

At Kairos Montessori we believe children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met.

In *The Montessori Method*, Maria Montessori writes:

*Discipline must come through liberty...If discipline is founded upon liberty, the discipline itself must necessarily be active. We do not consider an individual disciplined only when he has been rendered as artificially silent as a mute and as immovable as a paralytic. He is an individual annihilated, not disciplined.*

*We call an individual disciplined when he is master of himself, and can, therefore, regulate his own conduct when it shall be necessary to follow some rule of life. Such a concept of active discipline ... contains a great educational principle... Since the child now learns to move rather than to sit still, he prepares himself not for the school but for life; for he becomes able, through habit and through practice, to perform easily and correctly the simple acts of social or community life...*

*The liberty of the child should have as its limit the collective interest; as its form, what we universally consider good breeding. We must, therefore, check in the child whatever offends or annoys others, or whatever tends toward rough or ill-bred acts...*

The Montessori philosophy is based on the principle that the child will develop greater self-direction, independence, and self-control through work with activities that are meaningful and responsive to his/her needs.

The teacher serves as both a guide and an observer. She notes the child's individual needs for re-direction and presents an appropriate activity to effect this. She also protects the child's independence and concentration as needed. The teacher ensures that the children maintain the order of the room, and that they respect each other and each other's work. In this way, each child can freely act upon his inner directives in a positive and productive manner within a peaceful and purposeful learning environment.

Such needs are best met when there are clear and appropriate expectations and standards. This applies to all aspects of school life, particularly behaviour.

These standards apply to all children and adults involved with Kairos Montessori, in any capacity or location.

We believe that everyone has the right to be happy and secure at school and to be supported when he/she feels vulnerable.

Grounded in our Christian values, we aim to teach pupils about the rights and needs of others and to understand how these manifest themselves. In so doing we believe we are helping them to behave in socially acceptable ways that uphold these rights, and fostering the creation of a learning environment that supports all.

In a Montessori environment we aim to develop a child's inner discipline and self-motivation. For those children who have come from Montessori nurseries or schools the process may already have been started. Our task is to develop this in the primary years. There are children who have experienced other school environments and come with learnt behaviours that are different to the inner discipline we strive for, expecting and relying on external discipline for example. Our aim is to support all our children, and guide those who are making what can sometimes be a challenging transition to our environment.

At the outset we wish to state clearly that, without exception, bullying is always unacceptable at the School.

## **Methods**

The maintenance of good standards of behaviour is primarily the responsibility of the school staff, although children and parents also have varying degrees of responsibility.

As well as understand and use our Behaviour Policy we expect staff to:

- treat each other with respect and follow the guidance given in their contract;
- present a good role model for the children in their care;
- provide stimulating and appropriate activities to prevent boredom which may cause some forms of difficult behaviour;
- to convey to the children that it is the negative behaviour that is unacceptable and not the children themselves;
- to work with parents and/or carers in partnership to aid the child's behaviour and development.

## **Responsibility for Behaviour**

Mel Coning, Head of Elementary Academics, has overall responsibility for the behaviour within Kairos Montessori which includes supporting personal, social/emotional development, and issues concerning behaviour.

As the named person responsible, she is required to:

- keep up to date with legislation, research and thinking on promoting positive behaviour and on handling children's behaviour where it may require additional support;
- access relevant sources of expertise on promoting positive behaviour within the programme for supporting personal, social and emotional development;
- check that all staff have relevant in-service training on promoting positive behaviour; we keep a record of staff attendance at this training.

## **General Principles**

- We recognise that codes for interacting with other people vary between cultures and require staff to be aware of – and respect – the cultural norms of all those involved with Kairos.
- We require all staff, volunteers and students to provide a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents and one another with courtesy and care.
- We familiarise new staff with our behaviour policy and its guidelines for practice.
- We expect all members of our community – children, parents, staff, volunteers and students – to keep to the guidelines, requiring these to be applied consistently.
- We work in partnership with children's parents. Parents are regularly informed about their children's behaviour. We work with parents to address recurring inconsiderate behaviour, using our observation records to help us to understand the cause and to decide jointly how to respond appropriately.

## **Maintaining Good Behaviour**

Good behaviour must always be acknowledged. This will usually be at a personal level by staff or through peer recognition.

“That is exactly how we walk around the school...” “Well done for sharing beautifully...”  
 “Those were lovely table manners...”

