Kenilworth Nursery School
&
Whitnash Nursery School

Relationships, Behaviour and Wellbeing Policy

Includes Bullying Policy

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Committee Responsible: Governing Board
Lead Responsibility: Executive Headteacher

Kenilworth & Whitnash Nursery Schools celebrate and recognises the uniqueness of every child. We understand that interactions are relationship based and that safe secure relationships are the foundation for learning. We are careful to observe young children's behaviours and consider the meaning behind them and the message they are communicating. We are aware that children communicate worries and anxieties through behaviour and that it is important to consider not just the behaviour we are seeing but why a child maybe displaying this behaviour. We are also aware of the importance of 'learning behaviours' and of social relationships for learning.

We do not seek to judge but to teach and promote acceptable behaviour so everyone can feel safe and secure and ready to learn in our environment. We recognise that children cannot always adjust their behaviour and that we might need to co-regulate their feelings. We understand that some children on divergent developmental pathways may require bespoke support to manage their interactions and to self-regulate differently and we plan this carefully and individually.

AIMS

Our primary aim is to provide a happy secure learning environment for everyone, which begins with an awareness that we need to '**hold children in mind'**. We can do this by considering what they are feeling, thinking, experiencing, hearing, seeing, learning and what this means to them. How are they able to express this and what questions might they be asking that they cannot yet verbalise and above all **what do they need from us?** Children's behaviour conveys meaning to us and we must notice and 'observe to understand' what the behaviour is telling us about the child because "their challenges are our challenges." *Anna Freud Centre 2021*.

For children to be happy and feel safe at school in this social context it necessitates children learning self-regulation via co-regulation, group relationships, the difference between right and wrong and social rules for learning that includes using acceptable safe behaviour. We recognise that at times when children are worried or emotional this may be difficult and we may see behaviours that highlight the child is not feeling ok and that can worry or feel unsafe for others around them. We always explain why certain types of behaviour are 'unsafe', talking through the situation with care and at a level appropriate to each child's level of understanding. We aim to create a school where children, families and staff will share the same philosophy and work together to help the children become respectful and caring individuals. Promoting the child's self-image and self-esteem and enabling them to develop strategies to deal with situations such as physical and verbal confrontations, are vital and have highest priority. We recognise that children on diverging developmental pathways may feel dysregulated and become overwhelmed in our busy school environments and plan individually an approach for each child building up what is manageable based on responsiveness and recognition of their non-verbal communication. We always plan with 'voice of the child in mind'

Our School actively promotes and supports the development of positive relationships at all levels. We aim to work co-responsibly with parents, supporting them to set boundaries that are appropriate developmentally and in turn support children to feel safe and secure both in the school environment and at home. Exploring choice is vital and a key aspect of learning but we will ensure that some decisions remain adult decisions to protect children, keep them safe and ensure they are able to access experiences that are new to them so they may develop learning skills that will best support them throughout life.

Our policy and aims fully support the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance and statutory requirements 2026 and the Children's Act 2004. In addition, it also reflects guidance within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the Child Protection Policy 2024.

