



EDUCATIONAL & DEVELOPMENTAL: INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

(RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE)

PURPOSE

This policy provides clear guidelines for educators' interactions with children, building positive relationships, and supporting children's social and emotional development through positive behaviour guidance. We are committed to creating a nurturing, respectful and inclusive environment where every child feels valued, safe and supported to learn and develop.

Our service will:

- Foster warm, respectful and responsive relationships with each child
- Use positive behaviour guidance strategies that support children's self-regulation
- Respect and support children's agency and developing autonomy
- Maintain the dignity and rights of every child
- Never use inappropriate discipline or punishment
- Support children to develop social skills, resilience and emotional wellbeing
- Work in partnership with families to support each child's development

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All children enrolled at the service
- The approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators and staff
- Students on placement, volunteers and contractors
- All interactions between adults and children at the service
- All behaviour guidance approaches used at the service

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

This policy is based on the following legislation and standards:

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

- Section 166: Offence to use inappropriate discipline
- Section 167: Protection from harm and hazards

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

- Regulation 73: Educational program
- Regulation 155: Interactions with children
- Regulation 156: Relationships in groups
- Regulation 168: Education and care service must have policies and procedures

National Quality Standard

- Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children
- Standard 5.1: Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child



- Element 5.1.1: Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships
- Element 5.1.2: The dignity and rights of every child are maintained
- Standard 5.2: Each child is supported to build and maintain relationships
- Element 5.2.1: Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other
- Element 5.2.2: Children are supported to manage their own behaviour and respond appropriately
- Element 5.2.3: The importance of friendships is recognised and supported

Other Relevant Legislation:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
- Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)

KEY DEFINITIONS

Interactions: All communications, contact and engagements between educators and children.

Positive Behaviour Guidance: Strategies that support children to understand expectations, develop self-regulation, and make positive choices without the use of punishment.

Inappropriate Discipline (Section 166): Any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances, including physical punishment, humiliation, or emotional harm.

Agency: A child's capacity to make choices, express preferences, and have influence over their world.

Self-Regulation: The ability to manage emotions, behaviour and attention in accordance with the situation and social expectations.

Challenging Behaviour: Behaviour that interferes with children's learning, development and success at play, is harmful to the child, others or property, or puts the child at risk.

PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES

Our Belief About Children:

We believe that:

- Children are capable, competent and full of potential
- All children have the right to be treated with respect and dignity
- Children learn best in nurturing, responsive relationships
- Children's behaviour communicates their needs, feelings and understanding
- All behaviour is a form of communication
- Children develop self-regulation through supportive guidance, not punishment
- Every child is unique and develops at their own pace
- Children thrive when they feel safe, valued and understood

Principles of Practice:

- Relationships are the foundation of learning and development



- Positive, respectful interactions support children's wellbeing
- Children learn through play and meaningful experiences
- Guidance should be positive, consistent and developmentally appropriate
- Children's voices and perspectives matter
- Families are partners in supporting children's development
- Cultural diversity is respected and celebrated
- Inclusive practices ensure all children belong and participate

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Building Positive Relationships with Children

Warm, Responsive Interactions:

Educators will:

- Greet each child warmly by name when they arrive
- Get down to children's eye level when communicating
- Use warm tone of voice and positive body language
- Show genuine interest in children's thoughts, feelings and ideas
- Listen actively and attentively to children
- Respond sensitively to children's emotional needs
- Provide comfort when children are distressed
- Celebrate children's achievements and efforts
- Acknowledge children's feelings and validate their experiences
- Use touch appropriately (e.g., holding hands, gentle pat on back) when comforting or supporting children

Getting to Know Each Child:

- Learn about each child's interests, strengths and preferences
- Understand each child's family, culture and background
- Recognise each child's unique personality and temperament
- Observe children to understand their developmental needs
- Build trusting relationships through consistent, predictable interactions
- Spend individual time with each child
- Show children they are valued members of the group

Respectful Communication:

- Use children's preferred names
- Speak to children with courtesy and respect
- Use age-appropriate language
- Avoid baby talk with older children
- Give children time to respond and express themselves
- Ask open-ended questions to extend children's thinking
- Acknowledge children's contributions and ideas
- Avoid interrupting children when they are speaking
- Model respectful communication in all interactions

Supporting Children's Agency:

- Offer children genuine choices within appropriate boundaries
- Encourage children to express their preferences
- Support children to make decisions about their play and learning



- Respect children's right to say no (where safe and appropriate)
- Involve children in decision-making processes
- Listen to and act on children's ideas and suggestions
- Support children to advocate for themselves

2. Interactions with Children (Regulation 155)

Every day interactions must be:

Warm and Responsive:

- Acknowledge and respond to children's verbal and non-verbal communication
- Show affection and warmth in culturally appropriate ways
- Be emotionally available and present with children
- Tune into children's cues and respond sensitively

Respectful:

- Treat every child with respect regardless of behaviour
- Respect children's privacy and dignity (especially during toileting, nappy changes, rest)
- Respect children's personal space and boundaries
- Respect children's individual differences, abilities and backgrounds
- Respect children's family structures, cultures and values

