



**Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy - developing a culture of nurture and positive relationships.**

|                                    |                      |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Date of Last Review:</b>        | September 2026       |
| <b>Date approved by Governors:</b> | 16th October 2026    |
| <b>Date of next review:</b>        | September 2027       |
| <b>Origin/Author:</b>              | RMNS Leadership Team |

*"You can't teach children to behave better by making them feel worse. When children feel better, they behave better" Pam Leo.*

## **Introduction.**

Rachel McMillan Nursery School (RMNS), aims to help children develop a positive disposition to learning and positive behavior towards others. We recognize that very young children will need a lot of support when learning to manage their emotions (emotional regulation). We want the nursery to be a purposeful, motivating and safe learning environment. We do this by taking a positive approach to expected behaviours, an ethos of mutual respect between all members of our school community and with clear developmentally appropriate boundaries and support, on the rare occasions children's behaviour does not match our expectations.

Rachel McMillan Nursery School has an approach to behaviour management of positive reinforcement; praising and emphasising the right behaviour when we see it. We have a strong listening culture which encourages children to listen to each other (with adult support as needed) in order to gain a sense of empathy and understanding.

Rachel McMillan Nursery works with and values the diverse group of children who attend here. Often the nursery is the first experience children have of being in a large space, around large numbers of children, looked after by adults who are initially, unfamiliar to them. It is often their first experience outside of the family unit, of needing to communicate, negotiate and share with others. Most children need the help of respectful, caring and sometimes firm, adults to learn how to behave appropriately in a group. We encourage children to respect others, to share and collaborate, to appreciate and be sensitive to other people's feelings and qualities.

In the nursery the children have considerable scope to make choices and move around from area to area, from inside to outside. There are not many times the adults need to say "no" to a child, but we must be sure that when we say "no", we understand why we are doing so, that we really mean it and are consistent.

## **The promotion of positive behaviors, rests within five areas.**

1. Emotional security. Do the adults in the nursery provide warm, consistent care and attention to the child, who the child goes to if upset and/or seeks out on arrival? All staff recognize the importance of acknowledging children's positive behaviour rather than highlighting their challenging actions.
2. A purposeful, organised atmosphere. Do the children know where to find the resources they want to play with? Is there space for them to play? Are there quieter areas and spaces in which to be active and physical? Are transitions managed well for the child? From the session, into tidying up time? From Together Time to lunchtime/ home time or Extended Day? Does the child need extra support or cues at these times? We have routines to enable children to predict what is to happen next e.g. Every shelter has a visual timetable to help the children understand the flow of the day or week.
3. The child's age and stage of development. Do the adults know the child's needs well? Is the child able to share equipment, or does the child need support or protected time to play, without the pressure and competition of other children? Some children may need help with shy and withdrawn behaviour.
4. Effective staff communication. The shelter teams meet together, fortnightly for a children's meeting. At this meeting, we discuss the needs and developmental levels of the children, so that we are all using consistent strategies to support all the children. Each Shelter has weekly 'Team Time' to ensure information about the shelter children is known and understood by all team members.

5. The curriculum. Are there first-hand or play experiences that interest the child? Is the environment an enticing and motivating place to be? Does the learning, resources and equipment on offer, engage, extend and capture children's attention?

**An ethos that promotes positive behaviour.**

1. At RMNS, we believe that children will often behave as well as the adults they come into contact with. Therefore, it is expected that staff, students, volunteers, governors, mums, dads and carers will be good role models for all the children. We believe a nurturing approach that builds strong relationships is at the heart of our behavior policy.
2. RMNS has an approach of positive reinforcement towards the behavior we want to see, as well as one of listening, understanding, empathy and mutual respect between all members of the nursery community. We protect and value the unique nature of each child. The child's individual spirit and character, their drive to learn and develop, must be cherished and nurtured.
3. Positive behavior and an individual's ability to self-regulate are key factors in an educational and caring environment. Without a calm, warm, welcoming atmosphere, where all feel valued and there is a sense of belonging, learning cannot take place. We really value children's increasing capacity to regulate and show self-control and to take responsibility for their own actions, in age and developmentally appropriate ways.
4. We aim to support children to develop a positive attitude towards themselves and others. Self-esteem, self-respect and confidence is important for positive behavior and high levels of achievement. But we do also recognize that there are many factors that can affect a child's ability to demonstrate positive behavior.
5. All children require positive attachments (relationships) with adults that are attuned to their needs. We are aware that factors such as a new baby, changes at home, illness, tiredness etc. can all cause children to behave in different ways. We encourage mums, dads and carers to share such information, both formally and informally with staff, so that we can be mindful of children's emotions or states and provide appropriate support.
6. As the staff team get to know the children they become highly attuned to them and their developmental level and are able to offer individual support and other-regulation for children who may be struggling with their behavior, emotions or who are developing their ability to self-regulate.
7. Children who are learning how to be with other groups of children and who are looked after by adults other than their family members can become frustrated in attempts to express their emotional needs. Therefore, feeling loved and cared for, being included in play and activities, feeling valued, making friends, having a turn and asking for help if something goes wrong supports children who may be struggling.
8. Sometimes these emotional needs can result in negative attention seeking behaviours, such as hurting others or depending on developmental stage, tantrum like behaviours. To help prevent this, staff support children's emotional wellbeing and expression of emotions in a variety of ways including symbols, visual support, signing, and stories and actively listening to and talking with children. We want children to be able to recognize and name their feelings.
9. Another factor that can affect behaviour can be undiagnosed medical / psychological needs such as hearing loss or visual impairment. A known medical condition, such as epilepsy or

