St Mary's CE Primary School

Early Years Behaviour and Regulation Policy

Investing in the uniqueness of each individual

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"
Psalms 139 v 14

Date of Next Review: September 2027

"Investing in the Uniqueness of Each Individual"

At St Mary's CE Primary School we believe every child is uniquely created and loved by God.

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm 139:14

Our Christian values of Love, Trust and Hope underpin everything we do. We seek to create a nurturing environment where children feel safe, valued and understood so that they can flourish emotionally, socially, spiritually and academically.

This policy works alongside the whole-school Behaviour and Rewards Policy and provides a developmentally appropriate approach for children aged two years to Reception. As children progress through the school, they are supported to develop the skills, emotional understanding and self-regulation required to engage successfully with the wider school behaviour systems and expectations.

Principles
We recognise that behaviour is communication. Young children are still learning:

- How to recognise emotions.
- How to express feelings appropriately.
- How to cope with disappointment.
- How to manage frustration.
- How to share and take turns.
- How to understand the feelings of others.
- How to self-regulate.

Because these skills are still developing, adults focus on teaching, guiding and supporting behaviour rather than simply managing it.

Our approach is rooted in:

- Warm and responsive relationships.
- Consistent expectations.
- Co-regulation.
- Emotion coaching.
- Positive reinforcement.
- Restorative conversations.
- Understanding children's developmental stage.

Regulated Adults Regulate Children
Children borrow the calm of trusted adults. Staff therefore recognise the importance of managing their own emotional responses before supporting children.

Adults will:

- Respond rather than react.
- Use a calm tone of voice.

- Maintain a relaxed posture.
- Slow interactions during moments of emotional distress.
- Avoid shame, blame or confrontation.
- Recognise that behaviour may be linked to unmet needs, developmental stage or emotional overwhelm.

Co-Regulation
Before children can regulate themselves, they need adults to help regulate them. Co-regulation occurs when trusted adults support children in understanding and managing their emotions through calm, responsive interactions.

Adults at St Mary's will:

- Stay calm and emotionally available.
- Use warm, reassuring language.
- Name and acknowledge emotions.
- Help children understand what has happened.
- Support children to feel safe.
- Model self-regulation strategies.
- Help children solve problems appropriately.

Adults recognise that dysregulated children cannot learn effectively and therefore emotional regulation takes priority before discussion or teaching can take place.

Self-Regulation
As children develop, they begin to internalise the strategies modelled by adults and become increasingly able to regulate their own emotions and behaviour.

Self-regulation is taught through:

- Daily routines.
- Play-based learning.
- Stories and discussion.
- Circle times.
- Modelling by adults.
- Emotional literacy activities.
- Reflection and restorative conversations.

Children are encouraged to:

- Recognise their emotions.
- Talk about how they feel.
- Identify triggers.
- Use calming strategies.
- Ask for help when needed.
- Consider the feelings of others.
- Repair relationships when difficulties occur.

Emotion Coaching and Consistent Adult Language

At St Mary's, staff use Emotion Coaching to support children in recognising, understanding and regulating their emotions. We recognise that all feelings are welcome, but not all behaviours are acceptable. Through warm, consistent interactions, adults help children understand their emotions, develop self-regulation skills and learn appropriate ways to express their feelings.

Adults use a shared approach and common language to ensure consistency across the Early Years Unit. This supports children to feel safe, understood and supported whilst maintaining clear behavioural expectations.

Step 1: Recognise the Emotion

Adults acknowledge the child's feelings and help them identify what they may be experiencing.
Examples include:

- "I can see something is making you angry."
- "I wonder if you're feeling frustrated."
- "I can see you're feeling upset."
- "You look disappointed."
- "Something has made you feel worried."

Step 2: Connect and Validate

Adults show empathy and help children understand that emotions are normal and accepted.
Examples include:

- "It's okay to feel angry."
- "Everyone feels angry sometimes."
- "I can understand why that feels upsetting."
- "It's alright to feel disappointed."
- "I am here to help."

Step 3: Set the Boundary

Adults maintain clear expectations and ensure everyone remains safe.
Examples include:

- "It's okay to feel angry, but it's not okay to hit."
- "I won't let you hurt yourself or others."
- "I'm going to keep everyone safe."
- "I can't let you throw toys."
- "We use kind hands."

