**Collingwood Pre-school**

Well-Being and Emotional Health Policy

Intellectual development and social & emotional development are strongly influenced by a child’s experiences during their pre-school years. Emotional well-being includes being happy and confident and not anxious or upset. Social well-being allows children to make good relationships.

At Collingwood Pre-school we endorse the principle that attachment is everybody’s responsibility.

We are all shaped by our early relationships and our behaviour is influenced by our attachment experiences. John Bowlby described how a secure base is provided through a relationship with one or more sensitive and responsive attachment figures who meet the child’s needs and to whom the child can turn as a safe haven, when upset or anxious (Bowlby, 1988).

‘The concept of a secure base is essential to our understanding of relationship formation and children’s development. It links attachment and exploration and provides the basis of a secure attachment.’ (Schofield and Beek, 2014)

We all need a secure base in life. An early year’s setting is a hugely important secure base for all children as it is often the first step out of the family home. For some, it may be the only secure base that they have experienced.

In our pre-school every child has a key person and all staff have responsibility for the children’s happiness and emotional well-being.

At Collingwood Pre-school we are invested in supporting the very best possible well-being and emotional health between:

* Parent and child;
* Practitioner and child
* Child and child

To this end we are committed to early years practices that support the child’s whole being:

* Physical needs (need to eat, drink, move & sleep)
* The need for affection, warmth & tenderness (being hugged, receiving & giving love & emotional warmth)
* The need for safety, clarity & continuity (knowing the rules, being able to predict what comes next, counting on others)
* The need for recognition & affirmation (feeling accepted & appreciated by others, being part of a group & having a sense of belonging)
* The need to feel capable (feeling that you are good at something, to experience success)

We also believe that fairness is not about everyone getting the same (equality) but about everyone getting what they need (equity).

Benefits to children & families

* Children who enjoy their time in the setting and are engaged with learning
* The good emotional health of the children
* Parents who are engaged with the setting and involved with their child’s learning & development
* Good relationships developed between staff, parents & children.

# Our curriculum:

At the heart of what we teach the children is to express their feelings with words. We do this through our interactions with children, through our observations of the children in their play and with their friendships.

We do this with our daily interaction with the children through [Emotion Coaching](http://www.parentingcounts.org/information/timeline/five-steps-of-emotion-coaching).

In pre-school we use WIN:

I wonder….

I imagine….

I notice….

* I wonder if you feel frustrated by this…
* I imagine that would make anyone feel upset…
* I noticed you looked happy about that…

Children cannot successfully self-regulate their emotions unless they have experienced and internalised co- regulation (i.e. an adult tuning in/empathising with their emotional state and thus ‘containing’ - sharing, supporting and carrying - their emotional state). This also involves explicit teaching and modelling.

Activities are set up to explore and develop social and emotional skills and to build relationships. We use stories, puppets, role play and computer programs for personal and social education. We recognise that the unique child is at their own emotional developmental stage and we adapt our strategies according to their developmental level.

We support children to understand and respond to the boundaries set for behaviour in the setting by teaching the expected routines actively modelling with the children. We use repeated experiences of these routines to help children to understand these securely and to feel safe in the setting.

We teach through modelling ‘This is how we do this **…’** and encourage the child to follow these steps, celebrating each step they take in this learning until they master the routine and demonstrate independence.

Children will make mistakes as part of their learning; we support the child by modelling and encouraging them to do something different or to keep trying to learn from every situation and develop their resilience. We work with parents closely to help the child to generalise their skills, applying their learning to other situations.

We support children’s understanding of beginnings, endings and transitions to help the child develop a sense of ‘permanency’. This is the term given to the psychological developmental milestone children reach when they realise that objects and people exist and will continue to exist, even when they cannot be seen or are in their immediate vicinity. The child can understand that an adult who has left the room or setting will continue to exist and will remember the child and keep them in mind. The child realises that he or she exists as a separate person and can do so without constant contact with the adult. This sense of self comes from the child having repeated consistent and sensitive care-giving experiences. We recognise that not all children experience ‘good enough’ attachment experiences. Endings or transitions can bring up feelings of abandonment and vulnerability for some children.

We support children to feel reassured by our attention to such needs.

Conflicting feelings at times of transition, such as anger at the person leaving and sad about missing them, can be difficult for some children who experience unpredictable patterns of emotion in their life experiences. Conflicting feelings can be confusing and frightening for some children.

Some children can believe that they themselves are the reason for this. We help children through:

* Talking about beginnings, endings and changes at a timely point (not too far in advance to cause confusion).
* We use sequences with a visual timetable, photographs and pictures to help children to understand the routine or plans for special events using a persona doll.
* We recognise a child joining and leaving the setting, with a party for the leaving cohort when they reach the end of their time with us.

