

Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



Appendix 1

GUIDANCE ON MANAGING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

It can be difficult to differentiate between discipline and punishment. It is important to understand these terms in order to appreciate that when a child is disciplined, this is in fact a positive measure. It is imposed to give guidance to a child and help him/her to achieve control and remain safe.

WHY CHILDREN NEED DISCIPLINE

Discipline is important so as to:

- Protect children e.g. removing a child from a broken window while providing an explanation.
- Support children to get along with others e.g. a child reminds another child of a group rule that helps both avoid conflict.
- Enable a child to understand limits e.g. a child learns to take their turn during an activity as the group has set rules for how to behave.

DISCIPLINE V PUNISHMENT

Discipline is not the same as punishment. Instead of using punishment to correct behaviour, children and young people need to learn what behaviour is allowed and why. Group leaders should stress DO's rather than DON'Ts. An example of positive discipline would be telling a child

"Please hang your coat up as someone might trip over it"

rather than

"Don't throw your coat on the floor"

SAMPLE DISCIPLINE CODE

- Set limits but be careful not to impose too many rules. Before making a rule ask yourself: Is it necessary? Does the rule protect a child's health and safety? Does it protect the rights or property of others? Too many rules are hard, if not impossible, to enforce.
- Keep rules simple and understandable.
- Involving children as much as possible in devising a written code of conduct for their behaviour. This will make the rules clear and easily understood and children are less likely to break rules that they have helped establish.
- Explain the rules to children and what may happen when they are broken. Be flexible. Some rules may work when a child is young, but as children get older, they need and want more independence. Remember, not all children respond in the same way.
- Act quickly when a child misbehaves. Do not let a problem build up over time.
- Be consistent. Agree with other leaders on sanctions.
- Praise a child for good behaviour and accomplishments. Let a child know you appreciate his or her efforts.
- Avoid power struggles with children – discipline is not a game in which there is a winner and a loser. Leaders expect co-operation from children and children expect adults to be fair.
- Offer positive suggestions and avoid criticism. Criticism can cause a child to become resentful or angry and develop low self-esteem.
- Encourage and promote independence and responsibility.
- Always reject the behaviour and not the child or young person.

SANCTIONS

KEY PRINCIPLES

- Sanctions must be the final resort – after instruction and problem solving. **Under no circumstances is physical chastisement acceptable.**
- The sanction must be clear and the reason for it explained without recrimination.

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1. NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

Many times, children learn as a result of natural consequences; e.g. arriving late may mean that they have limited choice about their role in any planned activity within the event.

2. REDIRECTION

Suggest an alternative activity or setting when a situation is about to get out of hand.

3. LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of behaviour should relate somehow to the behaviour, e.g. tidying up from one activity before commencing another.

4. TIME-OUT

The child is removed from the activity. NB When time-out is used, do so because the child needs it and not because you are angry. Also be sure the length of time is appropriate and is made clear to the child.

- The sanctions to be utilised by group leaders within the event/activity should be explored and agreed prior to the event/activity taking place.
- The sanction must be proportionate to the misbehaviour and only be about the issue in hand. Do not bring previous incidents to confuse the issue.
- The sanction must be for a short period of time rather than for several hours or weeks.
- The sanction needs to be backed up by learning so they are helped to abide by group rules in the future. No sanction is an end in itself.

