



## **Policy on Managing Behaviour**

### **Rationale and Policy Considerations**

The **Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services)(Registration of School Age Services)Regulations 2018** requires a policy that supports children's positive behaviour.

To achieve this, it is essential to ensure that the emotional, social and general wellbeing of all of the children attending the service is positively supported in a happy, safe, well-planned and controlled environment.

It is very important for children to be able to: relate well to other children and adults; make friends and get on with others; feel secure and valued; explore and learn confidently and feel good about themselves.

The approaches for supporting children when their behaviour is challenging, in ways that are appropriate for their age and level of development, must also be set out.

### **Children's needs**

Children need:

- This policy to ensure that early years staff allow them the freedom and scope to learn through hands-on exploration and experimentation in a well-planned, well-resourced and well-ordered environment and to test the limits of their bodies to learn what they are capable of.
- To be able to do this within reasonable and appropriate limits for their own and others' safety and wellbeing.

- This policy to ensure that they receive the support, guidance and understanding that will help them to learn how to manage and regulate their own behaviour in ways that are appropriate for their age and level of understanding.
- To be supported to learn how to understand their feelings and learn how to express them in appropriate, acceptable and safe ways.
- They also need to learn how to manage conflict positively.

### **Parents'/Families' needs**

Parents/guardians need:

- To know that their child's needs will be appropriately met and their child's development will be supported in positive, supportive and constructive ways.
- To know that their child will be safe and happy.
- To know that they will be involved in decision-making about how their child's social, emotional and behaviour skills are being supported and developed and that the service will contact them, and work in partnership with them, in the event of any challenging or concerning behaviours being observed.

### **Staff needs**

Staff members need:

- To have clear policy and procedural guidance on what the service's approach is to supporting children in their social, emotional and behavioural development.
- To be clear on what are and are not acceptable ways of responding to behaviours that they may find challenging.
- To know what is expected of them in relation to working in partnership with parents/guardians to ensure that children receive a consistent and shared approach to supporting them with developing their behaviour skills.

All staff receive Behaviour Management training as part of induction.

### **Management needs**

Management needs:

- To ensure that parents are clearly informed about the service's approach to supporting their children's social, emotional and behavioural development.

- To know that the service's expectations with regard to how staff members work with the children and in partnership with their parents/guardians, are clearly outlined for all staff members to follow.
- To ensure that the regulatory requirement to have a policy on managing behaviour is adequately met.

### **National Quality Frameworks**

- [Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework](#)
- [Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education](#)
- [Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework](#)

### **Policy Statement**

We inform parents/guardians about this 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/guardians regarding our approach to behaviour guidance in the service before children first come to our service. We do our utmost to keep open lines of communication with families on an ongoing basis.

Club Spraoi's approach to supporting and promoting children's positive social, emotional and behavioural wellbeing is reflective of up-to-date professional practice.

Our approach to supporting children with their social, emotional and behaviour skills is to ensure as far as possible that children are kept comfortable, relaxed, happy and engaged in play and other activities while the adults model positive ways of relating to them and each other. We recognise the need to understand children's behaviour as a form of communication and to consider what might be triggering the behaviour and what the child is communicating. Children will be supported to learn how to express their feelings in appropriate ways and helped to learn how to deal positively with conflict.

The methods of dealing with challenging, unsafe or disruptive behaviour in this service will be only those that help children to develop self-regulation and are developmentally appropriate. When we work to promote positive behaviour with children, we are aware of the

theory of child development. Only positive approaches to guidance are used, including logical or natural consequences applied in problem situations, redirection, anticipation of and elimination of potential problems and encouragement of appropriate behaviour.

Corporal punishment is prohibited as are any practices or the threat of any practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitative, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful. Children are never humiliated, segregated or have food withheld.

Staff interactions with children are aimed at promoting their well-being and development. This includes their social and emotional development. Adequate and appropriate stimulation is provided for each child and any inappropriate or challenging behaviour is dealt with sensitively and appropriately without threats or punishment.

