

Behaviour Support Policy

Our focus in EMAS is on identifying, understanding, and meeting individual children's needs. As outlined in GIRFEC (Scot.Gov, Sep 2022) "We want all children and young people to live in an equal society that enables them to flourish, to be treated with kindness, dignity and respect, and to have their rights upheld at all times."

A child's behaviour cannot be considered in isolation to their additional educational needs and/or disabilities, either practically or legally. Treating all children fairly does not mean treating them all the same.

The physical safety and emotional wellbeing of our children and the staff is of utmost importance. EMAS promotes respect, tolerance, and positive interactions with others. The Montessori philosophy provides the framework within which we work, supporting the child to become a good role model as well as providing consistent expectations and appropriate responses to behavioural issues. The basic guidelines in the environment consist of the following:

- Respect for oneself.
- Respect for others.
- Respect for the environment.

Teachers support students considerately, and respectfully to understand these guidelines and to find their own way of existing harmoniously within them.

EMAS works collaboratively with parents and carers and recognises their role as the child's primary educator and role model.

The staff team:

- Are positive role models
- Protect the health and safety of the children and other staff
- Redirect children toward constructive activity
- Use consistent communication techniques
- Promote and practice social and communication skills that enable students to resolve differences

- Promote and practice conflict resolution strategies and support the development of listening skills

All children have the right to their individual space. Presentations are also given on how to communicate with one another when one child expresses an interest or concern for another child's activity. Lessons in Grace and Courtesy are given often (at all age levels) with opportunities for children to role-play various situations.

When staff members need to intervene, they explain what is needed. Sometimes redirection is needed to support children to move on from a situation, at other times it is appropriate to talk through issues with those involved and scaffold a restorative discussion.

Children in Children's House are supported to use a Peace Table at which they discuss the situation, with necessary scaffolding from staff, and aim to resolve any dispute or misunderstanding.

In Elementary and Teens, the framework of restorative conversation using the non-violent communication approach is practiced. As students grow and mature, they take on the role of mediator for peers and younger friends.

At times, children do need time away from the group to self-regulate or in many instances co-regulate with a trusted adult. Staff always seek to give appropriate comfort and guidance to a child who is finding it difficult to manage her/his behaviour.

All classrooms are designed with quiet areas for contemplation and solace, and children are supported to use these proactively as part of their own development of personal regulation strategies.

We aim to promote positive behaviour proactively. The guidelines below are followed in cases of challenging or dangerous behaviour.

'Challenging behaviour' includes, but is not limited to, persistent occurrences of:

- Inappropriate talk e.g. swearing or sexual
- Demeaning name calling
- Teasing or purposefully hurting feelings
- Hitting, spitting, or kicking
- Inappropriate sexual touching
- Purposeful destruction of materials or equipment

- Biting
- Repeatedly disrupting another child's work
- Interfering with the health and/or safety of another
- Any other behaviour that could be considered bullying

Support for children

At EMAS we have a whole school approach to behaviour support that is known as Restorative Practice.

Restorative Practice is a shared set of values that ensures we all have a shared understanding and shared beliefs around discipline and behaviour support. It is a philosophy in action that incorporates a continuum of processes that places relationships at the heart of the educational experience. Classroom management practices are relationship-centred so that conflicts are resolved with a focus on repairing the harm done to others in a way that influences positive behaviour and builds a safe, productive and caring community.

It is based on the premise that children need to be explicitly taught the skills they need to behave appropriately and manage conflicts.

Traditional versus Restorative Practice

Traditional systems of retributive justice are based on the (mistaken) assumption that those harmed are 'helped' by the punishment of the perpetrator. Questions asked might include – What rules were broken? Who is to blame? What punishment should apply? The focus is on stopping the behaviour – the cause is rarely addressed and there is little opportunity for self-reflection or taking responsibility. The main lesson learnt is: don't get caught.

The Restorative Practice at EMAS sees the individual as part of many systems, all interlinked. We ask different questions –

Who was harmed? How were they affected? What part did each person play in the incident? Whose obligation is it to make it right? How can the relationship be restored?

The focus is on changing the behaviour as it addresses the cause and provides an opportunity to understand the broader ramifications for both self and others. Participants

are encouraged to self-reflect and take responsibility for their actions. They learn about themselves and others, and self-esteem is built, rather than diminished.

Conflicts are a learning opportunity

At EMAS, conflicts are considered a learning opportunity and students are explicitly taught the skills they need to behave appropriately, just as they are taught the skills they need to read, write, multiply or divide.

Restorative Practice focuses on the learning opportunity that is presented, rather than a focus on blame or punishment, and is based on three pillars:

1. the needs of the person who was harmed
2. the needs of the person who did the harming
3. restitution – restoring the relationship.

Students learn how to participate with others, resolve conflicts, self manage, negotiate, collaborate, feel empowered, see their own part (and move away from blame/victim thinking), make amends, and restore relationships. The skills required are explicitly taught in a developmentally appropriate way.

While it can be difficult to self-reflect, admit where we are wrong, see how others are affected by our own behaviour, accept accountability and responsibility for our actions and to heal the harm by making amends and putting things right – it is by adopting these approaches that all involved are able to develop the strength of character to participate positively in challenging situations with an approach that fosters understanding, clarification and forgiveness.

From role modeling, to using peace tables to resolve conflicts, to holding no-blame whole class meetings, to discussing individual obligations and responsibilities – Restorative Practice is a whole school approach that is utilised as part of everyday community life and is based on the principles of:

- connectedness
- empowerment
- respect
- acceptance
- willingness
- open mindedness
- humility
- solvability
- compassion
- courtesy

- patience
- empathy
- kindness
- resilience
- fairness
- peacemaking

When Challenging Behaviour becomes Additional Support Needs:

At each stage in a child's development there are differences in the way emotional and social support is approached. There is never a 'one shoe fits all' solution as every child's struggles are unique to their time, place and community.

Steps taken to support a child or young person at EMAS:

- Staff seek advice and support from other staff members and the child's parents.
- Restorative practice is used to support conflict resolutions, while recognising that some children need more time to regulate before this can take place.
- Strategies and accommodations are recorded in a Staged Intervention plan
- When a child is receiving support from a school based therapist, or from outside school, then an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is created in order to make sure all staff are using the same strategies, this document is shared with the child's parents.
- The school may request that the child's parents seek an assessment from an educational psychologist or other outside support. Any recommendations are then incorporated into the child's IEP and support planning.

EMAS has an Additional Support Needs policy that covers these aspects of provision in more detail.

Record Keeping:

The school shall keep files current and may retain information on file for the duration of the child's attendance at Edinburgh Montessori Arts School and following withdrawal as per guidance from Education Scotland. Parents can request to see their own child's file at any time by contacting the Office or Principal. Relevant information will be passed on to the next setting or school that the child attends.

Harassment/Violence:

In the very unusual circumstance that harassment or violence occurs, including that based on a person's race, colour, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, creed, marital status, status with regard to public assistance and/or sexual orientation, EMAS staff have a duty to investigate. Such behaviour should be reported to the Office or Principal. The staff team will take prompt and appropriate action; restorative practices will be applied. EMAS reserves the right to facilitate disciplinary action, in the case of a staff member or initiate withdrawal of place in the case of a student, including the possibility of dismissal, should this be relevant.