

# INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY



## Purpose

This policy indicates the ways that are appropriate for staff to interact with the service's children to ensure that they feel safe, supported and respected. It is the responsibility of every staff member to make certain that the dignity and rights of every child are to be maintained at all times at the service.

Emotional development and social relationships are enhanced through thoughtful and sophisticated approaches to conversation, discussion and the promotion of children's language and communication. Children who experience relationships that are built on respect, fairness, cooperation and empathy are given the opportunity to develop these qualities themselves. When children have positive experiences of interactions they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of belonging.

## Responsibilities of the Approved Provider

The Approved Provider of an education and care service must:

- Ensure the service operates in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations 2011 with regard to the delivery and collection of children at all times.
- Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development.
- 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.
- Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor 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
- Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint
- Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service

## Responsibilities of the Nominated Supervisor

The Nominated Supervisor of an education and care service must:

- Guide professional development and practice to promote interactions with children that are positive and respectful through the use of the ECA Code of Ethics and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Establish practice guidelines that ensure interactions with children are given priority and those interactions are authentic, just and respect differences.
- Ensure 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.
- Consider the size and composition of groups to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service.
- Develop and implement 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.

Ensure that staff provides education and care to children in a way that encourages children to express themselves and their opinions and allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.

## Responsibilities of the Educators

The Educators of an education and care service must:

- Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- Acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration and alternative perspectives and social inclusion.

- Respect children's agency and encourage them to express themselves and their opinions.
- Interact with children and families in the manner outlined in the ECA Code of Ethics.
- Maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times.
- Have regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for.
- Offer positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour.
- Ensure that routines such as toileting, nappy change and rest times are used for positive one to one interactions with children and a time that they can get to know more about the child.
- Genuinely seek children's input, respect their ideas and take their suggestions on board.
- Support babies to build trusting attachments with one or two educators in order to develop a secure base for their exploration and learning.
- Form warm relationships with each child.

## **Responsibilities of the Family/Guardian**

The Family/Guardians of an education and care service must:

- Read and comply with this policy.
- Engage in open communication with staff about their child.
- Inform staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, a new sibling).
- Inform staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour.
- Work collaboratively with staff and other to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.

## **Children's rights, Family and Cultural Values**

Interactions within the setting are greatly enhanced when children's rights and family and cultural values are given due consideration and respect. Administrative procedures, initial conversations, documentation and ongoing communication with children and families are a reference point for interactions and a foundation for authentic and respectful communication.

## **Communicating and Listening**

Educators and staff must use listening as a foundation for interactions. Listening is based on observation and in leaving spaces in conversations and communication, suspending judgement and in giving full attention to children as they communicate. Truly attending to children's communication promotes a strong culture of listening.

## **Communicating with Young Babies**

Each baby is born with an enormous capacity for learning. Language development illustrates this, whereby a baby, born with no language, learns to comprehend speech and in turn speak, within a relatively short period. Babies are born primed for the social and emotional interactions and communications that will allow them to develop into skilled, culturally knowledgeable participants and communicators.

Initially, communication is dominated by the baby's immediate needs for food, rest, comfort and sleep. But babies also have social needs for interaction. From birth babies respond to voices and imitate facial expressions, cooing and gurgling, attempting to make sounds, squealing with delight or giggling at something amusing. In this way they are responding to stimulus provided by their environment, as well as the people with whom they are having interactive communication.

Communication with babies involves symbols and signs, not just spoken words. Conversations are not limited to spoken words, but involve a wider repertoire of communicated, meaningful verbal and non-verbal exchanges, they

should also be considered dialogues, not monologues. *What is distinctive about conversation with any person is turn-taking, with both recipients responding to the cues and messages of the other.*

In order to effectively interact with babies, staff will:

- talk to babies to establish the pattern of turn-taking, this transforms communication into a conversation; “talk”, pause for, and listen to the babies response, then “reply”.
- interpret and respond to the babies communication, whether it is verbal or non-verbal, ie observing a baby’s reaction to a toy and moving it towards the baby if they are showing and interest in it. This in turn creates a catalyst for a conversation with the baby about the features of the toy.
- communicate with babies face-to-face and use eye contact. Facing each other allows the carer to focus attention on the baby’s full repertoire of communications and helps the baby develop the skills of learning to link facial expressions with tone of voice. It also allows the staff member to recognise if the baby is becoming over-stimulated or is tiring of the conversation.
- allow the baby to initiate conversations by observing what the baby’s interest is, whether it is something in the service’s environment or other children.
- recognise that babies like repetition and game playing in the course of conversations. They delight in anticipating a response from the staff member.
- recognise that babies have varying capacities for attention, and conversations can vary in duration and intensity.
- use opportunities throughout the daily routines to have conversations, ie feeding times, bottle feeding and nappy changes.
- always modulate their voice so as not to startle the babies.

## **Children and Families**

A culture of respectful interaction is promoted when children’s attempts to communicate are valued. Turn taking and regulating children’s conversations promotes active engagement. Respectful communication with families generates greater confidence in interacting.

## **Reflection and Consideration**

Time is dedicated to reflecting upon interactions within children. Reflections should consider how to spend extended periods engaged in interactions with children that comprise communication and listening.

## **Role Modelling**

Educators model positive interactions when they:

- Show care, empathy and respect for children, educators and staff and families;
- Learn and use effective communication strategies.

## **Principles for Behavioural Management**

Staff respect individual children’s needs and differences in age, ability and experience regarding issues surrounding behaviour management and they are happy to discuss individual family expectations with parents. There may be times when staff will need to negotiate management strategies with parents to suit the needs of individual children.

- Wherever possible, children and staff will negotiate and determine boundaries and rules
- Rules will be reasonable considering the age, development and individual characteristics of the children
- Rules will be consistently enforced
- Children will be encouraged for desirable behaviour
- It is the behaviour that is praised or criticised, not the child

- Staff to present a good example through positive role modelling
- Children are encouraged to make appropriate choices

## The Role of the Staff

In response to unacceptable behaviour, staff:

- Redirect the child or remove the child from the situation if necessary
- Advise children of the consequences of continuing with the behaviour
- Remind children of desirable behaviour
- Explain to children how behaviour results in consequences
- Actively listen to children's feelings and discuss the rules
- Help children to return to play

## Related Statutory Obligations & Considerations

**Australian Childhood Foundation:** [www.childhood.org.au](http://www.childhood.org.au)

**Australian Human Rights Commission:** [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

**Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) -** [www.acacqa.gov.au](http://www.acacqa.gov.au)

**Children (Education and Care National Law Application) Act 2010**

**Education and Care National Regulations 2011**

**Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998**

**Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998**

**Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)**

**The Supporting young children's rights:** Statement of intent (2015-2018) [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:** [www.unicef.org.au](http://www.unicef.org.au)

## Related Telephone Numbers

- Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate 1800-619-113

## Amendment History

Version	Amendment	Short Description
01.01.2018	Clarification of responsibilities	Further information provided regarding authentic interaction

This policy will be updated to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements every year. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with Regulation 172 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulation*, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Date:	2 <sup>nd</sup> January 2018
Version:	1.1.2018
Last Amended By:	Heather Sheridan
Next Review:	January 2019
Position:	Nominated Supervisor