



Interactions with Children Policy

Policy first issued 10th August 2016
 Current review date 8th September 2023
 Personnel responsible Childcare Operations

NQS 5 Relationships with Children

NQS

QA 5	5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
	5.1.2	The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained.
	5.2.1	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other
	5.2.2	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

National Regulations

Regs	155	Interactions with children
	156	Relationships in groups

EYLF

LO 1	Children feel safe, secure and supported.
	Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency.
	Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities
	Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect
LO 2	Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation.
	Children respond to diversity with respect.
	Children become aware of fairness.
	Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

Aim

Our Centre aims to ensure that all educators form positive relationships with children that make them feel safe and supported in the Centre. Educators will encourage positive relationships between children and their peers as well as with educators and volunteers at the Centre.

Related Policies

Additional Needs Policy
 Continuity of Education and Care Policy
 Enrolment and Orientation Policy
 Physical Activity Promotion Policy

Implementation

Interactions with Children

Our Centre's Declaration of Intent will guide our interactions with children as follows:

In order to maintain positive interactions with children our Centre and educators will maintain the following:

- Our Centre will provide a relaxed and happy atmosphere for the children.
- Our Centre will ensure mealtimes are relaxed and unhurried and educators take the time to sit and talk with children.

- Our educators will encourage children to initiate conversations about their experiences inside and outside the Centre as well as what is happening around them, express their ideas and feelings, share humour with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, coordinators and staff members and seek assistance as they take on new challenges and try to do things for themselves.
- Our educators and staff will respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and engage them in sustained conversations about their interests in a positive manner.
- Our educators will talk with children in a two-sided manner. That is, encourage children to have their own opinions, ideas and comments. Educators should support children with this and let them know that their ideas are valued.
- Our Centre will have in place predictable personal-care routines that are enjoyable experiences for babies and toddlers and will respond to babies and toddlers when they practise their verbal communication skills.
- Our routines, as well as planned and spontaneous experiences will be organised to maximise opportunity for meaningful conversations between children and educators and the Centre will ensure that all children have equal opportunity to engage in one to one and small group conversations with educators.
- Our educators will be knowledgeable in the communication strategies and non-verbal cues of babies and toddlers and staffing and grouping arrangements within the Centre will support the development of trusting relationships between educators, babies and toddlers to allow them to feel secure in the Centre.
- Our Declaration of Intent and policy on interactions with children will be visible.
- Our educators will participate in children's play using children's cues to guide their level and type of involvement while always maintaining a positive approach when responding to children and offering assistance.
- Our educators will model reasoning, prediction and reflection processes and language.
- Our educators will collaborate with children about routines and experiences.
- Our educators will use techniques such as sign language and other resources and tools to support children with additional needs.
- Our educators will engage in give and take communication by adding to interactions initiated by babies and toddlers by describing objects and talking about routine activities with babies and toddlers.
- Our educators will use their interactions with children to support the maintenance of home languages and learning English as an additional language.
- Our educators and coordinators will use information from their observations of interactions with children to extend the children's thinking and learning.
- Our educators will also support children to build secure attachments with one and then many educators and use a favourite toy or comfort item to help them feel secure in the Centre. Most toddlers suffer a form of separation anxiety when away from their families. Educators need to reassure the toddler and work with the toddler's family in order to make the child feel safe and happy at the Centre.
- Our Centre will ensure that there are many opportunities for babies and toddlers to experience relaxed physical contact and close interactions with familiar educators.
- Our Nominated Supervisor, educators and coordinators will learn more about the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families using the Centre.
- Our educators will frequently talk with families to get an idea of the non-verbal forms of communication used by their children in order to convey messages such as hunger, needing the toilet, tiredness and emotions.
- Our educators will allow time to talk to parents about their children. This allows educators to gain insight into their home life.
- Our Centre will implement strategies to assist all children to develop a sense of belonging and confidence through positive interactions between the children and educators.
- Our Centre's roster will be planned in a way that promotes continuity for children.
- Our Centre will gather information from families in the enrolment form in order to be able to provide support for children during the settling in process.

