

Early Learning

Interactions with Children Policy

Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the service;
- enabling children to express themselves and their opinion;
- encouraging children to develop self-reliance and self-esteem;
- ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of each child,
- providing environments that support children’s developing social skills;
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service,
- building collaborative relationships with families to improve learning and development outcomes for children;
- encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children and educators/staff at the service.

Executive Summary

Stable and secure relationships, form the foundation for children to explore and learn. Through positive relationships, children learn that they are valued as competent and capable individuals. A sense of belonging and agency is essential for all children to enable them to test boundaries and consequences of behaviour to learn socially acceptable skills. Managing feelings, learning about appropriate behaviours, rights and responsibilities is a lifelong journey, with skill development on a learning continuum. Educators are in a valuable position to guide and support children as they develop the self-confidence and skills to learn acceptable behaviours and learn strategies to control their own behaviour.

Promoting a culture of respect, equity and fairness is of prime importance. Corporal punishment or unreasonable or excessive discipline *will not* be tolerated. Positive language and guidance is the key technique to encourage children’s cooperation. Educators are to use pedagogical decision-making and intentional teaching strategies to provide additional support for children that are challenged, when learning pro-social skills. Families will be involved when developing behavioural support plans for individual children, and consulted, if referral to allied health services is appropriate.

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Current Environmental Context

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* is founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, wealth, birth status or ability and forms the basis of any interactions with children. Developing responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children promotes their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security.

Educators are responsible for;

- appropriate behavioural expectations based upon each child's ability and capacity level,
- providing learning environments that support children's developing social skills and
- using teaching strategies that strengthen children's positive behaviour and decrease undesired behaviours.

Educators are to model positive, socially acceptable behaviour and language, develop rules and limits in consultation with children where appropriate, and support children to negotiate their rights in relation to the rights of others. When disagreement and or conflict occurs between children, and intervention by an educator is necessary, a respectful approach will be taken, that provides the children with the encouragement to learn about the effect of their behaviour on others and relevant conflict resolution skills. To support children who have specifically diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties, documentation must be maintained (*Attachment 32b*).

Attachment 32a – Responsibility relating to the Interactions with Children Policy

Attachment 32b - Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour guidance plan

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Reference/Sources

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved May 2017

- *Code of Conduct Policy-L1*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy-L3*
- *Educational Program and Practice Policy*
- *Inclusion and Diversity Policy-L1*
- *Access and Equity Policy-L2*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Policy-L2*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy-L2*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Children's Services Act 1996: Sections 26, 27*
- Department of Education and Training (DET) *Behaviour Guidance Practice Note 6* Reviewed June 2017: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/regulation/pracnotesbehavpol-12-05-2015.pdf>
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) *Code of Ethics* (2006): <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/>
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Sections 166, 167*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 73, 74, 155, 156, 157, 168(2)(j)*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children*
- *Relationships with Children. Information Sheet. Quality Area 5 National Quality Standard. Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (Oct 2016)*
- *Supporting Children to Manage Their Own Behaviour. Information Sheet. Quality Area 5 National Quality Standard. Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (Oct 2016)*
- *Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care Class 4 (October 2014)*
- [UNICEF - Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:* <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyldf.aspx>

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning: 12/03/2019

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by: 17/12/2020

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Attachment: 32a - Responsibilities relating to the Interactions with Children Policy

Approved Provider/Licensee

- Develop and implement the *Interactions with Children Policy* in consultation with all stakeholders, ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service.
- Ensure educators, staff and parents have access to this Policy and comply with its requirements.
- Ensure the Responsible Person, educators and all staff are aware of the service’s expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy*).
- Ensure children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times.
- Ensure the size and composition of groups is considered to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service. Smaller group sizes are considered optimal.
- Ensure the educational program contributes to the learning and 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 service provides education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for.
- Support educators/staff to gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy.
- Ensure the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children.
- Ensure educators and all staff 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 or excessive in the circumstances.
- Inform the Regulatory Authority (DET), in writing, within 24 hours of a serious incident or notifiable complaint/incident at the service.
- Ensure that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises, excursion or off-site program, unless directed by the court order otherwise.
- Ensure educators and staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others.

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Responsible Person

- Ensure educators, staff and parents have access to this Policy and comply with its requirements.
- Ensure educators and all staff are aware of the service’s expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy*).
- Ensure children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times.
- Ensure educational programs are developed and implemented in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child.
- Ensure the educational program contributes to the learning and development of children to have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and positive communicators.
- Ensure clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child’s developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation, and progress against the outcomes of the educational program.
- Ensure the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children.
- Ensure educators and all staff 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 or excessive in the circumstances.
- Where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises, excursion or off-site program, unless directed by the court order otherwise.
- Ensure educators and staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others.
- Ensure that individual behaviour guidance plans are developed for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, in consultation with educators, parents and families, and other professionals and support agencies.
- Ensure links and co-operation with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required.
- Inform the Approved Provider/ Licensee of any notifiable complaints or serious incidents (refer to Glossary) at the service.
- Organise appropriate training for educators/staff to assist with the implementation of this policy.
- Ensure that procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents to share information about children’s learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships.

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Educator

- Read, comply and implement this Policy.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Provide education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for.
- Be aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.
- Develop individual behaviour guidance plans for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, in consultation with parents and families, and other professionals and support agencies.
- Implement individual behaviour guidance plans for children in coordination with other educators and relevant support staff.
- Use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others.
- Support each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with others.
- Develop warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion.
- Deliver programs that develop a sense of wellbeing and identity, connection to community, and provide skills for lifelong learning in all children.
- Be aware of service expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families.
- Provide adequate supervision of children at all times.
- Communicate and work collaboratively with parents and families in relation to their child's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships.
- Collaborate and communicate effectively with team members to facilitate each and every child's learning and development.
- Inform the Responsible Person of any notifiable complaints or serious incidents (refer to *Glossary*) at the service.
- Develop links and co-operate with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required.
- Implement any child related court order provided by a parent, and escalate to manager if clarification is required.

