Plymouth Nursery Schools Federation

Behaviour and Relationships Policy

Helping children to manage their responses to challenging situations

Introduction

Exemplary behaviour is at the heart of productive learning. Research suggests that a relational approach to behaviour is more effective than a behaviour management system. It promotes holistic well-being, learning and behaviour and recognises that all behaviour is a form of communication. (Sources: Emmerson 2022, Bergin and Bergin 2009, Riley 2010, Corzolino 2013) It is a way of interacting or communicating with others that embodies core values such as respect, inclusiveness, honesty, compassion, cooperation and humility.

Staff at Plymouth Nursery Schools Federation (PNSF) understand the impact of trauma, support affected children and create inclusive, safe environments. Our Behaviour and Relationships Policy is set within the context of adults who are caring and nurturing and attune to each child. We have a relational approach to behaviour. (See appendix 1 for details.)

We recognise that young children are learning how to behave, navigate their world and forge relationships. PNSF staff are committed to working in partnership with children to create a happy, safe, predictable and mutually respectful environment.

Rationale

For many children, entering nursery will be their first experience of life away from their family. Consequently, many children will take time to become used to:

- the way the nursery operates on a daily basis and
- the absence of their primary care giver.

PNSF staff appreciate the need to be particularly sensitive to this whilst a child is settling in. They recognise their role in supporting children emotionally as they develop understanding of the rules, routines and boundaries of the provision.

PNSF staff also understand the vital importance of acknowledging the uniqueness of each child, establishing positive relationships with their parents/carers and providing an enabling physical and emotional environment, in order for children to feel secure and to thrive.
At PNSF we understand that self-regulation supports children's executive function. Executive function refers to the skills that help us to resist impulses, control the focus of our attention and hold information in mind so it can be applied. E.g. remembering the rules of a game you're playing. These skills are only just emerging in the early years. They require

teaching and modelling, practice and repetition to develop. Supporting the development of children's emotional regulation is an essential element in ensuring that all children are able to access learning and achieve their full potential. As such, co-regulation - the ability to regulate emotions and behaviours, manage stress, and return to a calm state, with adult support - is central to our approach to behaviour.

Aims

- Ensure a consistent and calm approach to responding to behaviour and the use of language to do so
- Ensure that agreed boundaries of acceptable behaviour are clearly understood by all (children, staff and families)
- Ensure that all staff take responsibility for maintaining positive behaviour
- Focus on repairing relationships when addressing unwanted behaviour (This is known as restorative approaches.)
- Promote children's self-esteem by praising effort in both learning and behaviour
- Ensure all children and staff are polite, happy and considerate of others' feelings
- Encourage respect for own and others' property
- Foster good citizenship, self-discipline and emotional regulation strategies
- Encourage a positive, calm and purposeful atmosphere, where children can learn without limits

The PNSF's rules are:

We are kind (to each other)

We help (to look after our nursery)

We listen

Our rules are explicitly taught when children start and routinely reinforced by staff through:

- group times
- scaffolded play and interactions in the continuous provision
- responses to incidents as they arise
- discussions about expectations / behaviour
- positive noticing – praising and drawing attention to children demonstrating expected / wanted behaviours.

The foundations of our practice for nurturing behaviour expectations within the PNSF are:

1. Consistent, calm adult behaviour
2. First attention to best conduct
3. Relentless routines
4. Scripting difficult conversations
5. Restorative follow up

1. Consistent, calm adult behaviour
Strong relationships between staff and children are vital. PNSF staff are consistent with children and set firm boundaries and expectations at all times. This predictability enables children to feel safe.

PNSF staff are approachable and provide attuned help and guidance to children for their behaviour, rather than merely disciplining. We ask all adults in school to demonstrate **calm, consistent adult behaviour**. If a member of staff is having difficulty with an individual or group of children, they are expected to seek support in order to make a positive change.

2. First attention to best conduct
PNSF staff support children to understand that all emotions are acceptable but not all behaviours.
The following principles are applied to all interactions with children:
Identify the behaviour we expect
Explicitly **teach** expected behaviour
Model the behaviour we expect
Practise the behaviour
Notice positive behaviour
Create conditions that ensure positive behaviour

A common and consistent use of language around behaviour ensures clear boundaries for learning how to behave and interact with each other. At PNSF we believe that the language around behaviour should be positive and behaviour guidance should be constructive, not punitive. We firmly believe in the power of meaningful, specific, individualised, direct praise. Staff provide 'positive noticing'. They actively notice exemplary behaviour, tell children what they are praising and explain the reasons why.

