

## Guiding and Supporting Children's Behaviour Policy

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### Rationale and Policy Considerations

"An important aspect of children's belonging, being and becoming involves them learning how their behaviours and actions affect themselves and others and developing skills to regulate these independently." Positive guidance and support towards acceptable behaviour enables children to learn over time how to manage their feelings, and take responsibility for their own actions.

Older children need guidance and support in making responsible choices and regulating their own behaviour. Children learn to consider alternative behaviours and recognise inappropriate behaviour within the group.

The Education and Care Services National Regulations requires the service to have a written policy on positive guidance of child behaviour that reflects current practice. The use of physical punishment<sup>1</sup> and restraint; physical, verbal or emotional punishment and practices that demean, humiliate, frighten or threaten a child is prohibited.

### Legislation and Government Requirements

- Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012.

### Needs

#### Children's

To have their feelings acknowledged and accepted and be able to express their emotions appropriately; to feel safe and protected; to have their cultural, religious and racial diversity respected; consistent expectations; maintain children's dignity and rights; and provide children with positive guidance and support towards acceptable behaviour

#### Families'

Their children are respected and liked; educators develop responsive, warm, trusting relationships with children and their families; clear guidelines about acceptable behaviours; involvement in determining appropriate strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour; avenues of support for parenting skills; non-judgemental communication from staff.

#### Educators

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 dealing with behaviour issues and ensuring that learning programs are meeting the child's developmental, social, emotional and cognitive needs; support from families and management in dealing with difficult behaviours

#### Management

Educators/staff and nominated supervisor to interact in a respectful and cooperative manner and be positive role models for children; appropriately trained educators and budget to sustain this; support from relevant agencies and professionals to make appropriate decisions in the best interests of the individual child and other children in the education and care setting.

### Scope

This policy is written for children, families, staff and visitors of Merino Court Childcare Centre

### Policy Statement

The purpose of the service's Guiding and Supporting Children's Behaviour Policy is to:

- encourage acceptable forms of behaviour by using strategies that build children's confidence and self-esteem;
- provide children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their emotions and develop ways to appropriately control their own behaviour; and
- promote collaborative approaches to behaviour guidance and support between the service's stakeholders and/or external agencies.

Behaviour guidance and support is a process that focuses on the 'whole' child. The education and care service will provide a secure, respectful and stimulating environment which encourages children to co-operate, enhances their self-esteem and encourages their ability to interact with others, and where acceptable behaviour is promoted and any recriminations are kept to a minimum. The educators/staff will endeavour to build relationships with children based on mutual respect and trust.

The service recognises and understands that a child's behaviour may be affected by their:

- age and development;
- level of familiarity with the service's routines and play limits i.e. when they first start education and care, children may not understand what behaviour is expected of them;
- general health and wellbeing;
- relationships with their family;
- play and learning environments, which includes the physical indoor/outdoor settings, the weather, the time of year, the time of day;
- educator's teaching strategies and caring practices, which includes how those strategies are implemented;
- relationship with other children and stakeholders, such as students, volunteers and visitors; and
- external factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences, or media coverage of traumatic events

Educators will encourage children to talk about any concerns they may have, and will ensure the program reflects and encourages core values such as friendliness, acceptance, respect, kindness, tolerance and co-operation. Educators will always listen and respond to children when incidents of bullying, violence or harassment are reported or observed, and will act to eliminate such incidents at the service. Where a child continues to behave in an unacceptable manner, families will be consulted to establish behaviour support strategies, which ensure that children are treated with the same respect and empathy as an adult would expect.

Merino Court Childcare Centre will provide a loving, safe environment, which encourages children to explore and cooperate and which seeks to enhance children's independence and social interaction skills. Unicef rights of the child state in Article 31 (Leisure, play and culture), that children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

## **Policy Principles**

### **Creating the right environment**

- Educators create environments with sufficient space that are likely to encourage positive social interactions.
- Children initiating their own experience using equipment and resources that they can access independently.
- Educators plan experiences in which children practice cooperating, sharing and helping, and point out the advantages of behaving this way.
- How children move from one experience to another is planned to allow smooth transitions and limit interruptions for other children.
- Adequate resources are provided to reduce conflict, but still provide opportunities for children to share.
- Educators provide experiences that challenge and interest the children.