In order to help children to feel safe, their educational environment needs to be high in both nurture and structure. Children need predictable routines, expectations and responses from adults. At Collingwood Pre-school, we offer repeated warm nurturing experiences so we aim to be consistent for the child. This is not consistency across all children because some children need something different from others but consistent for the individual.

We recognise the importance of high-quality adult interaction, which is sensitive and adaptiveto the needs of individual children and capable of promoting learning. These are the specific skills we use to support children to feel safe with us – to ‘tune in’ to the child.

We hear, see, sense, interpret and respond to the child, both verbally and non-verbally.

We try to meet the emotional intensity such as highly excited, active and frustrated, or sad and withdrawn on the same energetic level so we ‘ride the same emotional wave’ with the child and gradually support a return to calm.

We communicate with the child that we see, hear and have an understanding of their experiences. We adjust our tone and volume of our voice to support the child to feel safe with us.

We are mindful of our facial expressions and our body language when we interact with the child. This ensures the child feels safe and understands that we will be supporting them in a positive way, using eye contact and at a level and proximity just right for the child’s comfort.

We teach with visible routines and spoken instructions.

We recognise the developmental stage of the child when we teach children how to notice and act on their feelings. We know that not all behaviours are a matter of ‘choice’ and not all factors linked to the behaviour of children are within their control.

Therefore, the language of choice (e.g. ‘good choice/bad choice’) is not always helpful so we talk about feelings at work rather than choices.

Behaviour must always be viewed within the context of important relationships not within the child.

We strongly encourage parental engagement and involvement is absolutely crucial when addressing and planning support for a child’s emotional and social needs.

**Assessment**

As part of our ongoing observation, assessment & planning cycle the child’s key person will be monitoring their well-being & involvement and planning activities to support the children in this area. In our setting we think about the language we use when observing and assessing your child’s progress, we use non-judgmental terms and take an open minded and holistic approach.

We share our observations with parents and carers as part of our parent consultation process. We record children's well-being & involvement as part of our focus observations. These are collated in the child's on-line Tapestry learning journal. Parents are invited to view this and add to it at any time.

Early years practitioners should identify factors that may pose a risk to a child’s social & emotional well-being as part of the on-going assessment of their development. Some behaviours that cause concern may be a typical reaction to a difficult situation which may not be noticed by anyone except the child. All behaviour is communication and to make connections between the behaviour and need being expressed, we should consider the following:

* Is this behaviour developmentally typical for the age of the child? E.g. some behaviours are within typical lines at one stage and not at another such as separation anxiety.
* Some behaviours may seem regressive due to changes in family dynamics and transitions

e.g. babbling, whining, thumb sucking.

* Whether the child has any physical difficulties such as hearing, sight, sensory processing etc. that could cause difficult to manage behaviour.
* What has changed recently for the child that may impact on emotional stability?
* If the child is distinctly more emotional balanced at home or at the setting?
* If the child becomes easily distressed and takes a long time to soothe and settle?
* If the child has explosive outbursts? Frequently?
* If the child is hurting others at times? Adults or peers or both?
* If the child seems to need to move a lot?
* If the child laughs at socially appropriate or inappropriate situations?
* If the child seems unable to ‘feel’ any upset in others?
* If the child cries with distress at unexpected triggers? Or exhibits angry responses rather than tears?
* Has the child fleeting attention to toys and activities or to the adults or children?
* If the child clings to a preferred adult frequently?

Practitioners in our setting aim to understand children’s emotional health needs and have the time and skills to develop nurturing relationships. Evidence of vulnerability in a child is triangulated by key staff to ensure objectivity and the views of child and family placed at the centre of our support for the child.

We ensure a balance of support to maintain staff wellbeing and children’s wellbeing and where there are challenges, we take a whole team approach to supporting the child and there may be two key people involved for a child.

# Training

We ensure that all our practitioners participate in regular training in emotional health & well-being.

All staff complete safeguarding training on a regular basis which meets the mandatory requirements of the EYFS.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (Louise Dumas) and the Deputy (Jacqui Belton) complete training every 2 years and refresh their training annually.

Louise updates the staff at termly meetings to ensure that all changes to legislation and recent information is cascaded to the staff team.

**This policy was adopted by Collingwood Pre-school**

**Date: 4th February 2025**

**Signature: L. Matthews Title/Role: Chairperson**

**Date to be reviewed: Spring 2025 (or before if updates are received)**