5. Managing Behaviour

5.1 Promoting positive behaviour

Policy statement

St Mary's Nursery, Camberley believe that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are understood, supported and met and where there are clear, fair and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour.

The nursery recognises that children learn to understand and manage their emotions and behaviour through secure relationships, adult modelling, consistent routines, explicit teaching opportunities to practice social skills and sensitive support. Children develop at different rates and their behaviour must be understood in the context of their age, stage of development, individual needs, communication, experiences and circumstances.
We will maintain high expectations for all children while making appropriate adaptations and reasonable adjustments where children have additional neds or face barriers to learning, wellbeing and positive behaviour. Adjustments will support children to meet the same high expectations wherever possible and will be reviewed as children's needs and circumstances change.

Children will be supported to:

- understand boundaries, routines and expectations;
- recognise and communicate feelings;
- develop self-regulation, including waiting, listening, stopping or changing an action when necessary;
- develop confidence, resilience, independence and positive attitudes to learning;
- treat others with kindness, care and respect;
- share, take turns, cooperate, listen to others and resolve conflicts peacefully; and
- understand that their actions affect other people, places and objects.
- Adults will model calm, respectful and inclusive behaviour at all times. Incidents of poor behaviour, including unkind or discriminatory words or actions, will be addressed promptly and sensitively.

Procedures

In order to manage children's behaviour in an appropriate way we will:

- Provide staff with the relevant training and professional development so that they understand child development, positive behaviour, self-regulation and the nursery's procedures;
- communicate behaviour expectations clearly to staff, children and parents/carers;
- apply the nursery's behaviour procedures consistently and fairly;
- use the key-person relationship to understand each child's needs, circumstances and triggers;
- work in partnership with parents/carers and, where appropriate, other professionals and agencies;
- ensure that staff have the skills and confidence to support children who are struggling to regulate their emotions or behaviour;
- monitor patterns and trends in behaviour and use this information to anticipate and reduce recurring difficulties;
- provide an environment, routines and resources that support positive behaviour and social interaction;
- give specific, genuine praise and encouragement to reinforce positive behaviour, effort, self-regulation and cooperation;
- make reasonable adjustments and adaptations for children who need them while maintaining high expectations appropriate to age and stage;
- record significant incidents and interventions appropriately and review records to identify patterns, triggers and effective responses; and
- ensure that behaviour concerns which may indicate a safeguarding issue are managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Stepped approach

Step 1 – Prevention, teaching and early support

- EYFS requirements relating to supporting and understanding children's behaviour are incorporated into this policy and related procedures.
- Staff know and apply the nursery's expectations consistently and fairly.
- Adults model kindness, care, respect, calm communication and appropriate conflict resolution.
- Children are explicitly taught emotional awareness, self-regulation and executive-function skills in developmentally appropriate ways. This includes helping children to focus attention, listen, remember information, manage impulses, persist with a goal and change approach when necessary.
- Staff use routines, visual supports, clear instructions, modelling, repetition and positive reinforcement to help children understand what is expected.
- Staff identify environmental or relational factors that may contribute to behaviour and make appropriate adjustments.
- The provision is reviewed regularly to ensure that the environment, routines and adult practice support healthy social and emotional development.

- Management will review behaviour information and patterns periodically and make adjustments where necessary.

Step 2 – Initial and focused intervention

- When a child is distressed or involved in conflict, an adult responds calmly and promptly, stops unsafe or hurtful behaviour, acknowledges feelings, gathers information and helps the child to regain control.
- Children are supported, according to their age and stage, to understand what happened, consider the impact on others and practise an appropriate alternative response.
- If behaviour causes concern for the child or others, the key person will discuss it with the SENCO and/or manager as appropriate.
- Staff will consider relevant factors such as developmental stage, communication needs, SEND, changes at home, illness, tiredness, hunger, relationships, transitions, sensory needs, previous experiences and the environment.
- Where appropriate, adjustments to practice will be agreed and their impact monitored.
- If behaviour continues to recur or remains a concern, the key person will work with parents/carers to identify possible reasons and agree next steps.
- Where the cause or function of behaviour is unclear, a focused observation and assessment may be undertaken.
- The nursery may use an ABC approach:
- a) Antecedent – what happened immediately before the behaviour;
- b) Behaviour – what was observed; and
- c) Consequence – what happened immediately afterwards.
- The purpose of this approach is to understand the possible cause and function of the behaviour and identify effective support; it is not to label or blame the child.
- Where a trigger or pattern is identified, the key person, SENCO and parents/carers will agree an action plan where appropriate.
- Staff involved with the child will be informed of agreed strategies on a need-to-know basis and will implement them consistently.
- Plans will be reviewed regularly and adapted in response to the child's progress and changing circumstances.
- Significant incidents and interventions will be recorded appropriately.

