

## **The St Michael Steiner School Early Years Guidelines for Supporting Positive Behaviour in the Kindergarten**

Behaviour is the way we act and respond to people and situations we find ourselves in. All children learn and grow in their understanding of socially appropriate and desirable behaviour. During the kindergarten years, the child is developing as a social being and one of the tasks of the kindergarten teacher is to create and maintain an environment where the child can imitate and develop such behaviour. We understand that all behaviour is communication, and we will strive to understand what children may communicate through their behaviour. As adults supporting the children's development, we encourage:

- respect and care of self, others, and the environment
- the development of self-regulation
- the development of high self-esteem and self-confidence

### **Promoting positive behaviour**

In the kindergarten environment, children feel secure and safe through strong rhythms and routines in daily activities. During this phase of early childhood, children learn through imitation, and the teachers and assistants endeavour to be role models worthy of imitation. We use respectful, clear language to each other, modulating our voices to suit the occasion. We positively support each other in our activities around the children. We eat together on a daily basis, helping the children learn to share, serve each other and eat socially. We have clear and consistent boundaries, throughout the daily session, often established with the repetition of songs and positive habits. Each child is treated individually and according to their age and stage of development. We use a number of simple verbal reminders for the children, for example, 'hands are for work and play', 'kind words', 'knock at the door and you may enter', to provide consistency in the whole group of children. There is a clear understanding that the child is always accepted, while some behaviours are not. Expectations are likewise clear - we do not hurt ourselves, another person or our environment.

### **Working with challenging behaviour**

Most children experience social difficulties at some time in their development. This may be due to the child's stage of understanding spoken English. At different stages of development, we may use any of the following methods to redirect a child's behaviour:

- Distraction - attract the child's attention with a new focus or activity;
- Gain the child's attention with a look, gesture or word to make them aware of our observations;
- Lead the child away from the situation and engage them in an adult-led task, when appropriate the child returns to the group;
- Occasionally, and only for older children, they may be asked to help with a particular task instead of joining a group activity;
- With older children, we may use phrases such as: "*I will not let you do that*" or "*Please stop*", especially for a quick response to a child hitting or about to hit another, for example. As long as it is said in a gentle, but firm and clear way, without anger, it can be simple and direct.

If the behaviour of a child requires more attention than what can be achieved by the daily efforts described above, other means may be implemented to ensure the most positive kindergarten experience for the child, classmates, and group as a whole. We do not support the use of corporal punishment in our school.

Approaches for consideration when behaviour of a child is consistently disruptive and/or there is a cause for general concern.

1. Parent notification and consultation on a regular basis;
2. Teacher review on a regular basis (daily and/or weekly);
3. Discussion with parents, teachers and child where appropriate;
4. Undertake a Child Study in weekly teachers' meetings;
5. Implementation of an action plan to target a particular problem or concern;
6. Recommendation to consult with other professionals for help and support.

If necessary the kindergarten teacher will liaise with the early years or school safeguarding lead for further support and advice.

### **Parental Support**

We work closely with a child's family in order to support the child's development. A clear and flexible settling-in time is followed by home visits, 1:1 times with parents and parents' evenings. Parents are invited to family festivals, and we provide opportunities for parents to deepen their understanding of Waldorf education on aspects of early childhood from a Steiner perspective including indoor and outdoor play, health and development, temperaments, puppets and stories, use of technology, and festivals and their meanings. Where possible we invite speakers from outside. In keeping with our philosophy of supporting positive behaviour, we ask that parents agree to support us by considering the appropriateness of toys and clothing available to their child. Electronic games, weapons, cartoon or superhero images and their actions are not considered helpful in social integration and may work actively against what we are doing in the kindergarten. We find that specific television/computer programmes and images do not support positive behaviour in the kindergarten and ask for parents' thoughtful consideration.

For children showing challenging behaviour, we will look at specific needs and issues with our colleagues, the school SENCo, the College of Teachers, and the parents. If we are unable to provide the necessary support to meet the child's developmental needs, we may ask the child to leave, but this would only be after all other avenues have been explored, both in house and outside agencies.

Lead practitioner for behaviour in the Early Years (including EYFS): Maria da Costa

In house:                      Early years practitioners  
   College of Teachers  
   Eurythmy therapist

Outside agencies:    Hounslow Early Years Advisory team  
                                 Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Advisory Service