



Interactions with Children

POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

Our organisation believes that children's safety and wellbeing are paramount and will ensure this is fostered through our child safe culture, responsive relationships, engaging experiences and safe and healthy environment. Our educational program encourages children's self-expression, promotes self-reliance, maintains their dignity and rights, gives positive guidance, and recognises their culture, values, and abilities.

BACKGROUND

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place in relation to interactions with children.

LEGISLATION

- National Law Act – 165, 166, 168, 169
- National Regulations – 73, 84, 115, 117A, 118, 123, 126, 145, 155, 156, 168, 170–172
- National Quality Standard – 1, 2, 3, 4.1.1, 5, 6, 7.1.1, 7.1.3, 7.2.2

RELEVANT POLICIES

- Dealing with Complaints
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursions
- Governance and Management
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness
- Nutrition, Food, Beverages, and Dietary Requirements
- Providing a Child-Safe Environment
- Safe Arrival of Children
- Safe Transportation of Children
- Sleep and Rest for Children
- Staffing Arrangements

LOCATION OF INFORMATION

- Centre Policy and Procedure Handbook
- Wheelers Hill Child Care Centre Website

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is required to be reviewed at least annually by the approved provider, in conjunction with nominated supervisors, responsible persons, staff, families and children.

To be Reviewed: March 2026

- Dates of Review: January 2025
February 2024
January 2023
January 2022



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Interactions with Children

PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND

- Children face many challenges throughout their lives. Learning acceptable behaviour and being able to regulate their own behaviour in different social and emotional environments, or when interacting with others, are two of those challenges.
- Sound knowledge and understanding of children's social, emotional and cognitive development, and recommended appropriate practices, assisted in the development of this policy.
- Procedures reflect the organisation's commitment to establishing behaviour guidance strategies which ensure children are treated with the same respect and empathy as an adult would expect.
- 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.
 - always maintains the dignity and rights of each child.
 - gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour.
 - has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child at the service.
 - ensures children have opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and with staff and volunteers.

LIMITS AND GUIDELINES

- Limits and guidelines are necessary for the safety and wellbeing of every child in the service. The service is comprised of children of different ages, developmental stages, abilities & backgrounds. All behaviour guidance is age appropriate and often individually-based.
- It is important that limits be kept to a minimum so children can remember and understand the reasons for them. In the older rooms, the children assist in developing limits.
- The service follows basic, developmentally-appropriate limits which:
 - Emphasise positive actions.
 - Give children reasons for the limits.
 - Are implemented in a consistent manner.
 - Are reinforced positively and regularly.
 - Ensure each child's dignity and rights will be met at all times.



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- Are proactive and non-judgmental.
- Are reviewed regularly for age, ability, background, and cultural appropriateness.

BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE

- The term 'behaviour guidance' is used rather than 'discipline'. The term:
 - focusses on children's strengths.
 - demonstrates respect.
 - is based on knowledge of child development and learning.
 - is grounded in positive mutually respectful relationships between adults and children.
- Positive behaviour guidance:
 - uses an understanding of each child's family, background and culture.
 - focuses on supporting children to gain an understanding of their own and others' feelings and begin to learn skills to begin to manage their own behaviour.
 - encourages children to reflect on their actions, and the impact those actions have on themselves and others.
 - supports each child to respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
- When staff adopt a positive and active approach to behaviour guidance, they:
 - reduce challenging behaviours.
 - encourage children to achieve success.
 - develop positive self-esteem and increase competence in children.
- A positive approach to managing the behaviour of children is expected. Children are encouraged and supported to resolve problems and frustrations where appropriate. This can be achieved by exploring possible solutions, and helping children understand and deal with their emotions.
- A calm, controlled tone of voice and attitude should be adopted by staff in all situations.
- Interactions between staff and children should be positive, warm and friendly. Staff need to listen to children and get down to the child's level when engaging in discussion.
- It is inappropriate to use any form of physical punishment with children, and it is important not to demean, make fun of, belittle or frighten a child as a form of punishment.
- Children are taught positive strategies for dealing with conflict. This is achieved by developing children's sensitivity to the emotional feelings that bring them into confrontation with others.
- Children are supported to build secure attachments with staff and use a favourite toy or comfort item to help them feel secure in the service. Most children suffer a form of separation anxiety when away from their families. Staff need to reassure the child and work with their family in order to make the child feel safe, secure and happy at the service.
- Staff respond to children proactively, rather than reactively, anticipate potentially undesirable behaviours, and eliminate situations and environments that may trigger undesirable behaviour. Staff acknowledge that a behaviour is inappropriate and not the child.
- Staff are to ensure children are never put in a position where they feel frightened, ashamed, humiliated, embarrassed, insecure, or isolated. This includes being aware of the tone and body language used when guiding children's behaviour.



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- If behaviours displayed by a staff member are deemed to be unprofessional or inappropriate, the staff member may receive an official warning. If the offence is severe or continues following performance management processes, the staff member may be dismissed.

