

Little Acorns School

Behaviour Management and Discipline Policy

Updated: April 2022

To be reviewed: April 2023

Outcome:

Children educated at Little Acorns School are supported to develop and understand socially acceptable behaviours through praise and positive reinforcement. Anti-social or inappropriate behaviours should be understood and addressed in a suitable age / stage appropriate manner.

Staff working at Little Acorns School are assisted in such tasks relating to handling difficult and challenging behaviours, maintaining the child's dignity and safety.



Introduction:

This Policy begins with general guidance on handling difficult behaviours. It then looks at those Sanctions that are approved at Little Acorns School, and those that are strictly prohibited.

Unfortunately some the Children who are placed at Little Acorns have often experienced very traumatising and confusing treatment from adults in their early years, and thus may remain traumatised and confused during their time with us. Other children have a variety of need, predominantly SEMH needs that can lead to challenging behaviours. These difficulties can be acted out in physical behaviours which can pose a threat of harm to themselves, other Children or to the adults that are caring for them. For this reason and in the interest of safety Little Acorns has approved Physical Intervention techniques that are trained and supported by **Securicare**. This Policy also looks at the use of Physical Interventions and why and when this would occur.

It is essential that the approach to handling difficult behaviour be matched to the individual Child's level of understanding and ability to make use of the said approach. Children are positively encouraged to participate in a setting where they realise that positive behaviour is encouraged, expected and praised.

Little Acorns suggests that Children are most likely to behave in a socially appropriate manner when:

- Expectations are high and achievable
- They feel valued and cared for
- They receive regular praise and positive feedback

- They feel they are successful
- They receive consistent messages from staff, their families and carers, and their external networks.

General Guidance on Handling Difficult Behaviour:

1. Anticipate and Prevent

Get to know each Child well – A strong relationship based on trust and respect is one of the most effective preventative measures.

Involve the Children – In discussion about the adult's responses and treatment which they feel will help them when they are having difficulties. This needs to be appropriate to each Child's age and understanding.

Teach by example – Model respect for the children and for each other in all of our work.

Encourage age appropriate behaviour – notice and respond when children are being helpful or constructive, friendly or just quiet and co-operative.

Be consistent – as far as you can maintain consistent limits within the team and find out about the limits the child is used to at home or elsewhere.

Be clear – Children need to be aware of what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour and responsibilities. Problems often occur when expectations are unclear or unreasonable.

2. When things become difficult, what helps:

Try and avoid head on conflict – Try distraction or compromise – diffuse the situation where you can and stop it escalating (be aware not to collude in unreasonable compromise, this could escalate future situations with other staff who will not collude inappropriately). Relaxed humour can be appropriate.

Use the opportunity for the Child to learn – Try and teach a positive alternative to an unacceptable behaviour, e.g. 'Let's do this' rather than 'don't do that!' – Always aim to increase the child's own self-control, where it is safe to do so.

Encourage Children to find a way out of difficult situations – Offer alternatives, make sure the Child has a way out of the confrontation without 'losing face' and make sure the gains are in getting out of the conflict.

If you have to use sanctions – make them fair, reasonable and meaningful. They must be relevant to the incident or behaviour, and they are not a punishment or an illustration of power – giving a Sanction is not enjoyable but is necessary.

Recognise the Child's feelings – It may be unreasonable to bite, kick or scream but it is not unreasonable to feel cross or unhappy. Make a distinction between the feeling and the behaviour. Help the Child to find acceptable ways to express their feelings.

1. Keep your own self-control – get help and do not be afraid to go away and leave the situation to others if you feel you are losing your own self-control.
2. Move confidently but calmly.
3. Make your statements to the Child simple and clear.
4. Make sure your voice is quiet, firm and assured.

Reduce the threat – of your presence by sitting, kneeling or giving space for the Child to move about, but only if it is safe to do so.

