

GREY WARD CHILDREN'S CENTRE

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GUIDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

RATIONALE

Learning how to behave considerately is a developmental task just like learning to ride a bike. Child behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal, should be viewed as a form of communication from the child to his/her world. When children exhibit inconsiderate behaviours this should be viewed as an indicator that the child is experiencing distress. In this context, repeated, ongoing, inconsiderate behaviours are not just responses to be 'reduced' or 'eliminated'. In assessing the reasons for a child's behaviour, the child's whole environment should be considered, including the program and interactions, as well as circumstances at home and in the Centre.

This policy arises from the need for all members of the Centre's community to be consistent, clear and co-ordinated about expectations of behaviour. An atmosphere of clarity and consistency minimises confusion and enhances the Centre's ability to help children to learn, and be safe and secure. Children need guidelines in relation to themselves, their environment and those around them, as well as for the world at large.

We believe that setting limits for behaviour is important for the safety and protection of children, others and the environment. It also teaches children autonomous ethics. While a child is at the Centre we believe that there is no occasion in which physical punishment should be used against a child. This is also reinforced by the South Australian *Regulations Under the Children's Services Act*. The Centre is aware of the difference between controlling behaviour (through obedience and compliance) and guiding children's behaviour so that they may make wise choices. The Centre believes that children who are unable to make wise choices as they are used to having their behaviour controlled, could be at risk in the future of abuse by adults and/or peers as well as politically (terrorism and genocide).

We believe that children have an enormous capacity to absorb information about themselves, others and the environment they live in. The manner in which adults interact with children is significant to their growth and development, consequently behaviour guidance needs to be positive in its approach. Positive guidance of behaviour involves encouraging children to make wise choices and reflections about everyday situations. Children will behave as competently as we let them. It is our belief that this is achieved within an environment, which enhances a child's positive feelings about themselves, through fostering self-esteem, self acceptance and expecting success in all children.

AIMS

- ❖ To provide a psychologically and physically safe environment which nurtures the child and provides a sense of belonging and self-acceptance.
- ❖ To acknowledge and protect the rights of all children and staff.
- ❖ To provide opportunities to build children's confidence and feelings of self-acceptance through a safe, caring, well planned, learning environment wherein the expectations of children's behaviour are expressed positively and explicitly, and are developmentally appropriate.
- ❖ To acknowledge and accept children's feelings.
- ❖ To recognise and value children as individuals within their family context.
- ❖ To consult and work in partnership with families of children who are showing repeated, ongoing, inconsiderate behaviour.
- ❖ To maintain confidentiality.

PROCEDURE

Inconsiderate behaviours are unacceptable because they violate the rights of other children at the Centre and/or the rights of staff. Staff have the right to act on inconsiderate behaviour in the following ways:

STAFF GUIDELINES

All staff, including relief staff, will be guided by these procedures.

Staff will:

- ❖ build trusting, positive relationships with the children, as children are more likely to respond to expectations if they sense that staff understand them and care for them.
- ❖ promote the development of children's life skills and competencies such as:

self awareness	social skills
emotional regulation	positive decision making skills
autonomous ethics	co-operation and collaboration
the ability to notice behaviour and reflect on their own	
- ❖ make sure behavioural expectations are made explicit in terms of considerate and inconsiderate behaviours.
- ❖ consider a child's level of development and match their expectations to this so that a positive approach to behaviour management is achieved.
- ❖ understand and acknowledge the limits of young children's abilities to wait, to share, to express their feelings (eg anger, sadness, fear), to cope with tiredness/disappointment. Programs and routines will be planned to take these into consideration.
- ❖ endeavour to recognise potential difficulties and plan programs and routines accordingly.
- ❖ prevent over excitement by making provisions in the learning environment for quieter more restful activities eg story times, small group times, rest times etc.
- ❖ try to motivate children to behave by making it easy for them to do so - expect success, outline the benefits of success ('Once we've packed up we can play a game', etc), be playful if it is appropriate.
- ❖ reinforce considerate behaviours by making sure that the time and attention given by staff to these behaviours is noticeably greater than that spent on inconsiderate behaviours.
- ❖ clearly explain situations in which a child has wide choice, limited choice and no choice.
- ❖ clarify for children, situations of self-selection, limited selection and no selection.
- ❖ intervene early (if appropriate - refer responsibility to intervene) to avoid escalation of potential conflict situations.
- ❖ use voice intonations, facial expressions and explanations to encourage considerate behaviours. All communication in regards to behaviour management is to be respectful but firm.
- ❖ communicate with a child in a manner that helps the child realise the consequences of their actions so that they can deal with them in an autonomous way in the future. It is also important that communication has no unintended side effects with the child ie degrading the child: educator relationship.

