



Cultivating Emotional Harmony

Our world belongs to both children and adults.....all who occupy the space.....it is a shared world (McNair, 2012).

Preface

Childhood:

The starting place for this policy is childhood. How childhood is being experienced by children can be viewed as a benchmark for the humanity of our individual and collective actions. Childhood is invested with powerful emotions and beliefs, for example, when consulted on this policy staff members were keen that what is written reflects their 'love' of children and of consequence their value of childhood as a period in its own right.

This part of human life is the most intensely governed sector of personal existence therefore it appears to be very important that we understand children's lives, and childhood. For example, at Cowgate we talk of 'tuning into' the uniqueness of children viewing childhood as diverse where children are social actors. This way of thinking / being prioritises children's voices and asserts the right for children to participate in this community. Children are also agents in the construction of their own culture.

Social justice:

This policy is guided by a desire for justice, fairness and equity in education ~ social justice. Social justice is a term which does not mean the same to everyone who uses it. At Cowgate we believe that each individual is valuable and recognised as an important valued part of the community as a whole. On the other hand, there is a recognition that no individual exists apart from their community ~ or, more accurately, communities, since they certainly belong to more than one.. Thus, the good of a community inevitably has implications for the good of their communities. To address two contrary fears about social justice issues: on one hand, there is no thought that the interests of the individual are sacrificed to those of the community, although there may need to be a process of negotiation to discover how each can best be served. Equally on the other hand, there is no thought that the interests of the individual override the interests of the community. Again, there may need to be a process of negotiation to get the maximum good for both.

Importantly, at Cowgate we believe social justice is not the end of anything, it is the way...

The following policy was written by the Cowgate community and covers the following aspects: character strengths, confidence, creativity, good relationships, gratitude, mindfulness, optimism, physical experiences, resilience, sense of purpose.

We begin by our underpinning values then follow these with different aspects of emotional harmony. In each section we will provide a brief explanation of what we mean by each aspect and what we intend to do as a community to cultivate each aspect.



Our Values

These values written by the children, in May 2012, inform our everyday practices and policy development.

“I think we should have caring and nursery should be fair” (L.F)

“Be kind to people” (E.P)

“Going outside when you like and inside when you like” (A.S)

“Use their names, not calling names” (L.F)

“Sharing” (A.S)

“Take care of nursery” (N.J)

“And our pets” (O.T)

“And flowers and shoes and books” (E.B)

“By playing” (L.F)

“If anyone makes a mess, they can tidy it up” (L.F)

“Making our own choices” (A.S)

“Yes, the adults can make choices and the children can make choices” (L.F)

“Sometimes my friend makes my choices too and says he won’t be my friend. But I like to always be his friend and make my own choices” (M.M)

Cultivating Emotional Harmony

What do we mean by emotional harmony?

Emotions are how we genuinely feel about things. We all experience both pleasant and unpleasant feelings in our lives. When we get the balance right this is emotional harmony. The ten most pleasant emotions are: amusement, awe, gratitude, hope, inspiration, interest, joy, love, pride and serenity. Negative emotions include, anger, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, fear, frustration, guilt, sadness, shame and stress.

Emotional harmony is about emotional and spiritual resilience that enables us to enjoy life, survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and other’s self worth. Our emotional harmony affects everything we do, how we feel about ourselves and how we build relationships.

Individuals with emotional harmony will on most days:

- feel generally happy and interested in life
- feel satisfied with life
- like most aspects of self
- have warm, trusting personal relationships
- be able and confident to express own ideas
- feel a sense of purpose in life
- be able to manage daily life
- have challenging experiences
- a sense of belonging
- something to contribute to family and community
- hold positive attitudes and respect for others

What we intend to do to cultivate emotional harmony:

- create a centre which is fair for all;
- create an ethos where everyone is valued in conditions of trust and safety;
- nurture positive relationships;
- help children learn to notice, understand and manage their feelings (this will be done by role modelling, and expressing to children how we (as adults) manage our own emotions);
- encourage individuals to enjoy the present moment;
- listen, to understand how each individual really feels; see things from their point of view and accept how they feel. For example, we might say 'You seem really disappointed that your friend...I understand that is hard for you.' We know that when children are understood it is easier for them to think through their emotions.
- acknowledge all emotions positive and negative for example, 'You were very brave to do that when you felt so scared.' Children will learn that all emotions have a place in life.