At PNSF we value the use of praise in ensuring behaviour expectations are followed and self-esteem is promoted.

Systems for praise include:

- Staff providing specific verbal praise for positive learning, effort or behaviour.
- Children being invited to share / celebrate their positive learning, effort or behaviour with SLT or other Key Worker groups.
- Staff sharing positive learning, effort or behaviour with the child's parents / carers either face-to-face, through a note home, email or telephone call or via the PNSF's digital platform, Famly.
- Star of the week – for Nursery School. (See Appendix 3.)

3. Relentless Routines
At PNSF we are committed to making our school a safe environment for all children and adults. Children feel safe and secure in environments that are predictable. PNSF staff ensure that routines and boundaries are clear and consistent. This supports every child to

understand them for their own and each other's safety, as well as enjoyment. Staff give children clear, simple explanations in response to behaviour to aid understanding of the expectations.

PNSF staff:
• Do not assume that children know how to behave; staff teach them the rules that operate in the nursery and precise routines for individual activities.
• Use positive language when stating rules and routines; identify the behaviours that want to be seen, rather than those which do not.
• Teach children the behaviour expectations for learning activities (independent play, group time and discussion)
• Teach children the organisational behaviour routines (e.g. how to enter the group room, what to do at tidy up time, how to make a comment or answer a question in group time).
• Use acknowledgement and positive reinforcement to embed rules and routines.

Teaching of routines and behaviour expectations are supported by:
• Establishing the routine with visual support and running through it with the children in a developmentally appropriate way (e.g. objects of reference, 'now / next' board)
• Checking children's understanding of the routine
• Modelling / scaffolding routines, expectations and behaviours
• Positive noticing - 'catching' children doing the right thing and celebrating this

4. Scripting difficult conversations
At PNSF the staff's consistent approach to responding to behaviour is supported through the use of agreed 'scripted' conversations.

We use a 3 step **REMINDER > REDIRECTION > SUPPORTED RE-REGULATION** model to manage unwanted behaviour. This is adapted to meet the developmental and age-related needs of the child. (See Appendix 4 for details)

The focus of our response is on restoring a calm, safe environment and returning emotionally regulated children to their play and learning with their peers as quickly as possible. Staff take into account a child's level of understanding when responding to children's behaviour based on BLANK levels (see Appendix 5). The majority of unwanted behaviours will be dealt with by PNSF staff using quick interventions and de-escalation strategies. These are:

- Have a **gentle approach**.
- **Get down to the child's level** where possible. Make eye contact if appropriate. Ensure they are speaking so that the child can hear them.
- **Show concern** for the child. It can be helpful to hold the child's hand as a reassurance that it is the behaviour not them at fault; this can also be said to the child.
- **Consistently speak calmly** in a non-threatening or shaming way, without raising their voice.

- Give the child **ownership of the behaviour** by asking them to tell you what happened, if developmentally appropriate.
- **Reinforce** the nursery **behaviour expectations. Provide firm and clear instructions, stating positively and specifically what is wanted or needed and why** (as opposed to what is not wanted). E.g. "Let's take turns. Taking turns is kind."
- **Keep what they say focussed and to-the-point**; using short sentences alongside visual support (e.g. Makaton sign or symbol card) if appropriate.
- Give the child **time and space to adjust and respond** to what they are directed to do.
- **Provide a choice and explain the consequences**. (See Appendix 6 for details)

Once the child has responded in a positive way, staff will give the child positive feedback to reinforce the behaviour expectation.

If a child repeats the behaviour, staff will remind them again of the expected behaviour and introduce a new consequence e.g. having to come away from the immediate area or activity and/or being given some 'time in' with the adult to support them to calm down, regulate and process what has happened.
There will be occasions when this process may be lengthy and the child may be dysregulated However, it needs to be followed so that:

- the child understands what the behaviour expectation is
- the child knows that the process will be seen through
- the child knows that the adult is there to support them through it
- the adult can provide the positive message once the process has concluded
- the child will remember/can be reminded what will happen, if the behaviour is repeated on another occasion.