- When children have special needs our Centre will consult with other professionals or support agencies that work with children to gather information that will guide our interactions with these children. This information will be recorded in the child's file. Plans and strategies will be developed, communicated and implemented by all educators involved in caring for and educating the child.
- Our Centre's approach to equity and inclusion will be documented in our Declaration of Intent.
- Our Centre will ensure that educators document the knowledge gained about children, through their interactions, in the child's electronic file for reference for other educators and will continually review the experiences that are planned for children in light of this information.
- Educators will support the dignity of each child ensuring that they are clean, suitably dressed and comfortable at all times.

Group Relationships

In order to encourage respectful and positive relationships between children and their peers and educators our Centre will adhere to the following practices:

- Our Centre will encourage children to participate in enjoyable interactions with their peers, respond positively to ideas, negotiate roles and relationships, contribute to shared play, and develop friendships.
- Our educators will engage children in ongoing group projects that involve research, planning, problem solving and shared decision making.
- Our educators will model strategies for children to initiate interactions and participate in group play and social activities and assist them when they have trouble understanding or communicating with each other.
- Our Centre will ensure that the children have many opportunities for peer scaffolding.
- Our educators will promote a sense of community in the Centre.
- Our Centre will coordinate the staffing and grouping arrangements to support positive relationships between children.
- Our educators will support and promote children's interpersonal relationships and support the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and capabilities in group play, projects and experiences.
- Our educators will learn about children's shared interests and will use this information to plan further experiences that provide collaborative learning opportunities.
- Our educators will pre-empt potential conflicts or challenging behaviours by monitoring children's play and supporting interactions where there is conflict.
- Our Centre will ensure that the program and routines of the Centre will include regular opportunities for children to engage in social play and group experiences.
- Our Centre will ensure that food is being used appropriately and not as a reward or punishment.
- Our Centre will ensure that corporal punishment is not used as part of behaviour guidance or any other aspect of our interactions with children. Corporal punishment is never to be used in our Centre.

Behaviour Guidance

Positive Behaviour

Educators, staff and volunteers will model positive behaviour and guide children's behaviour in ways that promote their self esteem by:

- Encouraging children to be cooperative and helpful, to express their feelings and responses to others' behaviour confidently and constructively, and to respectfully guide the behaviour of other children when it is disrespectful or unfair.
- Supporting children to explore different identities and points of view, to negotiate their rights and the rights of others in a positive, respectful way and to communicate effectively when resolving disagreements.
- Discussing emotions and issues of inclusion and exclusion, fairness and bias and prejudice, also the consequences of their actions and the reasons for this as well as the appropriate rules.
- Encouraging children to listen to other children's ideas, consider alternate behaviour and co-operate to solve problems.

- Using positive language, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them, and remaining calm, gentle, patient and reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration or anger.
- Using their knowledge of children's personalities and friendships to help them manage their own behaviour and develop empathy.
- Using information from families about their children's social skills and relationship preferences to engage children in experiences that support their social development.
- Speaking in comforting tones and holding babies to soothe them when they are distressed, and responding positively to babies' and toddlers' exploratory behaviour.
- Intervening sensitively when children have difficulty resolving a disagreement, and helping them remove themselves from situations where they are experiencing frustration, anger or fear.
- Interacting with children and teaching them how to play in different ways: movement play, object play (understanding and solving problems), imaginative play (emotional resilience, creativity and empathy), social play (friendship and belonging, rough and tumble play, celebrations and ritual play), storytelling (my world, myself and where I fit in), creative play (new behaviours and thoughts), role play.
- Promoting children's agency by allowing them to be as independent as possible, to try things they see for themselves and experience the consequences of their choices while considering the risk and benefit to others. This may include teaching children how to use things.
- Ensuring curriculum is mainly based on children's ideas and interests rather than being led by educators.
- Setting up rooms and environments to foster positive behaviour e.g. room is interesting by not cluttered, defined and obstacle free walkways, resources are attractively displayed. The environment may include mirrors to help children focus and provide interest, contains photos of where resources belong.
- Ensuring activities are of interest to children e.g. are visual, smelly, have patterns.
- Supporting children with strategies to deal with their raw emotions e.g. anger, fear, panic and being patient when children revert to old behaviour if they are stressed, tired, hungry etc. This includes listening empathetically to children when they express their emotions and reassuring them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions.
- Ensuring children's basic needs are met e.g. they aren't hungry, thirsty or tired.
- Supporting children who appear to be insecurely attached by sensitively building relationships with the child and family.
- Allowing children to have uninterrupted play where they can continue their engagement in learning as they explore and improvise (one of the ideas behind progressive morning teas), and not interrupting a child who is actively engaged in an activity, or forcing a child to share when they are engaged with a resource. Simple strategies may be reducing unnecessary transitions or introducing progressive morning snack or mealtimes.
- Providing explicit instruction for routines and learning.
- Understanding that children's comprehension of vocabulary concepts or instructions may require support such as visuals, key work signing, two step instructions or allowing time for a child to process the instruction or information. This may be as simple as waiting three seconds after speaking to the child so they can process what has been said.
- Understanding that children may not be able to interpret or understand some words. For example, 'sharing' may not be understood as taking turns.

