



Behaviour Policy

Supported by Cambridgeshire's Understanding Children's Behaviours and Interactions Training

Adopted by Busy Fingers Preschool on 30th September 2025

BEHAVIOUR EXPECTATIONS AT BUSY FINGERS PRESCHOOL

1. At Busy Fingers Preschool, we believe that children need to be safe, learn how to behave pro-socially and know that the adults around them are able to manage them safely and confidently.
2. The use of restrictive physical intervention (RPI) will only be needed in exceptional circumstances for a very small minority of children who demonstrate dangerous behaviour. In Early Years we recognise that for developmental reasons, young children have not always learnt to regulate their emotions and from time to time their behaviour when dysregulated can put themselves, or other children or staff, in danger.
3. On such occasions, acceptable, planned and agreed forms of intervention may be used. We have a responsibility to operate an effective behaviour policy that encompasses preventative strategies for tackling difficult and dangerous behaviour in relation to the whole preschool and individuals.
4. All preschool staff have undertaken 'Understanding Children's Behaviours and Interactions' training to help them to feel that they are able to manage difficult behaviour and have an understanding of what dysregulated behaviours might be communicating.
5. Staff need to know what options are available to them for managing dangerous or difficult behaviour:

Difficult Behaviour	Difficult behaviour is behaviour that is anti-social, but not dangerous. It should be acknowledged in terms of context: ‘Daniel continually shouting out is difficult at story time’.
Dangerous Behaviour	Dangerous behaviour is behaviour that is anti-social and will predictably result in imminent injury or harm to themselves or another person or damage to property.

Except within an unpredictable first manifestation, the behaviour described as dangerous will be supported by evidence of severity and frequency of outcomes such as ‘three children required first aid for minor bruising as a result of Jane’s kicking’.

Dealing with Difficult Behaviour and Strategies to Support Positive Interactions (based on Cambridgeshire County Council Guidelines from Understanding Children’s Behaviour and Interactions training)

When children demonstrate challenging behaviour the staff will consider the following:

Are the children’s interests met – ensure that the children are interested and engaged in what they are doing and if they are not then change the resources or activities.

Distract & Divert - Distract one child and divert them to a different activity that is as engaging as the original one or an activity that would be meeting their interests. Consider one that is totally different to the activity. Think about how you are sounding – make sure you sound really excited about the distraction “oh wow, look at that amazing....”

Planned ignoring (of the behaviours) – agree on behaviours you are not going to respond to, ignore them and praise other children for carrying out the desired behaviour. Planned ignoring does not mean no interaction with the child. Non-response of the Behaviours.

Offering limited/clear choices – offering two choices as ways of what you want the child to do – the child is doing what you want but it gives them some control over the situation e.g. do you want to put on your coat or your shoes first. Need to allow them enough time to make that choice and not rush into it (remember it can take up to 10 seconds for a child to process and question and respond).

Clear and positive instructions - think about the child’s language level – do they need a very simple one- or two-word instruction that is positive e.g. instead of stop running, walk please. Repeat if necessary and use the child’s name first if needed e.g. Harry walk

Please.

Acknowledging children's feelings – valuing the child and validating their feelings. Teaches respect and names the feeling so that they understand why they are reacting that way.

Use an agreed script - It can be helpful for children to hear consistent messages from all staff and so using a pre-agreed script is a way in which the entire staff team can be consistent in their approach to managing and responding to any behaviours that cause concern. This approach will also contribute to the development of a supportive culture within your staff team.

Consequences not punishment – Punishment is a negative experience, which leads to negative feelings which leads to anti-social behaviours. When considering what consequences to use, it is best to choose the one that will be the least restrictive and give children the greatest opportunity to learn from the situation. Talk through the consequence and why it is being imposed. If consequences are too harsh, children will spend their energy being angry at you, rather than considering what they did wrong.

Strategies to support Positive Interactions

Reflect, repair and restore - Depending on a child's developmental stage it can be helpful to do a 'debrief' with a child after an event such as hitting, biting so that the child can re-tell and explore the story with a changed set of feelings.

- The Debrief might look something like this:
- Explore what happened (tell the story)
- "Let me tell you what I saw....."
- "Do you want to tell me anything about it?"
- Explore what the children were thinking and feeling at the time.
- e.g. "How did that make you feel?"
- "How do you think the other child might be feeling?"
- Explore who has been affected and how.
- e.g. "the other little boy says he doesn't want to play in the sand"
- Explore how we can repair relationships.
- e.g. "what do you think needs to happen to make things right"
- Summarise what we have learnt so we are able to respond differently next time.
- e.g. "What could you do next time"

If this strategy isn't appropriate for the child because of their level of development it is still an appropriate strategy for adults to reflect, repair and restore that relationship. Think about

including this as an essential part of the whole team approach to managing behaviours and supporting the adult's emotional well-being.