OBJECTIVES

Through the following universal provision, we hope to fulfil our aims by: -

- providing experiences to encourage the child to have a positive self-image through games, turn taking, stories, contributing to small group times and valuing the child's contribution at all levels while recognising and respecting the uniqueness of each child.
- being positive and consistent at all times and frequently using the phrases…good sitting, good listening, good walking. Praise will be specific and informative "I like the way you…" and we will focus upon learning skills and behaviours rather than outcomes
- giving clear positive instructions e.g. 'Please walk in school because .....' instead of 'don't run'. Through the provision of clear and consistently held boundaries we ensure children feel safe in the environment.
- encouraging social skills – 'please', 'thank you', consideration for all and turn-taking. We ensure children experience turn taking and sharing at the earliest opportunity and incorporate some element of turn taking into all of our groups. We encourage children to ask for a turn themselves, with support from staff if needed. We help children to negotiate and explain why they need to negotiate. Supporting children to understand the social relationships that support learning, including listening to the ideas of others and noticing the play and exploration of others.
- supporting children in developing positive relationships by developing emotional literacy so that thoughts and feelings can be openly discussed and explained and so that children can verbally assert their rights. Recognising the different needs and developmental pathways and ensuring that everyone has a sense they belong and can 'manage' or will be supported to 'manage' to access play and socio-emotional learning.
- recognising that each child is an individual, but there are certain times when a child has to conform to nursery procedure, e.g. small group, tidying up, fire drill, following pandemic health guidance measures and accepting the socially agreed noise levels.
- adults being good role models and encouraging the children to work within acceptable busy noise levels to ensure a calm working atmosphere. Staff use a quiet approach with the children at all times - staff voices are never raised (with the exception of the prevention of an accident through voicing awareness)
- always supporting a child, in a positive, quiet way to emphasise that it is the **action** which is unacceptable and not the child.
- encouraging children to vocalise to one another that they do not like being hurt and to express their feelings, developing an emotional literacy and empowering them to keep safe. Providing time for children to solve issue between themselves in a supervised and safe way.
- helping the children to realise how other children feel and so encourage empathy. If possible, help them to recognise the impact of their behaviour, although this may not always be a realistic expectation.
- ensuring if a dangerous situation requires immediate action e.g. throwing bricks, sand, or any other anti-social behaviour, it is stopped and then reasons are given as to why it is dangerous. If the behaviour persists, the child will be removed from the activity, for a specified time, with additional explanations and a reinforcing of boundaries of safe acceptable behaviour.
- enabling parents to feel comfortable in approaching staff about any problem that is worrying their child e.g. concerns expressed at home or any changes in circumstances which may be affecting the child's behaviour patterns at school and providing workshops to help parents understand the complex development of brain architecture and the ability of the child to manage the world.
- informing and involving parents in the school's approach to relationship work and the key use of language, moving children away from challenging situations, distracting and re-engaging children and providing time to think or a space to decide. From the outset we are co-responsible and ask for parent's support and co-operation in dealing with any behavioural issues or concern that may occur

at school. We also ask they share issues from home as early as possible so we have a complete picture of the child.
- by praising and highlighting acts of self-discipline and thoughtfulness.
- by listening to children's concerns and acting upon them.
- where appropriate, after consultation with parents, involve other agencies e.g. child psychotherapist, educational psychologist, clinical psychologist, health visitor

SETTLING IN

When children first come to Nursery school, they will find it is very different to any other previous experiences because it is their very first experience of a school environment. For some children it will be the first time they have attend a learning environment without their parents. By visiting children in their homes prior to them beginning school we support children to make an initial relationship with the adult who will be their keyworker.

We always ask that the first session in the setting is accompanied, by a parent or significant adult, so the children have the security of begin to explore and a little time to build a new relationship with their keyworkers and the surroundings before separation occurs. The settling in process is very carefully considered and is individual to each child. Some children may need adults to stay for a number of sessions or may need to only attend for quite short periods during the early stages of the process. The school will look at the use of transitional toys for children, photograph stories from home and a gradual building of session time to support settling in. Occasionally where a child is developmentally divergent this process may take considerably longer and we ask families work with us responding to the need sand capacity of their child to 'manage' and feel safe. We are aware that School can be extremely tiring.

Settling in is very important and if it happens successfully then research tell us that the next 'brand new experience' will be better received and children will become more confident when separating from parents in the future.

We ask parents to support this process and to work in co-responsibly with us at this point. We ask that whenever possible children are supported with quiet calm voices and that the parent adopts a pattern that supports the child to become comfortable on arrival, staff will work closely with parents at this point. All parents are asked to say goodbye very clearly so children do not suddenly look up and realise they have been left! Parents will also be asked to complete a short questionnaire with details about their child so that we can know as much as possible when building the new relationship. Photographs of the day will be sent home, via the Learning Journals App, so that parents can support the children and talk about their day with them to reassure them during initial settling in. A letter explaining the pattern of the day will be sent home, it will also ask parents to talk through certain elements of the day with their children before they begin.

For some children 'separation' from a parent can be very distressing and we approach each 'settling difficulty' differently and always consider the best interests of the child. We will gather information about the child, including routines and home life, we may suggest very short separations. In some cases, we may suggest that additional advice is sought.

