

19. Interactions with Children



Introduction

Educators at our service will:

- Be inclusive
- Be responsive to children's strengths, interests, and abilities
- Provide opportunities to become self-reliant and develop self-esteem
- Uphold children's dignity, rights, and agency
- Provide positive guidance and support towards acceptable behaviour
- Promote a safe, secure and nurturing environment
- Be authentic and responsive
- Be based in fairness, acceptance and empathy with respect for cultural and linguistic rights

Purpose

To encourage warm nurturing relationships between children and educators that support and view children as strong, powerful, competent, complex and full of possibilities. When children have positive experiences of interactions they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of belonging.

Goals – What are we going to do?

A positive, inclusive atmosphere and the wellbeing of children within an education and care setting is promoted through attentive care and quality interactions with children. Emotional development and social relationships are enhanced through thoughtful and sophisticated approaches to conversation, discussion and promotion of children's language and communication. Children who experience relationships that are built on respect, fairness, cooperation and empathy are given the opportunity to develop these qualities themselves.

Strategies – How will it be done?

Children's Rights, Family and Cultural Values

Interactions within the setting are greatly enhanced when children's rights and family and cultural values are given due consideration and respect. Administrative procedures, initial conversations, documentation and ongoing communication with children and families are a reference point for interactions and a foundation for authentic and respectful communication.

Listening

Educators and staff must use listening as a foundation for interactions. Listening is based on observation and in leaving spaces in conversations and communication, suspending judgement and giving full attention to children as they communicate. Truly attending to children's communication promotes a strong culture of listening.

Children and Families

A culture of respectful interaction is promoted when children's attempts to communicate are valued. Turn taking and regulating children's conversations promotes active engagement. Respectful communication with families generates greater confidence in interacting.

Reflection and Consideration

Time is dedicated to reflecting upon interactions with children and their inclusion within the program. Reflections should consider how to spend extended periods engaged in interactions with children that comprise communication and listening as well as recognizing and removing barriers in the environment, practices, routines and transitions which limit inclusion.

Role Modelling

Educators model positive interactions when they show care, empathy and respect for children, educators and staff and families and learn and use effective communication strategies.

Principles for Guiding Behaviour

Educators and staff respect individual children's needs and differences in age, ability and experience regarding issues surrounding behaviour guidance and will discuss individual family expectations with parents. There may be times when staff will need to negotiate strategies with parents to suit the needs of individual children.

- Wherever possible, children, educators and staff will negotiate and determine boundaries and set guidelines.
- Guidelines will be set taking into account the age, development, cultural background and individual characteristics of the children.
- Guidelines will be consistently enforced and it is the behaviour that is praised or criticized, not the child.
- Educators and staff will present a good example through positive role modelling.
- Children are encouraged to make appropriate choices.

The Role of the Staff

In response to unacceptable behaviour, staff will:

- Redirect the child or remove the child from the situation if necessary.
- Advise children of the consequences of continuing with the behaviour.
- Remind children of desirable behaviour.
- Explain to children how behaviour results in consequences.
- Actively listen to children's feelings and discuss the guidelines.
- Help children to return to play.
- As well as look at the environment, resources, routine and teaching practices.

Roles and Responsibilities

Approved Provider will:

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations with regard to the delivery and collection of children at all times.

- Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development.
- Ensure the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators.
- Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor and all staff members at the centre who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances (National Law: Section 166). ACECQA Inappropriate discipline - Information Sheet attached to this policy.
- Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (Section 174(4), Regulation 176(2)(b)).
- Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Section 174(4), Regulation 176).

Nominated Supervisor/Educational Leader will:

- Guide professional development and practice to promote interactions with children that are positive, respectful and inclusive.
- Establish practice guidelines that ensure interactions with children are given priority and those interactions are authentic, just and inclusive and respect difference.
- Ensure all educators and staff are aware of the centre's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families.
- Consider the size and composition of groups to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the centre.
- Develop and implement educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, that are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child.
- Ensure that staff provide education and care to children in a way that encourages children to express themselves and their opinions and allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.
- Under section 166 of the Education and Care National Law, a staff member, nominated Supervisor and Approved Provider may receive a penalty for up to \$11400 (up to \$57400 in the case of Approved Provider) for subjecting a child to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances. ACECQA Inappropriate discipline - Information Sheet attached to this policy.

Educators will:

- Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- Acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration and alternative perspectives and social inclusion.

- Respect children's agency and encourage them to express themselves and their opinions.
- Maintain the dignity and the rights of each child at all times.
- Have regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for.
- Offer positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour.
- Ensure that routines such as toileting, nappy change and rest times are used for positive one to one interactions with children and a time that they can get to know more about the child.
- Encourage children's attempts at independence but assist when necessary to avoid frustration.
- Genuinely seek children's input, respect their ideas and take their suggestions on board.
- Support babies to build trusting attachments in order to develop a secure base for their exploration and learning.
- Form warm relationships with each child.
- Display patience and respect when interacting with children
- Display a genuine interest in what each child is doing
- Assist children to become accepted into the program and to become happily involved in room activities

Families will:

- Read and comply with this policy
- Engage in open communication with staff and educators about their child.
- Inform staff and educators of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the centre (e.g. moving house, a new sibling).
- Inform staff and educators of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour.
- Work collaboratively with staff and others to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.

Related Legislation

- Education and Care Services National Law Act: Section 166, 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulations 73, 74, 155, 156, 157, 168(2)(j)
- Children and young persons (care and protection) Act 1998
- Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Links to other policies and documents

- Child protection
- Behaviour Guidance
- Educational Program and Practice
- Code of Ethics
- UN Convention on the rights of the child

Links to Education and Care Services National Regulations: 73, 74, 155-157, 168(2)(j)
Links to National Quality Standards: QA5, 6, 7

Sources

- ACECQA www.acecqa.gov.au
- ACECQA Inappropriate discipline Information sheet
- United Nations Convention on the rights of the child – www.unicef.org.au
- Guide to the National Quality Framework
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA)
- Donna MacIntyre – Approved Provider
- Community Early Learning Australia – CELA