



# Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori

## Policy #4

### BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

## Introduction

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The main purpose of this policy is to ensure a happy, safe and controlled childcare environment where no form of corporal punishment, solitary confinement, immobilisation or frightening, humiliating techniques are used to deal with unwanted or inappropriate behaviour. A pleasant environment for children and staff and for all visitors is essential to the health, development and well-being of the children who use our service.

## Definitions

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**Discipline – the root of the word:** The word 'discipline' comes from the word *disciple*. A disciple is a willing follower, someone who is happy to respond to your requests because you have won that person's trust and confidence. Discipline involves modelling appropriate behaviour, pointing out children's positive behaviour, and instructing them through word and deed about what behaviour is appropriate and what behaviour is inappropriate. A basic definition of discipline is: **the actions adults take to guide and direct children towards positive, acceptable behaviour.**

**The goal of discipline:** The goal of good discipline is to help children to become self-disciplined and able to control their own behaviour. Good guidance involves teaching children what they **can** do and explaining why they shouldn't do certain things and what appropriate alternatives might be. True discipline is about consistent and fair **guidance.**

**The role of adults:** Adults must be loving, patient, and firm to help children to learn that it makes sense to act in certain ways. Discipline based on trust, respect, love and consistency helps children to build self-esteem and self-discipline. Adults can help children to avoid inappropriate behaviour by helping them to understand rules and guidelines. When children do something inappropriate, adults can help them look at the consequences of their actions and think about what they can do to make things better.

**DISCIPLINE = GUIDANCE TOWARD POSITIVE, ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR**

Appropriate guidance requires a balance of patience, love, firmness, understanding, mutual respect, mutual trust and consistency.



## Policy Statement

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We will inform parents/carers about the Behaviour Guidance and Discipline Policy on enrolment and seek information from families about the behaviour guidance strategies they use at home.

We recognise that it is important to understand the expectations of parents/carers regarding behaviour guidance strategies used in the service before children first come to use our service. Staff members will keep open lines of communication with families on an ongoing basis in relation to maintaining behaviour guidance strategies and practices (see Key Person Policy).

The methods used in this service will be only those that promote the development of self-discipline and will be developmentally appropriate. When we work to promote positive behaviour with children, it is necessary to be aware of the theory of child development. Only positive techniques of guidance will be used, including logical or natural consequences applied in problem situations, redirection, anticipation of and elimination of potential problems and encouragement of appropriate behaviour.

Staff members' interactions with children are aimed at promoting their well-being and development. Adequate and appropriate stimulation will be provided for each child and any inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with sensitively and appropriately without threats or punishment (see Interactions Policy).

While staff/carers are aware of and respect individual children's and families' backgrounds and beliefs, it may be necessary to balance these with staff/carers' knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognised authorities.

## Procedures & Practices

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It is essential to understand that there are many influences on a child's behaviour – these include:

- Age and development.
- General health and well-being.
- Relationships with and within their family.
- Play and learning environments, which includes the physical indoor/outdoor settings, the weather, the time of year, the time of day.
- Staff/carers' caregiving practice and interactions.
- Relationships with other children and others such as students, volunteers and visitors.
- External factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences.

The role that families play, especially parents/carers, is crucial to the success of the behaviour guidance strategy. Parents/carers will be provided with regular opportunities to contribute to the development and review of their child's behaviour guidance plan, along with the service's overall approaches to promote positive outcomes for the child.



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## In daily interactions:

- Staff members must interact frequently and positively with children.
- Staff members will be available and responsive to children.
- Children should be spoken to in a calm, friendly, positive, respectful manner.
- All children regardless of race, religion, family background, culture, gender or ability must be treated with respect and consideration.
- Independence in children should be encouraged, as they are ready.
- Children's efforts, achievements and feelings will be acknowledged by sincere encouragement leading to growth in self-esteem and self-discipline.
- Children should be generally kept comfortable, relaxed, happy and involved in play and other activities.
- Pro-social behaviours among children must be recognised and encouraged.
- Staff expectations for children's social behaviour should be developmentally appropriate – children's level of understanding and maturity must be taken into account.
- Children must be encouraged to verbalise feelings and ideas.
- Parents/carers should be encouraged to comment on children's reactions to discipline.
- Staff members should model appropriate behaviour and plan activities that help children learn about right and wrong.
- Children must never be humiliated, segregated or have food withheld.
- Children should be distracted from unwanted behaviour.
- When behaviour is unacceptable, staff members will explain why simply to the child/children.
- Children should be helped to find solutions to conflict.

Physical restraint may need to be used but only:

- to prevent an accident such as a child running across a road.
- to prevent injury e.g. if a child is having a temper tantrum.

