Language Policy

The Montessori holistic approach to education is based on a belief in and respect for *all* children in an accessible and enabling environment. Children's communication and social maturation is a *process* and depends upon positive interactions and an environment that is supporting and empowering. Children are constantly learning, absorbing and adapting to the world around them – challenging these concepts along the way. From three years old, children are social embryos and will naturally develop within cohesive groups. The practitioner is personally challenged to consider their own inner attitudes and language patterns to aid children's social maturation.

EYFS: Key Themes & Commitments

- Practitioners must respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction
- Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them… create high quality settings which are welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children are able to enjoy learning and grow in confidence.
- Providers must be alert to any issues for concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere
- Providers must have & implement a behaviour management policy & procedures (see separate model behaviour and relationship policy, underpinned by this language policy)
- Providers must not give or threaten corporal punishment to a child and must not use or threaten any punishment which could adversely affect a child's well-being. Providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that corporal punishment is not given by any person who cares for or is in regular contact with a child
- Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, relate to others, set their own goals and solve problems. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. Practitioners need to decide what they want children in their setting to learn, and the most effective ways to teach it. Practitioners must stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning.
- Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well (including manage behaviour)
- Providers are responsible for managing children's behaviour in an appropriate way.

'Discovering boundaries'

- Having consistent boundaries for behaviour at home and in the setting helps children feel confident because they know what is and is not acceptable in either place
- Making choices about things helps children feel some sense of control over their day

'Respecting each other'

Every interaction is based on caring professional relationships and respectful acknowledgement of the feelings of children and their families

'Understanding feelings'

- Adults and children experience a range of feelings. Children gradually learn to understand and manage their feelings with support from the adults around them
- Show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others, and begin to regulate their behaviour accordingly

'Communication'

All communication is important, including gesture, signing and body language. Actions speak louder than words

- Children are sociable and curious. They explore the world through relationships with others and through their senses

'Listening to children'

- Babies, very young children and those with speech or other development delay may not say anything verbally, though they may communicate a great deal in other ways

'Shared Care'

- A key person meets the needs of each child in their care and responds sensitively to their feelings, ideas and behaviour

Children may play alone or with others

- Practitioners can extend and develop children's language and communication in their play through sensitive observation and appropriate intervention

'The Emotional Environment'

- When children know that their feelings are accepted they learn to express them, confident that adults will help them with how they are feeling

'Starting with the child'

Observe children to find out about their needs, what they are interested in and what they can do

- Note children's responses in different situations

'Children's needs'

Children need sensitive, knowledgeable adults who know when and how to engage their interests and how to offer different support at different times

Effective Practices

Staff

Staff are introduced to and expected to use the following key skills in their approach with children, staff and visitors:

- Eye contact should be made and maintained with children when speaking to and with them. This means that adults get down to the child's height when speaking with them

- Eye contact with visitors, staff and parents should be made ensuring that communication is respectful and a two way engagement

- Open body language promotes spontaneous and rich interactions with children and adults

- Communicating should be done in the same 'space' – not across a room, heads or table.

- Using words rather than physical means to guide the children's actions, effectively manages children's transitions whilst promoting their independence,

  - "We are going to wash our hands together!"

- For a whole class transition, staff will need to enlist the support of colleagues to speak to children individually, set expectations and acknowledging their achievements:

  - "We are going out to play now."

  - "When you have finished, please put your work back on the shelf and come and join us."

  - "We are putting on our coats first."

  - "Thank you for joining us."

- Across the age ranges a different language approach is necessary:

Babies

- Babies and toddlers are moving to explore their world and understand the objects in it through touch (via mouth and hands).

- Interactions in this age range are through glances and exchanges of expressions. Activities should be set up to facilitate these early communications. Their environment should be filled with a range of natural and richly absorbing materials. It should also promote their ability to move, pull themselves up, take first steps and climb.

- Staff will always speak to the child *before* physically picking them up, or moving them "I am just going to…" "After three we will…"

- If the child is able to join in a task, they should be engaged and empowered to do so for themselves, "This basket is for the bricks. Are you going to put the bricks in the basket like this?"

- Rather than simply move a child, speak to them individually, set expectations and acknowledging their achievements, "Please climb out of the basket…Are you going to get out of the basket yourself or shall I help you?...After 3 I am going to get you out of the basket…1,

3

2...are you going to get out of the basket?...Thank you for getting out of the basket."

- Staff will identify what is causing the behaviour. E.g. is it a schema (posting, throwing…)?

- Staff will then facilitate meeting the need in an appropriate way:

    o Name the action – "You are throwing"

    o Provide a safe way for the child to continue the activity – "if you would like to throw, I am going to show you where we throw"

    o Demonstrate how it is done – "This is how we throw."

    o Empower the child to do the activity this way whenever they like – "Show me how you throw the pom pom into the basket"

    o Acknowledge the child's achievement – "That is exactly how we throw the pom pom. Thank you for throwing the pom pom in the basket"

- Staff repeat this strategy cycle using the same words and the same tone as often as necessary. They seek the support of colleagues if and when necessary.

- Staff will adapt the environment rather than the child so as to create as many opportunities for the child to receive encouragement. They do this by observing the child's needs & adapting the environment.

Toddlers

Although now talking, children are still egocentric with independent energy. Although social, they are unable to 'share' conventionally. They have a keen sense of order.

