

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS, INTERACTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 5, Best Practice – Quality Area 1

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- Inform and guide educators on the importance of positive, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children, including when offering behaviour support strategies.
- Ensure all children are treated equitably and with respect.
- Each child at Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following GRPSA policies:

- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Educational Program and Practice Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc is committed to:

- Respecting and maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the service.
- Encouraging children to express themselves and their opinions, and to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.
- Considering the wellbeing and safety of each child at the service as paramount.
- Considering the diversity of individual children at the service, including family units (LGBTIQA+) and cultural values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.
- 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.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc.

3. PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Developing and implementing the *Positive Relationships, Interactions and Behaviour Support Policy* in consultation with the Nominated Supervisors, educators, staff and parents/guardians, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service.
- Ensuring parents/guardians have access to a copy of the Positive Relationships, Interactions and Behaviour Support Policy.
- Ensuring all GRPSA staff have access to a copy of this policy on employment.
- Ensuring the Nominated Supervisors, 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*).
- Ensuring that staff are aware of their obligations to adequately supervise children and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy*).
- Ensuring 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 (Regulation 156(2)). Smaller group sizes are considered optimal.
- Ensuring that staff are providing educational programs that are delivered 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 (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).
- Ensuring that staff understand their obligations to 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 (Regulation 73) (refer to *Educational Program and Practice Policy*).
- Ensuring that the service provides education and care (Regulation 155) 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
- Ensuring clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's (Regulation 74):
 - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
 - progress against the outcomes of the educational program (refer to *Educational Program and Practice Policy*)
- Supporting educators/staff to gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*, *Occupational Health and Safety Policy* and *Supervision of Children Policy*).
- Ensuring that the Nominated Supervisors, educators and all staff members at the service 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 (National Law: Section 166).

- Ensuring that all children being educated and cared for are protected from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury (National Law: Section 167).
- Promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and educators, staff and other professionals, to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences.
- Referring notifiable complaints, grievances or complaints that are unable to be resolved appropriately and in a timely manner to GRPSA Management (refer to *Complaints and Grievances Policy*).
- Informing DE, in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (Section 174(4), Regulation 176(2)(b)).
- Notifying DE, in writing, within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Section 174(4), Regulation 176).
- Ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order that all requirements in the court order are adhered to.
- Ensuring 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.
- Ensuring staff utilise resources available to them to develop individual behaviour guidance plans (refer to Attachment 1 – Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour guidance plan) for children requiring behavioural support, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisors, educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to *Sources*).
- Encouraging staff to develop and maintain links with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required. (For example, PSFO, Maternal Child Health, Orange Door).
- Maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).
- Determining further action in extreme circumstances where behaviour guidance strategies have been unsuccessful and where a child's behaviour may be considered a danger to other children or staff.
- Advising parents/guardians if their child is to be excluded for any reason.

All Early Childhood Staff are responsible for:

In relation to following policy, law and best practice guidelines, staff are responsible for:

- Implementing the Positive Relationships, *Interactions and Behaviour Support Policy* at the service.
- Understanding and accepting that serious breaches of this policy will be deemed misconduct and may lead to disciplinary or legal action, or a review of their engagement.
- Ensuring educators and all staff members at the service 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 (National Law: Section 166).
- Having a sound understanding and complying with the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics.
- Having a sound understanding of the Rights of the Child.

- Ensuring all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy*).
- Ensuring that the children educated and cared for are protected from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury (National Law: Section 167).
- Ensuring that all children are adequately supervised at all times (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy* and *Interactions with Children Policy*).
- Informing the Approved Provider of any notifiable complaints or serious incidents at the service.
- Ensuring educators, staff and parents/guardians have access to a copy of the Positive Relationships, *Interactions and Behaviour Support Policy* at the service and comply with its requirements.
- Respecting and valuing diversity and not tolerating any discriminatory practices.