PROCEDURE CONTINUED

- ❖ provide modelling of considerate behaviours as children learn through imitation.
- ❖ encourage children to settle their differences in a peaceful manner.
- ❖ maintain confidentiality.

RESPONSIBILITY TO INTERVENE

Staff have a responsibility to intervene with behaviours when they violate the rights of the children/staff eg if they hurt the children/staff or interfere with meeting children/staff needs or if they harm the child themselves eg no one wants to be around them. This behaviour looks like:

1. real danger
2. psychological harm to the child and others
3. excessive excitement, loss of control, or chaos
4. prohibition of the continuation of the program
5. the destruction of property
6. encouragement of the spread of negativity within the group
7. conflict with others outside the group
8. the compromise of the staff's mental health and ability to function
9. any situation which provides the opportunity to clarify individual and group values, standards, and social rules.

SUGGESTED TECHNIQUES

Staff may use one or a mixture of these behaviour guidance interventions in any given circumstance:

1. *Positive instruction*
 - send a concise positive message of what you want them to do instead eg 'Walk inside', instead of 'Don't run'; 'Feet on the floor', instead of 'Don't stand on the chair'; 'Look where you are going', instead of 'Be careful'.
2. *Planned Ignoring*
 - unfortunately ignoring habits rarely works, however if a child is exhibiting a new habit or something that is only mildly inconsiderate it may be able to be changed by saying something like, 'Joe. I am going to ignore you until you ask again in a happy voice'. This also lets the onlooking children know that you have noticed and are doing something about a behaviour which they realise is not acceptable.
3. *Signal interference*
 - use of non-verbal techniques including eye contact, frowning, clapping, etc. This technique often helps a child 'save face' with his/her peers and saves a shy child from any unnecessary embarrassment. Conversely this technique can be used to reinforce considerate behaviours also.
4. *Proximity control*
 - having a child physically close often results in the discontinuation of the inconsiderate behaviours eg at story times, meal times, group times etc. This physical presence of an adult figure can also have a calming effect on children.
5. *Interest boosting*
 - staff will make efforts to boost a child's interest by offering to help with activities, noting how much effort has already been made, discussing the activity etc.
6. *Tension reduction through humour*
 - a joke or a humorous comment frequently reduces tension. Caution must be used to be sure the humour is not harmful to any individual.
7. *Hurdle helping*
 - help is provided before the child exhibits inconsiderate/disruptive behaviour eg by offering assistance early, offering more resources/materials etc.
8. *Direct appeal*
 - staff will directly appeal to a child's sense of fairness by forcefully stating 'Stop this behaviour because it hurts my body/hurts your friend's body etc'.

SUGGESTED TECHNIQUES CONTINUED

9. Removal of seductive objects

- some objects can be removed until an appropriate time eg toys from home. Other objects can be packed away and replaced by different equipment.

10. Antiseptic bouncing

- staff will remove a child from an activity before inconsiderate behaviour occurs eg 'come and help me get some cups from the kitchen Joe to share with your friends' etc. This technique provides a child with the opportunity to avoid embarrassment, calm down, reorganise thoughts and begin the activity fresh.

11. Physical restraint

- children who have lost control of themselves in a tantrum often feel totally and absolutely helpless, consequently they find it difficult to control their physical and verbal behaviours. The child can be held securely until calm. During this time staff will calmly communicate to the child and reinforce the ideas that this is a safe environment and that they are here to help. After the child gains control, the incident will be discussed with the child. This technique will be used in consultation with the family and staff team due to personal safety issues and licensing recommendations.

12. Cool down time

- this technique is more beneficial with older children or those younger children with a high level of thinking skills. *Cool down time* is a technique which can often be successfully used when a child is on the verge of a tantrum/loss of control. Moving the child away from the other children to the lounge/book corner etc can provide a child with the opportunity to avoid embarrassment, calm down, reorganise thoughts and begin the activity fresh. *Cool down time* can also be used in conjunction with a Behaviour Management Plan (refer the section Behaviour Management Plan).

Management of cool down time

- i) take a child to a quiet area (do not send). This should be in the child's room where supervision can take place. Only those children on a Behaviour Management Plan can be taken out of the room as this is with the parent's permission. Other staff will also be notified giving them the opportunity to respond to the child appropriately.
- ii) when taking the child, use this opportunity to talk to the child about the behaviour and what is expected of their behaviour when they return to the group eg 'when you have stopped crying etc you can come back'.
- iii) no time limit is to be set by the adult – the child should decide when they come out as long as their behaviour has improved eg stopped crying. This teaches autonomous ethics by allowing the child to redefine their own actions/behaviour. As some children may not have developed this skill of self-reflection, a staff member may need to revisit the child and discuss whether the behaviour has been changed.
- iv) it is advisable to have no further comment or reaction once the behaviour has improved as this can act to restart the whole incident. It can also act to reinforce the incident.