This will vary according to the age and needs of the individuals involved. Some positive behaviour may be an unspoken expectation and not need commenting on, although a positive comment will always help maintain standards.

Standards of behaviour must be made explicit and described in behavioural terms that are relevant to the pupils concerned. For example:

### **Respecting each other in the playground means:**

- Asking if you can join in with games or take a turn with a piece of equipment
- Keeping your game within the defined boundaries so that it does not interfere with the games of others

- Making sure smaller children can play safely by not walking in or through areas where they are playing.

Where there is an expectation that staff feel may not need to be made explicit – e.g. common courtesy – Staff should first:

- Ask – “Are you aware, what happens when.” “How did you just do X...”
- Remind – “Just to remind you... when we are doing X we do Y”
- Explain - what happened / what we expect at Kairos – especially when behaviour may differ at home.

Any behaviour which falls below the standards set will be discussed with the individual or group. It must be made clear what constitutes unacceptable behaviour, in a way that the pupils can understand what it looks like. Expected behaviour must also be made clear and a review time set.

“I would like to show you what I have just seen... children were running down the corridor. When we move around School we walk calmly. This ..... (hurried / speed walking) is not walking calmly. Walking calmly means walking like this.....(demonstrate). This is what I would like to see you all do from now on, especially as we walk to get our coats to go outside to play.”

### **Dealing with unacceptable behaviour**

In dealing with any unacceptable behaviour it is essential for staff to ensure that children understand why their behaviour is unacceptable and their own responsibility in the matter.

This means asking the child, describing what happened, explaining the impact and why this is inappropriate. Ideally, this discussion happens in the moment. When this is not possible, it may happen later.

In extreme or repeated situations, other staff and parents will become involved, and / or be brought into discussions. Where there is repeated or serious concern about a child’s behaviour, parents must be informed and their support sought.

It is recognised that the reasons for bad behaviour are often complex and that high emotions can make immediate resolutions difficult. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to remove a child from the immediate situation. This must be done if it is in the child’s own interest or for the safety of the child or others. This should not be seen as a sanction.

### **Day to Day Strategies**

To manage and maintain positive behaviour on a day by day basis we have adopted the following strategies:

## **Weekly Objectives**

In their learning plans children have a page each week where their objectives are recorded. There are, on average, 2 weekly objectives for each child in respect of their behaviours or attitudes. These can be carried over from the following week.

## **Immediate Action**

Staff have the option of using immediate sanctions with pupils who display inappropriate behaviour. These are always relevant to the particular child and involve the short-term removal of normal privileges.

Examples of such action might include;

- Working on their own rather than with peers
- Having “time out” from a particular activity at lunch time play activity. During this time, the child will have an opportunity to observe others and discuss with an adult appropriate ways to behave.
- In extreme cases parents will be informed via email and face to face meetings and /or a note placed in the child’s ‘Behaviour diary’ (in specific cases).

## **General Principles**

As well as the above specifics, the day to day smooth running of the School, the atmosphere and the behaviour of the pupils is influenced by the demeanour, language, and actions of the staff. The following general principles apply within School to all staff in whatever capacity:

- We require all staff, volunteers and students to use positive strategies for handling any inconsiderate behaviour, by helping children find solutions in ways which are appropriate for the children’s ages and stages of development. Discussions with children at the time should acknowledge the feelings of those involved, explanation of what was not acceptable, and supporting children gaining control of their emotions so that they can learn a more appropriate response. Our Positive Language Policy should also be referenced as part of this aspect of behaviour.
- We ensure that there are enough resources and sufficient activities available so that children are meaningfully occupied without the need for unnecessary conflict over sharing and waiting for turns.

### **We DO;**

- Acknowledge considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share
- Support each child in developing self-esteem, confidence and feelings of competence
- Support each child in developing a sense of belonging in our group, so that they feel valued and welcome

- Avoid creating situations in which children receive adult attention only in return for inconsiderate behaviour
- Help children to understand the outcomes of their actions and support them in learning how to cope more appropriately

### **We DO NOT:**

- Send children out of the room by themselves to “stand in the corridor”
- Use physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking
- Deprive children of food or drink
- Use techniques intended to single out and humiliate individual children
- Shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children’s inconsiderate behaviour

### **Physical restraint**

- In special circumstances, we may use physical restraints, such as holding or picking a child up. This is only ever used to prevent physical injury to children or adults and /or serious damage to property. Whenever practically possible we tell the child what we are going to do beforehand.
- Details of serious events of this nature (what happened, what action was taken, by whom, and the names of witnesses) are brought to the attention of the Co-Head Inês de la Mata and are recorded in the child’s personal file. The child’s parents are informed on the same day.