BEHAVIOUR TRIGGERS

- Some behaviours regarded as challenging are simply age-appropriate behaviour. Learning to communicate needs and wants in appropriate ways is one of the many challenges children face.
- Factors that trigger or contribute to children's behaviour, include but are not limited to:
 - Programs
 - Routines
 - Equipment and resources
 - The physical environment
 - Overstimulation
 - Interactions between children and between adults
 - Rest, sleep and/or tiredness
 - Nutrition
 - Medical conditions
 - Additional needs
 - Changes to the family environment, *e.g., birth of a sibling or moving house*
 - Developmental stages
 - Abilities
 - Time of day
 - Cultural background
 - Family experiences
 - Boredom
 - Trauma and/or abuse
 - Anger and/or frustration
 - Desire for attention
 - Imitation
 - Excitement
 - Jealousy
 - Social clumsiness
 - High activity levels
 - Too much choice
 - Lack of choice
- Some rooms have provided a '*calm area*' where children can retreat to if they wish to calm themselves down or need a safe and secure place to regulate their behaviour or emotions.

BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE STRATEGIES

- When a situation arises between children, conflict is kept to a minimum by implementing the following strategies:
 - Taking immediate action.
 - Attending to the child who has been hurt or in distress.
 - Talking to the child regarding the incident.
 - Outlining what is acceptable behaviour.
 - Keeping it positive.
 - Pointing out what effect the action is having, *e.g., "_____ was really upset when you knocked over his blocks."*
 - Encouraging the child to take responsibility for their actions. This may be done by saying sorry, offering a hug, or assisting the child to fix the initial problem.



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- Assisting the child to find an appropriate way to return to play via either redirection to another area or activity, or working out with the other child how they can both resume play in a way that encourages positive interactions.
- Staff are encouraged to lead, advocate, and act in the best interests of children, families, themselves, and others.
- Staff should share behaviour support responsibilities with one another.

BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES

- **Prevention**
 - A well-designed, well-resourced and equipped room, tailored to the needs of the children, prevents frustration, interruption and hazards. It offers privacy, independence and easy supervision.
 - The daily routine should provide enough time for play, a sense of security, little waiting, and well-planned transitions between activities.
 - Staff ensure they have a wide range of resources available to prevent disputes occurring.
 - Using visual cues and hand gestures in conversations, interactions and group times.
- **Positive Redirection**
 - This is the basic procedure used in all rooms. Redirecting undesirable behaviour to an acceptable alternative, focuses on the positive rather than the negative. This can be enhanced through praise.
- **Role Modelling**
 - When staff demonstrate appropriate behaviour and communication through their everyday actions, children learn what is expected from them.
- **Limit Setting**
 - Staff set a few, clear simple rules that are appropriate to the age and developmental levels of the children in their care.
 - It is appropriate to involve older children in the process by creating and discussing the 'rules' together.
 - Limits are displayed both in pictures and writing for children, families and other staff.
 - Children are reminded of what they need to do in a positive tone.
- **Problem Solving**
 - Staff appeal to children's growing cognitive reasoning by involving them in solving their own issues.
 - Staff ask children questions to help them identify their needs, feelings, causes and choices.
- **Logical Consequences**
 - Through the use of an "if.... then...." statement, children are helped to see the logical outcomes of their actions, e.g., "If you run inside, then you could trip over".
- **Promotion of Independence**
 - Staff give children ample opportunities to make decisions for themselves, develop a sense of agency, and learn to self-regulate.
 - Children who play and learn in an environment which promotes independence are less likely to display inappropriate behaviours.
 - Children are encouraged to use language and other forms of non-hurtful communication to communicate their emotions.
- **Cool Down**



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- A cooling down period is a time when a child that is having a difficult moment is encouraged to find a space, near a staff member, to 'cool down' and regain self-control.
- The difference between 'cool-down time' and 'time out' is that a staff member stays with the child and reassures and supports them to regulate their emotions during cooldown time.
- It is viewed as a learning opportunity, not as punishment.
- **Restraint (only in emergency situations)**
 - Occasionally, there may be circumstances where a child becomes a risk to themselves or others and may need to be removed from the situation or physically restrained to prevent harm to themselves or others.
 - Children should only be physically restrained in an emergency, such as when a child is:
 - in a clearly unsafe situation, *e.g., attempting to scale a fence or run onto a road.*
 - physically threatening other children or adults.
 - behaving in ways that are destructive to themselves, other people or the environment.
 - These situations may require the supportive holding of children. This means that children are only held long enough to be removed from the situation, and the emergency situation has been addressed or subsided.
 - This approach should only be used when there is an immediate danger of the child being hurt or hurting others and when other strategies to guide the behaviour have not worked.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND PROGRAM

- The environment needs to be set up in ways that best suit the stage of development of the children. The actual program, activities, learning experiences, resources, equipment and materials provided for the children can also impact upon their behaviours.
- When planning the physical environment and educational program, consider:
 - arrangement of furniture, equipment and resources to maximise supervision.
 - providing enough space for children to move easily and freely around the room without bumping into things or one another.
 - cosy corners and calm spaces for children to have personal space & time away from others.
 - temperature of the room and ventilation.
 - a sufficient array of resources and equipment.
 - continuous or frequent access to the outdoor environment.
 - only short periods where children are sitting together on the mat.
 - lighting, noise levels and clutter.
 - open-ended creative art opportunities.
 - plenty of time for long uninterrupted play.
 - small-group times rather than large group times.
 - equipment and resources reflective of the children's emerging abilities & interests.
 - children's sensory needs and safety.
 - opportunities for large motor movement and play.
 - modelling and encouraging care and respect of equipment and resources.
 - rhythm of the day in relation to routines, rituals, and relationships.
 - relaxed and unhurried routines and transitions.
 - flexibility to respond to children's individual needs
 - a balance of active and passive experiences.

