

Managing Behaviour

We all express our emotions through our behaviour and gradually learn about the ways in which people relate to each other. Behaviour serves a purpose and using our observations can help us to understand what the child is trying to communicate. Have you ever considered that a child squealing is excited or that a child reluctant to engage in an activity may be because it is not developmentally appropriate for them?

Positive relationships

When young children have secure relationships with key people they feel confident to explore the world around them and build relationships with others. When adults do not tune in to children's needs and take time to understand them, children can become stressed and display challenging behaviour. Listening involves responding to what children are saying and recognising that children know and can tell us things through body language, expression, actions and behaviour as well as their voice. Stress has an impact upon children's development. A stressed child may not develop the connections in the brain that are needed for successful future learning and development. Warm, trusting relationships with knowledgeable adults can help to make a difference to children's behaviour. Partnership working with parents is crucial to successfully understand and manage children's behaviour.

"The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them." Ralph Nicols (Listening & Learning)



Managing feelings and behaviour

A child first learns to soothe themselves by having their needs well met by key people, through patterned repetitive experiences. When key people respond quickly, consistently and sensitively, older babies learn more quickly about their feelings and how to manage them. As they grow toddlers are becoming more independent and wanting their own way. They may display extremes of behaviour from very independent to dependent, aggressive to calm, helpful to stubborn. Toddlers like to test the boundaries set by their key people to gain the reassurance that the boundaries are still there. A consistent approach to managing behaviour is crucial. Young children are starting to express their feelings in words more as well as through actions. They are beginning to show more awareness of other people's feelings and that these might be different from their own about the same situation.

Children need to be intrinsically motivated to develop a 'can do' attitude. Enabling children to express themselves emotionally and supporting them to develop their emotional literacy is important. Simple ideas such as pegging their name on a feelings tree or using an emotions fan could be implemented. Staff should feel confident to discuss feelings with children to help support their emotional well-being and develop associated vocabulary. Find ways to teach children to self manage their behaviour. For example, by teaching children to use the word stop. Staff would then intervene as necessary. This would be built on to support children to resolve conflict themselves. It may be appropriate to have a personal, social and emotional development focus and ensure this is documented on planning to embed it in to practice.

Preparing children for change

Daily routines can trigger an increase in anxiety for adults and children. Focussing on transitions for children within the session and finding ways to support children through these times can offer reassurance. For example, giving children warnings before tidy up time to help them prepare for the change, or using sand timers during group time so that they can visually understand time. Developing a visual photo schedule of the day may support children's understanding and this could be used to support children at specific 'trigger' points of the day. For example, lunchtime routines often unsettle children. Staff may wish to reflect upon daily routines and consider the number of transitions to ensure sustained times for children to become fully involved in their learning. Social Stories could be used and developed with individual children focussing on the child's day at the setting and used as a discussion tool to reinforce a positive time. Social stories can be particularly useful to support transitional times.

A supportive environment

Well organised physical environments and secure emotional environments promote good behaviours. Consider whether the environment meets the needs of all children. For example, children who are noisy and demonstrate lively behaviour indoors may display higher levels of involvement outdoors. Reflect on areas within the environment where behavioural issues often occur. For example, an open space may encourage children to run or a sofa through the eyes of child is great for climbing. Acting on your observations and adapting the environment, rather than changing the behaviour of the child, will have longer lasting positive effects.

It is beneficial to establish your own setting rules with the children so that they have clear boundaries and expectations. These should be short, simple and memorable and written in a positive way. Staff should ensure these are visual within the learning environment and use group times to reinforce wanted behaviours. Staff should refer to their own setting rules with individual children to praise wanted behaviours and also following an incident once the child is calm. By reflecting with the child this will help to give them the tools to self regulate.

A consistent approach

Review behaviour management practices to ensure effective use of strategies employed. Strategies must be consistently implemented by all staff and shared with parents to reinforce at home. Leaders should monitor this to ensure there is consistency in the setting's approach to managing behaviour which should have a positive impact on the effectiveness of strategies. Staff should celebrate even the smallest of successes from the child's day in the setting and share these with parents to help build positive relationships.

Remember, there is always a reason behind a child's behaviour.

The requirements to have and implement a behaviour management policy and procedures and have a named practitioner responsible for behaviour management, have been removed from the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* - September 2014.

3.52 states: 'Providers are responsible for managing children's behaviour in an appropriate way.'

Reflective questions:

- How do practitioners know what is expected of them in managing children's behaviour?
- Do you cover behaviour management in your induction procedures?
- Who monitors how behaviour is managed and dealt with across the provision?
- Are all practitioners consistent in their approach?
- How do you ensure children understand what is expected of them?
- How do you share information with parents in terms of expectations of children's behaviour whilst at the setting?

