

Interactions with Children

Rationale and Policy Considerations

Developing responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children promotes their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security. Positive interactions with children convey to them that they are valued as competent and capable individuals, and children develop confidence in their ability to express themselves, manage their feelings, learn new skills and take risks to extend their capabilities.

Positive and responsive one-to-one interactions with babies and toddlers are important for their wellbeing and encourage them to thrive. Babies and toddlers need a secure base of trusting relationships with adults before they are ready to explore and learn about their world.

Older children need assistance from educators and other important adults in their lives to guide their interactions with their peers and others as they explore their identity and develop more complex social skills and relationships.

The Education and Care Services National Regulations requires the service to have a policy on interactions with children. The National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care requires that the rights and interests of children are paramount, and the approved learning frameworks identify developing secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships as one of the principles that reflects contemporary theories and research evidence concerning children's learning and early childhood pedagogy.

Philosophy

Documented approach to the development of secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships; approach to access and participation, and commitment to quality outcomes for children; approach to educator/staff professionalism and responsible conduct

Legislation and Government Requirements

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010(Vic) (or corresponding legislation)

Education and Care Services National Regulations

The National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care

Children's needs

Educators develop warm relationships with children; respect children's opinions; provide children with opportunities to become self reliant and develop self esteem; maintain children's dignity and rights; and provide children with positive guidance and support towards acceptable behaviour

Families' needs

Their children are respected and liked; educators develop responsive, warm, trusting relationships with children and their families; children are happy and feel safe and secure at the service; educators are responsive to their child's strengths, interests, capabilities and background

Educator/Staff needs

Educators to support each other and reflect on ways to improve relationships and interactions with children and their families; access to up-to-date training and resources on effective communication; opportunities to model appropriate communication and interactions with children; organisational culture that supports and encourages open and trusting interactions; time to actively engage with children.

Management needs

Educators/staff and nominated supervisor/coordinator to interact in a respectful and cooperative manner and be positive role models for children; to budget for adequate educator/staff training

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010(Vic) – Section 3(2)(b); 3(3)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f); 165-166; 168

Education and Care Services National Regulations –155, 156, 168(j)

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (Oct. 2011) – Standard 1.1; Standard 1.2; Element 2.1.2; Element 2.3.4; Element 4.1.1; Standard 5.1; Standard 5.2; Standard 6.2.; Element 7.1.5

Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – Principles: 1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships; 2. Partnerships 3. High expectations and equity 4. Respect for diversity – Practice: Holistic approaches; Responsiveness to children; Learning through play; Intentional teaching; Learning environment, Cultural competence; Continuity of learning and transitions – Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 5

Framework for School Age Care in Australia – Principles: 1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships; 2. Partnerships 3. High expectations and equity 4. Respect for diversity – Practice: Holistic approaches; Collaboration with children; Learning through play; Intentionality; Environments; Cultural competence; Continuity and transitions – Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 5

Policy Statement

The education and care service aims to develop responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with each enrolled child through taking the time to genuinely listen and talk with children and their families. Educators/staff relate to the children, their families, and to each other, in a friendly, caring and sensitive manner, valuing each individual and the unique contribution they make. The service aims to create an environment in which children feel they are valued members of their community, and in which their sense of belonging and wellbeing is supported. Educators will achieve this through providing consistent emotional support that will nurture the development of children's self esteem and assist them to acquire the skills and understandings they need to interact positively with others.

Strategies for Policy Implementation

Nurturing positive interactions with children

- As each child arrives at the service they will be greeted by an educator/staff member.
- Educators will be supportive and encouraging and engage in one to one and small group communications with children in a friendly, positive and respectful manner. They will form warm relationships with each child in their care.
- Educators/staff use children's names and get down to the child's eye level when communicating with them, and ensure that their interactions are both meaningful and personal.
- Educators/staff create a relaxed and happy atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly and genuine interactions with all educators, the nominated supervisor/coordinator, and other staff members at the service.
- Educators instigate many playful social interactions with children including conversations, songs, rhymes, finger plays, peek-a-boo games, sharing books or stories.
- Educators/staff respect each child's uniqueness, are attuned to and respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and will use the child's own language, communication styles and culture to enhance their interactions.

