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| **St Philip’s Marsh Nursery School/Cashmore Early Years Centre/Barton Hill Children’s Centre** | **Z:\Work\2018-2019\Cashmore\logo.png** |

**Learning Behaviours Policy**

**Review**

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| **Review Cycle** | **Date of Current Policy** | **Author(s) of Current Policy** | **Review Date** |
| Every two years | 19 March 2024 | Charlotte Carter/  Simon Holmes | 19 March 2026 |

**Ratification**

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| **Role** | **Name** | **Signature** | **Date** |
| **Chair of Governors** | Enza Phillips |  |  |
| **Head Teacher** | Simon Holmes |  |  |

**Rationale**

More than 90% of what we know about the brain has been discovered in the last 20 years1. Research in neuroscience is transforming how we think about wellbeing, resilience and, in turn, the behaviours of very young children. **In the first few years of life, children develop** [**more than 1 million new neural connections every second**](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/#neuron-footnote)**. At no other time are so many connections being developed2 - therefore a child’s experiences at nursery are key to building children’s brains.** ‘*Emotional wellbeing and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities [thinking], and together they are the bricks and mortar of brain architecture. The* [*emotional and physical health*](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/deep-dives/lifelong-health/)*, social skills, and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important for success in school, the workplace, and in the larger community’*.2 In other words, how a child is supported and interacted with in their early years, during both happy times and times of challenge, influences the person they become.

As young children’s brains are still developing, they can quickly move between experiencing times of **emotional regulation** (when they are able to manage their emotions) and times of **emotional dysregulation** (when they feel overwhelmed or have difficulty controlling impulsive behaviours). In addition, children do not yet have the experience or language they need to communicate their feelings. By effectively supporting children during times of dysregulation, we build further neural pathways in their brains, helping to form that strong foundation for future development.

**‘If you want to make children behave better, you have to make them feel better’**

*The Gentle Parenting Book* by Sarah Ockwell-Smith

**‘All behavior is communication. Sometimes as adults we may not immediately understand why the child is behaving as they are.’**

*Positive Behaviour Management in Early Years Settings* by Liz Williams

**Aims**

* To have a shared understanding with staff, parents and children about learning behaviours in order for us all to respond in a consistent way to children’s behaviours.
* To provide adults with a set of practical tools, strategies and vocabulary that can help us respond to and manage times of conflict and strong emotion (see the steps of conflict resolution and emotion coaching).
* Through the use of conflict resolution and emotion coaching strategies, we will encourage children to learn how to resolve their conflicts independently.
* Children and adults have the tools and vocabulary to express their feelings and request support to meet their needs effectively.

**Our Vision and Values**

St Philip’s Marsh Nursery School and Cashmore Early Years Centre is an inclusive school which welcomes all children from all communities.

We aim to make our school/centre a place where **everyone** – children and adults, family members and staff, irrespective of age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability or religion:

* + feels safe, secure and well supported;
  + feels valued, respected and empowered;
  + is motivated and excited to learn;
  + is enabled to contribute to our collaborative learning – together.

In this environment, each unique child is supported to:

* + grow in self-esteem, confidence and independence;
  + build positive relationships with adults and peers;
  + explore a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum;
  + develop effective life-long learning skills.

**We put children at the heart of what we do.** We acknowledge that our responses must be tailored to meet the child’s age, stage of development and current state of emotional regulation.

We offer an environment where children:

* are celebrated for being unique;
* have an opportunity to share ideas, views and opinions;
* are listened to and respected;
* are offered a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum;
* can experience a rich, stimulating and dynamic learning environment;
* can learn through a well-structured, well-planned, creative curriculum approach;
* work with adults who value, respect, support and scaffold their learning;
* experience adults working together in partnership with parents/carers and the community.

**Respect**

We let everyone know that the school/centre belongs to our whole community. Adults consistently model positive behaviours through their choice of language, active listening and social interactions, both with children and other adults. They model giving themselves and others adequate time to process events and language before expecting a response.

Adults support children to develop their negotiation skills through a range of strategies, including actively modelling problem-solving, conflict resolution and emotion coaching (see below).

To help all members of our school community understand our boundaries, we have three simple guiding rules:

**Be safe;**

**Be kind;**

**Look after our things.**

**Equality and Inclusion**

Thinking is challenged to understand and embrace difference. We aim to eliminate discrimination and bias on any basis, including disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age (except pupils), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, and religion or belief (defined as ‘Protected Characteristics’ under the Equality Act 2010) so that equality, diversity and inclusion (‘EDI’) underpin all we do.

