

MOON RISE MONTESSORI DISCIPLINE POLICY

Children who are in their first six years of life are busy developing who they are and learning how to adapt to the social norms of their cultural group, community, and society. Whilst we as adults may interpret some behaviour as “anti-social” we must always be mindful of the child's age, culture, what is happening in their world and what lies behind certain behaviours. For example, a two-year-old child who is still acquiring vocabulary and language to express themselves, may often grab an object from another child, push, hit, or even in extreme cases bite to get their point across. Whilst these behaviours are not socially acceptable, it is up to the adult in the environment to give this non-verbal, impulsive, and frustrated little being the tools to express themselves in a socially acceptable way. In the same way, a five-year-old child who has a good command of language and the vocabulary to express themselves, should not be biting at all and this type of behaviour could be interpreted as troublesome. We as adults will need to facilitate effective ways for all children to express themselves and cope with some immensely powerful emotions during their developmental journey.

In certain cultures, making eye contact is deemed respectful, in others, utterly disrespectful. So, knowing what the child and their family's cultural norms are avoids incorrect assumptions and interpretations.

We have few rules in the Montessori environment, however they are effective and necessary for the greater good of the group as well as the individual.

The three rules are:

- You may not hurt yourself.
- You may not hurt others.
- You may not hurt the environment.

Within these three rules, we provide stability, calm, respect, and peace. A Montessori community is set up to have freedom in limits. So an example that I always like to use is the following: An adult has the freedom to use every public road in South Africa (*the freedom part*) provided that they have a valid drivers licence, obey the rules of the road and the laws of the country whilst using these roads (*the limit part.*)

So too in a classroom, children have certain freedoms with certain limits. A child can choose to work with a certain activity for as long as they wish to, provided nobody else is working with it at the time (*freedom to work.*) They may choose not to work at all for certain periods of time, provided they do not disturb those who have chosen to work (*limit within the freedom.*) They may not throw equipment, jump on tables, work overly roughly with an activity (*the limit within that freedom to work with equipment in the environment.*) This would be a great example of all the above rules being implemented, throwing equipment, or jumping on a table could result in hurting oneself or hurting others and it certainly could damage the equipment (*environment.*)

With this in mind, the following is an outline of our Discipline Policy:

Children must learn to treat themselves, their peers, and their teachers with respect. Respectable and appropriate social behaviour will constantly be role modelled by the adults in the environment. Grace and courtesy exercises will be done constantly in age appropriate exercises. Through the setting of clear boundaries and limits, redirection, role modelling and giving children the tools that they need to settle disputes amongst themselves, the tone of the classroom and community will be set.

In the case of a child struggling with acceptable social behaviour, (as sometimes happens whilst they are still learning these skills) despite the above measures taking place, the Directress or Assistant may then separate the child and sit quietly with them to allow some 'cool down time.' This is not a punishment at all, merely a time of quiet contemplation where the adult 'holds the space' with the child to support them in calming down, gaining control over their emotions and re-joining the group once they feel ready to do so.

A child is never singled out, reprimanded, judged, embarrassed, chided, abandoned, left to deal with their emotions alone, or spoken harshly to. We accept that the child is having a difficult moment and give them the tools, time, and safe space to settle themselves.

Should we see any concerning social behaviours, we will request a meeting with the parents to see how we can work together to assist the child.

Behaviours that may cause a Directress/Assistant to intervene:

- Aggressive behaviour.
- Harmful/dangerous behaviour.
- Repeatedly and purposefully disrupting/distracting other children during the work period.
- Destructive behaviour.
- Severe frustration (some frustration may happen when a child is learning a new skill and this is normal and can even be productive, when a child exhibits signs of deep and distressing frustration, it is time for the adult to step in however, this must be done in a respectful and reassuring way.)

If the above occurs frequently, the following steps will be taken:

1. The Principal/Directress will request a meeting with the parent to discuss the concerning behaviours and solutions.
2. The staff will make careful observations for an agreed time period, (usually one to two weeks depending on severity of concerns) to note any changes in behaviour.
3. Therapy or specialist treatment may be suggested to the parents for the child to develop coping measures.
4. In the extremely rare case that we have no co-operation from parents and the concerning behaviour escalates to a point that the safety and well-being of the rest of the children is in peril, your child may be withdrawn from the school.
5. Every effort will be made by staff to assist any child going through a difficult phase and we request that parents work alongside us for the well-being of the child.

These measures are taken in the best interest of every child, parent, and staff member at MRM. Many times, anti-social behaviours are temporary and there is always a reason behind the behaviour. The school alone cannot be responsible for instilling good values and socially appropriate behaviour in the children. We must work together to role model these behaviours to our children. As the ancient proverb goes *"it takes a village to raise a child."*

I have read and discussed the discipline policy with the Principal/Owner of Moon Rise Montessori and have a good understanding of this policy.

Parent Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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