



Rockingham Montessori School Incorporated  
ABN: 68 115 270 695

**POLICY TITLE: APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR POLICY FOR 3-6 YEAR OLD CHILDREN**

**BOARD APPROVAL DATE: 15 June 2010**

**SIGNED BY CHAIR:**

**BOARD REVIEW DATE:**

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"LET US REMEMBER THAT INNER DISCIPLINE IS SOMETHING TO COME AND NOT SOMETHING ALREADY PRESENT. OUR TASK IS TO SHOW THE WAY TO DISCIPLINE. DISCIPLINE IS BORN WHEN THE CHILD CONCENTRATES HIS ATTENTION ON SOME OBJECT THAT ATTRACTS HIM/HER NOT ONLY WITH A USEFUL EXERCISE BUT WITH A CONTROL OF ERROR"

MARIA MONTESSORI, THE ABSORBENT MIND

**OVERVIEW**

The traditional view of discipline is one of controlling the children. This type of discipline is based on coercion, rewards and punishment. It is an external discipline imposed on a child.

True discipline, Montessori believed, comes from within. Our aim is to show the child the way to discipline. The child who can obey his/her interior guide is a disciplined child. Montessori wrote,

"THE PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE THAT PERVADED THE CLASSROOM AS THE CHILDREN PURSUED THEIR WORK WAS EXTREMELY TOUCHING. NO-ONE HAD PROVOKED IT, AND NO-ONE COULD HAVE OBTAINED IT BY EXTERNAL MEANS. "

This type of discipline is a developmental process. In a Montessori classroom there are children who have developed a degree of self control and those who have little. The Teacher must observe the child and endeavour to put her in contact with work which engages her concentration. For it is only through the work of the child that true discipline will come.

Children in a Montessori school are free - free to choose what work they will do and free to move about. They do not sit at fixed desks. This does not mean there is no organisation. In fact the opposite is true. The organisation in a Montessori classroom has to be extremely thorough in order for the child to be free.

The child guides herself in her work. The Teacher does not rely on rewards or punishments to motivate the child to work. The aim here is to "cultivate a friendly feeling" towards mistakes and errors, letting the child correct herself through the use of the materials and helping her to feel that we learn through making mistakes.

Note: In accordance with the Education Reform Amendment (Corporal Punishment) Act 1995 this school does not permit corporal punishment of students.

The following will serve as guidelines for supporting children in their road to self-discipline. As such, these strategies aim to clarify our approaches to common situations with children as they gain self-control. They are not directives, however, and it is essential to remember that each situation with each child will require its own responses to best support that child's growth.

Some Strategies and Situations

### **AIM**

To inculcate in children an understanding of the limits to acceptable behaviour, and the reason for these limits. Discipline and expectations of behaviour vary greatly among different cultures, social groupings and child rearing practices. Combined with this an adult's feelings about discipline are affected by what he/she experienced as a child.

### **RATIONALE**

We believe setting limits for behaviour is important for the safety and protection of children, others and the environment. We believe consistency to be important in order to help the child orient herself in the world. We believe that there is no occasion on which physical punishment should be used against a child.

An atmosphere of clarity and consistency also enhances the staffs' ability to help children to learn and to be safe and secure.

Ultimately, setting limits for behaviour aims to teach children self-discipline. We aim to help children to learn the consequences of their behaviour so that they understand how their actions affect those around them. The aim is to enable children to become self-disciplined and self-directed so that their needs and interests become clearer to themselves and those about them.

Children have an enormous capacity to absorb information, including social and cultural "cues", about themselves, others and the environment in which they live. Awareness of self, others and the environment is a vital quality for all children to develop in order to live harmoniously. Discipline is a means by which children are helped to develop that awareness.

By setting appropriate and consistent limits to behaviour we provide a secure environment in which children can explore their physical and social world. Discipline is instructive when:-

- it supports self-esteem and allows children to feel capable, competent and a pleasure to others;
- it takes into account a child's developmental level of understanding and ability. Needs and behaviour change as children grow;
- it acknowledges caring, cooperative, desirable behaviour;
- it is expressed positively. We speak of what we "do", not what we don't do;
- it guides, gives simple explanations, and offers alternatives so that a child can make choices. In time this will aid the making of appropriate choices;

- it is consistent;
- it is based on self discipline, and self-control - not coercion. It recognises that this is a gradual, developmental process.

Setting limits helps children to:

- feel secure and orient themselves in the world
- find appropriate expression for feelings that are hard to control, and thus satisfaction;
- start a process that is life-long in the learning.

## **UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES**

### 1. We respect ourselves and other people

We show this respect by treating others as we like them to treat us. We all have a wide range of emotional reactions to situations. It is important to respect these reactions as valid. It is OK to be angry. However we do not translate this anger into inappropriate aggression against others. It is fine to punch cushions, bean bags or the like but not people, animals or plants. Destroying things is also inappropriate.

### 2. We are careful with our own and others' work and belongings.

### 3. We are respectful with insects, animals and plants. Like us they are living things.

### 4. We keep ourselves and our surroundings clean.

### 5. We are considerate to others when we move about our environment. We move calmly inside, and safely outside.

Remember, too, that when children are not yet sure of you, they may act inappropriately to get your attention.