asthma, even when effectively managed by medication can leave children struggling with self-regulation. Indeed, the treatment itself can sometimes cause side effects that may lead to such. Information that is gathered at admission point, Home Visits, or any family meeting, can help to build a fuller picture of an individual child and the factors or context that might impact on their self-regulation/behaviour.

- i. The team at RMNS are knowledgeable and sensitive to this and each child's individual need. Establishing positive attachments and relationships between adults and children is central to working effectively with ALL children but especially for those who have additional needs.
- ii. Initially, as children settle in to school, this adult-child relationship will be developed with the child's key person - called Family Workers at RMNS.

10. A curriculum and learning environment that captivates and engages children and that includes differentiation, mutual respect, active listening, and effective classroom management is conducive to building and maintaining these relationships and attachments. This also encourages positive behaviours.

#### **Agreed Code of behavior.**

- We are kind to everyone.
- We have gentle hands.
- We share or take-turns
- We help each other.
- We listen to each other.
- We care for each other, for the resources and our school.

**Positive Feedback:** Praise is a very powerful tool to use. The general practice of classroom management involves positive feedback being given to children on a daily basis. This includes:

- Being specific about praise e.g. "I really liked the way you....." "That was so kind when you did....."
- Using the same language throughout the school so children are always clear and understand what is being said to them.
- Letting other people, children, staff, parents know about their child's positive behaviour.
- Celebrating children's achievements at school through displays, Tapestry observations and conversation. All children should experience this self-satisfaction and positive reinforcement.
- Using Together Times and group times to praise individual children.
- **Making sure ALL children get praise.**

**Modelling useful phrases:** Staff can demonstrate this, setting an excellent example, by using 'I statements' to help problem solving and conflict resolution e.g.

- "I feel.....because you.....I want you to....."
- Using language of negotiation e.g. "Can I be next?" "Can I have a turn?"
- Using assertive language e.g. "Stop I don't like it"
- To begin with and depending on child's age and development this should be collaborative with adults leading and modelling this in partnership with the child if there has been conflict.
- Then as a child becomes older, more mature and confident, as far as possible children should be allowed (*with developmentally appropriate adult support*) to have time and space

to begin and learn how to sort out conflicts themselves. This is the start of helping children to build resilience, self-regulate emotions, build relationships and independent strategies.

### Unacceptable Behaviour.

- Physical behaviour that hurts others.
- Verbal behaviour that is hurtful - name calling, racist comments, phrases or comments that exclude e.g. "you can't play here", shouting at others.
- Emotional - putting somebody down, or teasing them.
- Damage to books, equipment or resources.
- Knowingly taking something that does not belong to you.
- Consistently refusing to tidy up
- Snatching something from someone else rather than asking for it or waiting for your turn

We take any repeated pattern of negative behaviour towards another child or group of children (Bullying) very seriously and work thoughtfully and collaboratively with children and their families to address and resolve any issues. We recognise that in the case of very young children, they will not understand this behaviour as bullying BUT still the impact on the victim may still be one of distress, fear or sadness.