### **Positive behaviour guidance strategies**

- Educators build relationships with children that are safe, secure, and convey respect.
- Educators show their respect by using normal tone and volume when speaking with children; allowing older children greater freedom and responsibility in recognition of their developmental stage; and working co-operatively with children to solve problems. Shouting at children is not acceptable.
- Children's appropriate behaviours are acknowledged so that children know when they have acted positively.
- Positive behaviours are encouraged by diverting children to more appropriate experiences, showing appreciation for appropriate behaviour and building on each child's strengths and achievements.
- Children are encouraged to express their feelings in acceptable ways and to settle their differences in a peaceful manner. Educators talk to children about the types of emotions they experience and how to recognise similar feelings in the future.
- Educators listen to children's needs and provide them with opportunities to work through their emotions independently. Children's attempts to deal with their emotions are acknowledged and supported.
- Educators will help all children to understand how their behaviour affects others and will ensure children's self-initiated play:
  - does not make any other child feel frightened or intimidated;
  - respects the rights and feelings of others;
  - is not overly boisterous or loud; and
  - is valued and supported.
- Educators will always model behaviour that encourages inclusion, a sense of fairness, empathy and co-operation with others.
- Swearing and inappropriate language by children, staff or families will not be tolerated.
- Children will not be placed in time out, but rather spoken to about the behaviour and redirected to another experience.

### **Setting Limits**

- Clear guidelines about acceptable behaviours are developed with input from children, families, educators/staff and management. Families are consulted about expected child behaviours at the service at the enrolment interview and through communication strategies such as the Parent Handbook, service newsletters, and daily contact with their child's educator.
- Limits to behaviour will be clearly expressed in positive terms and reinforced consistently in a developmentally appropriate way.
- Children are involved in establishing play and safety limits in the service, which reflect recommended best practices, and the consequences involved when limits are not adhered to.
- Younger children will be given safety and behaviour guidance limits by their educators as they need direction to understand what is acceptable and appropriate in particular situations.
- Educators will negotiate with older children and involve them in setting agreed rules and behaviour limits to encourage ownership of the limits and responsibility for their own behaviour.

### **Challenging Behaviours**

- The service believes that developing a supportive relationship with the children encourages them to learn skills in self-control. Punishing a child stops the negative behaviour for a while but does not teach the child self-restraint. The consequences of negative behaviour will be discussed with the child and will be consistently followed through. No further punishment will be given and the child will be reminded in positive terms of the expected behaviour.
- Educators will label the negative behaviour and not the individual child, so that it is always the behaviour that is being managed and not the child.
- A "cooling off" period may be needed so the child can calm down before discussing what happened and sharing their feelings with the educator, who will in turn talk about their own feelings and responsibilities with the child. Educators will always talk to the child quietly and as an equal, and

preferably away from the rest of the group. Time out to cool down will vary from child to child and may include:

- listening quietly to soothing music;
  - sitting quietly with the educator;
  - doing something physical i.e. kicking a ball;
  - sitting quietly with a book;
  - being left alone (but not out of sight of the educator).
- Where a dispute or conflict occurs educators will talk separately to all the children involved, be calm, fair, positive and firm in their assessment of the situation. Wherever possible the children will be involved in deciding on the appropriate course of action to follow. Educators will not react to conflict situations by getting angry themselves as this could inflame the situation further. If an educator feels they are unable to control their anger in a particular situation, they will ask for assistance from another educator while they remove themselves from the incident to cool down.
  - No child will be isolated for any reason other than illness or accident for any period of time. Children will be supervised by an educator at all times.
  - No child will receive any form of corporal punishment, punishment by solitary confinement, punishment by physical restraint or other demeaning, humiliating or frightening punishment, or withheld food or drink as a form of punishment. Article 19 (Protection from all forms of violence): Any form of discipline involving violence is unacceptable. Therefore, **No child will receive any form of corporal punishment e.g. smacked, placed in a room alone, made immobile, frightened or humiliated in any way.**
  - Staff will not make statements to children that cannot be followed through.
  - Parents/Guardians who wish to discipline their own children whilst in the service will not at any time use any form of corporal punishment or use unacceptable language.
  - Non-enrolled children in the company of their parents/guardians will be required to conform to service policy on acceptable behaviour. If a parent/guardian is not able to control their non-enrolled child's behaviour they will be asked to remove the child from the service.