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

### **Procedures & Practices**

It is essential for all staff 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 practice and interactions
- Relationships with other children and others
- Factors, such as family, home life or peer group experiences.

The role that families play, especially parents/guardians, is crucial to the success of the behaviour guidance approach here at Club Spraoi. Parents/guardians will be provided with regular opportunities to contribute to the service's general approaches to promoting positive

outcomes for children as well as the development and review of their own child's individual care and education plan.

### **Behaviour Expectations – Community Standards**

Club Spraoi strives to create a warm, welcoming environment in which all children can fulfill their potential. We ask that all children that attend the service, respect the Community Standards during Before and Afterschool Care

With your voice:

- Be careful with other people's feelings. Don't tease, insult, threaten, or call anyone an unkind name. Tell the truth. Don't lie.
- Use appropriate language. Don't use bad words or gestures.
- Respect other people's conversations. Don't interrupt when people are talking. Don't bother people when they are working, playing or learning. Don't barge into a classroom.
- Do not leave your classroom or the building without permission.

With your body:

- Be careful with other people's bodies. Don't hit, bite or fight. Don't make anyone feel uncomfortable.
- Be careful with other people's things. Don't steal, break or damage property.
- Be careful with school property. Don't destroy or write on desks or walls.

With your mind:

- Always ask this question: "Would I like it if someone did that to me?"

And also:

- Be quiet in the halls.
- Listen to and follow directions by any staff member.
- Walk. Do not run.
- Don't fool around in the bathroom.
- Don't chew gum in school.

Possible consequences of inappropriate Behaviour

- Solve the problem that you created
- Write an apology letter

- Lose privileges
- Inappropriate items may be confiscated
- Meet with a staff member
- Club Spraoi will contact your family
- Be suspended

### **No-Bullying Policy**

Club Spraoi is committed to providing an environment that promotes respect, dignity, and equality. Club Spraoi recognizes that acts of discrimination and harassment, including bullying, taunting, or intimidation, are detrimental to children's well-being and achievement. Such behaviour affects not only the students who are its targets, but also those individuals who participate in, and witness such acts. To this end Club Spraoi implements a No-Bullying Policy which is supplied to all parents on registration. This policy also outlines Club Spraoi's policies and procedures in managing incidents where children at the service are experiencing cyber-bullying.

### **Homework Guidelines**

Students are expected to show consideration for others during homework time by using moderate voices and respectful behaviour inside the classrooms while doing homework. While it is not mandatory that all students finish their homework during Afterschool Care it is important that those students who prefer to, can do so in a supportive environment.

## **CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS AND PROMOTES CHILDREN'S SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL WELLBEING**

### **The role of the adult**

Adults who are loving, patient, and firm help children to learn that it makes sense to act in certain ways. Behaviour guidance 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 a child does something

inappropriate, adults can help them look at the consequences of their actions and think about what they can do to make things better. Adults always need to consider whether a child may have some unmet need that is leading to the inappropriate behaviour or is experiencing some distress, and look at ways to address this in addition to helping the child with managing their behaviour.

### **In daily interactions**

- Staff interact frequently with the children in a calm, friendly, positive, respectful manner.
- Staff are available and responsive to the children.
- All children regardless of race, religion, family background, culture, gender or ability are treated with respect and consideration.
- Independence in children is encouraged and scaffolded, as they are ready.
- Children's efforts, achievements and feelings are acknowledged and given sincere encouragement leading to growth in self-esteem and self-regulation.
- Children are generally kept comfortable, relaxed, happy and involved in play and other activities.
- Pro-social behaviours among children are recognised and encouraged.
- Staff expectations for children's social behaviour are developmentally appropriate – children's level of understanding and maturity are taken into account.
- Children are encouraged to verbalise feelings, ideas and interests.
- Staff plan activities and tell stories that help children learn about right and wrong.
- Children are distracted from unwanted behaviour.
- When behaviour is unacceptable, staff explain to the child/children why it is unacceptable in a way they can understand.
- Children need movement for their learning and development and are allowed to move freely for a significant part of the day.
- Soft, quiet spaces are provided for children to withdraw comfortably when they are feeling tired or overwhelmed or just want to be alone.