SELF- REGULATION

- There are five main skills at the core of emotional literacy. They include the ability to:
 - Recognise and name our own feelings.
 - Recognise other people's feelings and the emotions they are experiencing (empathy).
 - Manage our emotions by talking about them.
 - Recognise and take responsibility for our mistakes and take steps to rectify them.



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- Interact appropriately and effectively by tuning in to the feelings of others and sensing their emotional states.
- Staff can support children's self-regulation by:
 - designing learning environments that support positive behaviours.
 - providing appropriately challenging small group play-based experiences and flexible schedules.
 - planning learning experiences that support children to identify and express feelings.
 - establishing shared expectations for behaviour.
 - positively guiding children's behaviour.
 - providing positive feedback.
 - knowing when and how to intervene to support collaborative social problem-solving.
 - reflecting on how they support children to manage their own behaviour.
- Experiences that support children's self-regulation can be modified according to the interests and emerging understandings of the children in the group. Ideas include:
 - Sharing books or creating stories with a focus on emotions and talking about how characters might be feeling.
 - Singing songs and reciting rhymes and chants about feelings.
 - Drawing faces or bodies, or making sculptures with clay or play dough, to show different feelings – such as happy, sad and angry.
 - Listening to music and talking about, dancing, moving or painting how it makes you feel.
 - Moving or doing body sculptures in a way that reflects different feelings – such as excited, angry and scared.
 - Playing games with a focus on emotions, or games that illustrate different feelings.
 - Using puppets or persona dolls to tell stories that explore feelings, different perspectives and solutions to common situations.
- To support social problem-solving, staff:
 - are sensitive to all children's play ideas.
 - assist children to identify and articulate the problem from their perspective.
 - encourage children to listen to and respect others' ideas.
 - support children to brainstorm possible solutions.
 - encourage discussion and evaluation of the suggested solutions.
 - encourage collaborative decision making and the identification of shared goals.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

- A positive environment for learning and development will help reduce challenging behaviours.
- Positive strategies to prevent challenging behaviour include, but are not limited to:
 - Keep your strategy clear.
 - Keep rules simple and easy to understand.
 - Say what you mean.
 - Use "do" instead of "don't" whenever possible.
 - Talk with children, not at them.
 - Set a good example.
 - Encourage children to set good examples for each other.
 - Give clear, simple choices.
 - Show respect for children.
 - Appreciate, highlight and comment on desirable behaviour.
 - Encourage like a good coach instead of a cheerleader.
 - Use play activities to teach social skills.
 - Teach children how to resolve conflict and solve problems.
 - Teach children how to apologise.



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- When a child displays challenging behaviour, it is important to:
 - identify the possible reasons for the behaviour.
 - know how frequently the behaviour occurs.
 - notice in which settings it occurs and how extreme it is.
 - observe carefully then sensitively document and record the behaviour.
- Depending on the age of the child, staff can inform themselves by:
 - assessing the child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and progress against the learning outcomes.
 - using evaluations of the child's wellbeing, development and learning.
- Once these observations and assessments are completed, an informed decision can be made about whether an individual behaviour guidance plan is required, or whether the behaviour can be addressed through daily behaviour guidance practices.
- Staff must discuss challenging behaviour with the child's parent or guardian as families can provide staff with valuable information and insights.
- When there are differences of opinion between parents or guardians and the service in relation to responding to challenging behaviour, it is crucial for the parents or guardians and staff to work together to come to an agreement that is in the best interests of the child.
- Children's behaviour should always be understood in the context of:
 - an understanding of the child in the context of the family, culture, community.
 - knowledge of the child's developmental stage.
 - an understanding of the family dynamics.
 - knowledge about anything unusual that may be occurring within the family or influencing the child's behaviour.
- Children's behaviour can also be linked to other factors including, but not limited to:
 - being exposed to violence and extreme aggression early in life.
 - trying to cope with grief, loss and separation.
 - limited social experiences.
 - repeated rejections by loved ones and feelings of abandonment.
 - health and developmental issues.
 - inconsistent parenting.
 - changes to family circumstances.
 - having to adjust to new environments with different rules and ways of doing things too often.
- In response to challenging behaviour, staff will:
 - recognise the situation as an opportunity to help children develop skills, including their language and communication, attention and working memory, emotion and self-regulation, cognitive flexibility and social thinking skills.
 - recognise certain reactions as understandable behaviour.
 - acknowledge the child's intent with that behaviour.
 - clarify the preferred skills to be used and teach, role model and practice how to use them.
 - redirect the child or remove the child from the situation, if necessary.
 - advise children of the consequences of continuing with the behaviour.
 - explain to children how their behaviour made others feel.
 - actively listen to children's feelings and discuss the skills to use in future.
 - help children to return to play.

BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE PLANS



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- Staff having difficulties or ongoing concerns about a child's behaviour must consult with the nominated supervisor or responsible persons before developing a behaviour guidance plan.
- When taking observations about a child's behaviour to determine whether a behaviour guidance plan is needed, staff should:
 - focus only on what they see and hear - not on what they think or feel about a child's behaviour, thoughts or emotions.
 - record the frequency, the situation and how the child exhibits a particular behaviour.
 - note what factors make the behaviour better or worse.
 - record the length of time the behaviour or emotion lasts.
 - include what happens before and after the child exhibits such behaviour.
 - be recorded by different staff members at different times, and in different contexts.
- Staff should consider the following questions when observing a child's behaviour:
 - What is the child doing?
 - What learning areas are being affected?
 - What social areas are being affected?
 - Who is present at this time?
 - Where and when does this behaviour occur?
 - How often does it happen?
 - How long has it been happening?
 - How much is it influencing a child's day-to-day experiences?
- Behaviour guidance plans should be developed in consultation with each individual child's family. It must be clear and easy to follow by all staff working with the child.
- There may be times when staff will need to negotiate strategies with families to suit the needs of individual children. Agreements should be formed that:
 - are reasonable considering the age, development & individual characteristics of the children.
 - are consistently enforced and reflected on at the service and also at home.
 - encourages the child to understand the boundaries, agreements and expectations and builds their skills to interact with others within these.
 - builds the child's self-control, self-regulation and self-esteem.
 - presents a good example through positive role modelling, compassion and understanding.

CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

- While there is no national definition of '*additional needs*', there are children who may need or require specific considerations or adaptations to participate fully in ECEC services.
- Additional needs may arise for children who:
 - have a disability or developmental delay.
 - are presenting with challenging behaviours.
 - have a serious medical or health condition, including mental health.
 - are presenting with trauma-related behaviours.
- Additional needs also include meeting the needs and requirements of:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
 - children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
 - children from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds.
- Children who require further support for additional needs can be referred to early intervention services. Permission from each children's parents or guardians is sought prior to accessing these additional services.



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INCLUSION SUPPORT PROGRAM (ISP)

- The service works in partnership with the *Inclusion Support Program (ISP)* to develop support plans for children who require additional support.
- The *Inclusion Support Program (ISP)* assists education and care services to:
 - provide and embed quality, inclusive and equitable practices into their delivery of early learning programs for all children.
 - address access, inclusion and participation barriers.
 - build capacity and capability to support the inclusion of children with additional needs, with their typically developing peers.
 - ensure all children have genuine opportunities to access, participate and achieve positive learning outcomes.
- The *Inclusion Support Program* offers 3 categories of support:
 - professional support.
 - specialist equipment.
 - funding.
- The *IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator* provides a significant funding contribution to subsidise the longer-term employment of an additional educator to support the inclusion of a children with high ongoing support needs. It is available to support the inclusion of children:
 - with a disability diagnosis.
 - with additional needs, including those awaiting a disability diagnosis.
 - with a current and ongoing assessment for disability diagnosis.
- Additional educators do not provide individual support for a child who has additional needs, as they work as a team with other staff to meet the needs of all children within the care environment.
- An application for the *IDF Subsidy for an Additional Educator* applies to the care environment where an inclusion barrier (or barriers) is present. An application requires the following information from the service:
 - documentary evidence and enrolment details of the eligible child (or children).
 - the days and hours of attendance of the eligible child (or children).
 - the total number of hours the service requires access to an additional educator each week.
 - the total number of additional educators the service requires; if more than one in the same care environment is needed.
 - the context of the care environment, including the number and ages of children and the number of staff in the environment.
 - the inclusion profile and inclusion planning, including the current barriers to inclusion and the strategies and actions to address the barriers for the care environment.
- The *Specialist Equipment Library* provides services with access to free equipment and resources to address barriers to inclusion. Equipment available from the library includes, but is not limited to:
 - portable ramps to create access to the care environment.
 - standing frames and full support swings to allow children with high physical needs to participate in the daily program and activities.
 - hoists, slings, harnesses, change tables, toilet sets or steps, potty chairs, mobile stools and seating or posture aids for staff to assist them to lift and transfer children safely when carrying out basic care functions such as changing or going to the toilet.
 - specialised inclusion toys such as sensory or switch toys.
 - specialised furniture such as chairs, tables, desk and positioning equipment.
 - communication cards or charts, and Auslan dictionaries to enable children and staff to communicate effectively.
 - resources to support the inclusion of Indigenous children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, such as books in languages other than English.