### **Biting and Hitting**

- Biting and hitting are normal behaviours in the development of most children, usually influenced by stage of verbal communication skills. If a child bites or hits another the following procedures will apply:
  - Educators will attend first to the victim to comfort the child and assess their injuries. First aid will be applied in accordance with the centre's Accident Policy.
  - While attending to the victim (or immediately afterwards) the educator will talk about the incident with the biter/hitter, explaining the consequences of his/her action, in words they will understand. The educator will show their disapproval for the child's actions using tone of voice and facial expressions, and encourage the child to "help" make the victim feel better through positive and gentle touching. The educator will suggest an alternative action to biting or hitting i.e. tell the child to say "My turn please", and will follow this up by encouraging the biter/hitter to ask for a turn and making sure he/she does have a turn.
  - An **Accident/Illness/Trauma Report Form** will be completed. Parents of victims do not need to know who bit their child.
  - A record of what happened will be made including how the situation arose and why the child bit or hit. This information will help educators to prevent a repeat incident.
- If biting or hitting is an on-going concern with a particular child his/her parents will be informed and strategies developed that are consistent between home and the service.

### **Bullying**

- Whenever an incident of bullying is reported to, or observed by an educator, they will:
  - Intervene immediately to stop the bullying behaviour.
  - Talk to the bully and to the victim separately. If more than one child is involved in perpetrating the bullying, talk to each child separately, in quick succession.
  - Consult with other educators to get a wider reading on the problem, and to alert them to the incident.

- Minor incidents will be resolved with positive guidance to redirect the bully, reassure the victim, and aim to achieve reconciliation between the bully and the victim.
- Educators will understand that bullies often try to minimise or deny their actions and responsibilities.
- Educators will tell the bully why their behaviour was unacceptable. They will tell them what behaviour they do expect of them.
- Educators will reassure the victim that all possible steps will be taken to prevent a re-occurrence of the bullying, and will ensure that appropriate measures are taken to achieve this i.e. careful monitoring of the children involved; establishment of a signal system for the victim to call for help etc.
- Any serious or repeated incidents will be reported to children's families. Parents/guardians of the bully and the victim will be informed as soon as practicable. Depending on the situation this could be immediately through a telephone call, or when they come to collect their child at the end of the day.
- Parents/guardians will be involved in designing a behaviour guidance management plan whenever possible.
- For victims this will involve helping the child to make appropriate friends and develop their social skills and confidence. Specific instruction in assertiveness skills may also be helpful.
- For bullies the plan would involve specific programs to modify their behaviour, including increased supervision, anger management skills, encouragement and recognition for their efforts towards non-violent responsible behaviour. If incidents of bullying are very serious or repeated and cannot be resolved, and the bully endangers the safety and enjoyment of other children or educators at the program, they may be suspended on a temporary or permanent basis.
- Educators will teach children caring, non-violent, co-operative and tolerant ideas, values and behaviours through:
  - recognising and encouraging positive, friendly and supportive behaviours of children towards each other;
  - modelling positive, respectful, inclusive and nurturing behaviours towards children, families and other educators/staff;
  - planning and implementing co-operative, non-competitive experiences.
- Families are asked to tell an educator if they believe or suspect that bullying has occurred. Families are also asked to support the importance of courtesy, consideration and co-operation in everyday life, with their child.
- Educators will be given opportunities to attend training that will assist them to:
  - identify bullying behaviour;
  - resolve conflicts;
  - manage groups of children; and
  - be assertive.

#### **Managing extreme or persistent behavioural challenges**

- If a child's behaviour places him/herself or another child in danger, educators will act immediately to prevent the danger, and then talk through the problem with the child or children concerned.
- If children consistently display unacceptable behaviour the senior educator in the child's room will ensure:
  - the expectations of the child's behaviour are realistic and appropriate to their developmental level;
  - the child understands the limits;
  - there is no conflict between service and home expectations;
  - the child's needs are being met i.e. adequate storage for personal belongings, adequate nutritional snacks provided, service set up to encourage independence;
  - the child has no impediments which may cause the unacceptable behaviour;
  - the child isn't copying observed behaviour;
  - events at the service have not encouraged the behaviour;

