

**5. Managing Children’s Behaviour**

Our aim is that all of the children should be able to behave in socially acceptable ways.

To be socially acceptable, we believe that children should be able to:

* treat other children and adults with respect
* speak politely to other people
* have self confidence and high self-esteem.

To encourage this, the staff will:

* treat all children and adults with respect
* speak politely to all other people
* praise children’s efforts and achievements as often as they can
* explain to children what they should have done or said when they get it wrong
* tell parents about their child’s efforts and achievements
* avoid using critical or sarcastic language.

We will not accept the following behaviour from children or adults:

* use of rude or unkind language
* hitting, kicking, biting or other such physical responses
* racist or sexist remarks.

When a child demonstrates a pattern of wrong doing or consistently negative behaviour parents will be informed and strategies for progress agreed. An important reason for having a behaviour policy is in order for us to share our training and informed strategies with parents; ensuring that all of the adults in a child’s life are working together as a team to promote positive behaviour.

Behaviour: further information

There are two ways at looking at the behaviour of young children:

* We, as adults, control how the child behaves; responding to negative behaviour using a variety of techniques OR
* We give children strategies to develop their own self-discipline, so that when we are not there they are able to manage their own behaviour.

Research shows that self discipline is the only kind of discipline worth having if we want establish and maintain positive behaviour in our children; for the child and for the good of our society.

It is important for adults to help children learn about negotiation rather than manipulation. If adults manipulate children using bribes they damage the child’s developing self-discipline and moral understanding. When adults negotiate with children it shows their respect for the child. Adults and children should try to find the best solution together as partners.

Sometimes adults are able to see trouble looming and may be able to offer an alternative solution before conflict results. This gives children the opportunity to develop their own thinking skills and positive behavioural habits.

It is perhaps worth considering the variety of parenting and teaching methods available to us and those which we should aspire to achieve:

Permissive adult: HIGH emotional warmth with LOW control techniques

Dismissive adult: LOW emotional warmth with LOW control techniques

Authoritarian adult: LOW emotional warmth with HIGH control techniques

Authoritative adult: HIGH emotional warmth with HIGH control techniques (IDEAL)

The language used by an adult is of fundamental importance in a conflict situation, for example;

“Kicking hurts. Jo is very upset because it hurt, that was the wrong thing to do” IS BETTER THAN “Don’t do that. You are very naughty, and I am very cross with you”

THE MESSAGE NEEDS TO BE; I am not rejecting you; I am rejecting what you did.

◊ SHOULD CHILDREN BE MADE TO SAY SORRY? ◊

At Play Station a great deal of research and discussion has taken place around this subject followed by some focused debate and training sessions in December 2010.

Our findings were quite simple; DO NOT FORCE AN APOLOGY FROM A CHILD BUT DON’T LET THEM OFF THE HOOK EITHER.

To force an apology from a child encourages insincerity and certainly no change in their behaviour. Saying sorry because you’ve been forced to actually mean’s you’re not sorry at all. It quite possibly means you are sorry you’ve been caught but quite likely nothing more.

In reality ‘sorry’ has become a very useful get–out-of-trouble-free card; no longer reserved for accidentally treading on someone’s toes or spilling a drink over someone. Indeed, according to teachers Nationwide it is becoming increasingly common to observe a child hitting another child, saying sorry as they run off, then repeating these same actions only a short time later. Saying sorry has become something of a joke and there are some children in our society who have learnt how to say it with little understanding and/or sometimes care for its true meaning.

The definition of sorry is: a feeling, followed by an expression of sympathy or regret for the person who has been wronged or saddened in some way.

THE REPLACEMENT OF SORRY WITH “A HUG”

A common alternative strategy that is used, is to ask children if they would like to make their friend happy again by giving them a hug. This can be lovely in some cases; for some children though, this is an invasion of their personal space. By encouraging this action when it is not truly wanted we are telling children that even though they do not want a hug they should allow their own personal space to be compromised to make someone else feel better. Both individuals should always be asked if a hug is what they want and an alternative found if they do not. Staff members will always be mindful of this and respect all children’s personal space.

SO WHAT SHOULD ADULTS BE DOING?

Encourage children to realise that to say sorry is to promise the action will not be repeated. Use conflict situations as a teaching moment. Discuss what happened. Tell the child what you saw happen including the emotions they experienced and ask them if this is right.

“I understand you were angry because you also wanted to .......but instead of kicking Jo you could have.......” Encourage children not to use their bodies in an aggressive way; instead using polite words or seek the help of an adult to communicate. Always try to take a breath and remain calm in both your body and voice. There’s really not much else to say other than it is very helpful to regard language as your most valuable tool in adapting a consistent approach that will eventually work.

WHAT DOES NOT WORK

Giving in to the child’s demands, they will see this as a reward for their display of anger. Smacking; children will learn that to hit when you are angry is acceptable. Shouting; demonstrates that this too is acceptable behaviour

Responding in a consistently angry way; this may teach your child to fear emotion (particularly their own) and can lead them to internalise their feelings (a potential time bomb waiting to go off!)

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