choices
- Preventing stress and anxiety for all children, including understanding where the environment and certain experiences (such as transitions, unexpected events, some social situations) may be particularly stressful for neurodivergent children
- Providing multiple means of communication including visuals and sign, and respecting the communication preferences of individual children
- Working closely with families who we recognise may see aspects of their child's development that are not seen in the setting, and vice versa. This includes recognising 'masking' and the impact this can have.
- Providing emotionally safe and predictable environments for all children.

Co-regulation Leading to Self-regulation

We recognise the importance of co-regulation in supporting children's well-being and overall development. We also understand that co-regulation is a key strategy in supporting children's behavioural responses because it enables children to regulate with support, until they are able to do this independently.

We recognise the following key features of co-regulation:

- Warmth
- Sensitivity
- Responsiveness
- Validation

These are examples of co-regulation strategies we may use to support children in moments of dysregulation:

- Validation
- Connection
- Offering a hug
- Giving space to the child while remaining present and connected
- Play
- Model deep breathing
- Changing our tone, facial expression, body language to ensure calm and connection
- Reducing talking / noise
- Changing the environment

Emotion Coaching

We use emotion coaching to support children's behaviour and big feelings, recognising that this can positively impact outcomes for children in multiple areas of their development, including physical and emotional health; social life, academics, and 'behaviour'.

We put emotion coaching and co-regulation into practice using the following strategies:

- Recognise, empathise and soothe (I am here to help and I understand)
- Validate feelings and name them (This is what you might be feeling and that is acceptable and understandable)
- Be clear about the limits on behaviour (if needed)
- Problem-solve with the child (Let's work this out together)

For further information see: <https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com/>

Attachment Aware Practice

We recognise the importance of attachment in children's development. We ask parents to share with us information about their child's life so that we can understand where trauma, adverse childhood experiences or attachment issues may have arisen and can actively work to support the child and family.

We realise that we may not always know when a child has experienced these situations. With this in mind, we adopt an attachment aware approach to communication, behaviour and relationships with children.

This can be described by the PACE model developed by Dan Hughes. This means our communication and interactions with children are underpinned by the following:

PLAYFULNESS - we create an atmosphere of lightness and interest in our communication with children. This isn't about always being funny or distracting children away from their feelings. It is about expressing joy in our relationships with children, promoting feelings of safety and relaxation, and avoiding a tone that is critical, judgemental or irritated.

ACCEPTANCE - we actively communicate to children that we accept the wishes, feelings, thoughts, urges and perceptions underneath their behaviour. We have clear limits to behaviour while understanding the feelings beneath it. This acceptance is a key part of unconditional relationships that are based in professional love.

CURIOSITY - we wonder about the meaning behind the behaviour for the child. Curiosity replaces judgement and criticism when looking to understand children's behaviour. We wonder about what might have happened or how the child might have felt or thought. This is different from asking 'why did you do that?' which points to blame and criticism.

EMPATHY - we show children that we know how difficult an experience it is for them and that we will be there for them in the most challenging of moments. We do not ever leave children to deal with their distress alone. We show children that together we will get through difficult situations and feelings.

For further information see: <https://ddpnetwork.org/about-ddp/meant-pace/>

Observation and Understanding Children

Staff know children well and can identify through ongoing observation when a child may be feeling overwhelmed, overstimulated, frustrated or under stimulated, or may need support in a social situation. Staff intervene sensitively and proactively to prevent situations escalating.

We carefully observe children to understand triggers and provide the support they need in difficult moments. The foundation of our ethos is being curious about children's feelings, thoughts, experiences and behaviour so that we can support them to the best of our ability.

Teaching Children About Feelings

We teach children about their own feelings and the feelings of others, using the following strategies:

- Co-regulation and emotion coaching
- Validation of feelings
- Empathy for all children, including in moments of dysregulation and 'behaviour'
- Being curious about the feelings children are experiencing and providing names for those feelings
- Conflict resolution strategies (see below)
- Communication based in PACE (see above)
- Using resources such as stories, puppets, role play, and conversations about emotions to help children to start to recognise, name and talk about feelings
- Teaching children strategies to support them when they are not feeling okay
- Having a variety of strategies that children can access (e.g. a safe person, a safe space, movement, talking, sensory resources, time outside, listening to music)

Adults as Role Models

We ensure that all staff act as positive role models for children. This includes when responding to children's dysregulation and 'behaviour'. We help staff to reflect on their own responses towards children's emotions and behavioural responses to ensure that their reactions are appropriate, sensitive and based in co-regulation. We encourage parents, carers and visitors to be positive role models through sharing information about the importance of this.

