



Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy

Bowlby's Attachment Theory in our Therapeutic Approach

Innate Need for Attachment

At Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school, we recognise that children are biologically programmed to seek secure relationships. Our key person system ensures every child has a trusted adult who knows them deeply, greets them warmly each day, and builds a consistent emotional bond. This attachment provides the foundation for positive behaviour and wellbeing.

Monotropy

We value the primary attachment between child and caregiver. The key person acts as the child's "secure anchor" in the setting, mirroring the role of the parent at home. Family photos displayed around the environment strengthen this connection, helping children feel continuity between home and Acorn.

Secure Base

Children need a secure base to explore, learn, and grow. At Acorn, this is created through:

- Warm greetings and name use to affirm identity.
- Consistent routines that reduce anxiety.
- Spaces like the Calming Zone where children can regulate emotions safely. This secure base allows children to take risks in play and social interaction, knowing they can return to comfort and safety.

Internal Working Models

Through daily experiences, children develop mental representations of themselves and others. At Acorn, we nurture positive internal working models by:

- Using Time-In instead of isolation, showing children they are valued even when they struggle.
- Celebrating achievements on the Proud Cloud, reinforcing self-worth and capability.
- Updating the Interest Board to reflect children's voices, showing their ideas matter. These practices help children internalise messages of belonging, competence, and trust.

Impact of Disruption

We understand that inconsistent or broken attachments can lead to insecure patterns of behaviour. Our therapeutic approach prevents this by:

- Responding calmly and consistently when children are dysregulated.
- Supporting both the child who is hurt and the child who caused harm, ensuring neither feels rejected.
- Working closely with families to maintain continuity of care and emotional support.
- Using TAB training to ensure all staff respond in ways that repair and strengthen attachment bonds.

By embedding Bowlby's principles into our therapeutic approach, behaviour management becomes about connection, belonging, and emotional safety rather than compliance. Children learn resilience, empathy, and regulation because they feel securely attached and valued.

Therapeutic, Attachment-Based Approach

Introduction

This policy sets out our approach to promoting positive behaviour in the setting. It is rooted in attachment theory and therapeutic practice, recognising that:

- **Behaviour is communication.** All behaviour, whether positive or challenging, provides insight into a child's emotional state, developmental stage, and wider context.
- **Behaviour often signals unmet needs.** Actions may reflect hunger, tiredness, sensory overload, anxiety, or a need for connection.
- **Our role is to listen and respond.** Staff interpret behaviour with curiosity and empathy, seeking to understand the underlying need rather than focusing solely on the outward action.

This policy provides a clear framework for staff practice, guidance for families, and evidence of compliance with statutory safeguarding requirements.

Core Principles

- **Belonging:** Every child is recognised as an important member of our community.
- **Attachment-based practice:** The key person system ensures consistent, attuned relationships.
- **Therapeutic response:** Behaviour is addressed through connection, reflection, and repair rather than punishment.
- **Consistency:** All staff apply strategies confidently, supported by Therapeutic Approaches to Behaviour (TAB) training.
- **Partnership:** Families are engaged in co-creating strategies and celebrating achievements.

Understanding Behaviour as Communication

- **Unmet needs:** Behaviour may signal physical, emotional, or sensory needs.
- **Developmental stage:** Younger children may use behaviour to express emotions they cannot yet articulate.
- **Contextual factors:** Family changes, health issues, or transitions can influence behaviour.
- **Staff response:** Adults interpret behaviour with empathy, using observation tools (e.g., ABCCD/ABC approach) to identify triggers and patterns.
- **Practice:** Staff pause and reflect before responding, considering the child's wider context. Behaviour is never seen in isolation but as part of the child's developmental and emotional journey.

Time-In – Supporting Emotional Regulation

- **Definition:** A therapeutic alternative to "time out," ensuring children remain connected to a trusted adult.
- **Purpose:** To provide safety, reassurance, and co-regulation.
- **Practice:**
 - Sit alongside the child calmly.

- Validate feelings (“I can see you’re upset”).
- Offer calming strategies.
- Guide reflection and repair once calm.
- **Impact:** Reinforces belonging and supports children to repair relationships.