- cultivate an environment that grows the presence of discovery, freedom and joy;
- ensure the visibility of children;
- find out what children think, perceive and experience about Cowgate;
- engage children in the process of change;
- view children as their own constructors;
- cultivate children as they progress social justice concerns, including processes which may overturn themselves;
- encourage children through the process of negotiations;
- provide opportunities for serenity

Cultivating character strengths

‘We change the world by tiny individual acts of honesty, courage, kindness and integrity, by celebrating our own strengths, just a little more each day, and helping others to do the same.’ - Jenny Fox Eades

What do we mean by character strengths?

At Cowgate we believe character strengths are important to human life, strengths such as:

1. Appreciation ~ noticing and appreciating beauty
2. Bravery ~ not shrinking from challenge or difficulty
3. Caution ~ consideration of what is said / done
4. Creativity ~ thinking of new and productive ways to do things
5. Curiosity ~ taking an interest in experiences
6. Enthusiasm ~ approaching life with excitement and energy
7. Fairness ~ Treating all people the same according to a sense of equality and justice
8. Forgiveness ~ forgiving those who have done wrong
9. Gratitude ~ being aware and thankful for good things that happen

10. Honesty ~ speaking the truth and being genuine
11. Hope / Optimism ~ Expecting the best and working to achieve it
12. Humour ~ Liking to laugh and bring smiles
13. Kindness ~ Doing good deeds for others
14. Leadership ~ Organising group experiences and making sure everything is in place to make things happen
15. Love ~ valuing close relationships with others
16. Love of learning ~ mastering new skills and knowledge
17. Modesty ~ letting your accomplishments speak for themselves
18. Open - mindedness ~ thinking things through and examining them from all sides
19. Perseverance ~ finishing what you start
20. Perspective ~ being able to provide wise advice to others
21. Self-control ~ controlling what you say and do
22. Sociability ~ being aware of the motives and feelings of yourself and others
23. Spirituality ~ believing in the higher purpose and meaning of life
24. Teamwork ~ working well as a member of a group

What we intend to do to cultivate character strengths:

Everyone at Cowgate ~

- will be respected and valued for their character strengths;
- will be respected for their individuality, not sameness. For example individuals who enjoy working on their own, will be respected for their curiosity and perseverance, and not made to work as part of a team...working with others may evolve from raised self-esteem gained from acknowledgement of other strengths;
- will be thanked for their honesty;
- will be congratulated on their perseverance in getting a task finished;
- will be complimented on their kindness ;
- will be encouraged when they show courage or are seen coping with a difficult situation

Cultivating confidence

‘Parents and others should not speak so lightly and carelessly to the child’ - Friedrich Froebel

What do we mean by confidence?

Confidence helps us deal with the challenges in life. If we are confident, we believe in our abilities and feel hopeful that we can achieve our goals. We are also more willing to try new things, and this helps us learn. Having confidence also means we are more likely to feel comfortable with ourselves and that we have something worthwhile to give.

Confidence helps us interact with other people, which makes it easier for us to form relationships. We live in a social world, so our relationships with others are of considerable importance to our wellbeing. Confidence is an essential part of building relationships ~ the more confident we are the stronger, healthier relationships we will be able to build with others.

Confidence is an important part of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) ~ we (practitioners) are asked to enable young children to become confident individuals.

What is meant by a confident child?

Confidence means slightly different things to different people. At Cowgate we are talking about a child who

- believes in their own ability to do things
- has a genuine sense of their own worth
- takes responsibilities for their actions
- feels optimistic about life

Confidence is not a fixed thing, it can grow and develop. Confidence is about how we feel inside, one child may happily talk in front of large groups of people, while the other may sit quietly listening, both may be equally confident.

What we intend to do to cultivate confidence:

At Cowgate we believe we have an important role in supporting confidence in our children.

