

Behaviour Management Policy and Guidelines for Out of School Settings

Maintaining acceptable levels of behaviour in an out of school provision can prove to be very challenging. In order to support the management committee in translating policy into procedure and ensure the setting can run smoothly there needs to be a clear framework for behaviour in place. Below are guidelines from which settings can develop a procedure that protects the interests of the staff and management committee as well as the safety of children who attend.

Starting out

All childcare providers are required by law to operate within an equal opportunities framework; this is set out in the Children Act 1989. Therefore childcare settings have to be prepared to take active steps to counter any discrimination in language and behaviour by both adults and children within their settings.

Developing five positive rules

- When a setting first starts up there are no rules in place so staff need to spend time with the children developing positive rules that can be agreed on by children, staff and parents (five is a manageable number).
- These ground rules will essentially form the basis of any behaviour policy.
- Children who are used to rules tend to begin with things like 'we must not', but this can be turned round to for a more positive starting point eg. 'What we will do'.
- Partnership working with the children and staff is crucial; it demonstrates that everyone can be protected, have a say and have fun.
- If children feel they have been fully involved in the rulemaking process and have ownership of them, they will to some extent 'police' themselves. This sense of ownership and self-determination can have a really positive effect on the dynamics of the setting.

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- Staff must ensure that this shared responsibility does not become vigilantism - there is a difference between reporting incidents and telling tales.
- It important that adults visiting the setting, as well as staff and volunteers, recognise their responsibility in providing good role models and examples of desirable behaviour.

Rewards and sanctions

Once the guidelines for behaviour have been established, the key to success is consistency. Staff must be consistent and support each other in the implementation of any policy / guidelines.

Systems to monitor behaviour within the setting are often easy enough to establish, but may not in themselves increase the positive behaviour within a setting.

Dealing with behaviour

- Children who display 'bad behaviour' usually do so for a reason and often to gain adults' attention.
- Don't give attention to negative behaviour unless it directly warrants it and staff can log incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
- Focus on children who are behaving acceptably and, by praising them; reinforce the notion that acceptable behaviour warrants adult attention.
- Deal with minor disturbances on the spot with reference to the groundrules - it is important that children feel valued and respected and by acknowledging and focusing on behaviour when it occurs, it may encourage positive behaviour.
- With persistent unacceptable behaviour, staff must speak to the relevant parents / carers on the same day. If the incident has been logged, then the parents / carers will need to sign the book. There may an opportunity for the child to 'break the news' and thereby take responsibility for their actions. If this occurs it should also be noted along with any explanation for the action given by the child.

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- A logging system does not replace the need for good quality child / adult interaction. Staff must explain why incidents are recorded and suggest more appropriate ways to behave.
- It is important that staff know each child's level of understanding and maturity before sanctions or 'corrective' measures are applied or explanations given. Staff should be aware that some kinds of behaviour might arise from an impairment or learning difficulty.
- By recording incidents staff have a permanent record and can see if there is an improvement in a child's behaviour. If there is no improvement then staff need to follow the disciplinary policy and refer the situation to the management committee. This process may involve a warning system, suspension or permanent exclusion.
- In cases of more serious misbehaviour such as racial or other abuse and / or intimidation amongst children (including actual or threat of physical violence), the emphasis must be to support and comfort the victim (see Dealing with Bullying Policy).
- Wilful damage to or theft of property should be treated as serious misbehaviour.
- All details of rules, number of chances, verbal, written and exclusion procedures need to be freely available to parents and children so they are aware of the system and know it applies to everyone.
- Within a session an entry in the incident book could be used to justify a sanction - such as missing out on an activity. Staff have the right to suspend or exclude a child from a particular activity as a sanction or safety measure. This should not be done in a punitive manner, but could involve questioning the child as to whether they feel that their behaviour warrants a reward or possible sanction. Such a process may encourage the child to look at the connection between action and consequence and recognise that they have a responsibility for their actions.
- Staff should not use rewards and sanctions to pressurise a child to behave a certain way. If children are allowed to make informed choices and are made aware of the consequence of them, their learning will be experiential, rather than enforced by the adults present. This will encourage children's self-determination.

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- Staff should be aware of the feelings of any child / young person being disciplined, eg. angry, embarrassed or upset. Remember that children may need time out and / or space and time to calm down in order to be in a receptive frame of mind to take on explanations. In the case of older children there may be considerable peer pressure or influence. Situations need to be dealt with in a manner that is sympathetic to this.
- Once a disciplinary measure has been taken then that should be the end of the incident. The child should not have to experience constant reminders or be stigmatised by previous experience/s.
- Children need to be given the opportunity to appeal against any disciplinary measures taken against them, or misbehaviour attributed to them. In the first instance verbally (and politely) to the staff member when they should be given time out to discuss it. They may also wish to have a friend with them and this should be considered. Secondly through the setting's grievance procedure via a parent / carer.
- Children should be verbally praised to encourage acceptable behaviour, actions and attitudes in line with the setting's aims. However if a child does act inappropriately it must be stressed that it is the behaviour that is unacceptable and NOT the child. Care must be taken not to compare children, merely behaviour.
- If there are children who are frequently in the incident book then a system or individual behaviour plan may be suggested. This would make very clear what is acceptable behaviour and what is not and can indicate the sort of behaviour that staff and the child would like to display. A key worker may be assigned to monitor the child's behaviour and record positive actions. The process needs to open negotiation between setting, child and parent.