Inappropriate Behaviour

Educators and staff understand that inappropriate behaviour is a child's way of saying they need support. Educators will reflect on the reasons for the child's behaviour and develop strategies or a plan with the Nominated Supervisor which can be implemented by all educators to ensure consistent response to the child's behaviour at the Centre.

Children's behaviour may be inappropriate for a variety of reasons. Some of these include:

- Insecure attachment to educators or families.
- Emotional immaturity.
- Insufficient language skills to express their needs and wishes.
- Used to gaining attention from negative behaviour.
- Condition or number of toys, resources and equipment.
- A diagnosed or undiagnosed spectrum disorder.

Depending on the reason for the behaviour, some strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour may include:

- Ignoring the negative behaviour and praising the positive behaviour (while ensuring the safety of all children), and ensuring all body language is consistent with actions and words.
- Building strong social bonds through a focus on attachment theory and Circle of Security approaches.
- Using key words with signing and objects or visuals to help children with communication difficulties.
- Using minimal steps in directions then allowing time for a child to understand e.g. 3-5 seconds.
- Using terminology that children understand such as 'my turn', 'your turn', rather than assuming children understand e.g. children may not understand what it means to 'share' or that saying 'sorry' does not mean they can repeat the behaviour.
- Allowing children to develop their reasoning and emotional knowledge by helping them to reflect on their actions e.g. 'Tommy, what are you doing?', 'I saw you...', 'what were you about to do with...?'
- Not telling a child to do something but asking the child a question e.g. 'what do we have to do so we can have lunch', rather than 'pack up'.
- Talking with children about the consequences of their actions, our rules and why we have them.
- Adjusting the menu and the time that certain foods like fruit which are high in natural sugar are provided.
- Providing sufficient opportunities for exercise including running which can calm anxious or agitated children through the production of certain brain chemicals.
- Intentionally teaching behaviours like walking inside, never assuming children know how to do things or behave, and reaffirming those and other positive behaviours.
- Using empathy and putting themselves in the child's position to try and understand where the behaviour came from (rather than yelling at the end result of the behaviour).
- Documenting incidences of inappropriate behaviour and when they are occurring and developing a behaviour plan with parents and if relevant other professionals.
- Appointing one person (e.g. Nominated Supervisor) as a contact point for parents.

Educators will not isolate, intimidate or subject children to corporal punishment to guide behaviour. Parents will:

- Work in partnership with educators where concerns are raised about the behaviour of their child.
- Consent in writing where educators believe liaising with relevant professionals to support the learning and development of their child and apply for funding to do this where necessary.
- Agree to work with educators to minimise risk where the child's behaviour is a danger to children and educators. This may include seeking professional support from, for example a paediatrician, speech pathologist or family support services, or reducing the hours of care until the child's behaviour is supported and risk to others is minimised.

If parents do not comply with these requirements, the Nominated Supervisor may suspend or terminate the child's enrolment after providing two weeks' notice. The Nominated Supervisor may, however, suspend or terminate a child's enrolment without providing two weeks' notice if he or she believes the child's behaviour poses an unacceptable risk to the welfare and safety of other children and educators.