Strategies recommended in Aistear that we use include:

- Anticipating conflict and supporting children in resolving it, coming to the assistance of frustrated children and helping them find solutions.

- Modelling social behaviour when interacting with adults and children, thus helping children to learn from others' social skills such as taking turns, listening, sharing, asking for something, and saying excuse me, sorry, please, and thank you.
- Encouraging children to help each other during their activities, play and routines.
- Helping children share skills and knowledge with each other.
- Encouraging and acknowledging spontaneous co-operative efforts made by the children.
- Talking to children about the time they spend together.
- Encouraging children to play co-operative games.
- Interacting with (play and converse with) children rather than managing (giving instructions and warnings).

### **Boundary/limit setting and rules**

- Any limits are clearly related to the safety, welfare and protection of the child themselves and others around them.
- Limits are communicated in a way that is respectful of all.
- Rules are as few as possible, consistently upheld and within the children's understanding.
- Staff consult with the children in an age appropriate way, regarding the codes of behaviour and rules.
- Clear, reasonable boundaries on behaviour are provided and explained.
- Rules are written positively, e.g. 'we walk inside' rather than 'no running'.
- Children are allowed enough time to respond to requests for them to behave within the rules or codes of behaviour, according to their needs and understanding – young children may take more time than adults to think through what is being asked of them.

### **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, children are given the chance to exercise choice and then follow through on it.



- Younger children are given choices within limits, as appropriate to their level of development, e.g. ‘would you like to tie your shoe lace or will I help you with it?’

### **Positive reinforcement and encouragement**

- Positive behaviour, however small, is encouraged and affirmed with both words and body language (e.g. nods, smiles).
- When a child is behaving well and when they are trying to stop themselves engaging in negative activities, this is noticed and acknowledged. This builds self-confidence and encourages children to repeat positive behaviour.
- Negative behaviour is ignored when it is judged safe and appropriate to do so.
- Children are encouraged in their activities.
- Encouragement is demonstrated by adults participating with children in their activities, at the children’s invitation, taking care not to ‘take over’.

### **Schedules, routines and transitions**

- Schedules, routines and transitions serve as a framework from which children gain trust, security and order. These are always flexible, with as few transitions as possible, but they provide clear guidelines about what is expected.
- Any changes to the scheduling within the timetable will be clearly communicated to the children (and their families where necessary), along with clear reasons for the change (see Transitions Policy).

### **The physical environment**

- The way in which physical space is arranged and used can either encourage or discourage desired behaviour. Space is aesthetically pleasing, planned and well organised to diminish the potential for problems.
- Space is sufficient so children can play and work creatively in a relaxed setting. Providing, or allowing for, insufficient space for an activity will limit and is likely to influence children’s behaviour negatively.
- The outdoor space provides opportunities for children to move more freely, be louder without restrictions and become calmer.
- Active, loud and energetic play spaces are balanced with soft, passive, quiet and peaceful areas both indoors and outdoors.

### **Toys, materials and resources**

- Resources for working with children are developmentally appropriate and in good condition.
- Open-ended materials allow for children to use them in whatever way they choose and support engagement in play.
- There are enough easily accessible materials and equipment with enough complexity to keep children engaged for long enough without having to share too much or wait too long.

### **Responding to challenging behaviour**

We recognise that some of the ways children tell us they are stressed and overwhelmed are when they show the following behaviours on a regular basis. For example, they:

- are overactive
- have difficulty focusing on or completing a task
- become easily frustrated
- have difficulty making decisions
- have difficulty following directions
- solve problems by hitting, biting, grabbing or pushing
- have tantrums
- cling to adults
- avoid new tasks
- do not play with other children
- cry frequently and cannot be soothed easily
- do not eat

Adults always respond supportively to children's distress.