In the Cowgate community we will:

- cultivate a sense of self-worth in the children, we will do this by valuing who each child is as a unique being and we will respect their right to have a unique place in the world
- encourage children to take responsibility for their choices
- view children as capable
- remember that what we say (both positive and negative) can have a long-lasting effect on the children we work with. Children listen and believe us!
- give children tasks that will inspire and satisfy them. Tasks that can be broken up into manageable steps ~ here we will praise them at each step for their effort and persistence
- give children support to find solutions ~ finding their own solutions will inspire their confidence

- be honest with our praise (and personal)
- show them that we believe in them
- give time to show our genuine interest in what they are doing
- give constructive criticism (describe the behaviour not the person)
- help children find solutions not barriers



Cultivating creativity ~

‘Why should we use all our creative power? Because there is nothing that makes people so generous, joyful, lively, bold and compassionate.’ - Brenda Ueland

What do we mean by creativity?

Creativity is about expressing ourselves. It is about trying new ways of being. Creativity involves being imaginative and original. We believe that being involved in creative experiences is absorbing for children. From creative experiences children develop important characteristics and abilities such as:

- Appreciation of different ways of looking at the world
- Collaboration ~ being keen to work together as a team
- Communication ~ developing communication through talking, listening, writing or pictures

- Concentration ~ focus on what they are doing
- Developing good relationships ~ working together and making new friends
- Emotional intelligence ~ being able to express emotions
- Empathy ~ understanding what it can feel like being someone else
- Imagination ~ bringing ideas to life
- Independence of thought ~discovering things for ourselves
- Intrinsic motivation ~ participating in something for pleasure rather than external reward, so wanting to do it for themselves
- Open-mindedness ~ being open to new ideas
- Positive emotion ~ enjoying what they are doing

These can lead to ~

- A sense of purpose
- Achievement
- Confidence
- Development of strengths
- High aspirations
- Self-respect
- Sense of belonging



What we intend to do to cultivate creativity:

- we will provide rich opportunities for creativity, both spontaneous (free and unstructured) and planned experiences such as bread baking;
- we will talk of values not rules, creativity is stifled by rules;
- we will encourage children to be imaginative, and not grounded in our reality, for example, a cloud may look like a blanket or even a train to a young child. They may imagine fairies living at the bottom of the garden...;
- we will encourage their make believe;
- we will encourage children to challenge what we say, this is a form of creativity;

Cultivating good relationships ~

‘The father should never push him away or show impatience with his persistent qualities, for with every harsh word he destroys a growing point in his child’s life’ - Friedrich Froebel

What do we mean by good relationships?

We believe good relationships are really important for our well-being. We have a deep, natural need to connect with other individuals and to belong to a social group. The sense of belonging comes from good relationships with the individuals around us, in the centre with our friends, our families and individuals from our home communities. There are four key elements of any good relationship:

- trust
- effective communication
- mutual respect
- valuing differences

What we intend to do to cultivate good relationships:

- we will role model good relationships;
- we will encourage their friendships;
- we will be open and honest;
- we will include children in the decisions that affect their lives;
- we will apologise when we make a mistake, and forgive them for their mistakes;
- we will use positive appreciative language;
- we will keep our promises and try to understand their point of view;
- we will listen to children with empathy (listening with intention of really understanding);
- we will consider the child’s perspective if they ask us for our opinion or advice;
- we will be conscious of our own and the children’s tone of voice and body language when communicating with the children;
- we will be respectful of others, i.e., considerate towards them, thinking about their feelings and accepting that they may have different views and opinions;
- we will give to others, for example: time, kindness, praise, etc.);
- we will celebrate diversity and richness;

Cultivating gratitude ~

‘Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more...[i]t can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend...’ -

Melody Beattie

What do we mean by gratitude?

At Cowgate we believe gratitude is an attitude ~ a way of looking at things; it is the feeling and expression of being thankful. Thankful for both people and experiences in life. Research suggests encouraging children to ‘count their blessings’ improves their sense of being grateful and makes them more likely to enjoy school and learning.

What we intend to do to cultivate gratitude:

- we will role model our gratitude as we show thanks to other people and for experiences such as a lovely cup of tea;
- we will comment to the children when they demonstrate gratitude, for example, ‘That was thoughtful of you to thank your friend for’;
- we will help children find their silver lining in every cloud;
- we will encourage children to send thank you cards or buy flowers for the things people do for the centre.

Cultivating mindfulness

‘Mindfulness is paying attention here and now with kindness and curiosity’ - Association for Mindfulness in Education

What we mean by mindfulness?

Being mindful is simply about paying attention to those things in the present moment that we so often ignore, for example the sounds of birds singing, the sensation of rain on our face, or the feeling of joy in our body.