Supportive of Agency:

- Encourage children's independence and self-help skills
- Support children to do things for themselves
- Avoid doing things for children that they can do themselves
- Provide appropriate assistance when children need support
- Scaffold children's learning and development

Positive and Encouraging:

- Focus on what children CAN do, not what they can't
- Acknowledge children's efforts and persistence, not just outcomes
- Use descriptive praise that is specific and genuine
- Encourage children to try new things
- Support children to learn from mistakes
- Model positive attitudes and enthusiasm

Equitable and Inclusive:

- Ensure all children have equal opportunities to participate
- Adapt activities to include all children
- Challenge bias and stereotypes
- Celebrate diversity
- Support children with additional needs to fully participate
- Use inclusive language and resources

3. Relationships in Groups (Regulation 156)

Supporting Positive Peer Relationships:

Educators will:

- Model respectful, cooperative behaviour
- Support children to develop friendships



- Recognise the importance of friendships to children's wellbeing
- Create opportunities for children to play and learn together
- Support children to include others in their play
- Help children understand and appreciate differences
- Teach children to respect each other's ideas and preferences
- Support children to negotiate, share and take turns

Teaching Social Skills:

- Model and explicitly teach social skills (e.g., greeting, turn-taking, sharing)
- Support children to communicate their needs and feelings
- Teach children to recognise and name emotions
- Help children develop empathy and perspective-taking
- Support children to resolve conflicts peacefully
- Teach problem-solving strategies
- Encourage cooperation and collaboration
- Recognise and acknowledge prosocial behaviour

Managing Group Dynamics:

- Plan group sizes appropriate to activity and children's ages
- Ensure quieter spaces are available for children who need them
- Support children who find group situations challenging
- Facilitate group experiences that build sense of community
- Address exclusion and unkind behaviour promptly
- Support all children to feel valued members of the group

4. Positive Behaviour Guidance

Understanding Behaviour:

We recognise that:

- All behaviour is communication
- Children's behaviour tells us about their needs, feelings and development
- Challenging behaviour often indicates unmet needs
- Children are still learning to regulate emotions and behaviour
- Behaviour is influenced by developmental stage, temperament, environment, relationships and experiences
- Young children's brains are still developing capacity for self-control

Proactive Strategies - Creating the Environment for Success:

- Design environments that support positive behaviour
- Ensure adequate space, appropriate resources and engaging materials
- Establish predictable routines and clear expectations
- Give advance notice of transitions
- Ensure children's basic needs are met (food, rest, comfort)
- Provide appropriate level of stimulation (not too much, not too little)
- Offer choices to support children's autonomy
- Plan engaging, developmentally appropriate experiences
- Ensure educator-to-child ratios support quality interactions
- Recognise and respond to early signs of frustration or distress

Teaching Expected Behaviour:



- Explain and model expected behaviour
- State expectations positively (tell children what TO do, not just what NOT to do)
- Keep rules simple, clear and age-appropriate
- Explain the reasons behind expectations
- Teach and practice skills children need (e.g., asking for help, waiting, sharing)
- Use visual cues and reminders where helpful
- Recognise and acknowledge when children follow expectations

Responding to Behaviour:

When behaviour is positive:

- Acknowledge and describe what the child did: 'You waited patiently for your turn'
- Use specific, descriptive praise rather than general praise
- Focus on effort and process, not just outcomes
- Help children recognise their own achievements

When behaviour is challenging:

- Stay calm and regulate your own emotions
- Consider what the child might be trying to communicate
- Ensure immediate safety of all children
- Use brief, clear language to redirect: 'Blocks are for building. I can't let you throw them. You can throw the ball outside'
- Offer acceptable alternatives: 'If you're angry, you can stomp your feet, punch this cushion, or draw an angry picture'
- Validate the child's feelings while setting limits on behaviour: 'I can see you're frustrated. It's okay to feel angry, but I can't let you hurt others'
- Support the child to calm down before problem-solving
- Help the child understand the impact of their behaviour
- Work with the child to find solutions
- Follow up later to reinforce learning

Supporting Self-Regulation:

- Help children recognise their emotions: 'I notice you're feeling....'
- Teach calming strategies (deep breaths, counting, quiet space)
- Model self-regulation in your own behaviour
- Provide calming spaces children can access
- Give children tools to manage big emotions
- Acknowledge children's efforts to self-regulate
- Be patient - self-regulation is a developmental skill that takes time

5. Prohibited Practices (Section 166 - Inappropriate Discipline)

Under Section 166 of the National Law, it is an offence to use discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.