Teaching Empathy (This section is based on: Empathy in the Early Years
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk Chief Executive Stephen Moir

At Busy Fingers we recognise that young children may hurt another child as their brains are not developmentally ready to see things from another child's point of view (De-center). Therefore, in these situations we intervene and try to help the child see the consequences of their actions. This may involve phrases such as "Look at (child X's) face. How do you think they are feeling? Yes, they are crying because you hurt them and took their toy. How could we make them feel better?" The child can make suggestions which will be guided by the adult. They will not be forced to say sorry but will be encouraged to engage in a restorative action. For example, giving the toy back and giving the upset child a hug. Children with SEN who find it even harder to understand the emotions will be scaffolded to recognise emotions and given clear, simple instructions such as 'No hitting'.

The following strategies will also be used:

Being able to read nonverbal cues can help children to understand how someone is feeling. Children don't automatically know the difference between a happy face, a sad face or an angry face and can easily misinterpret someone's facial expression. Playing games, looking at characters in books or using toys with different faces, you can help them get a head start. Mimicking expressions – it can help experience emotions.

Research has shown that when we play-act at facial expressions, we experience some of the emotion we're trying to show. We can help develop empathy by role-playing as it really can help us feel what someone else is going through.

Saying sorry?

Forced apologies do not change behaviour. For a child to feel genuine remorse for their behaviour would require the child to have a real understanding of how they have made the other party feel, and regret for the behaviour.

Saying sorry in "parrot fashion" without an understanding in place is insincere and is often only done because children realise that it is what the adult expects, and it gets them off the hook! Children in the early years are unlikely to have developed enough understanding to explicitly understand how to be sorry. They may feel regret amongst other feelings and instead it should be the focus during this stage of development for adult to support children's' emotional literacy to support their future ability to understand saying sorry

If a child exhibits challenging behavior the manager/SENCO will use the Challenging Behaviour Reflective Audit Tool (Appendix 12.3) to try to identify changes that could be made to help to improve the child's behaviour.

At Busy Fingers Preschool it is recognised that physical interventions will often need to be used with young children, usually to comfort them. At times when children are displaying challenging or dangerous behaviour, a physical intervention may be required to keep everyone safe.

ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF PHYSICAL INTERVENTION AT BUSY FINGERS PRESCHOOL

1. There are occasions when staff may have cause to have physical contact with a child for a variety of reasons. These are the reasons which we deem to be acceptable forms of physical intervention at Busy Fingers:

- *Lap sitting*
- *Physically separating a child from their parent*
- *Carrying to help a child to separate from their parent, or if they are injured or distressed*
- *Physically comforting a child*
- *Steering, guiding or escorting a child*
- *Comforting a child in distress*
- *Averting danger to children/ or staff in an emergency*
- *Praising a child*
- *For curricular reasons (helping a child on the playframe/obstacle course/sensory circuits)*
- *In rare circumstances, restraining a child (RPI)*

2. In all situations where physical contact between staff and children takes place, staff must consider:

- *Th's age and level of understanding*
- *The child's individual characteristics and history*
- *The location where the contact takes place.*

The pyramid below represents a graduated process of intervention for behaviour. The majority of children in our preschool and other education provision will have their needs catered for at the lower end of the pyramid.

RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION (RPI) DEFINITION

Restrictive physical intervention (RPI), is the term used to describe any method where the use of force to control a person's behaviour is employed using bodily contact. It refers to any instance in which a practitioner, or other adult authorised by the Manager, has to use 'reasonable force' to control or restrain children in circumstances that meet the following legally defined criteria:

- *To prevent a child from putting themselves or others in danger*
- *To prevent a child from injuring self or others*
- *To prevent or stop a child from causing serious damage to property (including the child's own property)*



There is no legal definition of 'reasonable force', though, there are two relevant considerations:

- *The use of force can be regarded as reasonable only if the circumstances of an incident warrant it*
- *The degree of force must be in proportion to the circumstances of the incident and the seriousness of the behaviour or consequences it is intended to prevent*

Seclusion is an approach to RPI which may only be deemed acceptable in emergency situations, for example, if a student is so dysregulated that they are thrashing out or throwing items thus putting other children and members of staff in danger, and cannot be part of a planned approach to managing behaviour.

The definition of physical force also includes the use of mechanical devices (e.g., splints on the child prescribed by medical colleagues to prevent self-injury), forcible seclusion or use of locked doors.