PARENT/CAREGIVER GUIDELINES

- ❖ To respect the legislation that staff are mandated to uphold regarding physical forms of behaviour management. Consequently parents/caregivers who wish to discipline their own child whilst in the Centre must do so using techniques other than physical punishment and without using unacceptable language.
- ❖ To respect that there are many different child rearing practices.
- ❖ To respect that staff have a duty to maintain confidentiality.
- ❖ If parents perceive a problem with their child's behaviour they should see a staff member for professional support.
- ❖ If parents perceive a problem with another child's behaviour they should discuss this with a staff member, rather than attempt to discipline someone else's child, as staff are responsible for all children at the Centre.
- ❖ Trust that staff will use their professional judgement to decide which strategy(s) to use in which

circumstance(s). If you are unsure about the use of a particular strategy please approach a staff member before approaching a child, eg a child may be sitting on the lounge crying, if you are concerned please see a staff member before approaching the child.

CONSEQUENCES OF INCONSIDERATE BEHAVIOUR

- ❖ All consequences must respect the dignity and the rights of the child.
- ❖ Consequences will never include physical, verbal or emotional punishment i.e. smacking, slapping, shaking, pinching, put downs, name calling or any other that may humiliate or threaten a child.
- ❖ Consequences must be used as a part of a comprehensive behavioural approach with the focus on encouraging/reinforcing considerate behaviours.
- ❖ Consequences will not result in the child being left alone for any length of time.
- ❖ Inconsiderate/dangerous behaviours, which are repeated or prolonged, may require the child to have a Behaviour Management Plan, which is to be negotiated with the child's family. Further advice may also need to be sought from special needs service staff.

DEALING WITH CONSISTENTLY INCONSIDERATE BEHAVIOUR

If a child consistently displays inconsiderate behaviour, that child's staff team will:

- check preventative measures i.e. relationship interactions, the learning environment, methods of reinforcement etc.
- revisit their expectations of that child to see if they are developmentally suitable and realistic.
- check that the child understands the behavioural expectation e.g. that the limits are clear.
- check whether there is a conflict between techniques used at the centre and those used at home.
- check if any new/different situations have or are occurring at home.
- revisit the child's needs and see if they are being met.
- check whether the child has any health or other needs which may be impacting on their behaviour.
- check whether any events at the Centre have encouraged the behaviour e.g. transition, change in friendships etc.
- check whether consequences which have been put in place by staff have inadvertently encouraged the behaviour.
- make sure that all strategies being used are consistently followed by all staff.
- consider whether a behaviour management plan is necessary and/or whether special, expert services are required from Inclusion SA, DECD or other specialist services.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT PLANS

Behaviour Management Plans will be established in conjunction with the child's family and in response to consistently inconsiderate behaviour, which has been analysed by staff according to the procedure previously mentioned. Steps towards establishing a plan are:

1. Staff will contact parents and organise a formal meeting time (parents can also initiate this process). This meeting gives both staff and parents the opportunity to discuss the child's behaviour without the child being present.
2. Together, staff and parents will identify and discuss specific inconsiderate behaviours.
3. Together, staff and parents will discuss and agree on specific strategies to use when those inconsiderate behaviours are displayed.
4. A sequence of events will also be agreed upon e.g. reminders, warnings etc.
5. The plan will be designed with the idea that it can be implemented both at the Centre and at home.
6. Staff will make sure that parents have a copy of the plan.
7. Staff will make sure that, all Centre staff involved with that child have a copy of the plan to follow.
8. Together, staff and parents will catch up as necessary (informally and/or formally) to give feedback to one another in regards to the behaviour. This may be an ongoing process.
9. Specialist advice through Inclusion SA, DECS or other services will be contacted if there is no significant improvement with the behaviour.
10. If all the above strategies have been enacted and there has been a genuine attempt to implement

the agreed strategies, but if in the opinion of the director, no significant improvement is apparent, and there are safety considerations involved, then alternative arrangements for care will be considered by the director and the management committee.

EVALUATION

This policy will be implemented and monitored by staff and the Management Committee. Policies will be regularly reviewed by the Policy Sub-committee/Management Committee and may be altered due to changes in legislation and practices.

Policy Reviewed	Modifications	Next Review Date
July 2017	Nil	July 2018
July 2018	Nil	July 2019

REFERENCES

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