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- Equipment not available from the Specialist Equipment Library includes, but is not limited to:
 - therapeutic equipment, e.g., *hearing aids and therapist tables*.
 - equipment that the service would reasonably be expected to supply as part of the provision of a quality early learning environment.
 - equipment that the parent or guardian would reasonably be expected to supply for their child, e.g., *wheelchairs, walking frames and body suits*.
 - equipment for which there are hygiene issues, e.g., padded cots.
 - equipment provided under the *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)*.
- The *Inclusion Development Fund* is for when professional support or specialist equipment cannot address barriers. There are 3 categories of funding, for:
 - additional educators.
 - immediate or time-limited support.
 - innovative solutions.
- Families can request for the *Inclusion Support Program* to visit their child at the service and are able to have meetings with the *Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF)* and staff from the service to ensure a collaborative approach to their child's needs.
- The *ISF* will provide the service and the family with support, resources, training or workshop ideas, and can also help to obtain funding for an additional educator.

PRESCHOOL FIELD OFFICER PROGRAM (PSFO)

- The service works in partnership with the *Preschool Field Officer program (PSFO)* to develop support plans for kindergarten children who require additional support.
- The *Preschool Field Officer Program (PSFO)* is a targeted and time-limited capacity-building program. It uses a locally responsive approach that includes consultative support, resourcing and practical advice to assist early childhood staff.
- PSFOs also assist early childhood staff to link families into supports and services available for children with developmental concerns and broader child and family supports.
- All Victorian funded kindergarten programs are eligible to receive PSFO service to support the access, inclusion and participation of children with additional needs in a kindergarten program.
- This includes children enrolled in Four-Year-Old Kindergarten, funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten and *Early Start Kindergarten*.
- The role of the PSFO is to support, guide and coach early childhood staff to provide high quality programs that support the inclusion of children with additional needs.
- Support to the service may include:
 - provision of information and resources, and identification of adaptations, strategies and experiences to inform programming for a child with additional needs.
 - identification of a child with additional needs through contributing to the assessment of the child's capabilities as well as their learning and development needs.
 - supporting staff confidence and capacity to respond to a parent or guardian's concerns regarding their child's development.
 - provision of planning support that respects, acknowledges and complements the staff member's expertise in supporting children's learning and development.
 - coaching of staff to assist with planning and implementation of an inclusive kindergarten program that supports a child with additional needs.



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- building professional partnerships and collaborative relationships with staff and services.
- modelling of specific skills, suggestions and strategies with staff.
- assistance to embed child specific teaching and learning approaches and opportunities into the everyday kindergarten environment.
- identification of referral pathways and facilitation of linkages for families to the range of child and family supports, including more specialised assessment and services, when required.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR, DISCIPLINE AND PRACTICE

Inappropriate Behaviour and Physical Contact

Staff, students, volunteers and visitors are prohibited from engaging in inappropriate behaviour or physical contact including, but not limited to:

- Any form of corporal punishment or physical discipline, *e.g., spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, tapping, shaking, poking, smacking or any other physical force as retaliation or correction.*
- Touching the groin, genital area, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that may cause distress or embarrassment.
- Initiating, permitting or requesting contact, *e.g., kissing, massage, hand holding, tickling, tickling games, or rough, physical games.*
- Emotional abuse of any form, *e.g., name calling, humiliation, ostracism, shaming, degrading, intimidation, oppression, belittling, derogatory comments about the child or family and threatening, humiliating or frightening language.*
- Inappropriately physical restraining a child, *e.g.,*
 - *force applied to the head or neck*
 - *grabbing them by, or pulling them around by, their arms*
 - *restrictions to breathing or strangulation*
 - *punching or kicking*
 - *holding by the hair or ear*
 - *confining them in a locked room or limited space*
- Ignoring or disregarding any concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of abuse.
- Being alone with a child or young person unnecessarily.
- Unlawfully discriminating against any child on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Engaging in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them.
- Initiating unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or doing things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves, *e.g., toileting.*
- Developing a '*special*' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs.
- Showing favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.
- Photographing or recording a child or young person without the consent of the child and their family.
- Photographing or recording a child or young person on their own personal device.
- Working with children or young people while under the influence of tobacco, alcohol, drugs or illicit substances.
- Engaging in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children.
- Using inappropriate language in the presence of children.
- Punishment of any form with regards to toileting habits, or lack thereof.
- The use of corporal punishment or other types of abuse constitutes grounds for immediate dismissal of a staff member.

Inappropriate Discipline



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Staff, students, volunteers and visitors are prohibited from engaging in inappropriate discipline including, but not limited to:

- Hitting, pushing, slapping, pinching or biting a child.
- Force-feeding a child.
- Yelling at or belittling a child.
- Humiliating a child.
- Physically dragging a child.
- Locking a child away or isolating them.
- Depriving a child of food, drink, sleep, rest, comfort or medical attention.
- Unreasonably restraining a child, including in a high chair or cot for an unnecessary, extended period.
- Excluding children from events or activities.
- Consistently moving children to the office or another space away from the play areas.
- Taking children to different areas of the service alone.
- Moving children to another room as punishment.
- Verbally or physically threatening a child.