Suggested responses and support strategies:

- **Re-focus child**– "*Child's name,* only two more and you're finished!"
- **Offer of support** – "Do you need some help to share the trains?"
- **Wondering question –** *Child's name*, I'm wondering if sitting close to xxx is making it difficult for you to share the bricks. Let me sit with you so I can help you."
- **Distraction/ Redirection**: *Child's name*, let's find a door for your house.
- **Nip in the bud:** "*Child's name*, share the bricks so xxx can build a house too."
- **Name the need: "**I can see you're very cross because you wanted to go on that bike. Waiting is so hard, isn't it? Let's wait together for your turn. You will get a turn."
- **Use of a visual:** e.g. 'wait' symbol and / or Makaton sign, now and next board, count down buttons / sand timer used to support understanding of turn-taking or what is happening now and next.

Our 5 simple agreed scripts:
Remember ... (our rule about)
Let's ...
I need you to ...
(e.g. listening now / wash hands ...) thank you.
I'm here (when you are ready)

5. Restorative follow up

A restorative approach focuses on repairing relationships and problem-solving. A developmentally appropriate restorative follow-up needs to take place at the earliest opportunity. The Room Lead or a member of SLT can help staff facilitate this if required. The restorative follow up should take place once the child is calm. Staff take into account a child's level of understanding when talking to them based on BLANK levels (see Appendix 5). For children working at BLANK level one the member of staff will model the relationship repair by supporting them to re-join the play alongside others, modelling and scaffolding interactions, behaviour responses and play.
For developmentally ready nursery school children staff will talk to them about their understanding of what happened and how it made them and others feel. Staff will also support the child to problem-solve and develop empathy. This is done through 'wondering aloud' and 'lending the adult thinking brain' to the child to agree on more appropriate ways of responding next time.

Regular Significant Behaviour Occurrences and Extreme Behaviours
Some behaviours require adults to intervene and need specifically addressing, such as:

- Physical hurting (biting, scratching, pushing, hitting)
- Emotional hurting (using aggressive, unkind or discriminatory language)
- Spitting
- Damaging or attempting to damage property

Some children may exhibit particular behaviours based on early childhood experiences and family circumstances. As trauma informed staff, we recognise that a child's behaviour is their way of communicating their emotions. We also understand that for many children they need to feel a level of safety before they exhibit extreme behaviours. For these children our focus is building strong, healthy attachments. At PNSF we recognise that unwanted behaviour is often 'attachment seeking'. These children may have individualised plans that detail additional support, strategies and expectations.

Staff follow a graduated approach for those children who need specific support with regulating their emotions, managing relationships and developing social skills. This is done in collaboration with the child's parents / carers, as follows:

1. Monitor behaviour to identify areas of concern / possible causes/ appropriate targets - Observe children to understand what a child's behaviour is communicating, including a record of the context, potential triggers leading up to the incident, the result of the behaviour.
2. Discuss with Room Lead / manager and seek guidance from the school SENCO.
3. Identify reasonable adjustments that can be made to the provision or the support the child receives.
4. Liaise with parents/carers to ensure a holistic approach to supporting the child's behaviour and agree on strategies and targeted interventions e.g. a behaviour plan or IEP (See the PNSF SEND Policy for details of this process)
5. Regularly review as a team, with parent/carers and the child (if developmentally appropriate) implemented strategies and interventions and update / amend and adapt as required

6. With consent of the parents/ carers, pursue referral for additional specialist advice and assessment as appropriate, e.g. from CAMHS, Early Years Inclusion Advisory Service, Child Development Centre.

Parents / Carers as Partners

PNSF appreciates and deliberately encourages active parental involvement in order to:

• ensure that children attend nursery regularly, arriving on time, alert and ready for the session and are collected, promptly, at the end of the session / day;

• understand and reinforce the nursery school language as much as possible;

• share in any emotional, relational or behavioural concerns;

• support the work of the nursery school as staff seek to support the whole family.

Staff at PNSF always aim to contact parents quickly when there are concerns about deteriorating levels of acceptable behaviour.

Physical Restraint

When dealing with an episode of extreme behaviour, a child may need to be restrained if they or another person is unsafe. This will only be used as a last resort and by experienced, trained staff, in accordance with the DfE guidance on use of reasonable force: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6943dad6501cdd438f4cf5aa/Restrictive_interventions_including_use_of_reasonable_force_in_schools.pdf

PNSF will record all incidents of extreme behaviour on CPOMS and notify the child's family.