In relation to interactions with children, staff are responsible for:

- Using a positive and encouraging tone of voice when interacting with children.
- Respecting each child's uniqueness, displaying appreciation and respect for children as individuals.
- Developing warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion.
- Supporting children's consent by acknowledging and respecting a child's right to give, withhold or withdraw consent, verbally or non-verbally (for example, by using body language).
- Encouraging children to request assistance when taking on new challenges (inspiring children's independence and confidence).
- Inspiring, encouraging and accepting each child and encouraging them to do the same with their peers by actively:
 - Fostering each child's construction of a knowledgeable, confident self-identity
 - Fostering each child's empathetic interactions with a diverse range of people.
 - Empowering children to speak up and raise concerns.
 - Implementing a predictable routine for children including interest-based activities and experiences.
 - Helping children name and appropriately express their emotions.
- Using a variety of communication strategies, including verbal and non-verbal cues, to support the development of relationships with children.
- Encouraging children to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves.
- Encouraging children to work through differences appropriately and with guidance where necessary.

In relation to the learning environment, staff are responsible for:

- Providing a welcoming, safe, inclusive environment where children's interests and concerns are always responded to.
- Creating an environment that is flexible and responsive to the strengths, culture, languages, interests and capabilities of each child.
- Ensuring mealtimes are relaxed and unhurried.
- Sitting with children during mealtimes, engaging in respectful conversations.

- Never forcing a child to do something against their will – this includes resting, eating and participating in group experiences and activities.

A commitment to supportive learning environments:

- Ensuring 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.
- Acknowledging children when they make positive choices to regulate their behaviour.
- Taking a positive approach to behaviour guidance by praising positive behaviour on a consistent basis.
- Ensuring that individual behaviour guidance plans (refer to Attachment 1 – Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour guidance plan) are developed for children requiring behavioural support, in consultation with educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to *Sources*).
- Supporting each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with others.
- Ensuring that educators provide education and care to children in a way that:
 - 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.

In relation to documentation, staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring clear and straightforward documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's (Regulation 74):
 - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation.
 - progress against the outcomes of the educational program (refer to *Educational Program and Practice Policy*)
- Developing and implementing 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 (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).
- Ensuring 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 (refer to *Educational Program and Practice Policy*).

A commitment to positive behaviour support focussing on:

- Children's strengths.
- Knowledge of the child's learning and development.
- Mutually respectful relationships between adults and children.
- Understanding and addressing the underlying causes of challenging behaviours.
- Teaching new skills.
- Modifying learning environments.

- Reinforcing desirable and appropriate behaviour.
- Long-term behavioural improvements benefiting children, educators and families.

In relation to responding to challenging behaviours, staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring that children will be supported to understand what is appropriate and acceptable during play through staff guidance and direction.
- Establishing appropriate limits for the children according to the age and developmental stage of the children.
- Take evasive actions when required to maintain safety for both staff and children, e.g. where possible, intervening before a child is injured by another child.
- Ensuring children are only ever physically restrained in emergency situations, such as when a child is:
 - In a clearly unsafe situation, for example, attempting to scale a fence or run onto a road.
 - Physically threatening other children or adults.
 - Behaving in a way that is destructive to themselves, other people or the environment.

A commitment to partnerships with families:

- Communicating and working collaboratively with parents/guardians and families in relation to their child's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships.
- Providing guidance to parents/guardians and volunteers through positive role modelling and, when appropriate, clear and respectful directions.
- Ensuring that any continuing challenges with a child's behaviour are discussed with the family and any agreed upon approaches or plans are documented (refer to *Interactions with Children Policy – Attachment 1 – Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour guidance plan*).
- Ensuring that behaviour challenges, consultations and referrals will be treated within the guidelines of the *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*.
- Co-operating with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required.
- Ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order that all requirements in the court order are adhered to.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading and complying with the Positive Relationships, *Interactions and Behaviour Support Policy*
- Maintaining a respectful and professional relationship with staff.
- Engaging in open communication with educators about their child.
- Informing educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling).
- Informing educators/staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or about the effects of other children's behaviour is having on their child.
- Working collaboratively with educators/staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.
- Following the complaints and grievance procedure.

Volunteers and students and SCOPE additional assistants, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures under the guidance and supervision of GRPSA staff.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- Regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness.
- Monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy.
- Keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice.
- Revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required.
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour guidance plan.

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Goulburn Region Preschool Association Inc on 12th November 2012

Reviewed and Approved: 24th September 2016

Reviewed and Approved: 8th April 2019

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REVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 2028

ATTACHMENT 1

Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour support plan

These procedures recommend steps that services can follow to develop a behaviour support 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 *Definitions*). Challenging behaviour is best managed through a collaborative strategy developed between service staff and parents/guardians.