## STRATEGIES

### *If prevention doesn't work...*

- Try first to distract or defuse a situation, giving children a release. Use "do's" rather than "don'ts", and give brief explanations.
- Respond in a calm but firm manner, indicating what you expect from the child and what choices the child has.
- Help the child to realise the consequences of his or her actions.
- Follow through with the consequences.

When it's all over it is essential to restore a positive relationship between you and the child, before either of you go home.

### *What to do when one child bites another...*

1. Attend first to the victim to comfort the child and assess the situation. Apply first aid. First aid must be applied by a staff member holding a current First Aid Certificate. If the skin is unbroken wash area with soap and water, apply a cold compress (ice) for 10 to 20 minutes to reduce swelling. Arnica cream can be applied to reduce the bruising. If the skin is broken, clean the wound and wash with antiseptic. Apply a cold compress to the affected area for 10 to 20 minutes to reduce swelling. Do not apply arnica cream to broken skin. Cover with band aid.
2. While attending to the victim (or immediately after), draw-in the biter. Explain the situation and the consequences of his or her action in language understandable to the biter. Younger children need to see disapproval while older children may be drawn into a more complex explanation.

*By encouraging the biter to "help" with first aid she/he is then touching that child in a positive and gentle way.*

*With an older child you may be able to talk about how and why the situation occurred and encourage the biter to verbalise his or her feelings.*

*For an older child: (5-6 years)*

*Ask what happened and listen to the children's response. Talk about how the problem arose. "I know you are frustrated and angry because you wanted a turn but instead of biting what could you say to (name).*

3. Write an accident report. Parents of the victim do not need to know who bit their child.
4. Document the incident, briefly, in each child's observation records. Record how the biting situation arose and why the child bit. A pattern can be established and situations compared from observations. This information will help to prevent another such event.
5. If biting is an ongoing concern with a particular child his or her parents should be informed and strategies developed that are consistent between home and the Centre.

### Points to remember:

- Correct the behaviour not the child. Afterwards involve the biter in a positive experience to show that you still like them as a person.
- Prevention is the key issue; be aware of children likely to bite, when this occurs and why .
- Recognise why children bite - remember developmental stages.
- Remember, children need you to verbalise what they cannot. When the adult talks out what happened it can help the children to reach appropriate solutions. This one-to-one communication between carer and biter needs to occur immediately after the bite has occurred.

### What to do when children swear (2 to 5 year olds)

As children get older they learn the effects of using swear words.

Assess the situation - remember there is usually a reason why the child is swearing. Deal with the issue/problem which has lead to the child swearing. Encourage children to talk about what has happened and develop solutions to work through the problem.

Teach children to use appropriate language to express how they feel. Help them with appropriate words to use.

*Model appropriate language.*

If swearing is an ongoing problem with a particular child talk to the child about how it makes you and the other children feel when he or she uses those words, talk about why he or she uses those words and talk about words the child can use instead of swearing.

Talk to parents of the child if swearing is an ongoing problem. Devise methods of responding to swearing that are consistent between home and the School.

### Dealing with temper tantrums

It is important to recognise that most children reach a stage in their development where they are becoming independent yet need to feel secure. The world is exciting and invites exploration, yet can be frustrating. It is at this stage of development that temper tantrums are beginning. Tantrum behaviour includes stamping feet, throwing self on the ground, and screaming.

#### 1. Assess the situation

Why has the tantrum occurred? Usually the child will have a tantrum because he or she has been denied something he or she wants to have or something the child wants to do.

Is the child likely to hurt him or herself or another child? If so it may be necessary to clear a space free from objects and "onlookers".

#### 2. Reason with the child after she/ he has calmed down.

It is important to talk about what has happened. Children are beginning to learn ways of expressing how they feel and often can be shocked by the force of their own emotions (especially if it is the first time they have had a tantrum). They need to know you still like them as a person but didn't like what they just did. By talking and reasoning with children we believe it teaches them that it is OK to feel angry, frustrated or upset while helping them learn how to express these emotions in an appropriate way.

For a young child this may simply be a cuddle, followed by offering the child something else to do.

For an older child it is important to verbalise what has happened, talk about other ways of dealing with the situation, explaining why they couldn't do what they wanted to do (e.g. it's dangerous). By doing this you are showing the child that you still like them and are restoring a positive relationship with the child.

### **What to do when children wet or soil themselves**

Toilet training is like any other learning process. Children learn through trial and error, through their own mistakes. Children need lots of positive reinforcement when they do successfully use the toilet or potty.

If a child wets or soils don't get angry! They are learning to master this new and complicated skill, so ...

- be patient and remember often children are upset or embarrassed when they wet;
- take off the child's wet clothes (they go in a plastic bag and into the child's bag);
- take the child to the toilet, even if they don't do anything this is important for the child to develop a cognitive connection between wetting or soiling and actually using the toilet. Stay with the child when they are on the toilet. Provide books or small toys for those children who may be reluctant to sit on the toilet or potty; provide positive feedback for the child.

If it is an older child who help them to clean themselves up and get changed. It is common for children to regress in their toilet training so it's important to assess the situation. Is it a one off event or is the child wetting regularly? Note any changes in behaviour as a pattern may be evident.

In this way, the Teacher can assist the child to master this skill, develop a further degree of self control, and grow positively towards independence.