Exclusion (Fixed Term & Permanent)

Exclusion is an extreme step and will only be taken in cases where:

• Long-term or repeated challenging behaviour is not responding to strategies in place and the safety and learning of others is being seriously hindered. The child may be considered to have Special Educational Needs and the procedures for meeting those needs are set out in the PNSF's SEN policy.

• The risk to staff and other children is too high.

• The impact on staff, children and learning is too high.

Permanent exclusion will always be a last resort and PNSF will endeavour to work with the family and the local authority to complete a managed move to a more suitable setting where possible. In all instances, what is best for the child will be at the heart of the decision making process.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The PNSF Senior Leadership Team will monitor the visible consistencies of the strategies and responses laid out in this policy across the nursery schools on an on-going basis and address any discrepancies with staff. The SLT will monitor the effectiveness of this policy annually and report back to the PNSF Governing Body. Adaptations will be made as required to ensure on-going effective and appropriate responses to behaviour in line with evidence based best practice and DfE guidance.

Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the PNSF policies:

- SEND Policy
- Settling Policy

Reviewed and agreed 07/10/26

Appendix 1
Factors that influence the PNSF relational approach to behaviour:

Consideration of each child's personal, social and emotional stage of development and the building of trusting relationships with them, underpins our response to behaviour and the way we help children to understand expectations and boundaries. Other factors that influence our approach are - emotional security, the curriculum, a calm atmosphere, a child's developmental stage, special educational needs (SEND), communication and language:

1. **Emotional security**: Are there adults in the nursery who provide consistent care and attention to the child, who the child seeks out on arrival and goes to when upset? Are the adults in the nursery supported well so they are able to *'hold' the child and help them to regulate their emotions? (* 'hold' in this context means to keep the child in mind, hold their emotions, not physically holding a child)

2. **The Curriculum**: Are there first-hand play experiences that interest the child? Is the level of challenge correct? Do the adults join in with the play rather than 'hijack' children's plans and ideas?

3. **A calm atmosphere**: Are transitions managed for the child – from the session, into tidying up time; from group time to lunchtime? Does the child need extra help at these times? Have we reviewed our 'timetable' to make sure they are appropriate for the child and not just for the adults to manage the day?

4. **The child's age and stage of development**: Is the child developmentally ready to share equipment, or do they need protected time to play without the pressure and competition of other children? Do they need to 'share', if they are using the only red car do they really need to give it up while they are deeply involved in their play? Are there enough resources to enable collaborative play?

5. **Additional Needs/SEND**: Does the child have any additional needs that might impact on their ability to build relationships with others? Does the child's individual needs make it difficult for them to empathise with others?

6. **Communication & Language**: Are there a variety of ways for children to communicate their needs and wants, photographs, symbols, objects of reference, Makaton signing, communication boards? Are all children taught and familiar with the augmentative communication methods in place within the nursery so they can understand each other?

Appendix 2
Expected adult positive conduct:

All staff help children to understand that all emotions are acceptable, but not all behaviours. PNSF expects all adults (staff, governors, parents / carers and visitors) to promote and model positive examples of conduct at all times as laid out in Appendix 2.

- Calmness
- Respect
- Humour
- Empathy
- Consistency of approach in responding to children
- Dedicating time to actively listen and build relationships with children to develop open, trusted two-way communication
- Addressing actions / behaviour without shaming the child
- Reflective practice
- Shining a light on children's positive behaviour and conduct through praise
- Striving for solutions to situations that have a fair and positive outcome for all
- Adults utilising a wondering aloud approach to support children to resolve conflicts together; e.g. 'I see there is only one star-shaped cutter. I wonder what we could do so that everyone can use it ...'
- Modelling and scaffolding positive interactions and relationships e.g. saying sorry, thanking someone, sharing, taking turns
- De-escalation
- Providing co-regulation

Some behaviours are not acceptable at PNSF and will be challenged if adults in our community display them:

- Aggression
- Shouting
- Negativity
- Humiliation / shaming
- Power struggles

Appendix 3
Star of the week – Nursery School

Academic research has proved that the more a person repeats their positive qualities, the more they believe it, the more their self-esteem grows and the more embedded the behaviours become. In addition, the positive narrative counteracts negative labelling the child may be experiencing by alerting others to their positive qualities.
PNSF's 'Star of the week' is designed in response to this with the belief that every child has a right to be noticed and appreciated. Therefore, it is not a strategy where children are nominated each week – it is everyone's **right** to be a star – each child will have a turn during the year.

