



# Children with Challenging Behaviour in The Foundation Stage

A close-up photograph of several LEGO bricks. In the foreground, a red 2x4 brick is tilted, showing its top surface with the "LEGO" logo embossed in a circular pattern. Behind it, a yellow 2x4 brick is visible, also with "LEGO" logos on its top surface. The bricks are set against a light blue background.

**Guidance**

# Children with Challenging Behaviour in The Foundation Stage

## INTRODUCTION:

Children starting at an early years setting or transferring to school may have some difficulty adjusting to their new environment. Children in the Foundation Stage are not emotionally mature and the development of their personal, social and emotional skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding are paramount.

It is therefore extremely important that Foundation Stage practitioners support development in this area of learning by providing a secure environment, rich in learning opportunities, in which children can play and learn from first hand experiences.

The following questions can be used to evaluate your provision. They may indicate changes that can impact on children's behaviour.

## Environment

*Is there enough space for children to move about easily?*

Too many chairs and tables can restrict movement around the room, thereby causing friction between children. Three and four year olds are just gaining control over their movements and may not be well co-ordinated. Conversely, too much empty space which is not arranged in areas can create problems too!

*Is there enough for them to do?*

Providing a continuous curriculum that all children, whatever their stage of development, find stimulating and interesting, in all areas of the room, is challenging. However, this is needed, in order to foster curiosity, extend thinking and support learning.

Many three and four year olds are often intellectually capable but do not have the communication skills to express themselves. We need to 'tap in to' the 'hundred languages of children' - movement, dance, music, song, story, mark making, modelling etc enabling expression without frustration.

*Have we sufficient resources?*

Turn taking and sharing are developing skills in the Foundation Stage. If, for instance, four children are playing with the Lego, is there enough for each child to produce a satisfying result? Or, when playing with Brio are there enough trains and carriages to minimise disputes?



## Routines

*Is there a consistent pattern and rhythm to the day, which has meaning to the children?*

A pictorial representation of the day, which children can easily relate to and shows what happens next, is one way to reinforce this.

*Are there long periods of uninterrupted play?*

Between 40 minutes and an hour is needed for play to be established, carried out and concluded. Deep level learning can only take place when time is given for children to display a high level of involvement.

*Are times of stress minimised?*

For example, snack time or lunchtime involving large numbers of children, requiring long periods of sitting, waiting, and lining-up are potentially times of stress, and impose inappropriate expectations on young children.

*Is there an over emphasis on whole group activities?*

The younger (age or stage of development) the child, the more the need for individual and small group work to allow for quality adult: child interaction. Without realising it, we often include too many periods of whole group work such as registration, circle time, review, literacy and numeracy times, story time, music, PE etc.

*Do children have a degree of autonomy?*

This is not the freedom to do as they like, when they like! But, if there are times when children are in control of their own learning, when they are able to make choices and decisions, it is easier for them to accept boundaries.

*Are there opportunities to communicate regularly with parents?*

Home visits, start of the day routines involving parents, such as self-registration, provide valuable opportunities to talk with parents. Children displaying disruptive behaviour may lead chaotic and disturbing home lives. If parents are encouraged to work in partnership with practitioners, strategies can be agreed and used at home, pre school and school.

*Do children have enough opportunity for play indoors and outside?*

Provision of learning opportunities need to be provided both indoors and outside which children can access independently.

# Children with Challenging Behaviour in The Foundation Stage

## Physical Well Being

*Are children tired, hungry or cold? Do they have enough opportunity for physical exercise?*

It is worth considering these basic needs for healthy growth and development alongside emotional needs. Moving snack time to the beginning of the day, for instance can have a significant effect on behaviour.

## Emotional Well Being

*Do children have high levels of self-confidence and positive self esteem?  
Are they comfortable in the setting?*

Children who are stressed, frightened or worried cannot learn. It is biologically impossible. There needs to be lots of opportunities for them to experience success, to be praised, to take responsibility.

## Adult: child interaction

*Do all adults show empathy with children and use positive body language?  
Do they get down to children at their height to talk and make eye contact?  
Do they engage in conversations and, using clear language, encourage sustained, shared thinking?*

Misunderstandings both on the part of the practitioner or child can create potentially difficult situations. Allowance needs to be made for the child's lack of knowledge and experience. Both time and 'space' need to be given so that children's contributions can be listened to and valued.

*Are clear rules and boundaries consistently upheld?*

All practitioners in the Foundation Stage setting need to share common views on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and follow the same strategies when dealing with unacceptable behaviours. Children can help negotiate rules, thereby having some ownership and understanding of the rationale behind them. Rules should be kept to the minimum.