We recognise that at points of initial separation young children may cry. It is important to understand the meaning of the crying and work with parents to determine the most appropriate response. We do not seek to stop all crying as it can inform us of a child's emotional state but will develop an appropriate response that provides the fastest pathway to a settled and secure child. For example, an adult may not focus on a child who is crying in anger and is cross but may give them time and space to express the emotion before praising the calmer, quieter behaviour that follows. We are aware that children who are at an early stage of communication with language may use crying to communicate needs, wants or worries and so we work

carefully to understand what different crying may mean for each unique child. We also articulate why a child might be crying, eg. “I know you are a bit worried but it is ok”, or “I can see you are feeling sad today, let’s go and find something that will help you to feel better…”

SETTLED, HAPPY CHILDREN EXPERIMENTING WITH CONTROL

In the event of a situation where an otherwise settled, confident child is angry at being left at school by the parent and exhibits big emotional behaviours, e.g. sobbing, shouting, hitting out, the member of staff dealing with the situation will try to de-escalate the situation and move the child into a quiet, safe space to:

a) calm and reassure the child
b) ensure physical safety of the child
c) prevent other children from becoming upset

This will only occur when:

I. the parent and school together feel it is appropriate to adopt this strategy.

II. the parent understands the school’s good practice procedure when a child is extremely upset and why it is good practice.

More often the adult will watch observe and look for points to reassure and distract, offering a hand when the child is ready to move from a doorway.

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

Children within the Nursery developmental stages will often experiment and use behaviours that push boundaries and expectations. For example; they may want to go up the slide when the rule is you must only come down sitting down, they may want to throw items as they explore trajectory which maybe unsafe socially, they may play with water in the bathrooms or respond negatively or not at all to adult requests. In all of these cases staff ‘hold the boundary’ and explain the shared rule, usually based on safety or well-being. They will intervene in an unsafe or ‘unacceptable’ behaviour using the word STOP. Staff will then explain why the child must STOP; at times it may be necessary to explain after the event but usually it happens immediately.

The child is seen as a learner in this process and the staff quickly move to a positive outcome for the child, for example; “stop! It is not safe to flick the sand, it might go into your eyes or another child’s eyes. Why don’t we add water to the sand and see what happens then”. Occasionally a child may need to move to another space and staff will use the phrase “It’s your turn now to work”. If a child is still struggling, they may be asked to worked beside an adult for a period of time or move to a quiet space.

In some cases, children can continue to push against boundaries and expectations and it is then important to work collaboratively with parents and decide a course of action and agreement on how those boundaries will be held and respected. Shared phrases or explanations for the child may be developed, sometimes parents may change an expectation at home to better support the child to be able to manage that expectation at school, consistency is very important. In some instances where a behaviour might be embedded within the child that is unsafe, a ‘strong and clear boundary’ may be held but this will be decided with parents and is seen as a supportive process for the child and all involved. We know that once we have been through this process, children feel safer and more secure because the adults in their life are containing them emotionally. In doing this, adults take the worry from the child and we then find the child can relax and engage in play, which is where and how they then learn.

For many children the skills of 'self regulation' begin at around the age of two/three years old, but can take several years to fully develop. We know from neuroscientific research, that young children rely upon co-regulation form the adults around them.

All children are unique we recognise that most young children are still learning how to manage their feelings and behaviour and will need support. Children can seem upset and at times very cross when boundaries are held but invariably it allows them to participate in the learning more successfully and to feel 'safe' in the setting. We often find children are drawn to work with adults who successfully hold boundaries because they know what is going to happen and that they are safely held in the adult's mind, the relationship becomes predictable and secure. Holding boundaries and supporting children to understand the agreed school community rules for learning is a key element of the learning process and the work of the school and the first aspect of keeping children safe. Our key role is to teach children how to learn and to allow this to happen they must feel 'contained' and supported so they can become fully immersed in play and exploration.

Peer to Peer Interactions:

At Nursery School we recognise the importance and value of developing the skills to learn with peers and build social relationships for learning. However, we also recognise that this can present conflict between children who may be asked to share resources for the first time and challenge for those who will experience, perhaps, new boundaries and expectations for building effective learning relationships within a school environment. To support this learning the school will ensure children begin to develop 'respectful' relationships, listening to each other and valuing the ideas and interests of others. From the first settling in process, we also teach children 'consent' encouraging them to respect another child's instruction if they have said 'stop'. The use and action for the word 'stop' also raises the awareness of adults who are beside the children.