It is important for staff to note that, although no physical contact may be made in the latter situations, this is still regarded as RPI.

WHEN THE USE OF RPI MAY BE APPROPRIATE AT BUSY FINGERS PRESCHOOL

Restrictive physical intervention may be used when all other strategies have been considered and therefore only as a last resort.

However, there are other situations when physical handling may be necessary, for example in a situation of clear danger or extreme urgency (see above). Certain children may become distressed, agitated and out of control, and need calming with a brief RPI that is un-resisted after a few seconds. The safety and well-being of all staff and children are important considerations. Under certain conditions, such as preventing serious injury this duty must be an over-riding factor.

WHO MAY USE RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION AT BUSY FINGERS?

All Early Years Practitioners/teachers employed by Busy Fingers Preschool are authorised by the Manager and Committee Trustees to have control of children and must be aware of this policy and its implications.

If the manager has lawfully placed an adult in charge of children, then that adult will be entitled to use RPI within the given circumstances.

We take the view that staff should not be expected to put themselves in danger and that removing other children and themselves from risky situations may be the right thing to do.

We value staff efforts to manage what can be very difficult situations and in which they exercise their duty of care for the children.

The Manager/Committee trustees should consider whether members of staff require any additional training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities and should consider the needs of the children in doing so.

At times there may be a requirement to use RPI without a plan – this would be considered to be an emergency situation for example:

- *preventing a child running into traffic/water*
- *preventing immediate harm to self or others e.g., a fight or significant destruction*

Staff will be aware of 'reasonable force' and 'proportionate response'.

After such an incident, a full debrief of student, staff and witnesses should occur.

A plan must be made, or review of the risk management plan must take place, to mitigate against a recurrence of the situation which led to the RPI.

Trained or untrained staff have a duty to act in an emergency with unforeseeable risk of imminent harm.

DEVELOPING AN INDIVIDUAL RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN AT BUSY FINGERS PRESCHOOL

Our preschool behaviour policy plans for the majority of children.

In addition, some children, particularly those with developmental delay, early childhood trauma or SEN, may require an individual risk assessment/plan to formalise those strategies that differentiate from the whole-school policy.

When considering whether to complete a risk assessment/plan for a child, we have completed a robust analysis of each child's behaviour, using a graduated response encompassing early prognosis and identification of what needs are being met through the behaviour (what is the function of the behaviour?), risk calculation to determine the seriousness and probability of behaviour, protective and educational consequences, conscious and subconscious behaviour analysis, anxiety mapping, predict and prevent planning and roots and fruits.

When writing a risk management plan, we take into account our planned responses for all the areas below:



All practitioners at Busy Fingers will act in line with Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking. We will endeavour to understand what causes positive and helpful as well as disruptive, difficult, or dangerous behaviour. Busy Fingers staff recognise that all behaviour is communication and work to unpick what each behaviour is telling us, rather than punishing. We focus on developing positive experiences and feelings for everyone at Busy Fingers, recognising that these usually lead to positive and helpful behaviour, as well as looking at how to help to change behaviours that we want to reduce.

We always ensure that the reflect, repair and restore stage in line with Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking approach this:

- focuses on harm that has been done
- considers how the harm can be repaired
- looks at experiences, feelings and needs
- plans to ensure conflict is less likely to happen in the future. The plan is regularly reviewed with staff and parent/carers.

HOW RESTRICTIVE PHYSICAL INTERVENTION (RPI) IS RECORDED AT BUSY FINGERS PRESCHOOL

The use of a restraint or restrictive intervention, whether planned or unplanned (emergency), must always be recorded as quickly as practicable (and in any event within 24 hours of the incident) by the person(s) involved in the incident, using Busy Fingers Physical Intervention Form. See Appendix 1.

The written record should include:

- the names of the staff and child involved;
- the type of restrictive intervention employed;
- the reason for using a restrictive intervention (rather than non-restrictive strategies);
- how the incident began and progressed, including details of the child 's behaviour, what was said by all those involved, and the steps taken to defuse or calm the situation;
- the degree of force used, how that was applied, and for how long;
- the date and the duration of the whole intervention;
- whether the child or young person or anyone else experienced injury or distress and, if they did, what action was taken.

All records should be open and transparent and enable consideration to be given to the appropriateness of the use of restraint. Committee Trustees must ensure that they comply with their duties under legislation. They must also have regard to this guidance to ensure that the policies, procedures and training in Busy Fingers Preschool are always effective and comply with the law. Committee Trustees should have a lead to take leadership responsibility for their preschool's restraint arrangement.