## NEXT STEPS

Unfortunately, there are children who are still going to give cause for concern.

A suggested way forward would be:

- Contact the parents, look at records, and talk to any previous early years setting. Do they share your concerns? What strategies have they tried and what worked?
- Compile observations. Complete an ABCC chart (Example - Appendix 1). Are there any obvious triggers? What is the child's behaviour telling us about the child? Is the child tired, bored, unhappy, frustrated, angry etc. By thinking carefully about the behaviour and what it is telling us about the child, we can start to plan to support the child. What strategies were used and what worked?
- Make an action plan / behaviour plan (Examples - Appendices 2A/2B/2C/2D). Keep it simple. Aim to change one or two behaviours. Think about how to change the environment, teach the child new skills and reinforce the behaviour that you want to see.
- Once you have made an action plan / behaviour plan, share it with everyone involved with the child to ensure consistency, including supply staff, lunchtime staff, family and other children as appropriate.
- Review the action plan / behaviour plan within an agreed timescale. If the action plan is working, continue and develop the plan. If it is not working, problem solve the plan (see Appendix 3).
- If you continue to be concerned about a child's behaviour, ask for help. Use the Contact List on the back cover.
- At all times, keep talking to parents / carers, making sure that they are informed and involved. If parents need independent advice and support, provide them with information about the Southampton Parent Partnership Service. See back cover for details.



# Action Plan to Promote Positive Behaviour

APPENDIX 2A

<p><b>Summary of Strengths</b></p>	<p><b>Areas for development</b></p>	<p><b>Action (who/what/when?)</b></p>
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# Individual Behaviour Difficulties

APPENDIX 2B

Child's Strengths

Child's difficulties

Possible factors affecting behaviour

Ways to support child

1) Environment	
2) Activities	
3) Relationships	



# INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN - BEHAVIOUR

APPENDIX 2C

Name: Setting: Long term goals:	Name: _____ DOB: _____	Completed by _____	Home Involvement Parent Carer _____ Agreed Action:  Invited <input type="checkbox"/> Attended <input type="checkbox"/>	Review Outcomes Remain at Stage <input type="checkbox"/> Move up a stage <input type="checkbox"/> Move down a Stage <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Form Number _____				Action _____ Action Plus _____ Nature of Difficulty Language <input type="checkbox"/> Motor <input type="checkbox"/> Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Play/Social <input type="checkbox"/> Behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> Self help <input type="checkbox"/> Medical <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Date Set	Specific Targets	What environmental (e.g. Physical, curriculum) changes could be made	Skills to be taught	Reinforcement and opportunities for praise	Success Criteria

# EARLY YEARS INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN

APPENDIX 2D

Name:	Form Number	Completed by		Involvement from:		
		Stage	EY Action		EY Action Plus	
Setting:	DOB:	Nature of difficulty		Child's strengths:		
Long term goals:		Physical Development				
To improve/develop ...		Personal, Social, Emotional Communication/Language				
Date set	Target: _____ will	Success Criteria	Arrangements (Who, What, When, Where)	Monitoring Arrangements	Review Date	Outcome

## Individual Behaviour Plans - Reviewing/Troubleshooting

- Are there a few (1, 2 or maximum 3) behaviour targets?
- Are the targets SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timed)? E.g.:  

'Sophie will play a turn taking game with an adult and one other child at least twice a week for 5-10 minutes'

'Ben will say all of the names of the children in his group on request at small group time'

'Zena will sit on the "listening cushion" for 5 minutes during story time with an adult sitting next to her'
- Does the plan outline how the targets will be met? For example:
  - Who will do what
  - When / where / how
  - What resources will be needed
- Does the plan build upon the child's strengths / interests?
- Does the plan include ways of developing the child's self esteem?
- Has the plan been discussed with parents and does it take into account parental views?
- Has the plan been shared and communicated to all key staff?
- Has the plan been regularly reviewed?
- Have relevant outside agencies been consulted and involved?

## Contact List

### **All pre-school non-maintained settings:**

Please contact your PDW or Early Years Development Worker. They will refer you to an Early Years Support Teacher / Area SENCo.

### **All maintained school settings:**

Talk to your SENCo about the possible involvement of inclusion support services (e.g. Southampton Psychology Service, Outreach Services, Pupil Support Services).

### **Southampton Parent Partnership Service:**

An independent service for parents who have children with special educational needs (telephone: 023 8055 7607)