



Background

"In the process of learning the complex life skills of cooperation, conflict resolution, acceptable expression of strong feelings, children, like all of us, make mistakes" (Gartrell, 1997).

However, young children are likely to make far more mistakes than adults because their abilities to think and reason are in the early stages of development, their life experience is limited and they have had little exchange with other children.

Educators can effectively help children to learn social skills by providing them with supportive physical and social environments to learn and practise their social skills. When children make a mistake, educators are best to treat the children with respect and empathy as they guide and encourage them to recognise, manage and learn from the mistake, and to express their emotions in positive, non-threatening and productive ways.

Policy statement

This Policy sets out the Service's expectations for educators' relationships with young children and to facilitate children's friendships with each other. It also details the approach to children who have difficulty relating to others and following guidelines that uphold the safety, dignity and rights of other children.

Strategies and practices

- The Service's wide variety of resources, materials and equipment meets the needs (e.g. age, development, culture) and interests of the children, and supports children's learning and harmonious play. Refer to the Service's *Educational Program Policy*.
- The educational program is based on the knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests of each child as communicated to educators by their parents, observed by educators and contributed to by the children. Refer to the Service's *Interactions with Families Policy*. In addition, children's learning and development are assessed as part of the programming cycle of planning, documentation and evaluation.
- The Service's expectation that educators relate to children in accordance with this Policy and the Service's *Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy* is emphasised during their induction.
- The Service's rosters ensure continuity of care so that the children are with educators who know them well and are interested in what they think, feel and do. Further, the educators promote the children's wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security by being responsive, warm, trusting and respectful.
- Educators consistently model positive social skills in their everyday interactions with other adults and children.

Relationships with Children

- The Service provides educators with professional development in relating with children and in positive behaviour guidance.
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- Being mindful of size and composition of groups when planning group times and other programmed activities.
- The Service is committed to working in partnerships with parents to best meet the education and care needs of their children. Refer to the Service's *Interactions with Families Policy*. The communication between home and the Service is especially important when children experience difficulty relating to others, and ensures that each party is aware of what is occurring in the child's day.
- The program has extended periods of uninterrupted play which accommodate child-initiated, educator-initiated and co-constructed activities. This blend provides children the opportunities to make choices, contribute their own ideas, thoughts and feelings – and to develop social competence. Children then know that they are valued, capable and competent.
- Routines are unhurried, largely social occasions. Refer to the Service's *Educational Program Policy*.
- Educators collaborate with the children to construct simple rules (expressed in a positive way), and discuss with them how these rules help everyone feel safe and secure.
- Educators intentionally teach children to play and to complete projects together, and to resolve social conflicts that arise from time to time.
- Educators encourage children's efforts, rather than praise the child.
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- Educators must look at the child holistically when dealing with the difficult behaviours. Being in constant communication with the family is integral to supporting the child between home and care.
- Educators intentionally teach children protective behaviours.
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- If educators, visitors or students are found to be harsh toward children, they will be given a warning or immediate termination (depending on severity).

When responding to children who have difficulty relating to others or following guidelines, educators:

- Take a positive approach to guiding children's behaviour. They accept children's behavioural mistakes as a natural part of acquiring social skills, and view any mistake as a teaching/learning opportunity – rather than as a distraction.
- Draw upon strategies that do not diminish the child in the eyes of others and, at the same time, do not negatively affect onlooking children. Strategies could include: redirection, reminders of the rules (without censure), suggesting alternatives, offering choices and encouraging children to think about how others might feel (empathy).
- Question aspects of the environment that might contribute to the behaviour
 - Is adequate and safe playing space available?
 - Do the resources, materials and equipment meet the children's needs?

Relationships with Children

- Can children choose freely from the resources, materials and equipment?
- Has sufficient personal play space been provided?
- Is a quiet play space available?
- Is an active play space available?
- Consider other influences on the child
 - Specific circumstances
 - Specific times of day
 - Developmental issues
 - Prior experiences, particularly those within their family.
- Adopt a problem-solving approach which involves the children in deciding what to do in the situation.

When managing children with recurrent difficulty relating to others or following guidelines, educators:

- Maintain written records of dates, times, circumstances and possible causes of the incidents.
- Discuss with the parents any concerns about their child's behaviour. Collaborate with them in constructing a behaviour guidance plan to help the child acquire the social skills necessary to play and learn happily with others. When practicable, have the child contribute to the plan.
- Refer parents to an external support agency, when appropriate, and work collaboratively with that agency to ensure a consistent approach.

Responsibilities of parents

- To inform the Service of any changes in their child's education and care needs.
- To contribute to the program.
- To provide the Service with up-to-date information on their child and on any external circumstances affecting the child.
- To collaborate with educators in establishing any behaviour guidance plan required.
- To seek professional help for their child when recommended by the Service.

Procedures and forms

- N/A

Links to other policies

- Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Educational Program
- Interactions with Families Policy
- Staffing Policy **Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011**

Regulation	155	Interactions with children
Regulation	156	Relationships in groups
Regulation	168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

Relationships with Children

Law	166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
Law	167	Office relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

NQS	QA1.1.1	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators
NQS	QA1.1.2	Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program
NQS	QA1.1.3	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning
NQS	QA1.2.2	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback
NQS	QA1.2.3	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world
NQS	QA1.3.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection
NQS	QA2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
NQS	QA2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
NQS	QA2.2.3	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
NQS	QA4.1.2	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service
NQS	QA5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included
NQS	QA5.1.2	The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained
NQS	QA5.2.1	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other
NQS	QA5.2.2	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts
NQS	QA6.1.1	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
NQS	QA6.1.2	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing
NQS	QA6.2.2	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program
NQS	QA7.1.1	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations
NQS	QA7.2.2	The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle

Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Gartrell, D. (1995). Misbehaviour or mistaken behaviour. *Young Children*. 50(5) 27-34
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018 (September 2020 Update): Section 4 – Operational Requirements <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Guide-to-the-NQF-September-2020.pdf>
- <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications/reporting>

Relationships with Children

Further reading and useful websites (Consistent with the approach of the National Quality Framework, the following references have prioritised efficacy and appropriateness to inform best practice, and legislative compliance over state or territory preferences.)

- Abbey, B. *Guiding Children's Behaviour*. https://www.childcarebydesign.com.au/uploads/aca-queensland-ee-spring-2014_bg.pdf acc
- ACECQA. *Inappropriate Discipline*. <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-06/inappropriate-discipline.pdf>
- ACECQA. *Supporting Children to Regulate Their Own Behaviour*. https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-01/QA5_Supporting_children_to_regulate_their_own_behaviour.pdf
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>
- Tebyani, V. (2009). *Guiding children's behaviour in child care*.
- http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/family-resources/factsheets/guiding_children's_behaviour.pdf
- Protective Behaviours Consultancy Group of NSW - <https://www.protective-behaviours.org.au/>
- Starting Blocks - <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/other-resources/factsheets/developing-childrens-positive-behaviour-in-child-care/>

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.	
2	6 September 2019	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
3	29 November 2020	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
4	30 December 2020	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	January 2024