- Staff reinforce children's sense of order by giving them responsibility for simple tasks, such as tucking chairs under, wiping the table, collecting and returning activities to the shelves…

- Staff create a wealth of opportunities for children to explore and manipulate independently within a social setting.

- Staff help children to define their spaces to: climb, throw etc. So three children can work with the building blocks, but each one has their own pile of bricks on their own mat (they are social, yet independent).

- Staff reinforce this verbally:

    o "These are James' bricks. These are your bricks."

    o "If you would like to play with the bricks, you play with them on this mat"

    o "That is exactly where we play with the bricks. Thank you for playing with the bricks on your mat"

- Staff observe the child to see what interests each one and then provide opportunities for them to use their energies constructively

- Staff are careful to avoid phrases that plant ideas in children's minds, such as "don't push your friend!"

- o "At nursery, we play gently with our friends. This is how I play gently, you show me how you play gently with your friend…"

- Staff avoid giving self fulfilling prophecies "If you do that you will hurt yourself"

  - o If you want to climb, can I ask you to go slowly and then you will keep safe. That is exactly how to climb safely. Thank you for climbing slowly and safely.

Two to five year olds

Staff continue to use positive language strategies (as above). Children aged two and above are able to understand more verbal exchanges and are able to communicate more effectively. They may find adults give them less attention now, but they still require affirmation and attention and may seek to gain it in positive and negative ways.

- Staff consider whether the child understands the meaning of the words they use rather than expecting them to understand difficult concepts, such as 'sharing', 'wait' or 'get into a line'.

- Staff continue with the language strategy used above, but expecting the child to articulate their own needs

  - o "Would you like to play with Emma? If you would like to play with her, I would say 'Emma, please can I play with you?' Can you ask Emma if you can play with her? That is exactly how I would ask. What did Emma say?"

    If 'yes' – "Thank you Emma. Now you can go and join her on the mat"

    If 'no' – "Thank you Emma". Emma would like to play by herself for now. You can ask her another time, just as you have done today"

- Staff empower children with the '*I know*' statement: "*I know* that you can sit beautifully in the circle. Please show me how you sit beautifully. *Thank you* for sitting beautifully, that is exactly how we sit in the circle"

- Staff use language that empowers and re-affirms their belief in the child's abilities

- Staff provide choices for children, so that if they choose not to (sit beautifully in the circle), they have a suitable alternative

  - o "Josh *I know* that you know how to keep the sand in the sand tray…When we play in the sand tray, we keep the sand in it like this…If you'd like to play in the sand tray, then we keep it in the tray…Would you like to play in the sand tray?...Then we keep the sand in the tray…You can play with the sand like this or you can come and do something else next to me…What would you like to do?"

- Staff remain committed to these choices and repeating the options. If the child has to be removed, then the staff member will explain verbally beforehand that s/he is about to remove them and will then sit quietly pointing out what the other children are doing. Staff emphasise that they *know* that 'Josh' can do these things just as well

as the other children (carry scissors carefully…tuck their chair in…put their work away etc.) In this instance, parents are ALWAYS informed of the incident.

- Staff continue to recognise the behaviours and facilitate appropriate ways of meeting children's needs in an appropriate way:
    - Name the action – "You are fighting"
    - Provide a safe way for the child to continue the activity – "shall we make this into a 'fire' and we can all fight the fire!"
    - Join in the play as responsive play partners
    - Empower the child to do the activity this way (fight) whenever they like – "Show me where we can fight the fire. Can I join you and we'll put it out together!"
    - Acknowledge the child's achievement – "*Thank you*. That is exactly how we can fight at nursery"

- Staff are careful to avoid phrases that plant ideas in children's minds, such as "don't fight with your friends!"
    - "At nursery, we play games that our friends enjoy. This is how I play fighting fires, you show me how you play fighting fires with your friends…"

- Staff repeat this strategy cycle using the same words and the same tone as often as necessary. They seek the support of colleagues if and when necessary.

- Staff will manipulate the environment rather than the child so as to create as many opportunities for the child to receive encouragement. They do this by observing the child's needs and managing the environment.

Parents

- Partnerships with every parent are sought, based on shared responsibility, understanding, mutual respect and dialogue.

- It is recognised that families are all different. *Oaklea* invites parents to share their differences with us to support our understanding and children's learning at nursery. *Oaklea* welcomes parent participation.

- Parents are expected to share the ethos of *Oaklea* in respecting others and communicating positively with children and others.

- All policies and procedures are available for parents to read and they are invited to contribute to these.

Children

- Are encouraged to develop positive attitudes and ways of communicating with others

- Are helped to unlearn negative language and behaviours they may have acquired through sensitive explanations and role modeling

- Children's behaviour at nursery reflects their stage of development, their level of understanding and their sensitivities. These will be routinely celebrated and shared with parents.

- Children are vulnerable and need to be protected by adults. *Oaklea* has a duty of care to safeguard every child (such as from verbal victimization).

- In accordance with other policies, such as, 'Model Behaviour and Relationship Policy', 'Inclusion Policy' 'Health and Safety Procedures' there may be occasions when it is our duty to inform parents of a specific incident relating to their child. Our intention is for parents and carers to be fully informed of their child's needs, progress and achievements as in all areas of their development. Dialogue with parents, questions, feedback and views are always valued.