



BATTLEDOWN CENTRE FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

A Specialist Early Years Centre

DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR POLICY

This policy covers all aspects of school's work including Special School, Extended Services (inc Daycare) and Child Development Centre

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Can Behaviour Change?

We believe that any behaviour, positive or negative, can be changed. To do this we need to be able to:-

- define what a particular behaviour is
- be clear about what we wish to change

Behaviours we might wish to change will be either the ones which do not occur frequently enough e.g. sitting for circle time or those which happen with such persistence that life is made uncomfortable, e.g. pushing of other children.

Any behaviour pattern about which we are concerned must be broken down into clearly observable elements and examined in the context in which it occurs. We need to establish what makes it possible for that behaviour to occur repeatedly.

It is often appropriate to know and monitor an "ABC" of the behaviour:-

- 'A' stands for antecedents or events occurring before the identified behaviour.
- 'B' stands for the behaviour itself.
- 'C' stands for consequences or events occurring after the behaviour, including sometimes the reactions of those around.

When wanting to change behaviour, we aim to:-

- identify the behaviour
- find the factors which allow it to occur, i.e. relevant antecedents and consequences
- establish what makes it possible for it to increase or decrease in the future.

This particular approach assumes that children behave in certain ways because they have learned that the behaviour is rewarding or because they have not been taught to behave differently. This does not preclude awareness that some behaviour is a consequence of inappropriate management by other carers or due to medical factors.

A behaviour occurs because of a particular balance between antecedents and consequences. To change behaviour therefore, we alter the balance between these factors.

It is part of the adult's role in school to help children achieve and develop forms of behaviour which are appropriate to the learning context in general and school in particular. Adults in school are working together to develop consistent approaches in the management of children's behaviour. Where a specific attempt is being made to modify a child's behaviour, the strategies being implemented will be communicated by all other adults involved to those working with the child. This will include those who spend only short periods of time with the child e.g. the mid-day supervisor.

When an attempt is made to modify or change an existing behaviour there may initially appear to be an increased frequency of the undesirable behaviour. Staff will be expecting this and work patiently and consistently towards the desired goal, giving the child time to learn and adapt to the required response.

While it is not possible for adults in school to attempt to change inappropriate or unhelpful behaviours of children away from the school context, it is our aim to share the skills we use here with parents and carers and professionals from other settings and schools. We are glad to advise parents and other colleagues in order that they can be helped to manage the behaviour of children in contexts outside school more effectively.

Ways of Changing Behaviour

Some of the strategies we will use in school are as follows:-

Ignoring Behaviour

Our first strategy will, if possible, be to ignore inappropriate or annoying behaviour in the hope that if a child fails to attract attention, their 'enjoyment' from that particular behaviour will be reduced. We may use distraction techniques in support of this, or take the opportunity to reinforce some appropriate behaviour close at hand. We will make it clear at the outset why we are ignoring but will avoid repeatedly telling the child off so as not to give unnecessary attention.

We will be careful to ignore the child every time he repeats the unwanted behaviour and ensure that he does not get any attention from anyone else, even if it initially makes the behaviour worse.

Where difficult behaviour persists, it will be necessary to remind the child through words or actions of the behaviour we want to see and a warning of the consequences of continuing to behave inappropriately.

Rewards

We will reward a child who behaves appropriately. This will show a child that he is succeeding, that succeeding is fun and that we are pleased when he succeeds. Different rewards work in different situations. We always use an appropriate level of praise or an extrinsic reward such as a favourite activity or food. We can reward in the following ways:-

- we reward as soon as the child does what we want him to do
- we reward every time the child tries to do what we want at first
- we reward less often as the child learns to adapt his behaviour more readily
- we praise a child at the same time as using other rewards which may include using material rewards in the early stages until they are no longer needed
- we say exactly why we are pleased with a child when we reward him.

Sometimes rewards alone are insufficient; when a child does not know how to behave in a situation, so has to be taught. This may be by:-

Copying

We may encourage the child to look at another child or adult modelling the desired behaviour. We let him see us praising another child for doing well and encourage him to do the same.

Guiding

Here we gently guide a child who is learning a new behaviour during the early stages. This may include

guiding physically. We gradually and systematically withdraw our help as the child becomes more independent.

We may break a task into small steps. First we reward a child as soon as he shows the desired behaviour or makes a positive attempt. Next we reward not only when he has tried but also when he has attempted the second stage in the process and so on. Sometimes we make a task simpler for the child by teaching the last stage in the process first.

Removing Rewards

Another strategy which we can use is to take enjoyable things away from the child when behaviour is unacceptable. This strategy will only come into play once the previous strategies have been tried to no avail.

Removing the Child

Removing the child is the ultimate strategy we deploy.

If other people are giving unwanted attention, other children are copying, or if the behaviour is too dangerous to be allowed to continue, a decision may be made to remove the child.

This strategy removes the child from the context where he is behaving inappropriately and gaining attention for it. The child may be told firmly that he will be allowed back when he starts behaving appropriately.

The child may be removed briefly to a quiet area within the room where he cannot gain the attention reward. A time limit and criteria will be agreed with the team and with the child if appropriate. It may be necessary for a staff member to remain with the child during this process but eye contact and communication is not given until his behaviour is acceptable or the time set aside has elapsed.

The child will be returned to task once a short period of time has elapsed and only praised when he has been back on task for an agreed length of time.

Where the child has become overly distressed, some verbal and physical reassurance may be given to calm him before returning to the activity.

Conclusion

The strategies described in this document are designed to help us deal positively, quickly and effectively with challenges arising in the management of children's behaviour in school.

Our overall aim as we manage children's behaviour in school is to emphasise the positive and minimise the negative, encouraging behaviour which shows confidence, independence and consideration for others.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in three years.

Reviewed by Nikki Teague

Date May 2012