Dear Parents/Carers,

There is rarely a clear answer as to why a child's behaviour changes or becomes more challenging to those around them, and it's unlikely that we can advise you on a way stop this fully. What we can do is to refer to tried and tested principles to support your child and hopefully reduce the frequency of outbursts or flare ups of unwanted behaviour.

Firstly, be kind to yourself!

You may have set yourself high standards initially in terms of planning activities and things for your family to do. This is brilliant, but even the best practitioners have days where things don't go as planned. So, when this happens at home, go with it and find something different and more achievable to do (even if that is reverting to the television or tablet, that's OK!)

A) **Focus on the positive.** Catch your child when they are doing something nice or kind - notice it, and be specific with your comments. Spend more time connecting than on correcting. Be sure your child knows you love them even though you don't always like their behaviour. Separate the deed from the doer. "I like/love you, but I don't like how you are behaving".

B) **State the rules.** All children need and want boundaries and limits. Try to state your rules in positive terms. Tell them what you want them to do rather than what you don't want them to do. For example, say "Use your walking feet" instead of "No running!" Keep rules short and to the point, for example "Hands to yourself or "use your spoon". Have a few, reasonable rules and be consistent using and enforcing them. Comment when your children are following them.

C) **Make your world predictable.** Set your child up for success and keep the same basic routines every day. Home learning (if appropriate), TV, play, baths and meals can all be on a similar daily schedule so that your child gets used to a certain rhythm. Prepare your child for transitions. It can be hard to stop a

fun play activity to go somewhere so give a 5 minute heads up. (The Traffic Light System or a countdown might help with this – see strategies)

D) **Keep routines in place.** Setting and sticking to a regular schedule is important, even when at home all day. Consistency and structure are calming during times of stress. Young children, benefit from knowing what's going to happen next or soon. A schedule can mimic a setting schedule, changing activities at predictable intervals, and alternating periods of adult led activities and child led play.

E) **Encourage positive behaviour and ignore negative behaviour** (to the extent that you can safely!) If a child receives lots of attention for positive behaviour, that behaviour will continue. The same is true for negative behaviour. If there is no audience, the show will stop...eventually. Be firm and consistent with this and it will pay off.

It may help to print out or draw a schedule and go over it as a family each morning. Setting a timer will help young people know when activities are about to begin or end. Having regular reminders will help head off meltdowns when it's time to transition from one thing to the next.

Things to Avoid:

- Don't assume young children know what is expected of them-spell it out! When a child is unsure of what they are supposed to be doing, they're more likely to misbehave.

- Calling things out from a distance: Be sure to tell young child important instructions face-to-face. Things yelled from a distance are less likely to be remembered and understood.

- Transitions can be hard for our young children, especially in the middle of something they are enjoying. Having a warning gives them the chance to find a good stopping place for an activity and makes the transition less fraught.

- Asking rapid-fire questions, or giving a series of instructions: delivering a series of questions or instructions at a child limits the likelihood that they will hear, answer questions, remember the tasks, and/or do what they've been asked to do.