- consequences of the behaviour do not encourage it to persist;
  - strategies are consistently followed by all educators in contact with the child.
- Where children exhibit recurring behavioural challenges the nominated supervisor and the child's educator will work with the child and the child's family to develop a behaviour guidance management plan that is consistently followed between the service and home. The plan will:
  - explain why the displayed behaviour is inappropriate;
  - document inappropriate behaviours that occur consistently;
  - identify triggers to inappropriate behaviours;
  - document emerging patterns of behaviour;
  - define the context in which the behaviour occurs;
  - identify where the behaviour could possibly harm another child or adult;
  - document the appropriate behaviours that are required to replace the inappropriate behaviours;
  - reflect a collaborative approach with the child's family.
- Where school age children exhibit recurring behavioural challenges the nominated supervisor may discuss establishing a behaviour contract with the child, whereby positive behaviour is encouraged and negative behaviour results in consequences that have been agreed to in advance by the child. The contract may also establish a code of signals between the child and the educator, which act as a positive reminder for the child, when their behaviour is becoming unacceptable.
- The nominated supervisor is available to discuss and assist with any concern a family may have in respect of their child's behaviour or participation in the program.
- If the unacceptable behaviour persists the nominated supervisor will jointly with the family seek advice from an appropriate agency or professional.

#### **Excluding a child due to inappropriate behaviours**

- After the child has been given every opportunity to respond positively and if all methods fail to result in an improvement in behaviour, the nominated supervisor will discuss alternative care with the parent/guardian, in consideration of the health and safety of the other children and staff in care.
- Depending on the severity of the behaviour the service may implement the following steps:
  - The approved provider will write to the parent/guardian asking that they attend to their child's challenging behaviour. The service will support the family to access further professional assistance, the child will be given reasonable time to respond positively to new strategies and the family will be supported in this as far as possible.
  - If there is insufficient improvement in the child's behaviour the approved provider will write to the parent to advise them of this, and to explain that the child's attendance at the service is suspended for the next two weeks in order to give the child time to modify his/her behaviour away from the service. After this time the child may return to the service and will be given reasonable time to display a positive change in behaviour.
  - If the child does not demonstrate a positive change in behaviour on their return to the service, the approved provider will write to the parent/guardian to explain that the child's attendance at the service will be suspended until such a time as the behaviour is corrected.
- In the case of severe behaviour which threatens self-harm or bodily harm to educators/staff or other children, the parent/guardian will be informed that the child will be suspended or dismissed immediately.

#### **Related Documents**

- **Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010(Vic)** - Section 3(2)( b); 3(3)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f); 166
- **Education and Care Services National Regulations:** 84; 155-156, 168(j)
- **National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (Oct. 2011)** - Standard 1.1; Element 2.3.1; Element 2.3.4; Element 3.2.2; Standard 4.1; Standard 4.2; Standard 5.1; Standard 5.2; Standard 6.2; Elements 6.3.1, 6.3.2; 6.3.3

- **Early Years Learning Framework for Australia** - Principles: 1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships; 2. Partnerships 4. Respect for diversity - Practice: Holistic approaches; Responsiveness to children; 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 4. Respect for diversity - Practice: Holistic approaches; Collaboration with children; Cultural competence; Continuity and transitions - Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 5
- Accident/Illness/Trauma Report Form
- Behaviour contract
- Behaviour guidance management plan
- Educator/staff Code of Ethics
- Grievance procedures
- Orientation checklists

#### Links to other policies

- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Delivery and Collection of Children
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Educational Programs
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Equal Opportunity
- Excursions and Transport
- Grievances and Complaints Management
- Interactions with Children
- Partnerships and Communication with Families

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#### Further Sources

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**DEEWR Child Care Service Handbook 2011 - 2012;**

*Section 6.5 - What are my services responsibilities to parents?*

*Section 6.6 - What are my responsibilities to children?* - Retrieved 9 May 2012, from [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)

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**Linke, P** - **Dealing with bullying together: Prevention and resolution** - Early Childhood Australia - Research in Practices Series - Vol 16, No 1 2009

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**PSC Queensland - Attention seeking behaviour - Fact sheet** - Retrieved 2 June 2011, from [http://www.noahsark.net.au/PDF/factsheets/Behaviour\\_Attention\\_Seeking.pdf](http://www.noahsark.net.au/PDF/factsheets/Behaviour_Attention_Seeking.pdf)

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#### Document History

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