Step 3 – Additional support and external advice

If behaviour continues despite appropriate initial and focused support, or is of significant concern:

- the behaviour lead/manager and SENCO will meet with parents/carers to review the support in place and agree next steps;
- advice may be sought from relevant professionals or agencies;
- an Early Help assessment may be considered where appropriate;
- where SEND may be a factor, the setting will follow its SEND procedures and seek specialist advice where appropriate;
- advice from external agencies will be incorporated into the child's support/action plan and reviewed with parents/carers and relevant professionals;

- if behaviour forms part of wider welfare or safeguarding concerns, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed immediately; and
- where necessary, information will be shared with relevant agencies in accordance with safeguarding, information-sharing and data protection requirements.

Initial intervention approach

The nursery uses a calm, relational and problem-solving approach when children are distressed or in conflict.

Staff should:

1. approach calmly and ensure immediate safety;

2. stop unsafe or hurtful actions without shaming the child;

3. acknowledge and name feelings where appropriate;

4. gather enough information to understand what happened;

5. help children regain emotional control;

6. support children to understand the impact of their actions;

7. model or teach an alternative response; and

8. support children to repair relationships where appropriate and developmentally suitable.

Adults should avoid escalating situations through shouting, threats, humiliation or unnecessary confrontation.

Focused intervention approach

Some behaviour has causes or functions that are not immediately apparent. Where appropriate, staff will observe, reflect and consider the wider context of the child's experiences and needs.

Focused intervention may include:

- reviewing observations and patterns;
- considering antecedents, behaviour and consequences;
- considering communication, sensory, developmental, emotional and social factors;
- reviewing routines, transitions, the physical environment and adult responses;
- discussing patterns with parents/carers and relevant professionals; and
- testing agreed adjustments and reviewing their impact.
- The purpose is to understand and support the child, not to assign blame.

Use of praise, rewards and sanctions

Children need consistent messages, clear boundaries and guidance that help them increasingly manage their own behaviour.

The nursery will use specific, genuine and timely praise to reinforce positive behaviour, effort, cooperation, self-regulation and respectful relationships. Praise will help children understand what they have done well and why it is helpful.

Rewards may be used only where they are developmentally appropriate and do not undermine children's intrinsic motivation or become a substitute for teaching emotional and social skills.

The nursery will not use punishment that could negatively affect a child's wellbeing. In particular, children must never be:

- labelled or stereotyped;
- criticised or humiliated;
- shouted at or threatened;
- physically punished;
- deliberately frightened;
- isolated as a punishment; or
- placed on a "naughty chair" or left alone in "time out".

A child may be accompanied away from a group or activity when this is necessary to keep the child or others safe, reduce stimulation or help the child calm. This must not be used as a punitive exclusion or isolation. An adult will remain responsible for the child's safety and wellbeing.

Use of physical intervention

Physical intervention must never be used as a punishment or as a routine behaviour-management technique.

Staff should use calm verbal and environmental strategies wherever possible. Physical intervention may only be used when absolutely necessary, including:

- to avert an immediate danger of personal injury to any person, including the child; or
- where absolutely necessary to manage a child's behaviour.

Any physical intervention must be proportionate, necessary and the minimum force required for the circumstances. It must never be used to punish, intimidate, humiliate or obtain compliance for convenience.

Every occasion on which physical intervention is used must be recorded. Parents/carers must be informed on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

The record should state:

- the date and time;
- the child involved;
- the circumstances leading to the intervention;
- what was done and why;
- the duration, where relevant;
- who was present;
- any injury or first aid;
- the child's response;

- when and how parents/carers were informed; and
- any follow-up, review or safeguarding action required.

Corporal punishment of any kind must never be used or threatened. The nursery will take reasonable steps to ensure that corporal punishment is not used by anyone caring for or regularly in contact with children, or by anyone living or working on the premises.

Challenging behaviour/aggression between children

Any aggressive, unsafe, unkind or discriminatory behaviour between children will be addressed promptly.