Inappropriate Practice

Staff, students, volunteers and visitors are prohibited from engaging in inappropriate practice including, but not limited to:

- Using food, drink, sleep, rest or comfort as a reward or withholding it as a punishment.
- Negatively labelling of a child or family.
- Criticising a child's actions or behaviours.
- Discouraging a child from taking part in activities.
- Blaming or shaming a child.
- Making fun of, or laughing at or about, a child.
- Using sarcastic or cruel humour with or about a child.
- Excessive use of negative language to a child, such as, "no", "stop that!", "don't...", "you never..."

CODE OF CONDUCT

- The approved provider, nominated supervisors, responsible persons, staff, families, volunteers and visitors abide by the following appropriate standards of behaviour by adults towards children.
- These standards aim to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. It also guides staff on how to best support children and how to avoid or manage difficult situations.
 - Adhere to the *Providing a Child-Safe Environment & Interactions with Children* policies.
 - Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse.
 - Treat everyone with respect and dignity, including listening to and valuing the ideas and opinions of others.
 - Be inclusive and welcoming towards all children and their families.
 - Respect cultural, religious and political differences.
 - Act in a culturally sensitive way.
 - Have a zero tolerance of racism and act on incident of racism at the service.
 - Support children to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
 - Model appropriate adult behaviour.
 - Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
 - Listen to children and respond appropriately.
 - Report and act on any breaches of this policy, complaints or concerns.
 - Notify the approved provider and the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint.
 - Comply with the guidelines on physical contact with children.



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- Never discriminate against any child because of culture, race, ethnicity or ability.
 - Work with children in an open and transparent way.
 - Respect the privacy of children and their families, and only disclose information to people who are required to know.
 - Provide adequate supervision of children at all times.
 - Ensure the service is free from the use of tobacco, alcohol drugs and illicit substances.
- Racism will not be tolerated within the organisation. Claims of racism will be investigated by the nominated supervisor or responsible persons and acted upon. This may include suspension of attendance or employment while claims are being investigated, action plans, performance management processes, and/or additional training.

NOTIFICATIONS

- An incident of inappropriate discipline needs to be reported to the regulatory authority with 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident.
- The regulatory authority must also be notified within 24 hours if the service receives a complaint from a family or member of the public that alleges there may be a risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of the children.
- In addition to reporting to the regulatory authority, it may be appropriate for approved providers or staff to report an incident of inappropriate discipline to the children's commissioner, child protection agencies or the *Victoria Police*.

REQUIREMENTS

- The service ensures that all approved providers, nominated supervisors, responsible persons, staff, volunteers and students at the service who work with children are advised of the existence and application of the current child protection law in the relevant jurisdiction and understand their obligations under that law.
- The service ensures that all approved providers, nominated supervisors, responsible persons, staff, volunteers and students at the service who work with children have current, valid *Working with Children Checks* and/or *VIT registration*.

ETHICAL PRACTICE

- Our organisation acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live, play, learn and work – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation, and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this land.
- Our organisation is an inclusive organisation. We welcome all children, families, educators, staff and visitors into our services. We embrace the wonderful diversity that makes up our community and our world.
- Our organisation is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage all applicants to apply for positions within our organisation regardless of gender, race, age, culture, orientation, abilities, background, appearance, behaviour, qualifications, years of experience or professional barriers. Our aim is to create a workforce that reflects the community where we live, work, learn and play.
- Our organisation is a child-safe organisation. We want children to be safe, happy & empowered. We support and respect all children. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. As a child-safe organisation, all of our employees must have or obtain a valid working with children check. The *Child Safe Standards* are embedded in all of our programs and practices, to minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children.



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- Our organisation will not discriminate against any child, family, staff member or stakeholder based on gender, sex, identity, race, impairment, age, culture, qualifications, knowledge, religious beliefs, religious practices, marital status, abilities, background, appearance, behaviour, parental status, health status, relationship status, parental preferences, political beliefs, sexuality, orientation, family responsibilities, experience, personal or professional barriers, and/or any other determinant.

EMPOWERMENT

- Children are vital and active participants in the service. The organisation involves them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. Staff listen to their views, respect what they have to say, and trust their opinions, reflections, comments, and disclosures.
- The organisation has a responsibility to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children.
- The organisation promotes diversity and tolerance, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. Children are encouraged and supported to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights.
- The organisation:
 - promotes the cultural safety, participation, equality and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
 - promotes the cultural safety, participation, equality and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families.
 - promotes the cultural safety, participation, equality and empowerment of children from vulnerable backgrounds and their families.
 - promotes the safety, participation, equity and empowerment of children with a disability and their families.

CHILDREN'S DIGNITY AND RIGHTS

- It is essential that children's dignity and rights are respected by staff. The organisation expects:
 - Children are given ample opportunity to rest, relax, play and take part in cultural and creative activities.
 - Child management and guidance techniques are positive.
 - Physical, verbal or emotional punishment is prohibited, e.g., *threats, scare tactics*.
 - Children are only isolated for sickness, incidents, or prearranged appointments with consent from a parent or guardian.
 - Children are positively guided towards acceptable behaviour with encouragement.
 - Children are given comfort, emotionally supported, and provided with an environment where they can feel safe, secure and comfortable.
 - Children are not forced to sleep or rest against their wishes or needs.
- *Early Childhood Australia* has identified six principles to promote and protect play. These are:
 - Play is essential and valuable in its own right and for children's learning and development: every child has a right to have play in their life.
 - Every child has a right to a balance of play experiences that develop a healthy mind and body and a sense of wellbeing.
 - Play builds each child's capacity for communication and develops language & thinking skills.
 - Through play, children develop a sense of self and the emotional and social competence to participate in relationships.
 - Play connects children to their world, their cultural identities, to others and to other ways of knowing, doing and being.