Talk to the Child – even if it appears that he / she is not listening – try to maintain eye contact and focus on reassurance, offering comfort and security through staying with the Child when distressed and out of control. Do not try to sort things out in the heat of the moment; leave that for later when the Child is calmer. Together you can agree what needs to happen next in order to resolve the entire situation. If the Child asks you to give them space, do so, but only if the child is not in danger of hurting themselves or causing harm when on their own.

Use Physical Intervention only after other alternatives have been tried – If a Child is presenting a risk to themselves or to others, use the minimum force necessary and for just long enough to calm the Child down. Never use restraint as a form of punishment. Know and believe that Physical Intervention can be used positively. Parents and carers must always be informed if Physical Intervention has been required, and a written log must be completed using CPOMS, within 24 hours of the intervention taking place.

Do not leave a Child alone when upset unless you are sure the Child is safe.

3. When things do become difficult, avoid further unnecessary problems:

- Do not attempt to assist a Child alone if you feel out of your depth – ask for help or ideas or advice.
- Do not throw your weight around and make alarming or unrealistic promises or threats that will not transpire.
- Do not corner and overcrowd or inhibit a Child's movements unless the child or others are at risk.
- Do not use sarcasm or tease or belittle or shame or Child into obeying instruction.
- Do not shout as a routine response or give complicated garbled messages with a high-pitched voice. Shouting will often escalate matters and reproduce a more angry or manic response.
- Do not try to sort things out by bombarding the Child with statements and questions.
- Do not leave the Child to look for the help / containment that should be available.
- Do not use restraint as such a regular feature of practice that it comes to be seen by Children as an everyday method of control before accepting adult authority. Remember, Children who have suffered serious physical and / or sexual abuse can react powerfully to well-intentioned efforts to restrain, misperceiving such actions as the prelude to further assault.
- **Do not escalate verbal or disruptive challenges into physical challenges by using restraint before it is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THE CHILD, OTHERS OR TO PREVENT NON-TRIVIAL DAMAGE TO PROPERTY.**

It is important that all staff members are familiar with the Positive Behavioural Support Plan for each Child.

Finally, ALWAYS RECORD INCIDENTS OF RESTRAINT:

- **A Physical Intervention Record for each Child is kept which has the detailed account of the scenario, actions and responses, outcomes and learning. Those Records are monitored by the HeadTeacher in the record itself and comments and actions noted in 'Managers Monitoring' box. Patterns of behaviour etc are discussed at staff meetings.**

Sanctions:

The range of sanctions used in any establishment for Children must comply with the guidelines set down by Ofsted, in the National Minimum Standards and must not contravene the Children's Act 1989. Any Sanction imposed beyond those approved will be unacceptable and possibly illegal. All sanctions permissible at Little Acorns School are set out in this section.

Prohibited Sanctions

The following Sanctions are those prohibited by law and may never be used in relation to any Child at Little Acorns:

- Any form of corporal punishment
- Use of physical intervention for rude or challenging verbal behaviours.
- Any punishment relating to the consumption or deprivation of food or drink.
- Any restriction, other than one imposed by a court, on:
A Child's contact with parents, relatives or friends;
Visits by parents, relatives or friends;
Access to any telephone helpline providing counselling for Children
Contact with those external professionals listed in Regulation 15 (2).
- Any requirement that a Child wear distinctive or inappropriate clothes.
- The use or withholding of medication or medical or dental treatment.
- The intentional deprivation of sleep.
- The imposition of any financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum (which may be by instalments) by way of reparation.
- Any intimate physical examination of the Child.
- The withholding of any aids or equipment required by a disabled Child.
- Any measure which involves:
Any child in the imposition of any measure against any other child; or
The punishment of a group of Children for the behaviour of an individual Child.

Also the Restriction of Liberty of any Child in Little Acorns care. The Children Secure Accommodation Regulations 1991 defines secure accommodation as 'accommodation provided for the purpose of restricting the liberty of children'.

Under this regulation the Secretary of State's approval is required before accommodation may be used for the restriction of a Child's Liberty.

Little Acorns has no such approval and therefore the following are not permitted:

- The locking of a Child or Children in a single room at any time, even when accompanied by a responsible adult or adults.
- The locking of internal doors to confine a Child or Children in certain sections, even when accompanied by an adult or adults.