It is about taking time to be aware of all the good things in your life ~ all the good things surrounding you.

Mindfulness can be practised in many different ways. It simply involves bringing your attention to the present moment.

Research suggests practising mindfulness can:

- improve immune function
- increase empathy
- enhance relationships
- improve academic performance

What we intend to do to cultivate mindfulness

- provide experiences that encourage serenity
- give time to the children and learn from them as they enjoy being in the present moment and enjoying the world around them



Cultivating optimism

‘Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.’

Helen Keller

What do we mean by optimism?

Being optimistic is looking on the bright side of life or expecting things to be well and go well for you. It is also about believing that we can bring a positive change in our life and in the world.

Research shows that people who have a generally optimistic outlook will persevere when in difficulty, are high achievers, are highly motivated, have positive moods and a greater sense of control over their lives. They also tend to have good relationships and good health.

What we intend to do to cultivate optimism

- we will practise optimism
- we will encourage children to persevere
- we will help children focus on what is good in their lives and what is going well for them



Cultivating physical experiences for well-being

In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.' - John Muir

What do we mean by physical experiences for well-being

Physical experiences are simply about movement, walking, dancing, yoga, climbing trees, gardening, skipping, cycling, scooting, action songs and many more. The evidence for the benefits of physical experiences for children's physical health is clear and well understood. For example, there is strong evidence that physical experience builds strong bones and strengthens muscles, maintains flexibility, maintains and achieves a healthy weight, promotes good posture and balance, improves fitness, strengthens the heart and enhances healthy growth and development.

For children there is growing evidence that physical experience increases physical confidence, happiness and relaxation and improves body image.

Physical experiences can be more beneficial if they are outside. Evidence shows that contact with nature has benefits for our well-being over and above the physical experience alone. These benefits include:

- having a more positive outlook on life and higher life satisfaction
- providing stress relief and relaxation
- restoring concentration and improving productivity
- stimulating interest in the natural world and conservation
- improving recovery from illness

What we intend to do to encourage cultivating physical experiences for well-being

- we will role model an appreciation of physical experiences;
- we will discuss with children the benefits;
- we will plan more nature kindergarten trips;
- we will encourage children to be active outdoors;
- we will listen to children to discover their interests.

Cultivating resilience

‘It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.’ - Charles Darwin

What do we mean by resilience?

Resilience is about being strong inside and able to adapt well to changes and difficulties. We believe if children are resilient they will cope better with problems, they will have better health and they will be happier and more fulfilled.

A resilient child can be described as:

A child who works well, plays well, loves and expects well.

Research has shown that resilient children:

- have good relationships because they are caring, flexible, can understand others' feelings and can laugh at themselves and situations;
- are independent, active and confident that they can get things done;
- have a sense of purpose and hope for the future;
- feel that they are worthwhile and can make a difference;
- have support from their families and communities;
- are expected to do well by their families and communities.

What we intend to do to cultivate resilience

- we will role model resilience
- we will express our own emotions ~ demonstrating honesty
- we will explain to children if things may be difficult
- we will help children think positively
- encourage them to be friendly and to understand other people
- we will demonstrate that we have high expectations of them and that we believe in them ~ every child is unique, worthwhile and has their own unique strengths, such as kindness, curiosity and /or perseverance.
- we will help children focus on their strengths

Cultivating a sense of purpose

‘Deep down in every human heart is a hidden longing, impulse, and ambition to do something fine and enduring’ - Grenville Kieser

What do we mean by a sense of purpose?

A purpose is a desire to achieve something that is important, as well as a desire to make a difference in the world. Making a difference in the world can be a simple thing that positively affects someone’s life.

What we intend to do to cultivate a sense of purpose

- we will recognise children’s own unique strengths (strengths such as kindness, acceptance of others, being courageous...and use these strengths to help others);
- we will reflect on what children enjoy doing and what they are good at, what makes them feel good and who they admire;
- we will help children see they have a multiple roles in life and each of these roles has an important purpose;
- we will help children achieve their goals.

“With great respect and hearty affection all turn to the Principal. The little five year old children cling to his knees, while his friends and colleagues hear and honour his advice, with the confidence which his insight and his experience and his indefatigable zeal for the good of the whole, deserve (Hanschumann writing of Froebel, 1875:136, in Liebschner, 1991: 8).