Excluding a child from the service should only be as 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/guardians and family, and the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, educators and other professionals involved in the education and care of the child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).

Procedures

Step 1 – Observe

- 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

Invite parents/guardians to a meeting to discuss:

- 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 *Definitions*), referral for specialist assessment and additional adult support (written consent is required from parents/guardians before any intervention/assessment is undertaken)
- any other matter that will assist with the development of a behaviour guidance plan.

Step 3 – Consult

- If appropriate, and with the permission of parents/guardians, 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.
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Step 4 – Develop

Develop an individual behaviour support plan, based on consultation with the child's parents/guardians and other support agencies, that is:

- Appropriate to the needs of the child and accepted/agreed to by parents/guardians and other professionals involved in the education and care of that child
- Discuss implementation of positive behaviour support strategies such as:
 - Visual supports
 - Gestural cues
 - Verbal prompting
 - Redirection
 - Regulation techniques
 - Sensory adjustments (such as providing quiet spaces, weighted blankets or 'heavy work').
- Respecting individual abilities, needs, cultural practices and beliefs in all interactions, both verbal and non-verbal.
- Clear and easy to follow for all educators, staff, parents/guardians and/or volunteers/students working with the child.
- Acknowledging that when there is an immediate danger of a child being hurt or hurting others (or as part of a behaviour support plan), it may be necessary for an educator to take a child to an alternative learning environment or space, to support the child to calm down and/or self-regulate their emotions and return to a calm state at their own pace.
 - The educator can later take the opportunity to help the child explore their emotions, identify what happened and what they may have done differently (recognising that in the heat of highly emotive moments, it can be challenging for children to think or talk about what made them feel the emotion).
 - The educator can use photos, visual cues and social stories to support communication and positive interactions.

Step 5 – Implement

- Setting up learning environments and supervision plans to identify triggers and/or sources of challenging behaviour and:
 - Endeavouring to understand the child in the context of the family, culture and community.
 - Staying calm and promoting consistency.
 - Using positive reinforcement and positive behaviour supports.
 - Communicating in clear, simple, developmentally appropriate language.
 - Collaborating with other staff to ensure consistency and proactive strategies.
 - Documenting and reflecting on behaviours and strategies
- Ensuring that when setting limits, the child's attention is gained, instructions are given in a calm and clear manner, staff are consistent in their approach, and praise co-operation.
- Staff are encouraged to ignore minor inappropriate behaviour and redirect child to another activity as appropriate.
- Recognising when a child's behaviour is unsafe, such as hitting, kicking, spitting, punching, biting, etc, and the above positive behaviour guidance has been unsuccessful in modifying behaviour, a child can be removed from the activity for time away with a staff member nearby to monitor safety of all the children.

Step 6 – Monitor and review

- Continually review, reflect, evaluate and revise the strategies that have been implemented.
- Communicate with the parents/guardians regarding the child's progress and involve them in evaluating and revising the strategies.
- Consider further referrals to support agencies. (for example: PSFO, Maternal Child Health, Orange Door).

Roles and responsibilities

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

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there is a behaviour support 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/guardians 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, DE 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.

All Early Childhood Staff are responsible for:

- Observing children's challenging behaviour and identifying the need to develop a behaviour support plan to support a child in self-managing their own behaviour.
- Assisting the Nominated Supervisors to develop a behaviour support plan in consultation with parents/guardian and other professionals as appropriate.
- 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/guardians of the child concerned to develop and implement a behaviour support plan.
- Implementing a behaviour support plan and incorporating identified strategies and resources into the service program.
- Consulting the *Complaints and Grievances Policy* to ensure compliance with service procedures, and regulatory and legislative requirements.
- Investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer, specialist children's services officers from DE or other agencies working with the child.
- Undertaking relevant training that will enable them to guide children who exhibit challenging behaviour.

- Maintaining ongoing communication and consultation with parents/guardians.
- Setting clear timelines for review and evaluation of the behaviour support plan.
- Providing regular progress reports to the Approved Provider on the implementation and effectiveness of the agreed strategies contained in an individual behaviour guidance plan.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of information provided by parents/guardians unless written consent is provided to disclose information to relevant parties.
- Providing their observations, professional evaluation and expertise in reviewing individual behaviour support plans.
- Providing other information, as relevant, to the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisors to assist with the resolution of any issues.