A Child may be stopped from absconding if not to do so would place the Child at likelihood from significant risk of harm.

In addition to these Sanctions prohibited by law, Little Acorns itself prohibits the use of the following:

- Threats of unacceptable punishments
- Any verbal abuse intended to humiliate or degrade a Child, his/her Family or other important person – whether in relation to race, sex, religion or any other respect.
- Removal of curriculum entitlement for any reason other than health and safety.
- Removal of Rewards that have already been earned.
- Physical Restraint as a Sanction
- The whole group being sanctioned as the result of individual Children's behaviour.

Approved Sanctions:

Sanctions are routinely used by school staff to promote appropriate behaviour and to help individual Children accept responsibility and agency in their actions. School staff should regularly review the use of sanctions for individual Children to ensure that they are helping them to learn and become more responsible. If a sanction is not appropriate or effective then it should not be used. **In order for the use of sanctions to effectively promote appropriate behaviour their use must be in tandem with a system of Rewards for appropriate and positive**

behaviour and conduct. It is only when both elements of a Child's presentation is addressed, positive and negative, that a learning process can begin.

Guidance on the use of Sanctions:

Sanctions should:

- Be relevant to the inappropriate behaviour
- Be seen to be fair in the eyes of Children and discussed with them so that they know clearly what sanctions are and are not permitted.
- Not be seen as a revenge tactic.
- Be for a specific period where applicable.
- Be used with thought and consideration.
- Be tailored to the individual.
- Be discussed with the staff team.
- Be applied as soon after the event as possible.
- Be reviewed periodically; if seen to be unworkable other methods are applied, where appropriate. Involve the Child in the review if appropriate.

Permissible Sanctions include:

- A vehicle ban following dangerous behaviour in a vehicle during a school outing. *(This does not mean that the Child cannot leave Little Acorns, they are still able to walk to destinations with the supporting adult or use public transport where safe and appropriate to do so). The child would be allowed to travel in a vehicle for medical appointments during this time.*
- Catching up on missed School Work, or addressing issues of aggressive behaviour in class with the School Staff, this may be out of School hours.
- Spending time away from the group of Children until they are calm enough to re-join and not promote anti-social conduct in others. In these circumstances a Child may use Willow Classroom, or the house if it is deemed appropriate. **That the Child must not be isolated from appropriate adult support.**
- Being required to stay close to an adult. This could happen when a Child was finding it very hard to cope with most of the tasks of the day and was acting this frustration out in an anti-social manner.
- Asked to carry out small reparative tasks to **put things right relating to their behaviour**, tidying up a mess that was made or helping to repair some damage that was caused.
- Not being able to use specific pieces of equipment following their misuse, e.g. Computer Ban.
- Helping to tidy any mess they have made- or put back any displays they any have pulled down.
- Missing a School Playtime, for anti-social or disruptive behaviours that have impacted the other Children, or due to having School Work to catch up on.
- **Follow up conversation – This is a key sanction as it is also a process of reparation and understanding, a discussion about the behaviours and the Child's understanding of how to do things differently next time.**

While all of the above sanctions are permissible in their appropriate use, each Child has sanctions for physical aggression and disruption that are identified as the most productive for their individual requirements. This list is at the end of this Policy.

We must remind ourselves of those PROHIBITED SANCTIONS that must never be used at Little Acorns:

The range of sanctions used in any establishment for Children must comply with the guidelines set down by Ofsted, in the National Minimum Standards and must not contravene the Children's Act 1989. Any Sanction imposed beyond those approved will be unacceptable and possibly illegal.