Any such intervention will involve minimum force for minimum time.

Note: Staff giving comfort by holding a child when they are distressed is not physical restraint; however this should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.

Records must be kept of significant incidents to include:

- a) The child's name
- b) Time and location of the incident
- c) Events leading up to the incident
- d) The nature of the incident
- e) Others involved
- f) Witnesses
- g) How the situation was handled
- h) Whether restraint was used, what form of restraint and the reason for it
- i) Consequences

Recurring problems will be dealt with in an inclusive manner following observations and involving the child's parents/carers and other appropriate adults.

Discussing a child's behaviour with staff or parents/carers in front of the child or other children will be avoided.

**Physical punishment will not be used under any circumstances – this includes shaking.**



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## Boundary/limit setting and rules

- Any limits should be clearly related to the safety and protection of the child themselves and others around them. Codes of behaviour and rules should be as few as possible, consistently upheld and within the understanding of those that they affect.
- Staff should, wherever possible, consult with the children regarding what the codes of behaviour and rules should be.
- State what is expected rather than pose questions. Posing questions to a child implies that the child has a choice, but the reality in relation to limits is that they must uphold the agreed rules.
- Provide clear, reasonable boundaries on behaviour and explain the reasons for the boundaries.
- Allow children enough time to respond to requests for them to comply with the rules or codes of behaviour, according to their needs and understanding.
- Positively reinforce their change with both words and gestures, focusing on specific behaviour. This builds self confidence in the child and encourages them to repeat positive behaviour.

## Provide choice

- Negotiating choices between the adult and child can help children take appropriate responsibility and prepares them with positive life skills such as listening and reasoning.
- Whenever there is an opportunity for a real choice to be made, give children the chance to exercise choice and then follow through on it.
- Young children can be given choices within limits, e.g. 'would you like me to put your coat on or will you do it yourself?'

## Positive reinforcement and encouragement

- Encourage and affirm positive behaviour, however small.
- Notice and acknowledge when a child is behaving well and when they are trying to stop themselves engaging in negative activities.
- Ignore negative behaviour when it is judged safe and appropriate to do so.
- Encourage children in their activities.
- Demonstrate encouragement by participating in their activities, taking care not to 'take over'.
- Describe their actions and acknowledge their work by praising them and relating it to specific examples of positive behaviour.

## Schedules, routines and transitions

- Schedules, routines and transitions serve as a framework from which children gain trust, security and order. These can and should be flexible to some degree but they must provide clear guidelines about what is expected of the child, parents/carers and staff.
- Any changes to the scheduling within the timetable should be clearly communicated to the children and their families where necessary, along with clear reasons for the change (see Transitions Policy).



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## The environment

- The way in which physical space is used can either encourage or discourage the desired positive behaviour in a child. Space which is aesthetically pleasing, planned and well organised diminishes the potential for problems. Lack of sufficient space for an activity will limit and is likely to influence children's behaviour negatively but where space is sufficient, children can play and work creatively in a relaxed setting.
- Active, loud and energetic play spaces should be balanced with passive, quiet and peaceful areas.

## Toys, materials and resources

- Resources for working with children should be familiar, developmentally appropriate and in good condition and adequate supply.

## Conflict management and resolving an incident

- Approach the situation calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.
- Remain neutral rather than taking sides.
- Focus on the behaviour, rather than the child.
- Acknowledge the children's feelings with open statements, e.g. 'You seem upset...' and ask them if they agree with the observation and if so, do they want to talk about it? Start the negotiations with them by reflecting back their behaviour and involving them in checking out the details.
- Restate the problem, e.g. 'So you both want to play with the train at the same time ...'
- Ask for ideas for solutions and decide on them together, e.g. 'What can we do to solve this problem?' Encourage the children to think of a solution and check to make sure that the solution is acceptable to the children involved and realistically achievable. Clarify all the feelings with the children involved so that you are aware of anything that remains unresolved for them.
- If the child used positive problem solving behaviour, reinforce this, for example by saying 'You solved the problem...' then state what they did.
- Stay near the child so that you are prepared to give follow up support and clarification.
- Follow through with your decisions but be prepared to change them if they prove inappropriate for the individual needs of the child.
- Explain the reasons behind why something cannot happen or why some behaviour is inappropriate.

## Losing control

- When a child becomes so angry, anxious or frustrated to the extent that they themselves and others have been unsettled, it is important that the adult remains calm and settles the situation for this child and the others around.
- Adults should stop a child's aggressive or destructive behaviour such as biting, kicking or hitting and give a reason for their action such as 'stop biting, biting hurts'.
- Adults should model positive behaviour to the child and must never mirror the child's behaviour by raising their tone of voice or acting inappropriately.
- When the situation has been diffused, it is important for the adult to offer support, time and further discussion with the child, to reflect on what happened and to plan an alternative coping strategy in case a similar issue arises again.



