



Supporting Children's Behaviour and Emotional Development Policy

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Our Values

At Young Friends Kindergarten, we believe all behaviour is a form of communication. It is our responsibility to listen with curiosity, respond with respect, and support children to develop emotional literacy, resilience and trust.

- **Respect** – We honour the experiences, needs and voices of every child
 - **Authenticity** – We speak kindly, honestly and without control or reward
 - **Emotional Safety** – Children learn best when they feel safe, understood and valued
 - **Sustainability** – Relational consistency and calm practice are built into our setting culture
 - **Community** – Children, staff and families co-regulate together and support one another
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Policy Statement

This policy sets out our approach to supporting behaviour through *relational practice*, co-regulation, and in the-moment connection. We do not use time outs, reward charts, sticker systems or behaviour books.

Instead, we promote:

- **Emotional awareness** • **Predictable boundaries** • **Reflective conversations** • **Consistent modelling from emotionally available adults**

Behaviour is never seen as “challenging” — it is a **signal of need**, a request for support, or a communication of discomfort. It is the adult’s role to understand it.

Our Approach: The ‘Just Right’ System

The “Just Right” System is our consistent, setting-wide method for supporting emotional regulation. It is used across all rooms, ages and situations, and forms part of our training, supervision and daily language.

This approach is grounded in neuroscience and real respect. It supports children to understand their emotional state and gently return to regulation — the place where they feel “just right” inside.

We use a simple **traffic light framework** with friendly, relatable language:

- **Red – “Fizzy”**: This describes a high-energy, possibly overwhelmed state — for example, feeling angry, over-excited, or unable to focus. Staff help children recognise “fizzy” feelings and guide them towards calming strategies such as deep breathing, quiet time, or sensory play.
- **Amber – “Wobbly”**: This is the in-between state where emotions may be building or fluctuating. A child might feel unsure, frustrated, or unsettled. Staff support by offering choices, connecting through conversation, and providing predictable, soothing activities to prevent escalation.
- **Green – “Just Right”**: This is the regulated state where children feel calm, focused, and ready to learn or play. Staff reinforce “just right” moments with positive recognition, helping children notice and celebrate how good it feels to be in balance.

Staff model the language daily, narrating their own emotions and co-regulating with children. The system is always used **proactively** — never as a punishment — and is integrated into our planning, daily routines, and reflective practice to promote self-awareness, empathy, and emotional literacy.

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It supports children to understand their emotional state and gently return to regulation — the place where they feel “just right” inside.

We use a **traffic light framework** with friendly, relatable language:

- **Red – “Fizzy”**: High-energy, overwhelmed, or dysregulated (e.g. anger, over-excitement, inability to focus)
 - **Amber – “Wobbly”**: In-between state where emotions are building or fluctuating (e.g. uncertainty, frustration, anxiety)
 - **Green – “Just Right”**: Regulated, calm, focused, ready to learn and play
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How the Just Right System Works in Practice

1. Observation

- Staff observe children’s body language, tone of voice, and behaviour to identify whether they are “fizzy” (red), “wobbly” (amber), or “just right” (green).
- Observation is quiet and thoughtful — we tune in before we act.

2. Naming the Feeling

- Staff use the agreed words and colours to label the child’s state in a warm, non-judgemental way.
- *Example*: “I can see your body’s feeling a bit fizzy right now — let’s help it get back to just right.”

3. Connection Before Correction

- Staff approach with calm presence — kneel or sit near the child, model slow breathing, and offer safety through non-verbal cues.
- Use validating phrases such as: “I’m here.” / “That was a big feeling.” / “You’re safe. Let’s be here together.”

4. Pause and Observe

- Give the child space before speaking — allow them to process.
- Avoid rushing to fix or problem-solve immediately.

5. Co-Regulation Strategies

- **For “Fizzy” (Red)**: Staff offer calming activities such as deep breathing, sensory play, outdoor time, or quiet space.
- **For “Wobbly” (Amber)**: Staff provide reassurance, choices, and soothing activities to prevent escalation.
- **For “Just Right” (Green)**: Staff celebrate this state — acknowledging how it feels and encouraging children to recognise it in themselves.

6. Use Open, Non-Judgemental Language

- Instead of “Why did you do that?”, staff use: “I wonder what happened for you then?” / “That looked really hard.” / “What do you think we could do next time?”
- Staff support the child’s reflection — they do not impose their own interpretation.

7. Support Without Blame

- Staff acknowledge feelings: “That seemed loud for your ears.” / “You looked cross when the game changed.”
- Staff offer clear choices: “Would you like to sit with me or have some quiet time?”

8. Model Repair and Accountability

- We do not force apologies.
- Instead, staff model authentic repair: “I didn’t like that. Let’s try again.” / “I made a mistake. We all do. Let’s fix it.”

9. Reflection with the Child

- When the child is calm, our staff help them reflect: What helped you get back to just right? What could you try next time?
- Staff keep these conversations short, positive, and age-appropriate.

10. Consistency Across the Setting

- All rooms use the same language, colours, and approach.
- They are embedded into daily routines, circle times, and one-to-one moments.

11. Partnership with Families

- We share the Just Right language with parents and families so it is reinforced at home.

Our team do not say phrases like:

- **“You’re fine” or “You’re alright”** This dismisses emotional reality — **we validate, not correct** children’s feelings.
- **“Calm down”** Directive and ineffective — regulation must be modelled, not demanded.
- **Shouting or calling out to children across rooms.** Voices remain **low, warm and emotionally safe** Children should always be approached directly and quietly unless it is an unsafe situation that needs approaching quickly i.e. if a child is about to be hurt.
- Shortening or changing children’s names without permission from parents. Our team understand and respect that children’s names are part of their identity

Consistency and Team Support

The Just Right system works because our team model it **consistently**. Every adult is responsible for using it properly.

If a member of the team is unsure how to respond in the moment — or feels they are slipping into reactive or traditional habits — they know they can ask a more experienced colleague to step in and model the correct approach.

This is an expectation of all team members who grow by watching each other. Support is always available.

Supporting Individual Needs

Some children may have plans in place (e.g. SEND Support Plan, EHCP) which guide additional strategies for emotional regulation. These are respected and followed in conjunction with the Just Right system. No plan overrides the basic need for **compassion, connection and safety**.

Working in Partnership with Families

Families are involved respectfully in any ongoing behavioural concerns.

- No child is labelled, punished or discussed in front of others
- Discussions are held privately, with kindness and openness
- Our approach is explained clearly and positively — we do not engage in blame
- Suggestions for home strategies are offered when invited

Linked Policies

- Safeguarding
- SEND and Inclusion
- Supervision and Appraisal
- Wellbeing of Staff
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Equalities and Diversity
- Communication Policy

Authorisation

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