Sometimes a child may hurt another child, accidentally, within social play, eg. by swinging a block when building or knocking down a tower very close to another child, the children are spoken to about what happened, why this may have happened and how to avoid it happening again. Both sets of parents would be informed about what happened/when and the actions of the school. If the action of one child appears intentional and is driven by frustration or an inability to manage their own feelings, then this is also handled in the same way but the child who is 'struggling' to manage will be supported to develop those skills and safely monitored through out the period required for this to happen. All of this will be very openly and clearly shared with parents. Staff are trained within safeguarding to be alert for 'prejudice-based' or discriminatory actions/behaviours.

The school also recognises that sometimes peer to peer relationships can 'interrupt' learning or become a barrier to developing wider relationships. At time 'friendships' maybe unbalanced and one child may be dominant in ideas or play, unsettling the other. Staff are mindful to ensure that play is balanced and supportive of all involved. Staff will support children to broaden relationships that are 'exclusive' and act as a barrier rather than comfortable places from which to build learning relationships with others.

The school understands that young children are unable to maintain social distance in play and so require adults to support them with social and spatial management, the aim is to allow an exchange of ideas and social interaction while limiting physical interaction. This is considered in a dynamic way that is responsive to children and they are often involved in finding a way to achieve safe distances and still complete something they are interested in, working collectively.

The school recognises that all children must feel safe in the environment and access learning in spaces they feel confident and comfortable, this includes ensuring children are not disturbed in their learning by the

actions of others. Where play is becoming less purposeful or volume in a space is increasing, staff will invite children to have a 'turn' in a different space or try a new activity, using phrase such as 'it's time to…' and 'it's your turn now to…". All of this work is in line with the responsibilities detailed in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

The school has also received training in the use of a Protective Behaviours Curriculum as developed by Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board. This work supports young children to discuss and understand behaviours that make them feel safe and unsafe, the impact this may physically have upon their bodies and the network of people they have around them to help them. Within this work we recognise that some children may have had Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and that these may be a barrier to their learning or building of social relationships.

ACEs.

It is important to acknowledge that ACEs affect people at all income levels and social levels, and can have serious, costly impacts across the lifespan. Experiences of significant adversity do not have to cause irreparable damage if we acknowledge trauma's effects on lives. By reducing families' sources of stress, providing children and adults with responsive relationships, and strengthening the core life skills we all need to adapt and thrive, we can prevent and counteract lasting harm. A major part of preventing ACEs is to ensure the delivery of effective early years services that support parents/carers in providing safe and stable nurturing environments for young children. ACEs can result in negative or unsafe behaviours being exhibited by young children and to respond flexibly the school needs to consider Protective and Compensatory Experience buffers for stress and trauma (PACEs)

PACEs:

Protective and compensatory experiences are based in **relationships** that provide connectedness, a sense and feeling of community, involvement and unconditional care. They also require **resources and the provision of environments** and experiences that create safety, order, self-control and mastery. **Direct experiences** that support children are based in a sense of friendship and care, support for others and collaborative working and involvement, involvement in groups in which they can follow their interests and be inspired by the interest and of others, Children also need access to an available adult who is trusted, access to a safe environment and the opportunity to engage in learning and interests.

To achieve this and promote positive behaviours and self-esteem staff are:

1. Able to hold children in mind
2. Present and available
3. Aware of the Importance of noticing and regularly checking in with young children.
4. Able to listen, validate and empathise with children's emotions.
5. Able to respond with authentic interest
6. Able to scaffold finding solutions
7. Provide emotional regulation remaining calm and even in the face of emotional upset and at times anger and frustration.

BULLYING

Bullying will not be tolerated at Kenilworth or Whitnash Nursery Schools. Whilst we recognise at this young age children are not fully engaged in 'bullying' we also acknowledge incidents of angry/aggressive, persistent or unsafe behaviour may occur and these need to be addressed quickly and supportively. Staff work with specialist support to understand the meaning behind such behaviours and to appropriately support the child

and family. Children and staff are encouraged to adopt safe behaviours to promote safety and well being at all times for children and their families.

Nursery Schools are in ideal positions to observe changes in a child's behaviour. We understand that behaviour is meaningful and that children can use behaviour to communicate anxiety and distress non-verbally. Some changes may indicate that they are being subjected to aggressive or persistent behaviours, and it is vital that both the child exhibiting any unacceptable behaviour as well as the recipient of the behaviour are fully supported.