Embedding Belonging

- **Environment:** Family photos, cosy spaces, Proud Cloud, and Interest Board.
- **Relationships:** Warm greetings, use of names, affirming language.
- **Community:** Group activities that foster empathy and cooperation.
- **Language:** Respectful communication that validates feelings.
- **Celebration:** Achievements and interests recognised daily.

Interest Board – Valuing Children’s Voices

- Displays children’s drawings, photos, and contributions.
- Updated regularly to reflect evolving interests.
- Parents contribute home interests.
- Promotes identity, agency, and belonging.

Calming Area – Breathing and Regulation

- **Purpose:** A sensory-friendly space for emotional regulation.
- **Features:** Soft furnishings, sensory items, calming visuals, breathing cards.
- **Practice:** Guided by staff, used positively, never as punishment.
- **Impact:** Supports resilience and lifelong regulation skills.

Celebrating Achievements – The Proud Cloud

- **Definition:** A cloud-shaped display celebrating achievements.
- **Practice:** Staff and parents record moments of pride.
- **Impact:** Builds self-esteem, identity, and belonging.

Rewards and Guidance

- Effort, kindness, and resilience celebrated through praise and stickers.
- Children are never labelled, criticised, humiliated, shouted at, or isolated.
- Distressed children are supported calmly in safe spaces with their key person.

Responding When a Child is Hurt by Another

- **Immediate safety:** Calm intervention.
- **Support for the hurt child:** Comfort, reassurance, first aid if required.

- **Support for the child who caused harm:** Guided reflection, repair, reinforcement of belonging.
- **Informing parents:** Both sets of parents informed promptly; incidents recorded.
- **Monitoring:** Staff reflect on triggers and adjust practice.

SEN and Individualised Support

- Attachment-based practice with a trusted key person.
- Belonging reinforced through displays and celebrations.
- Co-regulation strategies (Time-In, Calming Zone).
- Individualised SEN Support Plans co-created with families.
- Child's voice included wherever possible.

Sensory Breaks – Supporting Regulation

- **Purpose:** To meet sensory needs and prevent escalation.
- **Practice:** Use of sensory tools, breathing, mindfulness, and movement-based breaks.
- **Impact:** Supports regulation, belonging, and readiness to rejoin the group.

Physical Intervention

Policy Statement

Physical intervention is only used as a last resort and in line with statutory guidance. It is never used as punishment, but solely to ensure the immediate safety of the child, other children, and staff.

Principles

- **Safety first:** Intervention is only applied when there is a risk of harm to self or others.
- **Minimal force:** The least restrictive intervention is used, for the shortest possible time.
- **Therapeutic ethos:** Intervention is accompanied by calm, attuned language and reassurance.
- **Respect and dignity:** Children are never restrained in a way that causes pain, humiliation, or fear.

Procedure

1. **De-escalation first:** Staff use verbal reassurance, distraction, and calming strategies before considering physical intervention.
2. **Intervention:** If necessary, staff may gently hold or guide a child to prevent harm.
3. **Support:** Another staff member should be present where possible, to witness and assist.
4. **Aftercare:**
 - The child is comforted and supported to regulate.
 - Reflection and repair are guided once calm.
 - Belonging is reinforced ("You are safe, you are still valued").
5. **Recording:**

- All incidents are documented on the Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form.
- Parents are informed promptly and sensitively.
- Risk assessments are updated if required.

Therapeutic Stepped Approach

1. Connection and Context: Calm responses, consideration of wider context, adjustments to practice.
2. Partnership and Reflection: Parent engagement, child's voice, reflective tools.
3. External Support: Involvement of agencies (Early Help, Area SENCo), safeguarding procedures followed.

Staff Training and Professional Development

- **TAB Training:** All staff trained in Therapeutic Approaches to Behaviour.
- **Reflective supervision:** Regular sessions to embed practice.
- **Team discussions:** Ongoing updates and shared learning.
- **Family partnership:** Strategies shared with parents for continuity.

Compliance and Safeguarding

- All incidents recorded and monitored on a Behaviour Incident form and filed in our Incidents and Behaviour folder
- Risk assessments updated and signed with parents.
- Safeguarding procedures followed if concerns arise.
- Policy reviewed annually to ensure compliance and relevance.

This policy was adopted by Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school on 01 September 2024