Prior to their week of being a star, the child's Key Worker, in discussion with other staff at the weekly staff meeting, identifies a positive quality about the child that they have noticed.

The statement is written on two stars; one for the child to take home and one to be displayed on their group room door. At carpet time, the star is read out to the child and a photo of them is placed on their group time door so everyone in nursery can see who is being celebrated this week.
A star of the week song is sung to mark the moment e.g.:

Twinkle, twinkle little star
What a special child you are
Each of us has things we do
That make us special me and you
Twinkle, twinkle little star
What a special child you are

Throughout the week staff will actively notice who is star of the week and encourage the child to communicate the positive things that have been noticed about them, to reinforce its message.

Star of the Week Song

*Twinkle, twinkle little **star***

*What a **special** child you are*

*Each of us has things we **do***

*That make us special **me** and **you***

*Twinkle, twinkle little **star***

*What a **special** child you are*

Appendix 4
3 Step **REMINDER > REDIRECTION > SUPPORTED RE-REGULATION** model in detail:

- **REMINDER** (reinforce rules, privately if possible):

"*Child's name*, I see you … e.g. have all the trains." (state the noticed behaviour)
"In nursery we … e.g. "are kind. We share." (state desired behaviour and give reminder of relevant rule: Jenny Mosely). Give the child time to respond.

- **REDIRECTION** (re- state the behaviour wanting to be seen and explain consequences):

"I see you … e.g. still have all the trains." (state the noticed behaviour).
This is the second time I have spoken to you. (Insert child's name) … if you … again, I will need to ask you to …. move to … / go to the quiet area / thinking mat, etc.
If developmentally appropriate, remind child of previous good behaviour e.g. "Do you remember when … ? That is what you need to do now. Think carefully. I know that you can make good choices." Provide choices and give the child time to respond.

- **SUPPORTED RE-REGULATION:**

• The child is taken to designated area of the provision.
• 'Time in' is provided for a developmentally appropriate time (up to 5 minutes) with an adult in order to reflect, calm down, process, etc. without causing further disturbance. Calming down activities will be provided: spider hand crawls, paper scrunching, modelling with play dough, sand drawing, blowing bubbles, deep breathing, sensory glitter jar, a walk outside, listen to calming music, clap and count, pop bubble wrap / pop-it toy, take a pencil for a walk

Appendix 5
Using BLANK levels to respond to and think about behaviour

BLANK level one
the member of staff will:

- Use re-direction and distraction techniques
- Support a child to join play alongside others, modelling and scaffolding interactions, behaviour responses and play.

BLANK level two
The member of staff will:

- Tell the child directly and clearly what happened and how their behaviour has affected others e.g. 'You took Bobby's car. Now he is crying'
- Avoid questioning the child about what they have done
- Describe appropriate behaviours using short, simple sentences, visually supported as required
- Say what you want to see rather than what you don't e.g. 'walk, thank you' instead of 'don't run'

BLANK level three
The member of staff will:

- Ask simple questions
- Ask the child to describe what happened, how they and others felt
- State the perceived justification for what the child did and explain why they shouldn't have done it
- Model response to questions if the child is unable to answer them

e.g.
Where were you?
What were you doing? /
How do you feel?
How did X feel?
NB – DO NOT ASK THE CHILD TO JUSTIFY THEIR BEHAVIOUR – NO WHY QUESTIONS

BLANK level four:
Tell me what happened
Why did you do that?
What should you have done?
What can you do now?
What can you do next time?

NB- when a child is dysregulated they may <u>not</u> be able to understand as well as they can when calm. It is important to reflect carefully on the level of language used to ensure the adult's response to a child's behaviour and the restorative process is effective.

Appendix 6

Offering choices to support children's behaviour responses in the Nursery School

Example Script:

"You have a choice. You can do……(positive statement)…… and then…….(reward)……. or you can ……..(negative statement)……..and you will have to……..(consequence)…… I know you can make good choices. What are you going to do?"

- Child response: i) if positive, staff will reinforce this, "you chose……. Now you can……..(reward)….."
  ii) if the behaviour continues, staff will repeat the choice and get the the child to repeat it themselves (to make it clear to them that the adult knows they have heard the choices).
  iii) if the behaviour still continues, the consequence is carried out.

Reviewed October 2025