



5.1 Interactions with Children and Managing Difficult Behaviour Policy

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Aims

The importance of developing positive relationships with children is reflected in Quality Area 5 of the National Quality Standard. Research shows that when children experience caring, responsive relationships early in life, they are more likely to feel a sense of security, well-being and belonging. When children feel safe, secure and supported they are then free to explore, play and learn, resulting in better outcomes throughout their life.

When staff have a positive relationship with each child in their care, it also provides a solid foundation from which to guide and support children as they develop the self-confidence and skills to independently regulate their own emotions and behaviours, and relate positively and effectively with others. Whilst it is acknowledged that children's abilities to connect with others and build relationships vary greatly, it is beneficial for all children to be offered opportunities to learn how to interact with others warmly, respectfully and appropriately.

To this end the centre's aims in respect of this policy are:

1. To provide a safe, caring and stimulating environment in which staff interactions with children are positive, genuinely caring and conducive to their healthy sense of self.
2. To acknowledge and respect each child's family and cultural background, and collaborate with and support parents regarding issues relating to the topic of this policy (See also the centre's 'Parent and Community Collaboration Policy')
3. To support children in forming and maintaining positive relationships with others, wherein differences are accepted and respected and a culture of fairness and equity is fostered. (see also the centre's 'Anti-bias and equity policy')
4. To support children as they learn to regulate their own emotions and behaviours and effectively communicate in relation to these.

Legislative Requirements

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Children (Education and Care National Law Application) Act 2010

Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

Who Is Affected By This Policy?

Children

Staff

Families

Management

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Relevant Early Childhood Professional Standards

Early Childhood Code of Ethics:	I-1 to I-10, II-1 to II-10, III-1 to III-5, VI, VII-3
Early Years Learning Framework:	Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 3.1, 5.1, 5.3, Principles:1-4
Education & Care Services Australian National Regulations:	155, 156, 168(2,j)
National Quality Framework:	Quality areas: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 2.1.1, 3.2.14.1.1, 4.2.2, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.2, 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.2.2, 7.1.3,

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Procedures

Staff interactions with children

1. Educators will develop warm, positive relationships with each child and their family on a continuing basis.
2. When speaking to a child educators will, where practicable, first get down to the child's eye level.
3. Educators will speak to children in a calm, quiet voice and use language appropriate to each child's stage of development.
4. Educators will give specific and descriptive encouragement for children's skills, behaviours and activities, eg "I like the way you are waiting patiently for your turn to talk" rather than "Well done".
5. When giving instructions, educators will give clear and specific instructions.
6. Educators will use positive phrasing when redirecting children, eg "Please walk inside", rather than "Don't run inside".
7. Educators will do their best to understand children's communications, both verbal and non-verbal, and respond genuinely and respectfully. Educators will collaborate with parents regarding any ongoing difficulties with understanding children's speech, referring to specialists where necessary.
8. Educators will make every effort to ensure that specific considerations and adaptations are made where necessary in order for every child to be able to participate fully in the curriculum.
9. Educators will be afforded the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge relevant to any child's specific additional needs, in order to be able to support that child in accessing the preschool program.
10. Where addressing the child's (and/or their family's) additional needs exceeds the expertise of educators, specialist support will be sought from the range of human service organisations available.

Preventing difficult behaviours

11. Educators will continuously observe children's play so as to be able to pre-empt any likely disruptive behaviour and take early action so that it does not erupt.
12. Those times which children can find most emotionally challenging, such as when they are separating from family or transitioning between activities, will be planned and considered to reduce anxiety and stress as much as possible.

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13. The learning environment will be attractively set up prior to children's arrival so that children are immediately motivated to use the materials/equipment and become meaningfully engaged upon arrival.
14. The learning environment will be set up so as to avoid overcrowding, obstruction of door areas and pathways etc which can trigger impulsive behaviour.
15. The program will offer a varied pace of focus and interaction and may be changed or modified throughout the day in relation to the group's needs, as decided by the educator.
16. The program will offer relaxing and enjoyable social play experiences for children as well as quieter opportunities where children can play individually or in pairs if they choose to.
17. The director will ensure that the centre's program:
 - is a stimulating and engaging one that encourages children to remain focused and actively involved in exploratory learning.
 - with the Committee of Management's financial help, provides a range of good quality materials and equipment, including duplicates of materials where needed.
 - provides learning experiences that foster constructive and positive social interactions in a variety of ways that are supported and scaffolded by staff e.g. one to one or paired play experiences, small group play and sometimes whole group experiences.

