

St Marychurch Pre-school

Regulation Policy

Statement of intent

Our setting believes that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and where there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour and support with their self-regulation.

Aim

We aim to promote knowledge and understanding of regulation and to develop a consistent approach to regulation across the setting. We understand that with supported interaction with other children, they learn to form good friendships, co-operate and resolve conflicts peaceably.

Methods

Self-regulation is now recognised as crucially important in young children's development, strongly predicting children's later success in relating to others and in their learning, while supporting lifelong mental and physical health. Self-regulation continually develops through to adulthood. Through strong adult relationships and adult modelling and guidance children learn to look after their bodies and develop a sense of self, set themselves simple goals and have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary and learn to understand their own feelings and those of others.

The importance of co-regulation

- Developing self-regulation, like many elements of development and learning, is not something children to do by themselves. Self-regulation depends on and grows out of co-regulation, where adults and children work together toward a common purpose, including finding ways to resolve upsets from stress in any domain, and return to balance. Over time and with consistent practice, the process shifts from co-regulation between adult and child to the child's self-regulation.
- Co-regulation grows from the child and adult having an attuned, reciprocal relationship.
- For young children, co-regulation also has both emotional and cognitive aspects. It includes the adult modelling calming strategies and naming and talking about feelings and ways to manage. This helps children learn to recognise their feelings and builds their cognitive awareness of strategies to reduce or manage extremes of emotion.
- Each experience of co-regulation helps to build the neural pathways and regulate emotion.

Self-regulation and cognitive self-regulation

- Children can begin to use cognitive self-regulation to support emotional self-regulation, by monitoring their emotional state and deciding on strategies to calm themselves if necessary. This depends on emotional and cognitive self-regulation working together to manage thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- Cognitive regulation and self-regulation closely link to the characteristics of effective teaching and learning.

Expectations within the setting to support self-regulation

- Practitioners build in daily time during whole/small group sessions to discuss how we are feeling; what makes us upset and what we can do to help ourselves feel better.
- Practitioners value the role as co-regulator.
- Practitioners encourage all children to signal or speak to an adult when they need help with their feelings

- Practitioners enable positive relationships between the children through promoting a child's strengths to redress the other children's possible negative viewpoint of the child.
- Practitioners encourage a child to access a designated quiet space when needed and support other children to respect this.
- Practitioners actively use a timetable for whole group and create an individual one if required.
- Practitioners promote the many opportunities created through pretend play for children to focus their thinking, persist and plan ahead.

A specific approach for a child who may experience dysregulation

- A commitment to provide a child with a co-regulator, a trusted, familiar adult who is sympathetic, both emotionally and physically, to help the child to manage their emotions.
- Create a 1:1 time to promote joy and laughter with a child who is prone to dysregulation to replenish their emotional bucket.
- Devise a regulation plan instead of an ILDP which identifies triggers, interests, preferences and calming activities, such as specific activity, song, book or play experiences and language.
- Engage the parents/carers in the regulation plan and review it every 6 weeks.
- Both to prevent and deflect dysregulation, taking 10 deep long slow breaths counting forwards and backwards together,
- Safe space – for a child to have their own space to regulate themselves (with or without adult support) which is respected by other children.
- Photos of the child (maybe in a book) reinforcing their regulated behaviours.
- Use specific praise whenever possible to acknowledge child's mastery of a previously challenging situation 'I am so impressed you shared that toy with Fred'.
- Distraction doesn't resolve the sensation of dysregulation just masks it.
- Create a box of favourite resources such as a cuddly bear, a snow globe/sensory bottle, a stress ball, a chew toy or play some music.
- Provide a sorting or matching activity such as finding pairs, using socks, a few picture cards, two lids which are the same or two animals which are the same hidden in a bag.

Language to support self-regulation

- Language development is central to self-regulation. Children use language to guide their actions and plans. Practitioners use self-talk to express their thought processes.
- Practitioners scaffold cognitive self-regulation by talking with children about thinking and learning. 'I can see you are working really hard and trying lots of different ways to fit that piece of puzzle in that space'.
- Using 'Now, Next' such as 'Now take off coat and next, wash hands'.
- Short clear instructions such as, 'shoes on now please'.
- For children who struggle with control, use a flat hand signal and STOP may be more effective than using 'no' which can trigger demand avoidance. Instead of saying 'I am asking you to stop', try saying 'the rules say children cannot climb on the furniture'.
- What vocabulary is used to name the four key emotions: happy, sad, frightened and angry.
- Identify four images to pictorially represent the key emotions.
- Children may begin to use more complex language to describe the sensations in their bodies when feeling dysregulated, acknowledge these and record them to prompt discussions such as 'when I'm upset if feel a fire in my tummy'.

What phrases could be used for naming and taming and NOT shaming

Describe, notice, acknowledge:

- **Describe:** verbally what we see the child is experiencing and how this is showing in their body language, facial expressions, vocalisations. The child may use their own language such as 'there is a fire in my tummy'.

- **Notice:** adults verbally speculate about what emotions the child may be experiencing and try to check in with the child as to whether they are right.
- **Acknowledge:** verbally outline the child's positive intent – what the child wanted to happen and where it went wrong.
- **Engage:** watch for signs of the child making eye contact or face watching in response to the adult using above strategies. This may indicate you have identified their feeling. This can reflect an upshift in their emotional state which indicates signs of regulation.

Thrive vital relationship functions

- **Attunement;** Be alert to how the child is feeling and mirror it in a matching tone/expression/gesture/noise/body language.
- **Validation:** be alert to the child's experience, acknowledge their experiences/perspective/emotions. Practitioner suggesting out loud what may have caused the dysregulation and what the emotion experienced might be called.
- **Containment:** be alert to how the child is feeling and demonstrate containment you can 'hold' (through empathy and understanding) the pitch/intensity/quality of their feeling and you can help them make it survivable by offering it back in small, digestible named pieces.
- **Soothing:** be alert to how the child is feeling, soothe and calm their distress. The child needs to repeatedly experience being calmed before they can do it for themselves. The child may appreciate gentle touch from a feather, cuddle, or blanket, with their consent, when dysregulated or may prefer to be alone with an adult still observing to protect their safety.
- **Regulation:** be alert to how the child is feeling, model calming strategies like jumping up and down first and then loud deep breathing; feeling your heartbeat calming, self-talk.

Once the child has regained regulation aim to build emotional resilience

Once the child is calm and regulated play alongside them quietly and calmly re-visit what triggered the dysregulation (which may not be until the following day).

Most importantly, listen and observe the responses and use phrases such as

- 'Can you tell me what upset you?'
- 'I wonder what we could do to help you if this happened another time?'
- 'Would you be able to come and get me/another practitioner to let us know you need us?'

What further support is available for a child who frequently dysregulates?

- Ensure the strategies above have been implemented.
- Review and update the regulation plan with parents/carers every 6 weeks.
- Share the regulation plan with all practitioners who work with the child in the setting.
- ALFEY funding may be requested with regulation plans submitted.
- Through partnership with parents, other agencies can be involved to support child and family such as Early Help, Health Visitor/GP for support and/or referral to Paediatrician, SALT referral or Portage.

Our designated Self-Regulation and Behaviour Management Person is Gemma Wise.

Signed _____ Position _____ Dated _____

We aim to provide a safe, stimulating, caring, happy Pre-school where all children and their families are welcome. We provide a curriculum based on the Early Years Foundation Stage using individual children's interest and needs.