### **Guidance for 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 use the skipping rope 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 a child uses positive problem solving behaviour, reinforce this, for example by saying 'You solved the problem...' then state what they did.
- Stay near the child/children 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/children.
- 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 staff remain calm and settles the situation for this child and the others around.
- Staff will stop a child's aggressive or destructive behaviour such as biting, kicking or hitting and give a reason for their action such as 'biting must stop, biting hurts'.
- Staff model positive behaviour to the child and will never mirror the child's behaviour by raising their tone of voice or acting inappropriately.
- When the situation has been diffused, it is important that staff 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.

- A positive approach that the child may use in the future is reinforced such as walking away and playing elsewhere or by stating clearly that they don't like what is happening and/or it hurts.

### **Holding or restraining a child to prevent harm**

- Physical holding as prevention must only be used:
  - 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.
- No matter what age the child is, physical restraint must only ever be used for immediate safety reasons, with the minimum force and for the minimum amount of time. The purpose of this intervention can only be to prevent injury to the child, another child or to an adult, or to prevent serious damage to property.
- 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 staff member 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 will only be used in an age appropriate way, e.g. it may be appropriate to pick a very young child up.
- Great care will be taken when holding a child with particular attention paid to their individual needs.
- The intent of this action is to keep the child and others safe until their self-control is regained and they feel contained, but it will 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 is supportive and in no way a punishment.

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

### **Time to one side with support of an adult**

- In some very rare situations, it may be appropriate to use time to one side with the support of an adult, for short periods of time, to enable a child to calm down. This

may follow an incident in which the child may have felt very angry, anxious or frustrated to the extent that they themselves and others have been unsettled.

- Adult support is needed throughout this time and the child can decide when they feel able to continue to participate in the activities.
- A child must never be isolated in any space or room without adult support.
- The use of the 'naughty step' or similar is never used as this can lead to feelings of isolation and stigmatisation of the child.
- Outdoor time will never be taken away as a form of punishment.

### **Staff behaviour**

- It is important to promote only limits that guide children's safety and security rather than any that might curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity.
- Staff are aware of and understand that their own dispositions, values, attitudes, temperaments, expertise, reactions and responses to children impact on the behaviours that the children learn.
- Staff acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant, e.g. an adult who is not scared of thunder will support a child not to overreact but will not trivialise the fear or anxiety the child expresses.
- Staff respond to and acknowledge children's feelings and emotions such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride and help children to learn to name their feelings and emotions.
- Staff understand that children may not yet have developed the appropriate ways to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Staff attitudes and practice demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their level of development and/or general disposition.
- Staff are 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.
- An atmosphere which fosters trust, security and comfort is created by giving children time and attention to enable them to talk and express their feelings.
- Children are in an environment that encourages caring and co-operative relationships, which supports them to relate with each other in more positive ways

by learning through example from the adults and positive behaviour from their peers

- Staff 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 fun, ending the session in a positive way
- Any limitations to a child's behaviour are phrased in a positive way, focusing on 'what to do' rather than 'what not to do'. By using these positive statements, staff reinforce for children appropriate and desirable ways of communication. It also decreases the likelihood of children responding with resistance or defensiveness.
- Explaining to children the 'why' of behaviour guidance and the limits which help them to internalise and learn the rules of positive social interaction.
- Minor incidents are best ignored. As long as their behaviour is not impacting negatively on others, adults sometimes need to step back, take a breath and decide not to speak or intervene.
- Staff 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 the adult as a reliable source of advice by demonstrating that what they say is valued.

### **Prohibited practices**

It is important to note the following:

- Children are never ignored, spoken to sarcastically, humiliated, segregated, or have food withheld.
- Corporal punishment - Any physical force which is used with intent to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, such as hitting, spanking (refers to striking a child with an open hand on the buttocks or extremities with the intention of modifying behaviour without causing physical injury), shaking, slapping, twisting, pulling, pinching, squeezing, or biting is prohibited.
- Practices or the threat of any practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitative, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful will not be carried out on any child while attending this service.