The following practices are NEVER acceptable and must NEVER be used:

Physical Punishment:

- Hitting, smacking, slapping, spanking
- Shaking, jerking or rough handling
- Pinching, pulling hair, ear or arm

- Forcing a child to sit, stand or remain in any position
- Any form of corporal punishment

Emotional or Psychological Punishment:

- Humiliation, ridicule or belittlement
- Shaming or embarrassing a child
- Yelling, shouting or speaking harshly
- Threatening or intimidating
- Comparing children negatively
- Using sarcasm or put-downs
- Blaming or criticising the child rather than the behaviour

Withdrawal of Basic Needs:

- Withholding food, drink or comfort
- Denying access to toilets
- Forcing children to eat
- Denying sleep or rest

Isolation or Exclusion as Punishment:

- Forcing a child to sit alone as punishment
- 'Time out' used as punishment or to isolate children
- Excluding children from activities as punishment
- Sending children away from the group as punishment
- Locking children in rooms or confined spaces

Other Inappropriate Practices:

- Ignoring a child for extended periods
- Labelling children negatively ('naughty', 'bad', 'difficult')
- Comparing children to siblings or peers
- Using consequences that are unrelated to the behaviour
- Forcing children to apologise without understanding
- Excessive or harsh consequences

Important Note:

Supporting a child to take space to calm down is different from isolation as punishment. If a child needs space to regulate:

- It should be child-led or offered as a choice, not forced
- The child should remain within sight and hearing of an educator
- The educator should stay calm, supportive and available
- The space should be calming and comfortable, not punitive
- The focus is on supporting the child to self-regulate, not punishing

6. Responding to Ongoing Challenging Behaviour

When a child's behaviour is consistently challenging:

- Observe and document the behaviour, including triggers, patterns and contexts
- Consider what the child might be communicating
- Reflect on whether the environment, expectations or program may be contributing
- Discuss observations and concerns with families
- Work with families to understand the child's needs



- Share strategies that work at home and at the service
- Develop a consistent approach between home and service
- Seek consent to consult with specialists if needed
- Develop an individual behaviour support plan if required
- Access professional support (early childhood teacher, inclusion support, behaviour specialist)
- Review and adjust strategies regularly
- Celebrate small improvements and progress

Behaviour Support Plans:

If an individual behaviour support plan is developed, it should include:

- Clear description of the behaviour of concern
- Analysis of triggers and patterns
- Strategies to prevent the behaviour
- Positive alternative behaviours to teach
- How to respond when the behaviour occurs
- Who will implement the plan
- How progress will be monitored
- Review date
- Input from families and specialists

When Behaviour Poses Safety Risk:

If a child's behaviour poses immediate risk to themselves or others:

- Ensure the immediate safety of all children
- Use minimum necessary intervention to keep children safe
- Stay calm and regulated
- Remove other children from the situation if needed
- Seek assistance from another educator
- Do not physically restrain a child unless absolutely necessary to prevent immediate harm
- If physical intervention is required, use minimum force necessary and for minimum time needed
- Document any incidents thoroughly
- Notify the nominated supervisor immediately
- Inform families
- Review and adjust behaviour support strategies
- Seek additional professional support

7. Partnerships with Families

Open Communication:

- Share information about children's experiences daily
- Discuss children's development, interests and friendships
- Communicate openly about behavioural concerns
- Listen to families' knowledge of their child
- Respect families' parenting approaches and values
- Work collaboratively to support consistency

Responding to Family Concerns:

- Take all concerns seriously



- Listen without being defensive
- Gather information and observe carefully
- Work together to find solutions
- Keep families informed of strategies and progress
- Adjust approaches based on family feedback

EDUCATOR AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Approved Provider / Nominated Supervisor:

- Ensure all staff understand and comply with this policy
- Ensure staff have appropriate training and support
- Model positive interactions and behaviour guidance
- Monitor compliance with Regulations 155 and 156
- Address any inappropriate practices immediately
- Support educators to implement positive strategies
- Provide resources and professional development
- Ensure behaviour support plans are implemented

All Educators and Staff:

- Build warm, respectful relationships with every child
- Use positive behaviour guidance strategies
- NEVER use inappropriate discipline or punishment
- Comply with Regulations 155 and 156 at all times
- Treat all children with dignity and respect
- Support children's social and emotional development
- Work collaboratively with families
- Seek support when needed
- Participate in professional development
- Reflect on their practice regularly

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Families are encouraged to:

- Share information about their child's interests, needs and development
- Communicate openly with educators
- Work in partnership with educators to support their child
- Discuss any concerns about their child's behaviour or experiences
- Support consistency between home and service where appropriate

Provide feedback on the effectiveness of strategies

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Educational Program and Practice Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy



- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- ACECQA: Guide to the National Quality Framework
 - ACECQA: Positive Behaviour Guidance Information Sheet
 - Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
 - Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
 - National Quality Standard
 - Early Childhood Australia: Code of Ethics
 - Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework
 - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): www.acecqa.gov.au
 - Early Childhood Australia: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
 - Raising Children Network: www.raisingchildren.net.au
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POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently if required due to:

- Legislative changes
- Changes in best practice
- Feedback from educators, families or children
- Following incidents or concerns
- Following regulatory assessment and rating
- Updates to the Early Years Learning Framework

Date policy was last reviewed: 11/01/2026

Date for next review: 11/01/2028

Reviewed by: Director and Staff