Managing difficult behaviours

18. When managing difficult behaviour the director will ensure that while needing to be firm, all staff will nevertheless treat children respectfully and with dignity.
19. Staff members will not humiliate, reject or insult children, or use any other intimidating or bullying forms of harassment to stop behaviour.
20. When a child is experiencing strong emotions, educators will:
 - respond patiently and calmly in a way that respects that child's feelings, whether positive or negative
 - acknowledge the feeling as appropriate
 - assist the child to self-regulate by helping them to label their feelings
 - provide support to, and work with the child to find a way of dealing with these feelings in appropriate ways, eg. taking themselves away from the group to have some quiet time.
21. Where educators have identified a child with ongoing behaviours of concern including both challenging and withdrawing behaviours, they will be guided in their response by the six-step procedure which follows this policy (Appendix A). All resources needed to support this procedure are contained in the folder labelled 'Supporting Children's Needs' which is kept in the director's office.
22. When managing difficult behaviour, the educators will work closely with parents in developing strategies and goals for improving the child's behaviour at the centre.

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23. From time to time when deemed appropriate, the centre will host seminars run for families by outreach centres such as Mission Australia which can support them in understanding their child at their stage of development and by providing strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour. (See also the centre's 'Parent and Community Collaboration' policy).

Supporting children's self-regulation

24. Educators will ensure that quiet spaces are made available at all times for children to have some personal space and time away from others when needed.
25. Educators will program to support each child's emotional development both formally (re program planning) and informally (daily as children play, chat etc). This will involve helping children to recognise and talk about their own feelings and the feelings of others. This will be achieved by a variety of means e.g. conversation, picture books, puppets, children's drawings etc.
26. Educators will encourage and empower children to begin to take more responsibility for their own behaviour and its consequences by helping children to think through their actions and consider what is acceptable/unacceptable and why.

Fostering children's social competence

27. Staff will - at all times - model positive, constructive ways to communicate and interact with others by the ways in which they support and talk to each other, children and parents.
28. Educators will make it very clear to children that there are rules about how 'we treat one another at preschool.' This will be communicated both individually and as needed to the group as a whole, and will be both a part of new children's orientation to preschool, as well as an ongoing practice.
29. Educators will use positive reinforcement to reward and encourage positive interactions observed between children during play.
30. Educators will be aware that children's individual ability to connect with others and build relationships vary greatly. As such, they will observe how individual children approach and interact with others, and develop strategies to support children based on these.
31. In line with moral reasoning development at this age, staff will foster and consolidate children's basic understandings of what is right, fair and kind.
32. Educators will help children gain an understanding of how to assert their own rights in socially appropriate ways (e.g. Step 1: instead of hitting, get an adult to help, Step 2: Instead of getting an adult to help, use words - not actions, Step 3: Use the 'right' language, etc).
33. Educators will participate in ongoing professional development in such areas as interacting positively with children, supporting children's behaviour, inclusion and supporting the mental health of children, families and staff.

The director will ensure that this policy is maintained and implemented at all times.

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Does This Child Need Help.

Steps to help identify concerns

Step 1 – If you see a concern or behaviour that is happening over time:

- Discuss and share concerns with others (educators in the room or director, please always ensure confidentiality), this allows for different perspectives and makes others aware to observe.
- Consider EYLF milestones checklist, or other checklists such as Teacher observation, Social Sams or Preschool Point in Time.

Step 2 – Documenting the behaviour or concern

- Describe the behaviour or concern, document when it happens, time, what happened before and what happened after. Documenting over a period of time often emerges a pattern.
- To document you can use a behavioural chart or observation chart.

Step 3 – Hypothesis

- With your documentation and summary notes, make a hypothesis or summary statement. This will identify if the child has underlying factors, triggers and may assist with consequences, replacement skills or preventions
- Use a behaviour support plan or summary statement to create your hypothesis.

Step 4 – Speaking with the parents

- Ensure you are aware of possible reactions, some families may be in denial or shock. See reactions table
- Set a time with the family, be away from all other distractions (preferably in a room, sitting down.
- The best way to start of the conversation is to ask if they have any concerns, parents may be aware of the concern or behaviour. When necessary use the family interview guide or preference checklist.
- With your documentation, carefully explain concerns.
- Be prepared for the families reactions.
- Allow parents to consider what you have discussed , give them time
- Arrange another time to discuss it further.

Step 5 – Assisting with options

- Working together as a team Preschool to assist with behaviour or concern.
- Visuals, speech therapist, paediatrician, occupational therapist ect, See referrals

Step 6 – Higher learning needs

- Individual Learning Plan
- NDIS Plan and funding arrangements