## **SERIOUS BEHAVIOUR ISSUES**

Serious behaviour issues may include:

- Any repeated pattern of behaviour that interferes with the child's learning or engagement in social interactions with peers and adults such as withdrawal
- Behaviours that are not responsive to the guidance procedures/approaches described above
- Prolonged tantrums, physical and verbal aggression, disruptive behaviour (e.g. screaming, property destruction, self-injury, persistent non-compliance).

When a child's serious behaviour issues are causing disruption and problems for the other children in the group, the following approaches will be considered:

- Reviewing the programme to ensure that it is meeting the child's care, learning and development needs
- Reviewing the service's approaches to addressing the child's behaviour
- Discussing with the child's parents/guardians to help to develop a specific plan for that child. The purpose of the plan will be to help ensure that the reason the child is having difficulty with regulating their behaviour, is identified if possible and addressed. It is also to provide whatever support they need to be able to relate well to other children and adults, make friends, feel secure and valued, explore and learn confidently and feel good about themselves.

An individualised plan that takes a positive, learning approach, will be developed. This plan may include:

- Observing and recording the behaviour
- Identifying the triggers for the challenging behaviour (best guesses about why and when the behaviour happens)
- Considering ways to make the events/interactions that the child seems to find difficult, easier to manage (e.g. less difficult, less confusing, more engaging)
- Skills to teach the child to be able to deal with the situation without resorting to the problem behaviour

- Ways in which the adults will respond when the problem behaviour occurs - to ensure a consistent response
- Ways that parents can help the child at home
- Ways to review and evaluate the plan.

Recurring problems are dealt with in an inclusive manner following observations and involving the child's parents/guardians and, where necessary, other appropriate adults (with parents'/guardians' consent).

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

Parents/guardians are encouraged to maintain on-going communication with staff on the approaches being implemented.

When all reasonable attempts to support the child whose challenging behaviour is causing the difficulties have failed, it may be necessary to suggest to parents/guardians to seek professional advice, such as a psychologist or play therapist. The parent/guardian may then seek the advice or request referral to other professionals.

In partnership with parents, any programme designed for a child by an appropriately qualified specialist will be fully implemented as far as the resources of the service allow.

In exceptional circumstances and following specialised advice and guidance, it may be considered necessary for the child to leave the service to move to a service that can better meet their particular needs.

All staff team members will be provided with support to deal with stressful situations arising from dealing with challenging behaviour. (See Staff Supervision Policy.)

### **Recording incidents**

Records are 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
- j) Parents/guardians signature/s.

(See Accidents and Incidents Policy)

### **If a child attempts to leave the service without permission**

- One staff member will remain with the group
- The other staff member will reason with the child, ask them how we can support them to make the correct choice/return and we will discuss the situation and try supporting them to resolve it. The staff will offer to phone parents to let them discuss it with them.
- If they still insist on going staff will keep trying to contact parents. Allow the child to speak to parent/guardian if phone contact can be made with them. Stand at exit door. If child leaves the building two staff follows if available. Continue to try contact parents.
- The two staff will walk if possible and try to keep the child calm by speaking to them.
- If parents or guardians cannot be contacted the other emergency number given by parents can be phoned.
- If staff cannot contact the parents and cannot locate the child or are concerned for the child's safety, the HSE or/and gardai will have to be contacted.
- When the child comes back to school a detailed investigation will be carried out. A support plan will be put in place and reviewed within required timeframes.
- Written records of the incident will be kept.

## **Communication Plan**

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

All parents/guardians are informed of the Policy on Managing Behaviour on enrolment. Staff members check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy is included in the Parents'/Guardians' 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 all staff and to parents/guardians in the Policy Folder located at the entrance to the classroom.

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

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

## **Contact Information**

If you need more information about this policy, contact:

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**This policy was adopted by Club Spraoi on:** 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019

**Signed by:** Priscilla McCann (Owner)

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