

## Positive Language Policy

August 2018

It is expected that all staff at The Old School House develop, use and reinforce the use of positive language. Such language is designed to manage and lead behaviour and learning by creating a supportive atmosphere and guiding pupils to positive outcomes.

**Always use eye contact with children when you are speaking to and working with them.**

Always aim to get down to the child's level before you start talking. Eye contact is easier when you are at child height!

**Always use eye contact** with and amongst staff members working in the same room. **Eye contact** is the first point of communication. You are barely communicating with another person without it. Communication is a two way process with a speaker and a listener, ensure you have engaged your 'listener'!

Be aware of personal body language and the impression that it gives the children. Crossing your arms can make you unapproachable and cuts you off from spontaneous interactions with the children.

Move towards the child or any other person when communicating with them, remember to respect the other person, try and make sure you move so that there are no barriers to your communication. Do not communicate across the room or table, so consequently "over" others!

Use your words to guide the children's actions, rather than automatically offering your hand for them to take and then be guided physically. The children in your care are independent beings and it is our responsibility to promote this, such as "We are going to the bathroom together" "We are going to the garden together". Use the word TOGETHER to emphasis a joint action to help the child with that transition from one place to another.

If you wish to promote a transition of the children ie from the Work Cycle to stories or outside play, engage all the staff in this period so that all the children are spoken to individually and told what is happening, expectations set, and praised for achieving. 'We are going out to play now. When you have finished your work please put it back on the shelf, and then you can join us. We are putting our coats on first. Thank you for joining us.' This ensures that the calm atmosphere remains. A raised adult's voice, or a jolt within the cycle escalates volume.

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cross the areas:

## **Wrens/ Cygnets Rooms**

### **Treasure Baskets and Heuristic Play (0 - 18mths)**

At this age the children are generally not walking, moving by crawling and using grabbing actions to 'feed' their thirst for knowledge about the nature of the objects around them through touch, using their mouth and their hands.

With these children the amount of praise given is universally higher as the children are constantly challenging themselves and achieving huge milestones in movement as well as language.

In a well managed environment the positioning of the resources would give the children enough space to work independently, but with the proximity to feel as if they are in a social setting interacting through glances and exchanges of expression. It is not feasible to expect a child in this early 'ego-centric' phase of development to share.

Fill the environment with a wealth of natural resources that you can rotate, and create safe opportunities for the children to pull themselves up, take initial steps, and climb. Be aware that we naturally just pick up a child without giving it a second thought! If you wish to move a child, be polite!

'I'm just going to .....

'After three we are going to.....'

'Would you like to.....'

If the child is able to move himself in some instances, empower him to do so for himself

'This is a basket for the bricks. I would like you to put the bricks in the basket' 'Climb out of the basket please?' 'Are you going to get out of the basket by yourself or can I help you?' 'After 3 I am going to help you get out of the basket' 1,2, Are you getting out by yourself? 3 'thank you for getting out of the basket by yourself' OR 'I am going to pick you up out of the basket'.

If there is inappropriate behaviour ie throwing or pushing ask yourself some simple questions first:

- Is it the throwing / pushing that the child is interested in?
- Is it to initiate contact with another child that this child wants?

With the answer you can then look at your practice and adapt it accordingly. SO in this instance create a safe throwing activity such as Pom Poms into a basket. When it is the action, label it first so that the child is aware of what you are referring to. "Bobby, you are throwing. Bobby you are throwing the ball."

Then you can redirect that action after a couple of sessions. 'Bobby would you like to throw?' 'If you would like to throw, we do throwing over here. I am going to show you where we throw. This is how we throw Bobby. You show me how you can throw the Pom Pom. Throw the Pom pom into the basket. That is exactly how we throw the Pom Pom. Thank you for throwing the Pom Pom into the basket'

You have in this instance:

- Identified the action and its requirement to be fulfilled by the child

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ven that action a name, a label so that child can identify it for himself

- Provided a safe way in which this need can be satisfied
- Guided the child to this place and demonstrated how it is done
- Empowered the child that they can do this action whenever they would like
- Praised the child for accomplishing the task

When these strategies are in place, as soon as you see the throwing of something inappropriate, you just go back to the original question. 'Bobby would you like to throw?' and start all over again.

If it is the contact with the child that is required, then demonstrating and praising is the most simple approach, but one that requires constant re-enforcing.

