



Understanding Bullying in the Early Years

At Clare House Nursery, we recognise that **true bullying is uncommon in the early years** because young children are still developing the social, emotional and communication skills needed to build positive relationships and manage their emotions. Behaviours such as hitting, biting, grabbing toys or excluding others are often linked to frustration, unmet needs or difficulties with communication, rather than intentional bullying.

We understand that these situations are more accurately described as **relational conflict** or developmentally appropriate behaviour, where children are learning important skills such as sharing, turn-taking, empathy and problem-solving. Our role is to support children through these experiences using calm, nurturing guidance and positive role modelling.

However, we also recognise that bullying can occur. Where behaviour is **intentional, repeated, hurtful and involves an imbalance of power**, it will always be taken seriously. We will work closely with children, families and, where appropriate, other professionals to ensure every child feels safe, valued and respected.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that is **deliberate, repeated over time, intended to hurt another person and involves an imbalance of power**. It may be physical, verbal, emotional, discriminatory or, in older children, online. Bullying causes distress and can have a significant impact on a child's emotional wellbeing, confidence and sense of safety.

For behaviour to be considered bullying, it would usually involve all of the following:

- **Intentional** – the behaviour is meant to upset, hurt or intimidate another person.
- **Repeated** – the behaviour happens more than once over a period of time.
- **Hurtful** – it causes physical or emotional harm.
- **Power Imbalance** – one child has, or is perceived to have, more power than the other. This may be due to age, size, confidence, popularity or another factor.

At Clare House Nursery, we understand that most disagreements between young children are **not bullying** but are part of learning important social and emotional skills. Practitioners carefully assess each situation to distinguish between normal developmental conflict and behaviour that may be considered bullying, ensuring every child receives the appropriate support.

Our Nurturing Approach

At Clare House Nursery, we believe that children develop positive behaviour through secure, trusting relationships with caring adults. We recognise that emotional wellbeing is the foundation for learning and that children thrive when they feel safe, valued and understood.

Rather than asking:

"What is wrong with this child?"

we ask:

"What is this child trying to communicate?"

We understand that empathy, emotional regulation and problem-solving develop over time through repeated experiences with warm, responsive adults who model positive relationships and support children to understand their emotions.

To develop emotional literacy and emotional intelligence, we embed **The Colour Monster** and other age-appropriate resources into our daily practice. Through stories, discussions, visual prompts and role play, children learn to recognise, name and express their feelings while developing empathy and positive relationships.

Our practitioners:

- Build secure attachments and trusting relationships.
- Model kindness, empathy and respectful communication.
- Support children to recognise and regulate their emotions.
- Use **The Colour Monster** and other emotional literacy resources to develop children's understanding of feelings.
- Encourage children to express their thoughts, feelings and needs.
- Promote restorative conversations and help children understand the impact of their actions.
- Celebrate individuality, diversity and inclusion.
- Work in partnership with families to provide consistent, nurturing support.

Through these everyday interactions, we help children develop the confidence, resilience and self-regulation skills that provide the foundations for lifelong learning and positive mental wellbeing.

Working in Partnership with Parents

Parents and carers play an essential role in promoting respectful relationships.

We encourage families to:

- talk openly with us about any concerns
- reinforce kindness and empathy at home
- share any changes that may affect their child's wellbeing
- work alongside practitioners to provide consistent support

Where concerns arise, all families involved will be treated respectfully, fairly and without judgement.

Possible Signs a Child May Need Additional Support

Whilst these signs do not necessarily indicate bullying, they may suggest that a child requires additional emotional support.

Parents and practitioners should be aware if a child:

- becomes withdrawn
- appears unusually anxious or upset
- talks about others being unkind

- loses confidence
- becomes reluctant to attend nursery
- experiences changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- has unexplained injuries
- becomes unusually quiet or distressed

We encourage parents to discuss any concerns with us as early as possible

Our Commitment

At Clare House Nursery we believe that every child deserves to grow within a community where they feel accepted, valued and respected.

Through our nurturing approach, strong relationships and understanding of early brain development, we help children develop empathy, kindness, emotional resilience and positive relationships that will support them throughout their lives.

We are committed to ensuring that discrimination, prejudice and bullying behaviour are challenged promptly, fairly and consistently, while supporting every child to learn from their experiences and flourish within our caring nursery community.