**Managing unacceptable behaviour.** We understand that a child's self-esteem can be instrumental in their ability to behave positively. Consequently, we place emphasis on the **behaviour** shown not the character of the child, making sure that no child is labelled negatively and that all children see themselves as being valued, having a place and a sense of belonging. We are consistent in our approach including these actions:

- Calmly intervening, being at child's level and using a firm, calm and controlled voice and tone.
- Comforting the child who has been hurt (if applicable). Showing concern and care for the child. Helping the other child/ren to see the consequences of their actions, naming the feelings of the hurt child or asking them to name them if appropriate. Try to establish what actually happened by listening to ALL parties involved.
- Letting children know what is unacceptable about the behaviour, labelling the behaviour **not** the child - making physical contact, e.g. holding hands or putting an arm around a child may help them to concentrate on what you are saying.
- Staying calm. It is important that we clearly signal the unacceptability of dangerous behaviour, and behaviour which harms others or nursery property in an assertive/serious but calm way.
- If children are mature enough, guide them into working out how to sort this out for themselves (e.g. "What could you do, to help them feel happier/better?") or ask the child who has been hurt what consequences they would like to see happen to help them feel happier. Support the other child to help make amends.
- If appropriate, tell the child clearly, what will happen, if the behaviour continues e.g. having a short time away from playing. This could include a time to calm and regulate, close to a member of staff. This is '**Time-in**' NOT 'Time out', as it is focussed on **emotional regulation, attachment and repair**, to enable the child to successfully re-join the play.
- **Deal with the behaviors immediately and then drop it.** Do not prolong the response by continuing to talk about it or give it unnecessary extra attention.
- If a child is in immediate danger, we may need to raise our voice to be heard. **This should be an exception**, and we must ensure that our voice/tone is strong, clear and assertive NOT shouting or aggressive. **Shouting is never an acceptable response to behavioral; challenges unless there is immediate danger to a child.**

- We always demonstrate a kind and caring approach to the children, never shouting at them, intervening physically only as a last resort and in line with positive handling procedures. We help the children to self-regulate by remaining calm, gentle but firm and modelling regulation through our empathetic 'thinking aloud' and together with them, of their thoughts and actions.
- We never embarrass or humiliate children. Any conversation about an individual child must only happen away from the children - so must **never** happen in the shelter or the garden when children are present.
- **Do not demand that the child says sorry** - they may not mean it and, if they don't say it, you are just creating a standoff situation that you cannot control. Adults modelling saying sorry is very important and as children mature they can be praised for saying 'sorry', when it is authentic.

### **Strategies for managing repeated patterns of behaviour**

1. Discussion within the Shelter team, to share information, raise awareness and vigilance. Planned time to talk with the child's family about the concern Meeting with the parents, in order to gain an understanding of the child's behaviour and develop agreed joint strategies to manage the difficulties
2. Share information with members of the Leadership Team and/or SENDCo.
3. Tell all staff team the strategies that are being used, in either the fortnightly children's meeting or morning Briefing to share information, raise awareness and vigilance.
4. If appropriate, Looking at "triggers"/use of ABC charts (e.g. is it always at tidying up time?) and acting to prevent the challenging behaviour occurring (e.g. giving child positive attention at that time.)
5. If behaviour persists, seek advice from SENDCO or external agencies e.g. CAMHS, Educational Psychologist

### **Involving mums, dads and carers**

**Where a child's behaviour is challenging, the joint-work of the mums, dads, carers and the nursery is critical:**

- Mums, dads and carers are experts on their own children.
- Mums, dads and carers should be involved as partners, not people to be blamed or told off.
- They should not receive unprepared feedback on their child's behaviour in nursery. Take a problem-solving approach, we need to work together to help your child with this... Can we all use the same strategies?
  - Think first - exactly what will you say? Talk it over first before meeting the mum, dad or carer, if possible.
  - Meet the mum, dad or carer in a confidential space where other families cannot overhear what is being said.
  - Explain the difficulty in nursery and ask if the mum, dad or carer has any particular understanding or clarification of the situation.
  - Arrange to review progress a short time later.
  - Feedback information from the meeting to the shelter/staff team.

Some children's behaviour is more challenging than others. When the nursery staff and the mums, dads and carers work closely together, then children's behaviour almost always improves.

It is important to help children whose behaviour is challenging whilst they are still young - things get much more difficult when they are bigger and older, and have started primary school.

## Appendices

### Modelling the behaviour, which we hope to promote.

- Treat each other and the children with respect and kindness.
- Use calm and sensitive methods of control to achieve order.
- Focus on the positive, remembering that a child may only have ever been told what not to do.
- Acknowledge children's feelings with authenticity - e.g.
  - "That is a very big feeling. I can help you. Shall we sort it out together?"
  - "I can see you are very angry about that."
  - "You look sad."
- **Don't say** - "don't be sad" ... "it will be alright" ... "don't cry". As it diminishes the importance of children's emotions/feelings. And don't ignore them.
- Support each other!
  - Practically e.g. enabling a colleague to have a few minutes' time away if she or he is becoming stressed by a difficult behavior.
  - Emotionally e.g. recognising that a colleague may be upset or angry after an incident has occurred, and enabling a colleague to recognise this and talk about it.
  - Professionally e.g. sharing approaches or strategies which you have found effective, reminding each other when necessary about our policy, challenging each other when it seems that our ethos or policy is being breached.