'Bobby, when we play with our friends we are gentle. This is how I play with my friend gently' (Demonstrate soft stroking). Can you show me how you can play gently? That's exactly how we play gently. Thank you Bobby for playing gently with your friend.

If a child is struggling with this and has this kind of interaction constantly with an adult, try to predict and interject first. 'Bobby, when you play with ....., you will play gently.' (Demonstrating gentle stroking actions on yourself or Bobby). Watch and then praise as soon as he approaches and initiates positively. 'That's exactly how we play gently with.....' If he returns to the push, then you return to the sentences above, but your best line of defence is to create as many opportunities for the child to receive praise, manipulating the environment so that contact with another child is always observed and managed. Role modelling interactions with others through "Grace and Courtesy" exercises also works well.

In all of these instances it is imperative that no matter how many times you go through the same procedure you approach it in the same manner, with the same tone of voice and the same words. Never be afraid of asking for support from your team members and changing roles. We would all struggle if required to do this for the 20<sup>th</sup> time in one session!

### **Cygnets/ Duckling Rooms (18mths to 3yrs)**

Although the children are now moving, walking and starting to talk, they are still in a very ego-centric stage of development and are not capable of 'sharing' in the conventional meaning of the word. The children are social beings, but all with their own independent energy to act on their surroundings at different times, on different things, in different ways.

The child's internal sense of order can be re-enforced and fostered, where the children are given the responsibility of simple tasks such as tucking in their chairs, wiping the table, helping themselves to an activity and returning it to its place, on the shelves or table. Their main 'task' within this age span is to work out what everything does, how it works, to perfect their movements and start that incredible journey into verbal communications.

In the environment ensure there is a wealth of opportunities to explore and manipulate independently, but within a social setting. Provide safe places to climb up and down, throw, read, build and construct, use simple implements. These latter materials can start to be used in defined spaces, such as on mats, where all pieces are kept on their own spaces. It means that three children can be working with the building bricks, but each one can have their own pile of bricks on their own mat. The child is therefore socially engaging in the same activity but in their own way, in their own space!

'Bobby these are ..... brick's. These are your bricks. If you would like to play with the bricks we play with them on this mat. That is exactly where we play with the bricks. Thank you for playing with your bricks on your mat'. (These sentences will be required to be repeated many times initially)

A vital key is to observe, know each child, what they are interested in and provide opportunities for them to use their energies constructively.

It is at this point where it is really easy to use sentences that put 'ideas' into children's heads. 'Do not draw on the table, don't climb on the chair, don't push your friend, don't kick the bricks down, don't put your feet on the books etc etc. You cannot undo something in a child's mind until it is already planted in there. You say the words above and the child will not hear 'don't. They will only hear 'draw on the table'. And then we wonder why that happens!

If I say to you - 'Don't think of Elvis Presley'. You are now thinking of Elvis! You have to think about Elvis before you can then NOT think about him.

Here we have to rephrase, and use our words to direct the child towards the appropriate actions 'When we draw we keep the pencil on the paper', 'When we are at Nursery we keep our bottoms on our chairs' 'We play gently with our friends when we are at Nursery' (this is how I play gently, you show me how you play gently with your friend) 'When we are at Nursery we use our hands when we play with the bricks', 'We keep our feet on the floor when we are at school,' 'Use our hands for the books and then we can read the books'.

It is habitual to add the 'consequence' of negative actions when we talk to children. 'Don't do that or you will fall', 'If you do that you will hurt yourself'

Again, children will become self fulfilling prophecies. If you give them the negative consequence, 9 times out of 10 it will happen. This is as above, you have given the child the action (although

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t purposefully), you have disempowered the child, and put in feelings of doubt and insecurity, putting a question mark over the possibility of risk taking.

It is possible to use these sentences, leaving the 'consequence' element out altogether. 'If you would like to climb, can I ask you do go slowly, and then you will be safe.' 'To be safe walking along the wall you need to go slowly, or 'hold 'Mummy's hand', whichever you feel more comfortable with.

Sentences such as 'When we walk down the road, we keep our feet on the pavement', 'To be safe when we walk down the road we keep our feet on the pavement' really help. They guide the child as to your expectation, empower

them, that they can indeed do this action and you then do as in all cases POSITIVE QUANTITATIVE PRAISE.

