



# 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

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## 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

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## 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)
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### **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.

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### **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

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## **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

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## 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.cecqa.gov.au](http://www.cecqa.gov.au)
- Early Childhood Australia: [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)
- Raising Children Network: [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://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