### Useful strategies to use when you are finding a child's behaviour challenging:

- Stepping in early and distracting children away from mis-using resources or challenging behaviors, by focusing on other activities/resources and giving attention to children learning positively or 'doing the right thing': e.g. "Thank-you, X that is so helpful of you to put the bricks away." Not "X is being good and doing what they are asked!"
- Get down to the child's level where possible with reasonable, close proximity to them.
- Make eye-contact where possible. If eye contact is not possible, then ensure you are speaking so that the child can hear you. Reflect child's feelings back to them e.g. "I can see that you are upset".
- Keep what you say focused and to-the-point. Do not use a lot of words/instructions.
- Speak calmly and firmly but don't raise your voice.
- State positively what you want or need e.g.: "I/we need you to walk when you are inside, to be safe. There are a lot of children in here".
- Try to say what you need positively, wherever possible, rather than "Don't....."
- Before you say anything - make sure you have the child's attention. Instead of calling out instructions or telling the child off, start off by getting eye contact with the child and/or getting down to the child's level. Then you won't have to repeat yourself and you can be sure the child is paying attention.
- Be firm and clear but avoid a direct power struggle. For example: "I will wait one minute for you to give that to me" gives the child some time and space to adjust to what you are saying.
- Don't keep talking or repeating. Try: "I need to you to come away now. I can wait one minute. But then I will have to hold your hand and bring you away." If the child does not respond: "I need to hold your hand now and move you away."
- Give warm praise, **the moment** a child follows the specific instruction you gave them. For example, if you asked them to put the bricks away, praise the putting away of the bricks (even if it is done angrily). The child is following your instruction, so praise that. You could then praise any child nearby who is putting the bricks away carefully or gently as that is

likely to support the behaviour of the original child you were speaking with.

- Talking things through/Thinking out loud, can really help children to find other ways of dealing with problems. For example: "You both want that car. What shall we do? Could you have it first, and then N have it next?" **Or** - "Can you use your words?" *Let's try saying* "Can I be next?" **Or** "Can I have a turn?"
- You can support conflict resolution by modelling the behaviours/phrases that lead to this e.g.
  - "X looks sad, I wonder if they wish they hadn't hurt you." **Or**
  - "I wonder if together we can think of a good/fair way to share this toy/take it in turns" **Or**
  - "Shall I help you to say, 'Stop I don't like it!' so that Y knows you don't want them to do that."
- Sometimes both children have contributed to a problem. You may want to try an approach such as: "Is there a problem here?" "Has something gone wrong?", "What's the matter?" "How can I help?"
- You may be able to model positive ways to manage a conflict, e.g. "You look very sad about that, but it's not your turn. You need to say, "Can I have a turn next?" and then depending on child's developmental level, support them to do this successfully.
- Try to say what you want to happen, **not**, what you don't want to happen. Try saying "It is time to pick up all those toys now" rather than "Stop throwing the toys". Use visuals, to support children's understanding, if appropriate.
- Sometimes the more we say, the less children listen, and just "switch off". So instead of saying over and over what you want, say what you want and set a limit: "I need you to pick up the toys, please. I wonder if you can do it by the time I have counted to 10?"
- Always follow through on what you have said and be consistent, making it immediate and short, so children trust and believe what you say.
- Remind children of what is allowed, and what isn't. Be precise and clear

#### Some strategies for dealing with dangerous and harmful behavior.

- Letting children know what is unacceptable about the behaviour, labelling the behaviour **not** the child. E.G. "I don't want you to throw the toys because it might hurt people." Rather than "You are being naughty."
- Staying calm, it is important that we clearly signal the unacceptability of dangerous behaviour, and behaviour which harms others or nursery property.
- Playing alongside the child in a new activity to support positive or appropriate play or re-directing the play e.g. if children are playing dangerously with sticks either redirect to a resource more appropriate for that play they are already doing **or** take an opportunity to teach or explore with the children how to play with the resources or be curious about the different ways resources can be used, if they are not using them appropriately. Teaching children how to use the resources is a fundamental and important part of our role.
- If children do not respond, it may be appropriate to say that they will have a short time away from being able to play, being alongside one of the adults for some '**Time-in**'. The time should be equal in minutes, to the child's age or developmental stage.
- To follow through this strategy, you might sit quietly with the child for the time, or hold the child's hand and keep the child with you. Time-in is about proximity and emotional regulation
- Before the child returns to play, ensure that the boundaries are clear. E.G. "Remember, in nursery there is no hitting." **Settle the child to an activity before leaving them.**