We recognise and celebrate diversity, including that which exists within our pupil and staff populations, the communities that we serve and the wider world beyond. We recognise the power of the images we offer our children. The guiding principle of ‘If you can’t see it, you can’t be it’ reminds staff that all children and families must be able to see themselves, their homes, their cultures and their potential future selves within the books, pictures, resources and curriculum that we offer.

The key person approach helps us to understand the unique context of every child and family within the setting. See our Key Person Policy for further detail.

**An Emotionally Safe Environment**

Personal, social and emotional development is a prime area of learning in the early years foundation stage (EYFS). We recognise that a child needs to feel safe, welcome and secure in order to learn. To create an emotionally safe environment, staff employ a range of strategies informed by the ‘**Birth To 5 Matters**’ non-statutory guidance, including:

* Create a listening culture and atmosphere which is calm and caring, where young children feel able to express their emotions.
* Model caring responses and comforting or helping behaviours in your interactions with all children.
* Name and talk about a wide range of feelings and make it clear that all feelings are understandable and acceptable. Put children’s feelings into words for them e.g., ‘It looks like you’re cross about that’.
* Model how you manage your own feelings e.g., ‘I’m feeling a bit angry and I need to calm down, so I’m going to…’.
* Be emotionally available to young children when they need to ‘emotionally refuel’.
* Display a sequence of photographs to show the routines.
* Provide photographs and books where emotions are being expressed to look at and talk about with children.
* Provide a range of music, stories, open-ended materials and play opportunities, play props and resources to support young children in exploring and making sense of feelings such as fear, anxiety and anger.
* Set, explain and maintain clear, reasonable and consistent boundaries so that children can feel safe and secure in their play and other activities.
* Ensure consistent use of conflict resolution and emotion coaching (see the steps detailed below).

**Communication**

We have an ‘open door’ policy. We greet parents/carers and children positively every day, both at the front door and in each room. We show that we value each other’s contributions through active listening and turn taking in conversation, letting people know when we have understood them.

We communicate through **positive body language, gesture, facial expressions and eye contact** when appropriate. Staff use positive language to **state what we want** children to do rather than what we don’t want them to do, e.g., when a child is running inside you could say ‘Walking inside’, or when a child is climbing on furniture you could say ‘Down please’. We provide an alternative to what the child is doing such as ‘You can run outside’ or ‘Let’s make something you can climb with the large bricks’. We use the acronym EPIC to remind us:

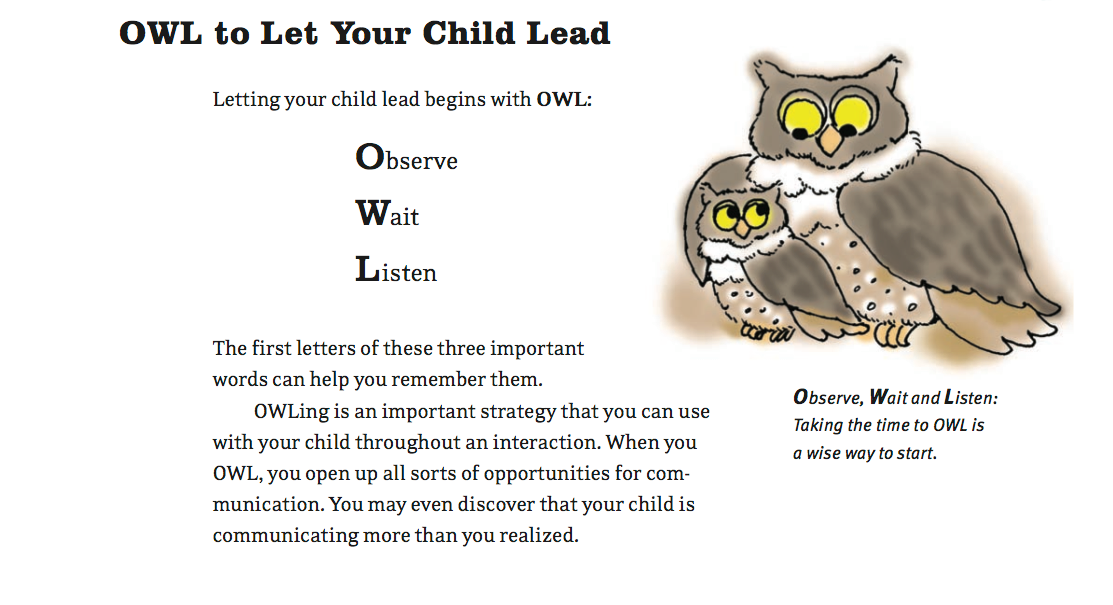
**E**xplicit - clear, unambiguous, developmental stage-appropriate communication.