Definitions of Bullying:

"It is the wilful, **conscious** desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone"

Tattum and Herbert (1990)

"Bullying is the behaviour arising from the **deliberate intent** to cause physical or psychological distress to others or to extort something from them"

Maccoby (1980)

The significant factors in all these definitions are the effect on the person being bullied and the intention to hurt. (Though this hurt may be far greater than intended). As a school we are aware that the children we work with are developmentally at an early stage of learning appropriate social and group behaviours and may engage in unsafe behaviour from time to time that is unintentional and without deliberate intent. We work to carefully support at these points and to share this understanding with children and parents alike.

AIMS

We aim to: -

a) develop a shared understanding of what bullying is and age and stages at which this term may become appropriate, developing ways of both identifying and working to prevent the development of unacceptable behaviours that may become bullying.

b) act promptly and liaise to support children and the parents of children involved in bullying and likewise the victim.

c) promote to parents, governors and children that bullying is not a normal part of growing up and is a totally unacceptable form of behaviour.

d) promote the positive self-image of each individual to help counteract the negative feelings which bullying can trigger.

DEVELOPING A SCHOOL APPROACH

Through an agreed understanding of what unsafe behaviours that may lead to bullying are and strategies to use in response, we are able to:

a) recognise unsafe behaviours when we see them - possible signs of bullying
b) immediately defuse the situations and act to pre-empt difficulties between young children
c) empower children to understand their right to feel and be safe and help them to develop
d) verbal strategies to explain their feelings to others who may not be aware of them
e) support young children to develop an understanding of the impact of their behaviour upon others

Bullying is distinct from other inappropriate behaviour in both its intent and intensity.

Bullying behaviour may:

- be a one-off activity
- be generally persistent
- be deliberately hostile - intention to hurt
- involve an imbalance of power
- cause distress to one or more child(ren) or adults
- be aggressive
- be verbal
- take a written form through use of social media

Our responses always stem from our positive ethos which: -

- ➢ acknowledges that everyone in school has a responsibility to deal with unacceptable/bullying behaviours;
- ➢ encourages children and families to talk openly about concerns;
- ➢ develops trust between children and adults;
- ➢ inspires the confidence of parents in the school's ability to support all children and families.

On witnessing an incident of 'bullying', as with other incidents, we:

- ✓ stay calm, don't make snap decisions or attach blame;
- ✓ state briefly and firmly why the behaviour is unacceptable;
- ✓ refer the incident as soon as possible to the Headteacher, to share with the team and discuss the child and best ways of working with the individuals.

On being told of 'bullying' by a 'bullied' child we:

- are sensitive to what the child is saying
- reassure the child that he/she is right to tell - 'everyone has the right to be safe'
- assure the child that the other child will be spoken to and that all the teachers are there to help them and look after them.

BULLYING OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Children with a marked physical "difference" may need extra support in practising responses to comments, and with developing and maintaining their self-esteem. Frequently, children with physical difficulties or divergent developmental pathways find it helpful to have an opportunity to explain to their peers what their difficulty is, what their physiotherapy or exercise routine is etc. If teachers can reinforce these children's strengths and determination to live their lives, this can be a powerful aid to raising their status in the eyes of their peers. Where children are non-verbal adults will sensitively articulate difference and needs and respect.

Children with learning difficulties may be frustrated by an inability to articulate their feelings, and may be driven to a physical response, we are aware that at times this behaviour may be interpreted as 'bullying' or unacceptable and we strive to support children with strategies to adopt at points of frustration. They may deal with unacceptable behaviour towards them in a way which escalates rather than defuses the situation. If this is happening, the child needs time to practice responses. Much reinforcement of appropriate behaviour may be needed. Staff awareness is key in defusing situations quickly and effectively for all parties involved. All incidents are monitored and we look for antecedence, behaviour and consequence. We also

monitor for patterns of behaviours. Unsafe behaviour is often an indication of dysregulation in a child or a blueprint of experience.

Although incidents should, as far as possible, be dealt with in line with the general bullying policy, there is a need to support some children in a more individualised way:

- ✓ developing their vocal assertive skills: 'I don't like that.' or 'stop that';
- ✓ helping them make and maintain relationships;
- ✓ empowering them to resist teasing, temptations, or whatever form the unacceptable 'bullying' behaviour may take.

This policy has been written giving due consideration to the European Convention on Human Rights (particularly Articles 3 and 5). Any actions taken will always adhere to the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity i.e. proportionate to the incident/behaviour and the less intrusive/forceful.