### **Abuse – Racial or otherwise**

Abusive behaviour, particularly those based on negative stereotyping – racist behaviour for example, is never appropriate in School. We make clear immediately the unacceptability of this behaviour. We do this by explaining what is being done, the harm caused and why it is not appropriate. We do not personally blame or create further stereotypes by labelling individuals as bullies or racists.

### **A note on rough and tumble, fantasy play that involves aggression:**

Young children often engage in play that has aggressive themes – such as superhero and weapon play; some children appear preoccupied with these themes, but their behaviour is not necessarily a precursor to hurtful behaviour or bullying. It may be inconsiderate at times and may need addressing using strategies as above.

- We recognise that rough and tumble play is normal for young children and acceptable within limits. We also know that this may involve some use of name calling or teasing, as an integral part of the play. Until they become hurtful to the child/children on the

receiving end we regard these kinds of play as pro-social and not inherently problematic or 'aggressive'.

- We do work to contain such play within certain boundaries - physical, behavioural or emotional, to ensure children are not hurt. We discuss these with the children, making sure they understand them.
- Observing and understanding this play we are able to suggest alternative strategies for heroes and heroines, making the most of 'teachable moments' to encourage empathy and lateral thinking to explore alternative scenarios and strategies for conflict resolution.

### **Younger Children and hurtful behaviour**

We take hurtful behaviour very seriously. We also put this in the context of what we know about the development of younger children. Most children under the age of five will at some stage hurt or say something hurtful to another child, especially if their emotions are high at that point in time. It is not helpful to label this behaviour as 'bullying'. Bullying is defined as seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce (someone perceived as vulnerable). For children, hurtful behaviour is normally a momentary, spontaneous response and often without an awareness of the feelings of the person whom they have hurt.

- We recognise that young children behave in hurtful ways towards others because they have not yet developed the means to manage intense feelings that sometimes overwhelm them.
- We will help them manage these feelings as they have neither the biological nor the cognitive means to do this for themselves.
- We understand that the self-management of emotions, especially of anger, can only happen when a child has developed neurological systems to manage the physiological processes that take place when they experience anger or fear.
- We understand that the person on the receiving end does not understand any of this, their hurt feelings are perfectly legitimate and they need calming, consoling and a sense of reconciliation.
- Therefore, we help this process by offering support, tending to the hurt child and calming the child who is angry. By helping the children return to a normal state, we are helping them to learn how to manage their own feelings and develop the physiological response system they use to do so.
- We do not engage in punitive responses to a young child's rage as that will have the opposite effect.
- Our way of responding to pre-verbal children is to calm them through holding and cuddling. Verbal children will also respond to cuddling to calm them down, and we offer them an explanation and discuss the incident with them at their level of understanding.
- We recognise that young children require help in understanding the range of feelings experienced. We help children recognise their feelings by naming them and helping children to express them, making a connection verbally between the event and the feeling. 'X took your car, didn't he, and you were enjoying playing with it. You didn't like it when he took it, did you? It made you feel angry'.

- We help young children learn to empathise with others, understanding that they have feelings too and that their actions impact others' feelings – e.g. 'When you hit X, it hurt him and he didn't like that and it made him cry'.
- We help young children develop prosocial behaviour, such as resolving conflict over who has the toy e.g. 'I can see you are feeling better now and X isn't crying any more. Let's see if we can be friends and find another car, so you can both play with one.'
- We are aware that the same problem may happen over and over before skills such as sharing and turn-taking develop. In order for both the biological maturation and cognitive development to take place, children will need repeated experiences with problem solving, supported by patient adults and clear boundaries.
- We support social skills through modelling behaviour, through activities, drama and stories. We build self-esteem and confidence in children, recognising their emotional needs through close and committed relationships with them.
- We help a child to understand the effect that their hurtful behaviour has had on another child; we do not force children to say sorry, but encourage this where it is clear that they are genuinely sorry and wish to show this to the person they have hurt.
- When hurtful behaviour becomes problematic, we work with parents to identify the cause and find a solution together.

