

## Communicating with children policy

It is expected that all staff members who work at Victoria Road Montessori will develop, use and reinforce the following key skills:

- Always use eye contact with children when you are speaking to them
- Always aim to get down to the child's level before you start talking. Eye contact is easier when you are at child height!
- Always use eye contact with staff members working in the same room. Eye contact is the first point of communication. You are not communicating with another human without eye contact. Communication is a two way process with a speaker and a listener; ensure you have engaged your 'listener'!
- Be aware of personal body language and the impression that it gives the children. Crossing your arms makes you unapproachable and cuts you off from spontaneous interactions with the children.
- Move towards the child or any other person when communicating with them. Remember to respect the other person and child and move so that your communications occur directly between you, not across the room or a table!
- Use your words to guide the children's actions, rather than automatically offering your hand for them to be guided physically. The children in your care are independent beings and it is our responsibility to promote this: "we are going to the bathroom together", "we are going to the garden together". Use the word *together* to emphasise a joint action; this helps the child when moving from one thing to another.
- If there is ever a need to alter an activity for a group of children (for example, from the work cycle to stories or outside play), engage all the staff in this period so that all the children are spoken to individually and told what is happening, expectations are set, and children praised for achieving: "We are going out to play now. When you have finished your work, please put it back on the shelf, and then you can join us. We are putting on our coats first. Thank you for joining us." This ensures that the calm atmosphere remains with no raised adults' voices

### Notes to consider:

"Bobby these are bricks. These are your bricks. If you would like to play with the bricks, we play with them on this mat. This is where we play with the bricks. Thank you for playing with your bricks on your mat". It will be necessary to repeat sentences like this many times initially.

Ideas expressed in the negative often have the opposite effect to the one intended. You say “don’t draw on the table” but the child may hear “draw on the table”. They may also experience feelings of doubt and insecurity or be afraid to take risks. It is better to use our words to direct the child positively: “When we draw, we keep the pencil on the paper”; “We play gently with our friends when we are at school” or “This is how I play gently; you show me how you play gently with your friend”, “When we are at school, we use our hands when we play with the bricks”

Use sentences with the 'consequence' element left out altogether: “If you would like to climb, can I ask you do go slowly, and then you will be safe.”; “To be safe walking along the wall you need to go slowly”. Sentences like these guide the child as to your expectation and empower them, suggesting to them that they can indeed perform this action. Then you praise them: “Thank you for keeping your feet on the pavement. That's exactly how we walk down the road and stay safe”

These simple sentence structures can be used in myriad circumstances. When carrying scissors: “When we carry scissors we hold them like this and then we are safe”; “Can you show me how you hold the scissors like me?”; “That's exactly how we hold our scissors”; “Thank you for holding your scissors so beautifully.”