**P**ositive - say what you would like the child to do.

**I**nclusive - differentiate and adapt appropriately, use Makaton, visuals, gestures, eye gazes, noises, objects of reference etc. to communicate.

**C**ollaborative - give children a voice, listen, value their contribution and work together.

The child’s voice is noticed and heard using words, symbols, Makaton, non-verbal language and the expertise of language support staff. Staff use the Hanen OWL strategy3 to better notice the communication of all children:



Staff also use the ‘Five to Thrive Strategy’4. Five to Thrive is based on five key activities that are the building blocks of healthy communication and brain development (Note: ‘cuddle’ can also be ‘engage’).

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| Just like when playing with building blocks, if your tower falls you need to rebuild. So if you’re trying to talk to a child and they get frustrated or upset, you could respond to how they’re feeling and address this first.  When a child enjoys these five simple activities every day it helps them:   * grow; * be content in their own skin; * make and sustain friendships; * have positive connections with people. |

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| **Conflict Resolution: The Six Mediation Steps**  **1. Approach calmly**  Breathe. Dysregulated children need support from a calm adult to help them re-regulate their feelings.  Place yourself between the children on their physical level. Use a calm, voice and gentle touch.  If an object is involved in the conflict say something like, ‘I’m going to hold the [*name object*] while we work out what’s happened’”. Hold the object or put it out of reach of the children.  **2. Acknowledge feelings**  Recognise and label children’s feelings, e.g., ‘You look sad’, ‘I can see you’re crying’, ‘You’re making a noise’, ‘You look worried’.  Give the children time to process their feelings and respond before moving onto the next stage. This step could take a long time, but it is important not to rush it. See Emotion Coaching below for more details.  **3. Gather information**  Ask the children open-ended questions to find out what has happened, if they have not already told you, e.g., ‘What’s happening?’ or ‘I wonder what happened?’.  Children may respond with gestures, eye gazes and body language as well as verbally. Avoid leading questions and assumptions such as ‘Did he hit you?’, ‘Did she take the car?’, ‘Did you have the bike first?’.  Repeat children’s words back to them or verbalise the child’s gestures to help them clarify their thoughts. Check that you have understood what they have said/shown to you.  Remember you are there to help them recognise and resolve conflict, not make judgements.  **4. Restate the problem**  State what you understand so far e.g., ‘Ellis would like to ride the bike and Brian would like to ride the bike’. Use the details the child has described. Each child may see the situation differently.  **5. Ask for solutions and choose one together**  Follow on from restating what has happened with ‘I wonder what we can do?’. Listen and give the children time to think of their own ideas. Listen to, respect and explore all the ideas, even if some of them seem unrealistic.  If children say they can ‘share’, explore this idea further so that everyone is clear how the sharing will happen, e.g., ‘What will you do to share?’ or ‘How can you share the [*name object*]?’ You can 'share’ in lots of ways: you can take turns with a bike; you can divide some resources between children, such as playdough, stones, ducks; you can build a structure together with a variety of materials.  If Ellis says ‘I can have a turn first’, ask the other child if that solution is OK, look at them and say ‘Ellis said can he have a turn and then you can have a turn after, is that OK?’. If the child says ‘No, I want a turn first’, repeat this to Ellis, look at him and say ‘Brian said no, he would like a turn and you can have a turn after, is that OK?’. Keep looking for a solution that both children agree on. This step could take a long time, but it is important not to rush it. With time, children will learn negotiation language and strategies to enable them to resolve conflicts with minimal support. Other children will join your negotiations and give their ideas for a solution. This can be extremely helpful.  You can also model offering a solution if you have explored all the children’s ideas, e.g., ‘Is there another car, bucket, bike etc.?’  **6. Be prepared to give follow up support**  When children have reached a solution check that they are both satisfied with it. Summarise what is going to happen, e.g., ‘So, Brian, you’re going to …. and Ellis, you’re going to….’. Then acknowledge that the children have made a plan that they both agree on e.g., ‘You did it!’, ‘You worked together and made a plan’. This builds the children’s confidence in their capabilities as negotiators. Observe the children and be available to support the children if needed to carry out their chosen solution. |