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- Reinforce a positive approach that the child may use in the future, such as walking away and playing elsewhere or by stating clearly that they don't like that and it hurts.

## Holding and restraining

- No matter what age the child you are working with is, holding and restraining should only be used for immediate safety reasons, with the minimum force and for the minimum amount of time.
- Where a child is expressing feelings of anger, anxiety or frustration, in a way which is unsafe for themselves and others and where reasoning has not stopped the behaviour, a caregiver may assist the child in re-establishing control by holding them, to contain their feelings safely, as a last resort and for the minimum length of time. This intervention should only be used in an age appropriate way, e.g. it may be appropriate to pick a very young child up.
- Great care must be taken when holding a child with particular attention paid to their individual needs. A medical condition such as asthma or disability or any special needs would mean that any type of holding may exacerbate their condition.
- The intent of this strategy is to keep them and others safe until their self control is regained and they feel contained, but it must only be used in exceptional and rare circumstances.
- A calm and caring attitude on the part of the adult is critical in ensuring that this strategy is supportive and in no way a punishment.

## 'Time away' or 'time out'

- In some situations, it may be appropriate to use 'time away' or 'time out' interventions, for short periods of time, to enable a child to calm down following an incident in which they have been very angry, anxious or frustrated to the extent that they themselves and others have been unsettled.
- The use of the 'naughty step' or similar can lead to feelings of isolation and stigmatisation of the child.
- Adult support is needed throughout this intervention and the child and the others involved should decide when they feel able to continue to participate in the activities.

## Staff behaviour

- It is important to promote realistic play and behaviour limits that guide children's safety and security rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity.
- Staff members should acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant, e.g. an adult who is not scared of thunder should not trivialise the fear or anxiety expressed by a child.
- Staff members should respond to and acknowledge children's emotions such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride.
- Staff members must understand that children may not have developed the appropriate strategies to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Staff members' attitudes and caregiving strategies must demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their development and/or general disposition.
- Staff need to be committed to nurturing and supporting children by suggesting alternative ways of responding and where possible giving children choice, rather than telling them how to behave.



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- An atmosphere which fosters trust, security and comfort must be created by giving children time and attention to enable them to talk and express their feelings.
- When children are in an environment that encourages caring and co-operative relationships they learn to relate with each other in more positive ways by learning through examples from the adults and positive behaviour from their peers
- Staff should model appropriate behaviour, so that children can see what to do and learn from positive examples, rather than simply instructing them to do things. An example of this is joining in and encouraging children to clear up toys or paints after a session and making this part fun which will end the session in a positive way
- Phrase any limitations to a child's behaviour in a positive way, focusing on 'what to do' rather than 'what not to do'. By using these positive statements, staff will reinforce for children appropriate and desirable ways of communication. It also decreases the likelihood for children to respond with resistance or defensiveness.
- Teaching children the 'why' of behaviour guidance and limits helps them to internalise and learn the rules of positive social interaction.
- Ignore minor incidents. Adults who work with children need to develop tolerance for a certain amount of noise, clutter and attention seeking behaviour. As long as their behaviour is not impacting negatively on others, adults need to step back, take a breath and decide not to speak or intervene.
- Staff should listen to children and respond in a fair and supportive way, this gives them a greater sense of comfort and trust and encourages them to use you as a reliable source of advice by demonstrating that what they say is valued.

## Communication Plan

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Expectations and codes of agreed behaviour should be accessible and communicated to all, using a variety of media, e.g. posters, pictures, drama. They must be communicated in a way that ensures that they are understood according to levels of literacy and comprehension of every child.

All parents/carers are to be informed of the Guidance and Discipline Policy on registration. Staff members will check with parents/carers that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy will be included in the Parents'/Carers' Handbook. This policy will also be included in staff induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents/carers in the Policy Folder located in the main office.

Parents/Carers may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/Carers and staff will receive written notification of any updates.

### Review Date

Date: .....

Person Responsible: .....



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## Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

- Parent/Carer Involvement Policy
- Interactions Policy
- Transitions Policy
- Key Person Policy
- Accidents, Incidents and Injuries Policy
- Records and Record Keeping Policy
- Incident Report Form

## References

- Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 2006 and Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations, 2006
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- **Supporting Quality: guidelines for professional practice in early childhood services (3rd edition)** by Geraldine French. Barnardos' Training and Resource Service, 2008

## Contact Information [Who to contact for more information]

Name: .....

## Policy Created

Date: .....

## Signatures

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