Parents

- Read and comply with this Policy
- Engage in open communication with educators about your child.
- Inform educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on your child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling).
- Inform educators/staff of any concerns regarding your child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour.
- Collaborate with educators/staff and other professionals/ support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for your child, where appropriate.
- Notify and provide a copy of any court order that relates to your child, to the service.

Note: Volunteers, contractors and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

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Attachment 32b - Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour guidance plan

These procedures recommend steps that services can follow to develop a behaviour guidance plan for a child exhibiting challenging behaviour. These procedures should be adapted to suit individual services.

A caring relationship with an adult, who can provide the learning and emotional support required, is pivotal to dealing with a child's challenging behaviour (refer to *Glossary*). Challenging behaviour is best managed through a collaborative strategy developed between service staff and parents.

Excluding a child from the service should only be a last resort. This decision should be made as part of the collaborative management of a child's behaviour, and based on a joint decision by the parents and family, and the Approved Provider/ Licensee, Responsible Person, and other professionals involved in the education and care of the child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).

Procedures

Step 1 Observe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe children exhibiting challenging behaviour, including in the broader context of their environment, the culture of the service, and the interactions of the whole group and other educators working with the child. Identify, based on observations, whether there is a need to develop an individual behaviour guidance plan for the child.
Step 2 Discuss	<p>Invite parents to a meeting to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ongoing behaviour displayed by the child, including highlighting improvements and celebrating successes their aspirations, as well as the service's aspirations, for the child the child's individual characteristics, including interests, temperament, age and cultural background recommended strategies to support the child's development, and how these strategies will be reviewed and evaluated resources or changes to the environment/program that may be required for a behaviour guidance plan to be implemented e.g. changes to routines and transitions the support already accessed by the family to assist with managing the child's behaviour other support available, such as a Preschool Field Officer (refer to <i>Glossary</i>), referral for specialist assessment and additional adult support (written consent is required from parents before any intervention/assessment is undertaken) any other matter that will assist with the development of a behaviour guidance plan.
Step 3 Consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If appropriate, and with the permission of parents, consult with other support agencies or service providers who are already working with the child, to assist with the development of a behaviour guidance plan.
Step 4 Develop	<p>Develop an individual behaviour guidance plan, based on consultation with the child's parents and other support agencies, that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> appropriate to the needs of the child and accepted/agreed to by parents and other professionals involved in the education and care of that child clear and easy to follow for all educators, staff, parents and/or volunteers/students working with the child.
Step 5 Monitor and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continually review, reflect, evaluate and revise the strategies that have been implemented. Communicate with the parents regarding the child's progress and involve them in evaluating and revising the strategies.

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Roles and responsibilities

The following are the roles and responsibilities of the various individuals working with the child at the service.

The Approved Provider/ Licensee is responsible for:

- ensuring that there is a behaviour guidance plan developed for a child if educators are concerned that the child's behaviour may put the child themselves, other children, educators/staff and/or others at risk
- ensuring that parents and other professionals (as appropriate) are consulted if an individual behaviour guidance plan has not resolved the challenging behaviour
- consulting with, and seeking advice from, DET if a suitable and mutually agreeable behaviour guidance plan cannot be developed
- ensuring that they are notified if a complaint is received about a child's interactions or behaviour e.g. when the safety of other children is in question
- ensuring that, if a complaint is received, every attempt is made to resolve the issue by consultation and investigation as soon as possible
- ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan
- ensuring that educators/staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and responses of a child/children with challenging behaviour.

The Responsible Person is responsible for:

- developing the behaviour guidance plan in consultation with the educators and the parents of the child, and other professionals and services as appropriate
- consulting the *Complaints and Grievances Policy* to ensure compliance with service procedures, and regulatory and legislative requirements
- consulting educators for their professional evaluation of the situation, and drawing on their expertise in relation to developing strategies and identifying resources required
- meeting with the parents of the child concerned to develop and implement a behaviour guidance plan
- supporting educators by assessing skills and identifying additional training needs in the area of behaviour guidance
- advise on possible strategies, in consultation with families and educators
- investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer (refer to *Glossary*), specialist children's services officers from DET or other agencies working with the child
- setting clear timelines for review and evaluation of the behaviour guidance plan.

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Educators/staff are responsible for:

- developing the behaviour guidance plan in consultation with the Responsible Person, educators and the parents of the child, and other professionals and services as appropriate
- observing children’s challenging behaviour and identifying the need to develop a behaviour guidance plan to support a child in self-managing their own behaviour
- assisting the Responsible Person to develop a behaviour guidance plan in consultation with parents and other professionals as appropriate
- communicating behaviour guidance plan with co-educators, volunteers and relief staff
- implementing a behaviour guidance plan and incorporating identified strategies and resources into the service program
- undertaking relevant training that will enable them to guide children who exhibit challenging behaviour
- maintaining ongoing communication and consultation with parents
- providing regular progress reports to the Approved Provider/Licensee and Responsible Person on the implementation and effectiveness of the agreed strategies contained in an individual behaviour guidance plan
- maintaining the confidentiality of information provided by parents unless written consent is provided to disclose information to relevant parties
- providing their observations, professional evaluation and expertise in reviewing individual behaviour guidance plans
- providing other information, as relevant, to the Approved Provider/Licensee and Responsible Person to assist with the resolution of any issues.

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