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| **Emotion Coaching**  Emotion coaching links in to the second stage of conflict resolution – acknowledging feelings. Emotion coaching is an effective way to respond to challenging behaviours or when children are upset or angry, e.g., when children are really missing their parent/carer.  Here are the steps:  **1. Empathy**  Empathy is putting yourself in someone else's shoes and fully understanding what they are experiencing, being able to resonate with the emotions that the other person is feeling and holding the child’s experience in mind *and* heart.  Empathy is evident when you give your full attention to children, listen to them carefully and show that you are not only interested in what they are saying and doing, but also that you understand and care how they are feeling.  Get to the child’s level (e.g., by sitting, kneeling or if the child is lying down, lie down next to them).  Adults gently mirror the child’s emotion in their facial expression and body language.  Adults make utterances e.g. ‘ooh’, ‘aah’, ‘oh dear’ etc. so that voice tone can communicate empathy and validation. Listen to the child, observe gestures, body language, behaviour and respond accordingly.  **2. Adults validate and label the emotions**  Once adults are confident that they have identified what the child is feeling, they can label and validate the feeling, e.g., ‘I think you are feeling cross……very cross… sad…frustrated’. You may extend this to why you think they are feeling that way e.g., ‘You feel cross, you would like the marble’.  Give the child an example of when you felt that way (be genuine!). e.g.,  ‘When I cannot pull my zip up on my coat I sometimes feel cross’.  Listen to the child and acknowledge what they say, e.g., ‘I want my mummy’, reply ‘You want your mummy. I wonder what Mummy is doing?’ or ‘Where is Mummy?’ or ‘Your mummy is....’. Reassure the child that Mummy/Daddy/etc. will pick them up later/after story time.  By doing this you are providing support that will help your child to regulate their emotions.  **3. Set limits on behaviour (if necessary)**  Keep going with all the above steps until the child has started to process their emotions and regulate.  Give a reason for their emotions, asking questions so that they only need to shake or nod their head, e.g., ‘you really want to go through this door’.  Use the tool EPIC:  **E** – Explicit, clear instructions such as ‘I need you to hold my hand’.  **P** – Positive language - say what you would like the child to do.  **I** – Inclusive, differentiate appropriately, use Makaton, visuals, gestures etc., to communicate. Make appropriate reasonable adjustments when necessary.  **C** – Collaborative, give the children a voice, value their perspective and ideas, work together.  **4. Co-regulate and problem solve**  Continue to talk with the child – help them to understand that other people also feel this emotion and maybe relating it to a shared experience, e.g., ‘Sometimes I feel sad, I felt sad when I did not have any playdough’ or ‘When I am sad, I like a hug. Would you like a hug?’. Talk about possible strategies for the next time the child may feel like this. |