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- Children's right to play is our collective responsibility. All adults have a role in understanding, protecting and valuing the importance of play for every child, in every community.
- Interactions within the service are greatly enhanced when children's rights and family and cultural values are given due consideration and respect.
- Staff are required to:
 - provide children with strategies to make informed choices about their behaviours.
 - notice and listen carefully to children's concerns and discuss diverse perspectives on issues of inclusion and exclusion, and unfair behaviour.
 - design play environments that are adequately equipped with resources and arranged to allow individual, small and large group activities.
 - be consistent and fair as they guide every child's behaviour positively.
 - set an example by being in control of their own behaviour, and positively managing their interactions with children, families and colleagues.
 - provide children with clear expectations and instructions for play, in a manner that every child understands.
 - manage noise levels during play and routines so that each child's needs are accommodated as they play, eat and sleep or rest.
 - sensitively and actively invite families to collaboratively develop strategies to support children's behaviour in the service and the family home.
 - promote and support children's home languages in the service.
 - support children's consent by acknowledging & respecting a child's right to refuse or say no.

SUPPORTING AGENCY

- Environments that support agency provide children with a variety of resources to choose from and allow children to make choices independently of adults. When children are listened to with respect to their voices, their words, and their ideas, it models trust and collaboration showing them that they are heard and their ideas matter.
- Practices that support agency include, but are not limited to:
 - Having equipment shelving at child height.
 - Encouraging children to choose the materials they want to use.
 - Providing open ended materials.
 - Having areas where children can store works in progress to return to over a period of time.
 - Setting up play spaces with areas that allow children to choose between quiet and busier areas, indoor or outdoor play, in large groups, small groups or solitary play.
 - Providing space where children can store and independently access their own belongings.
 - Engaging children in decisions about meals and routines.
 - Involving children in discussions about service policies, procedures and practices.
 - Involving children in the review of the service philosophy.
 - Allowing flexible routines led by the child's own cues and behaviours rather than the clock.
 - Seeing babies as capable of being an active participant in routines, activities & experiences.
 - Scaffolding language to assist children in expressing feelings.
 - Using routines as an opportunity for learning.
 - Facilitating self-help skills as opposed to doing tasks for children.
 - Being aware, and responsive to young children's verbal and non-verbal cues.
 - Being respectful during routines, e.g., *asking children's permission to check their nappies*.
 - Supporting children to negotiate a resolution rather than solving it for them.
 - Providing opportunities for children to set goals for learning.
 - Offering choices of experiences based on what children are interested in learning about.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Approved Provider	• Ensure the service provides education and care to children in a way that: ○ encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions. ○ allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem. ○ maintains the rights, dignity and agency of each child at all times. ○ gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour. ○ has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child. • Ensure the service meets minimum educator-to-child ratio requirements. • Ensure children are adequately supervised at all times. • Ensure all staff 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. • Implement positive behaviour guidance strategies. • Role model respectful and positive interactions with the children. • Ensure every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury. • Act on any circumstance that poses a risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child or children, or of any complaint alleging that a serious incident has occurred at the service. • Notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any circumstance that poses a risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child or children, or of any complaint alleging that a serious incident has occurred at the service. • Ensure all staff, including volunteers and students, have undertaken current child protection training. • Ensure staff are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and responses of children with challenging behaviour. • Value diversity and not tolerate any discriminatory practices. • Empower children to speak up and raise any concerns. • Empower children to use language and other forms of non-hurtful communication to express their emotions. • Trust and listen to children. • Advocate for children and their rights. • Interact with children by getting down to their level & using eye contact. • Maintain confidentiality at all times. • Read, understand, follow and enforce the organisation's policies and procedures.
Nominated Supervisor and Responsible Persons	• Ensure the service provides education and care to children in a way that: ○ encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions. ○ allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem. ○ maintains the rights, dignity and agency of each child at all times. ○ gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour. ○ has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child. • Ensure the service meets minimum educator-to-child ratio requirements. • Ensure children are adequately supervised at all times.



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Educators and Staff Members	• Provide education and care to children in a way that: ○ encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions. ○ allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.