'Thank you for keeping your feet on the pavement. That's exactly how we walk down the road and stay safe'.

These simple sentence structures can be used for a multitude of instances, e.g. carrying scissors:

'When we carry scissors we hold them like this and then we are safe', 'Can you show me how you hold the scissors to be safe?' 'That's exactly how we hold our scissors' 'thank you for holding your scissors so beautifully.'

### **Gosling Room (3yrs - 5yrs)**

Many of the strategies above will still apply in many instances and it is imperative to keep the same 'positive approach' to all scenarios. When a child is over two, has a better command of the spoken word and understands most verbal exchanges, there is a tendency to dull down the praise and our expectations of this now articulate, confident mover is high.

A child craves attention, especially when it has been so freely given in the first few years of life. A child does not discriminate between types of attention - it can be gained in a positive as well as a negative way. As much as possible ignore the negative behaviours, observe and praise for all those behaviours that you wish to see repeated.

Children develop and progress through a very dark wood, with no clearly defined pathway. They stumble upon the 'socially acceptable' ways of behaving by being told what NOT to do! We can show the children a much clearer way forward by using simple sentences, outlining expected behaviour and then praising them for it when it is achieved.

The hardest part is trusting that ignoring some of the negative behaviours (when other children are not at risk) is OK!

It is at this stage that many of the expectations we have of the children should be questioned, asking ourselves 'Do they know the meaning of these words?' or 'Do they know what I mean by...' rather than taking it for granted. It is best to introduce the child to the concept first and then praise when it is achieved, for example:

'Bobby, would you like to play with John?' 'If I would like to play with John, I would say 'John please may I play with you?' 'Bobby can you ask John if you can play with him?' 'That is exactly how I ask John. What did John say?'

If YES - 'Thank you John. Bobby would you say thank you to John and then you can go and join him on the mat'

If NO - 'Thank you John. Bobby, John would like to play by himself today, so you can ask him another time, just as you have done today.'

Respect the child who was playing by himself in the first place and empower him that it is OK to say 'No'. If someone asked me if they could help me in my kitchen I would definitely say 'No'.

Before Bobby interacts with another child, you can now prompt, as he approaches another child 'Bobby, would you like to play with Jack?' I know that you know how to ask Jack. How will you ask Jack if you can play with him? That's exactly what I say when I would like to play with a friend, well done Jack'.

The other change at this stage is that when you have worked with the children in such a positive way and have introduced them to the expected ways of behaving and treating the environment and its resources, you can empower with the statement 'I know that you know....'

'Bobby, I know that you know how to sit beautifully in the circle. Please show me how you sit beautifully, thank you for sitting so beautifully, that's exactly how we sit beautifully in the circle'.

This string of sentences can be used for all manner of situations where you wish to redirect a child's energies, but wish to empower them and re-affirm your belief in their abilities. The words can remain the same and your intonation can vary depending on the child and the desired outcome. As some children go from the unconscious mind into the conscious mind (3 years and over), they may require choices.

'Bobby I know that you can sit beautifully in the circle. Would you like to show me how you can sit beautifully in the circle? If you are not going to sit in the circle then we will sit here together and watch what all the children are doing' Are you ready now to join all the other children? I knew that you knew how to sit in the circle beautifully, thank you Bobby. (This works on the premise that all children are social beings and would like to be doing what the rest of the group is doing)!

'Bobby I know that you know how to play with the sand beautifully. When we play with the sand we keep it all in the sand pit here. Please keep the sand in the sandpit. If you'd like to play with the sand then we keep it in the sand pit. Would you like to play with the sand? Then we keep the sand in the sandpit. You can play in the sand pit beautifully or come and sit with me? What would you like to do?

Either Bobby will start playing appropriately with the sand to which you can praise him, or then say that after 3 he will need to make his choice. After count down ensure that you keep to the choices that you have given a child. Do not give in. If you get to 3 and the child has not done as requested then he is removed politely, and the second choice is carried out.

This would usually be sitting accompanied for a short time, with an adult pointing out all the other children and the positive aspects of their work or play, telling 'Bobby' that you know he can also, sit with his friends beautifully, carry scissors safely etc etc.

In all cases of communication know that changing is not easy. It takes time. Ask colleagues for help to point your own phrases out to you. The first step to making changes in the way we speak to children is to firstly become aware of how we communicate and having the desire to make a change.