Reactive Strategies

Conflict resolution

We use conflict resolution strategies to help children learn how to manage conflict in peaceful and constructive ways. This may mean:

- Sitting with children who are experiencing conflict, validating both children's feelings and acknowledging both perspectives (children may not always be able to see another person's perspective, but we can still role model this)
- Having clear limits to behaviour and communicating these with understanding and compassion
- Modelling problem-solving as a means to resolving conflict
- Modelling calm, connected and constructive communication when we respond to children so that we are role models for peaceful and respectful conflict resolution

De-escalating Situations

This means using strategies such as:

- Providing a safe space to access (for quiet and calm, or for movement, depending on how individual children need to regulate)
- Ensuring there are plenty of activities and resources to support children's interests and developmental needs
- Validating how a child feels and brainstorming together to find ways to manage these feelings
- Co-regulating with children, particularly when children are too young to self-regulate or have not yet developed this ability

Responding to 'Behaviour'

- We do not single children out or humiliate them
- We do not raise our voices (other than to keep children safe)
- We do not use time out, 'planned ignoring' or isolation approaches
- We do not ask a child to 'think about what they have done' - we do facilitate conversation and curiosity about what may have happened and how we could do things differently in the future
- We may redirect a child away from an unsafe situation (or alternatively redirect a group of children away from a child who is not able to act in a safe way) to ensure the safety of all children
- We use co-regulation and emotion coaching strategies followed by re-direction as and when appropriate

- We talk about situations that have arisen without judgement and respecting the level of understanding and maturity that a child has
- We have clear limits that are communicated calmly and with empathy for a child's experiences and feelings
- We do not force children to apologise as we recognise this isn't reflective of empathy or a wish to make a repair
- We do show children how to make a repair, for example using a teddy bear or card when words are difficult to find (this strategy is most appropriate for older children of 3 or 4 years old)
- We provide safe strategies for children to express their feelings such as a calm space, a space for big movement, resources to squeeze, resources to throw safely, resources to chew/bite
- We respond to 'boisterous' games by engaging in children's play and channelling and redirecting their energies into safe ways of playing that are still fun and stimulating

Nursery Rules

Our nursery rules are concerned with safety, care and respect for each other. We keep the rules to a minimum and ensure that these are age and stage appropriate. We regularly involve children in the process of setting rules to encourage cooperation and participation and ensure children gain understanding of the expectations of behaviour relevant to them as a unique child.

We recognise that the majority of children know about our rules and understand them (relative to their age and stage of development). We also recognise that for many children, following the rules at all times is not always possible due to their stage of development and immature brain development.

We have clear limits to behaviour and these are communicated with compassion and curiosity for a child's experience and feelings.

We actively encourage children to have consideration for others, our environment and belongings through conversations, stories, role modelling and every day practice such as putting things away where they belong, checking that other people are okay and offering help where we can.

"Accepting the child's intentions does not imply accepting behaviour, which may be hurtful or harmful to another person or to self. [We] may be very firm in limiting behaviour while at the same time accepting the motives for the behaviour."

Physical Intervention

We only use physical intervention (where practitioners may use reasonable force to prevent children from injuring themselves or others or damaging property) or to manage a child's behaviour if absolutely necessary. We keep a record of any occasions where physical intervention is used and inform parents on the same day, or as reasonably practicable.

We recognise that there may be occasions where a child is displaying distressed and/or behaviour which challenges and may need individual techniques to restrain them to prevent a child from injuring themselves or others. This will only be carried out by staff who have been appropriately trained to do so. Any restraints will only be done following recommended guidance and training and only with a signed agreement from parents on when to use it. We will complete an incident form following any restraints used and notify the parents.

We never use or threaten to use physical punishment or corporal punishment such as smacking or shaking or use or threaten any punishment that could adversely affect a child's well-being

Anti-bullying Statement

We encourage children to recognise that bullying, fighting, hurting and discriminatory comments are not acceptable behaviour. We want children to recognise that certain actions are right and that others are wrong.

Bullying takes many forms. It can be physical, verbal or emotional, but it is always a repeated behaviour that makes other people feel uncomfortable or threatened. We acknowledge that any form of bullying is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately while recognising that physical aggression is part of children's development in their early years. Staff will intervene when they think a child is being bullied, however mild or harmless it may seem and sensitively discuss any instance of bullying with the parents of all involved to look for a consistent resolution to the behaviour.

By promoting positive behaviour, valuing co-operation and a caring attitude, we hope to ensure that children will develop a positive sense of self, have confidence in their own abilities, make good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably. These will provide them with a secure platform for school and later life.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
<i>April 2025</i>	Hayley Doncom	<i>April 2026</i>