Our Centre will have in place strategies to enable the Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators and staff to encourage positive behaviour in children while minimising negative behaviour. We will also have strategies in place to involve children while minimising negative behaviour. We will also have strategies in place to involve children in developing behaviour limits and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

The following strategies will need to be put in place for the Nominated Supervisor and educators to manage situations when a child's behaviour is particularly challenging and when families have different expectations from the Centre in relation to guiding children's behaviour and where the Centre needs to use a different method of approach from the documented behaviour building and guidance strategies in this policy. These are as follows:

Developing a 'Behaviour Building and Guidance Strategy'

Step 1: Observe

Observe the child

- Triggers – where, who, when
- Behaviour type / Intensity
- Frequency – how often

Step 2: Analyse

Look for possible causes of behaviour

- **Emotional**
Environmental – role models all children and adults
 - Parenting / caregivers behaviour management style
 - Reinforcing behaviour
 - Environment not stimulating / too frustrating
 - Way the environment is setup
- **Social / Cultural**
Developmental – lack of social skills
 - Lack of understanding
 - Frustration – lack of language / English as a second language
 - Difficulty in achieving tasks with current development level

Step 3 – Discuss

Invite parents / guardians to a meeting to discuss:

- The ongoing behaviour displayed by the child, including highlighting improvements and celebrating successes.
- Their aspirations, as well as the Centre's aspirations, for the child.
- The child's individual characteristics, including interests, temperament, age and cultural background.
- Recommended strategies to support the child's development, and how these strategies will be reviewed and evaluated.
- Resources or changes to the environment / program that may be required for a behaviour guidance plan to be implemented e.g. changes to routines and transitions.
- The support already accessed by the family to assist with managing the child's behaviour.
- Other support available such as a Preschool Field Officer, referral for specialist assessment and additional adult support (written consent is required from parents / guardians before any intervention / assessment is undertaken).
- Any other matter that will assist with the development of a behaviour guidance plan.

Step 4 – Develop Strategy

- Identify ways of meeting needs
 - Emotional
 - Environmental
 - Developmental
- Establish long and short term goals with a few limits
- Do you require assistance and support from an external agency?

Step 5 – Consult

If appropriate, and with the permission of parents / guardians, consult with other support agencies or service providers who are already working with the child, to assist with the development of the strategy.

Step 6 – The Implementation Plan

- Implement the plan consistently
 - Praise appropriate behaviours constantly
 - Redirect before the incident occurs
 - Ignore small incidents
- Consequences – discuss consequences ‘if you continue to ...’, ‘then you will be unable to play with..’
 - Discuss consequences with children to assist in their learning process

Ongoing – Evaluation and Reflection

- Reflect on the strategy with educators, the family and Nominated Supervisor on a regular basis.
 - Is your strategy working – why / why not
 - Has the behaviour improved / become less frequent
- Does the strategy need to be implemented over a longer period?

Developing a ‘Managing within your capabilities plan’

We recognise that challenging behaviour of children varies and the educators often need to adjust their skills in order to manage the variety of behaviours by individuals. The Nominated Supervisor ensures that educators have the opportunity to engage in professional development to develop their skills and knowledge.

It is also recognised that managing children with challenging behaviours may place educators and children in the environment at risk of physical harm. To reduce risk and recognise an educators level of skill a ‘*Managing within your capabilities plan*’ will be devised in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor and leading educator.

This plan is developed based on the ‘*Behaviour Building and Guidance Strategy*’. This plan outlines the stages of the strategy and implementation and documents where each educator and the Centre Director is comfortable in managing within their skills and capabilities.

Where the child / family is not responsive to the ‘*Behaviour Building and Guidance Strategy*’ and the strategy has an adverse effect on the safety and wellbeing of children, educators in the care of the Centre will encourage the family to seek an alternative program that better suits the needs of the child and the family.

Bullying

Our educators will be aware of the following characteristics in children who bully -

- Children of all backgrounds can bully
- Preconceived notions of children who bully should be avoided
- The child who bullies may also be the victim of bullying
- The child who bullies will often think that they are innocent, and that the child being bullied is somehow deserving of this negative experience.
 - Recent research demonstrates that aggressive behaviour and bullying inclinations begin in some children as early as two years old, which highlights the importance of children’s services educators in effectively responding to children who bully.

Our educators will be aware of the following characteristics of victims of bullying -

- Children of all backgrounds can fall victim to bullying
- Preconceived notions of children who fall victim to bullying should be avoided
- Boys are victims of bullying more than girls.
- Victims may have low self-esteem, lack of confidence, lack social skills or be viewed as unpopular.
- It is important to remember that victims are often sensitive and easily hurt, and feel incapable of preventing such negative experiences.