Step 4: Problem Solve and Support

Once the child is calm and ready, adults support them in finding solutions and developing regulation strategies.
Examples include:

- "Let's take some calm breaths together."
- "Let's think about what we can do instead."

- "How can we solve this problem together?"
- "When you are ready, we can talk."
- "Next time, what could you try?"

Restorative Conversations
When appropriate and once children are regulated, adults help them reflect on what happened through age-appropriate restorative questions.
These may include:

- “What happened?”
- “How were you feeling?”
- “How do you think they felt?”
- “What can we do to make things better?”
- “What could we try next time?”

This approach helps children develop emotional awareness, empathy, personal responsibility and problem-solving skills. It also provides a strong foundation for the restorative approaches and behaviour expectations they will encounter as they move through the wider school.

Natural Consequences and Repair
At St Mary's CE Primary School, we recognise that young children learn best when adults help them understand the impact of their actions and support them to put things right.
Consequences are not intended to punish. Instead, they help children learn responsibility, empathy and appropriate behaviour.
Examples may include:

- Helping to tidy resources that have been thrown.
- Supporting or comforting a child who has been hurt.
- Practising and rehearsing more appropriate ways to respond.
- Taking time with a trusted adult to calm and regulate before returning to play.
- Working alongside an adult to repair relationships and solve problems.

Any consequence will be:

- Immediate where possible.
- Proportionate to the child's age and stage of development.
- Linked to the behaviour.
- Focused on learning, repair and restoration.

Children will never be shamed, humiliated or publicly embarrassed.

Positive Behaviour Support
We actively recognise and celebrate positive behaviour.
Children may receive:

- Specific verbal praise.
- Stickers.

- Dojo points.
- Sharing achievements with families.
- Celebration during collective worship.
- Additional responsibilities.
- Positive notes home.

Adults ensure praise is specific:
Instead of: *"Good girl/boy."*

Adults use: *"You showed kindness by helping your friend."*
"You kept trying even when it felt difficult."
"You used your words to solve that problem."

This aligns with the wider school's emphasis on positive recognition and praise.

Teaching Emotional Literacy
Children are explicitly taught to recognise and discuss emotions.
This includes:

- Happy
- Sad
- Angry
- Worried
- Excited
- Proud
- Nervous
- Frustrated
- Calm

Staff use:

- Emotion cards
- Stories
- Role play
- Small world play
- Puppets
- Visual supports
- Zones of Regulation style resources where appropriate

Supporting Regulation
Strategies available across the Early Years Unit may include:

- Calm breathing activities
- Sensory tools
- Quiet spaces
- Story sharing
- Adult support

- Physical movement breaks
- Outdoor learning
- Prayer and reflection opportunities
- Comfort objects where appropriate

These are used to support regulation rather than as rewards.

Supporting Challenging Behaviour
When behaviour occurs that is unsafe or disrupts learning, adults will:

1. Remain calm.
2. Ensure safety.
3. Support co-regulation.
4. Use emotion coaching language.
5. Help children understand expectations.
6. Support repair and reconciliation.
7. Work closely with families where concerns persist.

Children are never shamed, humiliated or publicly embarrassed.
Consequences are always proportionate, immediate and linked to learning and repair.

Physical Behaviour
Young children sometimes communicate distress through physical actions such as:

- Hitting
- Biting
- Kicking
- Throwing objects
- Pushing

When this occurs, staff will:

- Prioritise safety.
- Support the child to regulate.
- Address the behaviour calmly.
- Teach alternative ways to communicate.
- Work closely with parents if concerns become persistent.

Partnership with Parents
We recognise that consistency between home and school helps children thrive.
We work closely with parents to:

- Share successful strategies.
- Support emotional development.
- Discuss concerns early.
- Celebrate progress.
- Develop consistent approaches where appropriate.

Progression to the Whole-School Behaviour Policy
As children move through Reception and into Key Stage 1, they gradually develop:

- Greater emotional awareness.
- Increased self-regulation.
- Personal responsibility.
- Understanding of consequences.
- Restorative thinking.

The Early Years approach provides the foundation for the whole-school behaviour expectations described in the school's Behaviour and Rewards Policy.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Early Years Lead and Head of School.