The nominated trustee is: NAME __Kendle Hanslip (Sept 2025)__

COMPLAINTS

It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping parents and committee trustees informed, we can avoid the need for complaints. All disputes which arise about the use of force by a member of staff will be dealt with according to Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

The following guidance on complaints following a RPI is from page 7 of the DfE 2013 document 'Use of reasonable force in schools' (ref: DFE-00295-2013).

What Happens if a Parent Complains About a Restrictive Physical Intervention Used on Their Child:

- All complaints about the use of force will be thoroughly, speedily and appropriately investigated.
- Where a member of staff has acted within the law - that is they have used reasonable force in order to prevent injury, damage to property or disorder – this will provide a defence to any criminal prosecution or other civil or public law action.
- When a complaint is made the onus is on the person making the complaint to prove that his/her allegations are true – it is not for the member of staff to prove that they acted reasonably.
- Suspension must **not** be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force. The committee trustees should refer to 'Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff' Guidance. (See below) where an allegation of excessive force is used against a teacher or Early Years Practitioner. This guidance makes clear that a person must **not** be suspended automatically, or without careful thought.
- Busy Fingers Preschool Manager/committee trustees will consider carefully whether the circumstances of the case warrant a person being suspended until the allegation is resolved or whether alternative arrangements are more appropriate.
- If a decision is taken to suspend a member of staff, Busy Fingers will ensure that the member of staff has access to a named contact who can provide support.
- The committee trustees should consider whether the member of staff has acted within the law when reaching a decision on whether or not to take disciplinary action against the member of staff.
- As employers, the committee trustees and Cambridgeshire County Council have a duty of care to their employees. It is important that they provide the appropriate pastoral care to any member of staff who is subject to a formal allegation following a use of force incident.

Staff need to be free of undue worries about the risks of legal action against them if they use appropriate physical intervention. **Parents** need to know that their children are safe with us, and they need to be properly informed if their child is the subject of an RPI, including the nature of the intervention, and the rationale for its use.

DEFINITIONS

Anti-social behaviour: Behaviour that causes harm to an individual, a group, to the community or to the environment.

Behaviour: Everything a person says or does. The spectrum of behaviour goes from extreme pro-social to extreme anti-social behaviour. A behaviour policy should increase pro-social behaviour and reduce anti-social behaviours through planned responses.

Consequence: A logical, explainable response to a pro-social or anti-social behaviour. A consequence is a logical or natural outcome of something occurring earlier; a conclusion reached via reasoning. Consequences are designed to help children learn and develop prosocial behaviour transferable to all contexts.

Consequence (protective): Removal of a freedom to manage harm. They are necessary measures to manage the risk of harm that results from dangerous behaviours. Protective consequences limit freedoms.

Consequence (educational): The learning, rehearsing or teaching so the freedom can be returned.

Dangerous behaviour: That which is anti-social and will predictably result in imminent injury or harm (the level of injury and harm that constitutes the label dangerous should be defined within policy). This includes harm to self or others, damage to property or behaviour that would be considered criminal if the person was the age of criminal responsibility, such as racist abuse. Except within an unpredictable first manifestation, the behaviour described as dangerous will be supported by evidence of severity and frequency of outcomes such as 'three children required first aid for minor bruising as a result of Jane's kicking'.

Difficult behaviour: That which is anti-social, but not dangerous. Difficult behaviour should be acknowledged in terms of context: 'Daniel continually shouting out is difficult within a group teaching activity'.

Dynamic Risk Assessment :An assessment of risk based on all relevant factors available in the moment undertaken by a individual that needs to employ immediate and appropriate actions to manage the presented risk posed during an incident caused by dysregulation. This individual should trained to employ appropriate actions (eg via Cambridgeshire Steps)

Pro-social behaviour: Relating to behaviour which is positive, helpful, and values social acceptance. 15 Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy Guidance (November 2022) Supported by Cambridgeshire Steps Approaches.

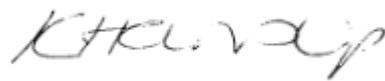
Punishment: The imposition of an undesirable or unpleasant experience upon a group or individual, meted out by an authority. Punishment is designed to suppress and control behaviour within a specific context.

Restrictive physical intervention (RPI): Any method which involves some degree of direct force to try and limit or restrict movement (Restraint Reduction Network 2019).

This Policy has been adapted for **Busy Fingers Preschool** from the 'Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy Guidance' (November 2022) Supported by Cambridgeshire Steps Approach.

It was adopted as an official policy of Busy Fingers Preschool on 30th September 2025

Signed by Committee Trustee:



Name: Kendle Hanslip

Committee post: Committee chair (Sept 2025)