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	○ maintains the rights, dignity and agency of each child at all times. ○ gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour. ○ has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child. • Ensure children are adequately supervised at all times. • Ensure children are not subjected to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances. • Implement positive behaviour guidance strategies. • Role model respectful and positive interactions with the children. • Ensure every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury. • Act on any circumstance that poses a risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child or children, or of any complaint alleging that a serious incident has occurred at the service. • Hold a valid employee <i>Working with Children Check</i> or <i>VIT registration</i>. • Keep up to date with current child protection legislation and any obligations under that law. • Undertake appropriate training and education on child protection, including recognising the signs of child abuse, knowing how to respond, and understanding processes for reporting and managing concerns & incidents. • Access professional development and resources related to positive behaviour guidance. • Value diversity and not tolerate any discriminatory practices. • Empower children to speak up and raise any concerns. • Empower children to use language and other forms of non-hurtful communication to express their emotions. • Trust and listen to children. • Advocate for children and their rights. • Remain calm, respectful and tolerant, and use positive language, gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. • Interact with children by getting down to their level & using eye contact. • Collaborate with children to develop a set of rules or boundaries to guide their behaviour and discuss clear expectations and consequences of undesirable behaviours. • Assist children in regulating their own behaviours by using simple conflict resolution skills, building self-reliance and self-esteem, role modelling and positive direction. • Provide children with the language and vocabulary needed to express their emotions and feelings and verbalise their concerns. • Sensitively manage children who are having difficulty conveying their message or managing their emotions. • Acknowledge, appreciate and celebrate children's efforts, achievements, and considerate actions. • Develop behaviour guidance plans in consultation with staff & families. • Maintain ongoing communication and consultation with families. • Access early childhood intervention programs to support additional needs. • Co-operate with other services and/or professionals. • Inform families of support services available to them, and of the assistance these services can provide. • Maintain confidentiality at all times. • Model non-biased or gender-specific language and attitudes. • Engage in critical reflection about stereotypes and biases.
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	• Challenge inappropriate or stereotypical remarks by children. • Build and strengthen knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and contributions. • Promote and support children's backgrounds, cultures, and home languages throughout the service. • Provide an inclusive environment which promotes acceptance, respect and appreciation for varying abilities and differences. • Adapt activities, interactions, communication, the environment, and documentation to ensure all children and families are actively included and supported to participate in the program. • Organise environments with sufficient resources for individual, small and large group interactions and meaningful play experiences. • Provide ample opportunities for each child, at every age, every day, to have play experiences that meet their individual needs & amplify their capacities. • Provide age-appropriate, challenging, and interesting activities, experiences, resources and provocations for children. • Provide a wide variety of resources that reflect different families, cultures, abilities and backgrounds. • Educate staff and families on the educational value of play. • Read, understand, follow and enforce the organisation's policies and procedures.
Parents, Guardians and Families	• Abide by the organisation's <i>Code of Conduct for Families</i>. • Interact with all children, staff and families in an appropriate manner. • Role model appropriate behaviour and effective communication skills. • Engage in open communication with staff about their child. • Share relevant information about their child's development, additional needs, and behaviour upon enrolment and on a regular basis. • Share any recent events or changes in circumstances which may be influencing their child's behaviour. • Provide consent for staff to consult with professional agencies to assist with inclusion support and funding. • Work collaboratively with staff and professional agencies in order to develop a broader understanding of the child's developmental level. • Work collaboratively with staff and professional agencies in the development of a behaviour guidance plan and supportive strategies. • Follow the service's strategies at home to maintain consistency. • When required, seek external professional advice to support their child's development and behaviour. • Understand and show value for the importance of play. • Read, understand and follow the organisation's policies and procedures.

SOURCES

- ACECQA – *Embedding the National Child Safe Principles* – July 2023
- ACECQA – *Inappropriate Discipline* – July 2023
- ACECQA – *Interactions with Children Policy Guidelines* – July 2023
- ACECQA – *Providing a Child Safe Environment* – July 2023
- ACECQA – *Relationships with Children* – February 2018
- ACECQA – *Support Children to Regulate Their Own Behaviour* – February 2018
- ACECQA – *Supporting Agency: Involving Children in Decision Making* – February 2018
- AIFS – *Effective Behaviour Management Strategies for Children Aged 0-10 Years* – July 2022
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority



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- Australian Government – *Inclusion Support Program Guidelines* – July 2023
- Be You – *Observing Children Deepens Our Understanding of their Behaviour* – May 2019
- CCYP – *A Guide for Creating a Child Safe Organisation* – April 2023
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 – September 2023
- Department of Education and Training
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics 2016
- Early Childhood Australia – *Statement on Play* – June 2022
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 – July 2023
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 – July 2023
- Gowrie NSW – *Reimagining Traditional Classroom Management Strategies*
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018 – July 2023
- Community Child Care – *Planning and Strategies to Promote Positive Behaviour* – 2011
- National Office for Child Safety – *Complaint Handling Guide* – February 2019
- NSW Government – *Support for Children in Your Care: Positive Behaviour*
- United Nations – *Convention on the Rights of the Child* – September 1990
- Victorian Government – *About Child Safe Standards* – July 2023
- Victorian Government – *Child Protection in Early Childhood (PROTECT)* – April 2023
- Victorian Government – *Preschool Field Officer Program* – December 2023
- Victorian Government – *Supporting Children's Behaviour in ECEC* – December 2023
- Victorian Government – *The Child Safe Standards in Early Childhood Services* – July 2023
- Victorian Government – *Understanding Children's Behaviour* – May 2015