

Does not follow rules and boundaries

Positive relationships support children's wellbeing, emotional development and self-regulation. Adults who respond consistently to children's verbal and pre-verbal cues help them feel safe, secure and valued. Children need co-regulation from trusted adults before they can self-regulate independently. Consistent routines, clear expectations and predictable experiences reduce anxiety and help children feel secure. When children feel safe, understood and connected, they are more likely to follow rules and boundaries. Together, positive relationships, clear expectations, consistent responses and opportunities to develop social skills provide the foundation for effective behaviour support in the Early Years.

Practitioners can support children by:

- Maintaining a calm, organised and predictable environment where children know what to expect.
- Using visual timetables, Now and Next boards, and visual or verbal reminders to support routines, transitions and changes throughout the day.
- Establishing clear, age-appropriate rules, boundaries and expectations that are consistently reinforced by all staff.
- Using clear, consistent and positively phrased language to promote understanding of how we learn and play together, for example, "Use walking feet" rather than "Don't run".
- Modelling the behaviours, attitudes and interactions expected from children.
- Supporting understanding through Total Communication approaches, including visuals, gestures, signs and spoken language.
- Giving countdowns and transition warnings to help children prepare for changes in activities.
- Acknowledging and validating children's feelings while maintaining clear and consistent boundaries.
- Supporting co-regulation before gradually developing children's ability to self-regulate independently.
- Regularly engaging with parents and carers to build a shared understanding of any factors that may be influencing a child's wellbeing or behaviour.
- Providing opportunities for responsibility and independence, such as helper roles.

Activities, ideas, resources or strategies:

- Games like Simon Says, Follow My Leader, Red Light, Green Light or Musical Statues
- Listening walks
- Action songs and rhymes
- Emotion check-ins using feelings boards, mirrors or emotion cards
- Circle-time discussions about feelings, friendships and problem-solving
- Breathing exercises and simple mindfulness activities
- Movement breaks and yoga activities
- Calm spaces with sensory resources for regulation
- Story times focusing on emotions, choices and consequences
- Turn-Taking or cooperation activities and board games
- Cooperative outdoor games
- Role-play scenarios focused on sharing, waiting, kindness and problem-solving
- Puppets to model positive behaviour and conflict resolution
- Small world play to explore social situations