Guidance on the use of Physical Restraint:

- Only use a physical restraint if you have been trained in the use of Securicare, or as directed by a staff member trained in the use of Securicare.
- Only use a physical restraint if a Child is in danger of hurting him/herself, yourself or another person, or causing non-trivial damage to property.
- Only use a physical restraint if other forms of intervention have been tried and preventative steps are unsuccessful. These may include talking, comforting, calming, and withdrawing yourself from the situation.
- Remember physical restraints are defensive protective techniques. They should never be used offensively.
- Before you restrain, remember:
Principles of Body alignment
Concern for circulation and respiration
Avoid pressure on joints
Ensure you are not likely to inflict pain or cause injury
Seek to recover the Child in a calm and caring way
Assess the Child's emotional and physical wellbeing
- **Will the restraint reduce risk?** If the Child is acting to significantly damage property (for example) there is a responsibility to stop this from occurring. However use your discretion; If restraining this Child is likely to cause a higher risk of injury than verbal resolution and some repairs will, then take the safest possible avenue.
- Use a physical restraint only until the Child can be safely released
- Record the incident in the Physical Intervention Report Sheet.
- Use only if preventative steps are unsuccessful
- Use the Securicare Progressive Response System – move to a less restrictive hold as soon as possible.
- 'Restrictive techniques' are only employed to terminate or interrupt a truly dangerous situation where injury may occur.
- Protect the Child and yourself.
- Remember: Excessive force in the use of a restraint that is not reasonable may constitute assault of a minor leading to further investigation.

Where after a physical restraint there is any concern over the health or wellbeing of the Child or a staff member, NHS direct must be called as a minimum procedure. Where advised to seek further medical advice from a GP or from the Accident and Emergency Department of William Harvey Hospital this must be completed immediately.

A child who is complaining of injury must be given the opportunity for medical assistance via the above routes.

Where a Child complains of not being able to breath during a restraint the restraint must be released immediately. Children are susceptible to 'positional asphyxia' during restraint situations, this may not be obvious during a restraint. The Child may still be able to shout and talk, asphyxia can take effect sometime after a restraint has concluded. Therefore it is vital that any complaint of shortness of breath is heeded and immediate action to resolve the situation is implemented. Where shortness of breath has led to altered behaviours and perceptions, blueing of the lips, face or extremities, lack of coordination or other concerning side effect medical assistance must be sought immediately through the above routes, or with a call to 999 for the provision of an ambulance.

999 may be called for police involvement in disruption of the home in certain extreme circumstances:

- *Where an intruder or trespasser is on site and posing threat to the home, the property or persons therein.*
- *Where aggressive behaviours of Children are such that the team on shift and the on call Manager are together not able to ensure the on-going safety of the children without police involvement. This must be with the permission of the on-call Manager if there is not a Manager on site.*
- *Where there is an emergency that in all situations requires the involvement of police for its safe conclusion.*

However, Little Acorns always seeks to not criminalise Children and involves the police in addressing behaviours only when absolutely necessary.

Staff are to be offered a 'de-brief' regarding incidents requiring physical intervention. Where this is possible immediately afterward it should be provided, however the end of a shift is suitable in a group de-brief forum. Where an individual would like an individual de-brief that will be provided also. A person senior to those who took part in the restraint should offer the de-brief, however, colleagues of any position within the trained care team are able to offer support to one another and de-brief forums where there is not a senior person available.

Children should also be offered a de-brief in what is termed a 'follow up chat'. This will be to discuss the highs and lows of behaviour and adult responses, what the Child felt comfortable with and what they did not, and most importantly what they can do as a team next time to avoid the need for restraint. The Child's view from this follow up chat should be noted in brief on the Incident Record.

Children who have witnessed a physical intervention may also require a de-brief, this is less formal and takes place as a supportive talk from a suitable and relevant adult.

Monitoring the use of Physical Interventions:

All incidents involving the Children cared for at Little Acorns are recorded and each child has an individual Physical Intervention Log. These are read and monitored by ANeal.

These incidents are then monitored by Alison Neal on a daily basis (Monday to Friday) wherever possible to find patterns, compile learning outcomes and identify strategies to manage and limit the need for future physical interventions with each individual child.

The Manager's monitoring comments are noted on the Physical Intervention Records. These Records remain available to staff in the Child's PI Record folder held in the Office. Significant themes or learning outcomes are fed back through Handover Meetings and / or MEMO's to the house and staff team.