- Educators/staff assist children to learn to communicate and interact positively and cooperatively with their peers through modelling appropriate communication and responding positively to children at all times.
- Educators encourage children to communicate their own ideas in a respectful and courteous way, and will respond appropriately to children's non-verbal cues.
- Educators/staff show empathy, respect and understanding when communicating with children and model this in their interactions with adults.
- Children will never be singled out or made to feel inadequate at any time.
- Educators/staff comfort children who are upset, or are showing signs of distress, and help them to feel safe, secure and understood.
- Educators ensure routines such as toileting, nappy change and rest times are used for positive one to one interactions with children and a time when they can get to know more about the child's likes, dislikes, interests, joys, fears etc.
- Babies are supported to build trusting attachments with one or two educators in order to develop a secure base for their exploration and learning.
- Educators/staff Interact with children during meal times in a relaxed, unhurried manner, in which the enjoyment of foods and the social aspect of meal times is promoted.
- Educators/staff are genuinely interested in each child's own interests and needs, and take the time to fully understand what children are doing or saying, listening to their responses and asking open ended questions.
- Educators make sure they are available to give children their full attention as they arrive at the service after school and invite children to chat about their day and to share their news.
- Children are encouraged to share their feelings or thoughts, and express different viewpoints about matters that affect them.
- Educators/staff share humour with children and are playful and friendly in their interactions.
- Educators/staff respect children's desire not to engage in conversations or interactions at certain times or for particular reasons.

Involving children in decision making

- Educators will genuinely seek children's input, respect their ideas and take their suggestions on board.
- Young children will be encouraged to make decisions about:
 - the experiences or activities they would like to do;
 - the materials and resources they would like to use and how they would like to use them;
 - where they would like to play (i.e. indoors or outdoors)
 - who they want to play with, or whether they wish to play alone;
 - the adults with whom they feel most comfortable;
 - when and what they would like to eat;
 - how they prefer to sleep or rest;
 - whether they need to use the toilet or have a nappy changed.
- Older children will be encouraged to make decisions about:
 - what experiences are included in the learning program;
 - what experiences they will participate in;
 - the friends they choose to spend time with;
 - planning the afternoon snack menu;
 - appropriate rules or boundaries;

- planning excursions or incursions;
- setting up the environment;
- the introduction of hobbies or clubs.

Encouraging families to share information about the child

- Educators will use information gained from families to enhance their interactions with children and continue to build children's sense of wellbeing and belonging.
- Educator's will encourage families to share important information about their child through:
 - initiating regular on-going communications with families in a manner that promotes the development of strong relationships that are based on mutual respect, trust and understanding;
 - encouraging families to share their thoughts, ideas, questions and concerns, and promoting supportive partnerships between families, educators and the service;
 - treating all families equitably without bias or judgement;
 - recognising that each family is unique and valuing this uniqueness.

Educator/staff communications with each other

- The service recognises that the way educators/staff interact with each other has an effect on the interactions they have with children and families.
- Educators/staff will role model warm and supportive interactions as they interact with each other.
- Educators/staff will convey mutual respect and recognition of each other's strengths and skills through:
 - recognising each other's strengths and valuing the different work each does;
 - working collaboratively to reach decisions which will enhance the quality of the education and care service;
 - welcoming diverse views and perspectives;
 - working together as a team and engaging in open and honest communication at all times;
 - respecting each other's feelings;
 - developing and sharing networks and links with other agencies;
 - resolving differences promptly and positively and using the experience to learn more effective methods of working together;
 - using calm, friendly voices with each other.

Procedures

Services may find the following list of example procedures, useful tools in the implementation of this policy. List your services precise steps for achieving each action. Ask yourself when, how, where and who is responsible for what actions.

- Children's Interest Inventory
- Educator/staff Code of Ethics
- Grievance procedures
- Orientation checklists
- Procedure for welcoming children and families to the service
- Procedure for seeking children's input in decision making
- Survey forms (family and child input)

Links to other policies

The following policies may be linked to this policy:

- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Educational Programs
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Equal Opportunity
- Establishing a Protective Environment
- Excursions and Transport
- **FDC Educators Monitoring Support and Supervision**
- Grievances and Complaints Management
- Guiding and Supporting Children's Behaviour
- Partnerships and Communication with Families

Further sources

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POLICY CREATED DATE:

POLICY REVIEW DATE:

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