Our educators will implement the following strategies to overcome bullying -

- Our educators will practise all-encompassing and socially inclusive care.
- Daily programs will recognise, value and reflect the social and cultural diversity of our community.
- Our educators will role model and actively encourage appropriate behaviours.
- Our educators will form a close relationship with family members in order to work cooperatively to overcome instances of bullying.
- Our educators will empower children by giving them responsibilities that will make them feel valued.
- Our educators will help children deal with their anger. This includes offering alternative dispute resolution techniques that are socially acceptable.
- Our educators will seek the support of children's services professionals when it is necessary.
- Our educators will respond promptly to children's aggressive or bullying behaviour.

Supporting Children through Difficult Situations

When a child, family, educator or the Centre as a whole experiences a stressful or traumatic situation such as a bushfire, car accident, sudden illness or death, crime or violent situation it is important to provide appropriate support so they can recover from the ordeal. A child's reaction to a stressful or traumatic situation will depend on factors such as their age, stage of development and impact of the event on individuals around them. A child may react in ways that you don't expect and sometimes will act normally at first but be wary of a delayed reaction.

Some reactions include:

- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches.
- Being anxious or clingy.
- Suffering from separation anxiety.
- Having sleeping problems or nightmares.
- Re-living the experience through drawing or play.
- Losing interest in activities.
- Loss of self-confidence.
- Regressing to 'babyish' activities.

Our educators will talk with a child about the event to bring any issues out into the open. The ways our educators will approach this are:

- Reassuring the child that they are safe, but only if they really are.
- Talking to the child about what happened in a way that they will understand and without going into frightening or graphic detail. Our educators will not leave out important information though, as children will fill in the gaps.
- Ensuring the child hasn't jumped to conclusions. Some children will think they are to blame in a tragic event; our educators will make sure they know this isn't so.
- Talking about the event with appropriate individuals (for example, all children if the event has affected the whole service or the children that have been affected) and letting everyone have their say including children.
- Talking to the children about how individuals react to stressful or traumatic situations and that the feelings they are feeling are normal.

Coping Mechanisms

Some strategies that our educators will use to help children cope in these situations are:

- Giving children a sense of control of their environment and life. Letting the child make minor decisions, such as what to eat for lunch, what to wear or what toy to play with will make the child feel more in control.
- Allowing the children plenty of time to play and to do physical exercise; this will help the child burn off stress chemicals and allow for more sleep.
- Helping the children physically relax with story times and cuddles.
- Limiting stimulants like chocolate, lollies etc.

It is important to remember how you respond to the stressful or traumatic event will affect the child's response. Children look to their families and educators to find ways to deal with a situation they probably don't understand. Children need their family members (and other adults who are close to them) to help them understand the situation and their emotions and also offer comfort and support. If adults are distressed about a situation it is important for them to seek help for themselves.

At the Centre, we wish to help in whatever way we can if your family has undergone a tragedy. Talk to educators (or confidentially to the Nominated Supervisor) and we will endeavour to work with families and children to support all parties through the situation.

Should it be required, educators will liaise with appropriate authorities, such as the Department of Education and Training and Children's Services, and follow any recommendations made by these authorities.

Mental health and well-being information is provided to families and the wider community, such as information about local support services and resources about social and emotional learning.

Building Skills for Peace Building

We aim to create an environment that establishes more peaceful ways of living in our Centre and wider community, which develops skills for finding solutions to life's problems and develops individual resiliency. We believe that respect for people, self and property is paramount.

Our educators will implement the following strategies to build skills for peace building:

- Our educators will practise all-encompassing and socially inclusive care.
- Daily programs will recognise, value and reflect the social and cultural diversity of our community.
- Our educators will role model and actively encourage appropriate behaviours.
- Our educators will form a close relationship with family members in order to work cooperatively to overcome instances where children require social assistance.
- Our educators will empower children by giving them responsibilities that will make them feel valued.
- Our educators will help children deal with their anger. This includes offering alternative dispute resolution techniques that are socially acceptable.
- Our educators will seek the support of children's services professionals when necessary.
- Our educators will respond appropriately and promptly to children's behaviour.

Sources

National Quality Standard

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Early Years Learning Framework

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually. The review will be conducted by:

- Management
- Employees
- Families
- Interested Parties

Last reviewed: 8.09.2023

Date for next review: July 2024