Staff will:

- intervene immediately where necessary to maintain safety;
- support the children involved calmly and respectfully;
- avoid labelling children as “bad”, “naughty” or “bullies”;
- consider each child’s age, stage of development, communication and individual circumstances;
- teach and model safer and kinder ways to communicate, play, share, take turns and resolve conflict;
- provide additional support where behaviour is persistent or indicates an unmet need;
- inform parents/carers where an incident is significant, repeated, results in injury, causes substantial distress or requires further support;
- record significant incidents and interventions appropriately;
- consider whether repeated or harmful peer behaviour indicates a safeguarding concern and refer to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy where necessary; and
- review the environment and risk assessment where changes are needed to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

The nursery recognises that young children are developing self-regulation, empathy, communication and social understanding. Harmful behaviour must nevertheless be addressed consistently and promptly, without defining the child by the behaviour.

Where a child’s behaviour may indicate that they themselves are experiencing abuse, neglect, exploitation or another safeguarding concern, staff must report this immediately through the nursery’s safeguarding procedures.

Challenging or discriminatory behaviour from adults in the setting

The nursery will not tolerate behaviour from an adult that demonstrates prejudice, discrimination, harassment, intimidation or disrespect towards a child, family, colleague or other individual or group.

This includes discriminatory or prejudiced comments or actions relating to protected characteristics and other forms of prejudice, including xenophobic behaviour.

Concerns about an adult’s conduct will be taken seriously and managed under the appropriate safeguarding, complaints, disciplinary or whistleblowing procedures.

Where an allegation or concern about an adult may meet the safeguarding threshold, the Designated Safeguarding Lead/manager will follow the nursery’s safeguarding procedures,

including referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), police, children's social care and/or DBS where required.

Where the EYFS requires notification to Ofsted of an allegation of harm, the nursery will make the notification within the statutory timescale and in accordance with its safeguarding procedures.

Bullying and repeated harmful behaviour

The nursery recognises that repeated harmful or intimidating behaviour can have a significant effect on children's wellbeing. We will not label very young children as "bullies". Instead, repeated behaviour that causes harm, fear or distress will be taken seriously and addressed through the same principles of understanding, prevention, teaching, support and safeguarding.

Staff will:

- identify patterns of repeated behaviour;
- consider the needs and experiences of all children involved;
- respond promptly and consistently;
- support children who have been affected;
- teach appropriate social and emotional skills;
- work with parents/carers;
- make reasonable adjustments and provide targeted support where required; and
- refer safeguarding concerns in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Partnership with parents/carers

Parents/carers are partners in supporting children's behaviour and emotional development.

The nursery will:

- communicate behaviour expectations clearly;
- share concerns promptly and sensitively;
- listen to parents/carers' knowledge of their child;
- agree consistent strategies where appropriate;
- keep parents/carers informed about action plans and significant incidents;
- provide opportunities to review progress; and
- work with other professionals, with appropriate consent or where information sharing is required to safeguard a child.

Monitoring, review and quality assurance

The manager will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- review of behaviour records and patterns;
- staff supervision and discussion;
- observation of adult practice;
- feedback from children, where developmentally appropriate, and parents/carers;
- review of support plans and interventions;
- consideration of inclusion and reasonable adjustments;

- review of incidents involving physical intervention; and
- an annual policy and practice review, or earlier where guidance, legislation, inspection requirements or the needs of children indicate.

The nursery will ensure that the policy is understood and implemented in practice. Staff will not be expected to create inspection-specific paperwork; normal records and evidence of practice should demonstrate how the policy operates.

Further guidance

Department for Education: Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-based Providers, dated 13 July 2026 and effective from 1 September 2026.

Ofsted: Early Years Inspection Toolkit, updated June 2026 and for use from 1 September 2026.

Ofsted: Early Years Inspection Operating Guide and Inspection Information, for use from 1 September 2026.

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

St Mary's Nursery Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

St Mary's Nursery Supporting Children with SEN policy.

St Mary's Nursery Complaints, Whistleblowing and Health and Safety procedures, as applicable.

This Policy was adopted by	St Mary's Nursery, Camberley,	*(name of provider)*
Last reviewed On	1st September 2026	*(date)*
Date to be reviewed	1st September 2027	*(date)*
Signed on behalf of the provider		
Name of signatory	Sue Dunn	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Acting Chairperson	