**Possible behavior challenges/unmet needs**

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| **Behaviours** | **Possible approaches and strategies** |
| A child who hurts other children/ adults and other aggressive behaviour | When appropriate use ‘Stop’ and/or visual cards. Do not get children to say they are ‘sorry’. Saying sorry can be meaningless and will often be used by children to excuse behaviour without learning and/or understanding. Instead use the language of empathy and information sharing, e.g., ‘Oh, my friend is hurt. I need to see if they are OK’ or ‘I need to see if they need anything’. ‘They may need a cuddle. I need a cuddle when I get hurt’. Ask the child who has been hurt ‘Where does it hurt?’.   * Give the hurt child/adult what they need to help them to process what has happened and receive what they need, a cuddle, cold compress, playdough etc. Next, address the needs of the child who hurt the other child/adult. * Give space for them to regulate before trying to resolve the situation. * Understand the child’s level of emotional development and preferred communication.   The adult resolving the conflict to ensure the key person is informed of any incident. The key person will discuss behaviours with the class team and consider what the child may be communicating through this behaviour, e.g., frustrated, threatened, helpless, excited.  The key person to share observations of the child’s behaviour with the parent/carer and talk about the parents' experiences of the child’s behaviour at different situations at home.  You may decide to observe, note and identify times when the child displays these behaviours by using an ABCC diary (see below) to establish a possible pattern etc. |
| A child who appears angry | See Conflict Resolution and/or Emotion Coaching above.  Try and establish what need is not being met and talk about the child’s needs/wants. |
| Using inappropriate language (swearing) | Initially, ignore the words.  If the child repeatedly says an inappropriate word you may need to say ‘that word is not used at nursery’.  The key person to share the concern with the parent/carer and possibly identify where they learnt the word, e.g., repeated language that the child has heard from an older sibling. Possibly identify why/how the child is using the language, e.g., is it because the child has dropped something, because the child is cross or are they saying inappropriate things to other children etc.  Ensure the child's parent/carer know that inappropriate language is not used in the school/centre, including outside in the car park and garden area by the children and adults. |
| Not tidying up | The routine should be followed to create a secure, safe, welcoming environment where the children know what is going to happen and when. Use visual aids to reinforce this and establish clear expectations.  Give children a 'five more minutes of playing’ warning, using a now and next board and the ‘five more minutes playing time...’ song.  When five minutes have passed, show the children the now and next board and sing ‘playing time has finished now...’, or ‘we’ve stopped, we’ve stopped, we’ve finished…’.    Recognise that transitions may be difficult, and some children may need to be taken to a quiet space to ‘tidy up.’  Make it fun – turn it into a game, e.g., ‘let’s put the blue Lego in the basket.’  Be specific. Give the child an achievable and specific tidying job, e.g., ‘John, put the cubes in the basket!’  Give positive praise. You could sing ‘Anya is fantastic, Anhar is amazing, Leo is super at tidying up!’ when you see children putting things away.  Revisit the school/centre ethos for taking responsibility for our environment in review/recall time.  Positive modelling, commenting on what you are doing, e.g., ‘I’m putting the cars into the basket’. Comment on what the child does, e.g., ‘You are putting the cars into the basket; we are tidying together’.  Point things out that are on the floor that the children can tidy, e.g., ‘I can see a yellow duck’.  If a child does not want to tidy, they can stay with you while you tidy to ensure they do not play or get more things out. Tell the child ‘Playing time has finished, it is tidy up time’. You may need to say, ‘If you do not want to tidy you can stay with me/sit down while I tidy’. Make tidying up exciting and interesting for the children that are tidying and continue to praise them. |
| Not taking turns or ‘sharing’ | Adults to create opportunities where they can role model using turn taking language and turn talking with other adults and children.    See Conflict Resolution and Emotion Coaching above.    Ensure there are enough resources so that children can realistically take turns and/or divide resources between each other.  Adults to model negotiation skills with other adults.  Recognise child’s developmental stage and model/negotiate accordingly. |
| A child who runs away or stays outside when it is time to go inside. | Children who run away are communicating something to you.  Remain calm and do not run after them.  Tell the child what you would like them to do, e.g., ‘come’ or ‘garden time has finished, it is xxxx time. I am going inside’. Hold your hand out, remembering to give the child processing time before going inside.  For safety, ensure you can see the child if they remain in the garden.  Wait. If they stand still you may need to repeat the message. If you think the child needs to be prompted by a different adult, seek support from a colleague.  Wait. If the child runs off, open the door, observe the child and assess what the child may need. You may need to go to the child calmly and repeat ‘Garden time has finished. It is time to go inside’.  Some children may need you to make it fun and race to the door to help them to come inside.  Note: If you say ‘Bye’ and walk away, you have inadvertently given the child permission to be outside. The child will be confused by the mixed message when you then help them to come inside. |

**ABCC diary**

We record using the above acronym to help us find out why children exhibit certain behaviours. The diary is a snapshot of behaviours over a particular period of time, e.g., across a week or two. It is not intended to be a long-term record, rather a tool to notice patterns and reflect on these to support the child.

**Antecedent** – What happened before the behaviour? What was the trigger?

**Behaviour** – What was the behaviour?

**Consequence** – What happened next? E.g., what intervention was used (conflict resolution and/or emotion coaching etc.) and how did the child respond?

**Communication** – Why might the child have been behaving this way? What are their behaviours communicating to us? This step is key when reflecting upon how we might support the child in future.

**Acknowledgements, References and Further Reading:**

* With thanks to Filton Avenue Nursery School
* 1,4 <https://fivetothrive.org.uk/>
* 2 [Harvard Center for the Developing Child](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/)
* *3 ‘Learning Language and Loving It: The HANEN program’* by Elaine Weitzman & Janice Greenberg
* *‘The Gentle Parenting Book*’ by Sarah Ockwell-Smith
* ‘*Positive Behaviour Management in Early Years Settings*’ by Liz Williams
* *‘*[*Birth to Five Matters Non-Statutory Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*](https://birthto5matters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Birthto5Matters-download.pdf)*’*, Early Years Coalition
* *‘*[*Ordinarily Available Provision’, Bristol’s SEND Local Offer*](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/4038-bcc-ordinarily-available-provision/file), Bristol City Council