### **Information about biting.**

- Thankfully, this is a quite rare behavior but it does cause distress to the children and families affected.
- Biting is part of a normal developmental phase.
- It is often a means of communication or gives sensory relief (e.g. if a baby/child is teething).
- It can be a quick and effective way to get a toy or attention.
- It can be a result of overwhelm if activities, the environment or emotions are too demanding or stressful.
- It can be as a result of unpredictable routine or inadequate levels of positive or nurturing adult interaction.
- It may be imitative behaviour.
- One in ten toddlers bite (i.e. it is common)

### **Guidance on dealing with and avoiding biting.**

- 'Punishment' is **not** advised – it is much better to 'unpick' the possible reasons and MODEL appropriate behaviours.
- Focus attention on the victim, empathising with their response, comforting and reassuring them and voicing how they feel. Show a sad or upset face or visual to the child who bit and say firmly "No biting" OR "Stop! No biting"
- Be **consistent** in your response.
- Use helpful phrases such as "We don't bite people, we bite food" Or show children with 'Chewelry' that they can use that if they need to bite.
- Model and teach
  - nurturing behaviours
  - Useful words/phrases "Stop, I don't like it.", "Mine", "Want it", "Can I be next?"
  - "Kind hands", "Gentle touching", "Use your words".
- Be specific in your language use – "Be nice", "Be good" is too vague and unclear.
- Observe to establish if there are any patterns or specific needs
  - Internal reasons such as hunger, tiredness, teething or physical discomfort.
  - External reasons such as over stimulation, overcrowding, lack of favoured toys, lack of attention or lack of supervision.
  - These may mean we need to think of other strategies or resources e.g. Chewellery.

### **What to do to encourage non-biting behaviour.**

- Be aware of the triggers that have been observed to cause this and minimise/eliminate them.
- Provide positive guidance (modelling appropriate physical interactions, symbols, words or phrases).
- Pre-empt and anticipate triggers.
- Praise positive interactions e.g. "Gentle hugging".
- Remain curious about behaviours and think of the 'Why?'
- Log occurrences.
- If necessary, 'shadow' the 'biter' and/or the 'victim'

### **Working with parents around biting.**

- Reassure parents of the child's confidentiality.

- Reassure that this is part of a normal phase of development for many young children (Typically, once children have developed the language they need to communicate wants and desires, words begin to replace biting.)
- Work with families to ensure consistent use of strategies and language used.

### **Play fighting.**

Generally:

- Practitioners can usually tell the difference between rough and tumble play and genuine fighting.
- However rough and tumble play can lead to children being accidentally hurt and so there have to be established rules.
- A play fight is not the same as bullying - bullying would be an intent to hurt with persistent actions from a specific person/s.
- Play fighting is a part of imaginative role play. It does help children to develop.
  - They are creating their own narrative/story. Taking on a role.
  - This often means they are exploring themes of good/bad, right/wrong, rules/justice/consequences.
  - Children learn what is real/pretend. How to control their emotions, including anger, their bodies, and their expressions.
  - Children learn their own limits and those of others so that they don't lose control and hurt themselves or others.
  - Children can choose whether they want to engage in this play or not.
  - These are all valuable learning experiences.
- Staff must observe, model and support closely if children are engaged in Superhero play or play fighting.

### **Research shows:**

Play fighting nurtures an ability to comprehend the hierarchy of social structures - there is a suggestion that there is a link between rough and tumble play and social competence - play fighting has been found to stimulate the release of certain chemical growth factors in the cerebral cortex - an area known as the 'social brain'.

### **What does this mean for Rachel McMillan Nursery School?**

- Rough and tumble play and play fighting are important in children's physical, personal and social development.
- We must monitor carefully for 'Singling out'/bullying and we should always intervene if it has become too rough or looks as if it may become a real fight.
- We should help our children to learn about and understand their own emotions and those of others. This will involve, discussion, negotiation, establishment of rules, empathy and self-control.
- We should help our children develop the skills they need to cope in challenging social situations - identifying 'what is going on', self-control, ability to walk away, adherence to rules, knowing when to seek help.

Children who experience and learn to deal appropriately with rough and tumble play are more likely to develop the resilient and robust social skills they will need later in life.

All young children need adult support to enable them to make effective use of the play provision. We need to be able to interact, support, comfort and reassure children so that we and they know they are happy and safe.