

Policy 6.13 Interactions with Children

Purpose of Policy

To create an environment that promotes equitable and respectful relationships between staff and children.

This policy recognises the importance of an environment that promotes positive relationships and behaviours, both between staff members and between staff and the children in their care. It emphasises that children have the same rights as adults. It acknowledges, values and celebrates the differences and similarities that exist in all persons.

Policy statement

- Children are treated with the same respect and empathy as an adult would expect.
- Staff use strategies that build children's confidence and self-esteem; provide children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their own behaviour; and promote collaborative behaviours between the service's stakeholders and/or external agencies.
- We model the values, attitudes and current recommended strategies that promote positive play behaviours and patterns.
- We respect the importance of interactions and relationships between children, families and staff.
- We understand why children behave in certain ways in specific circumstances.
- We promote realistic play and behaviour limits that guide children's safety and security rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity.

BCCC Responsibilities

1. Managing behaviours, not children

We recognise and understand that a child's behaviour may be affected by their age and development; 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; staff/carers' caregiving strategies and practices (which includes how those strategies are implemented); relationships 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.

Families and staff display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and not the individual child. This means that behaviours are managed, not children. Staff, other children and families refrain from labelling a child's inappropriate or negative behaviour as 'naughty' or 'bad'. Similarly, traditional labels such as 'good boy' or 'good girl' identify the individual but not the positive behaviour. For example, when a

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child completes a task directed by an adult, such as washing their hands before a meal, we respond with 'thank you (child's name) for washing your hands with soap before lunch' or 'thank you for remembering to clean your hands before you eat'.

2. Behaviour guidance

Staff who are implementing behaviour guidance strategies and/or plans for children who display inappropriate behaviours, (especially if the behaviour is aggressive towards other children or adults) receive continued support and assistance. BCCC has a duty of care to ensure that employees' mental and emotional wellbeing is considered, as well as the child's need for positive behaviour guidance strategies.

The use of physical punishment, isolation, humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.

Guidelines that can assist staff when recognising and implementing behaviour guidance strategies and practices:

- Staff respond to, and acknowledge children's emotions, such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride.
- Staff acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant.
- Staff understand that children may not have developed the appropriate strategies to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Staff attitudes and caregiving strategies demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their development and/or general disposition.

3. Indoor outdoor programme

The running of an indoor outdoor programme and strategies such as the use of progressive morning and afternoon tea, give children the freedom to immerse themselves in play that is uninterrupted by the need for rigid routines and enforced waiting times.

4. Communication

- We provide families with support and information regarding the use of positive language. We use 'I' messages and positive and respectful language when communicating with children, eg 'I feel...'
- We get down to the child's level when communicating with them and make sure that they are listening.
- Children are encouraged to participate cooperatively, and to 'help' when possible.
- Children are assisted to recognise and label their feelings and are also assisted to develop an awareness and respect for other people's feelings.
- Clear expectations and limits are set in cooperation with the children where possible.
- Children are redirected where necessary through options or choices.

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5. Establishing limits

- Children are involved in establishing play and safety limits, which reflect recommended best practices, and the consequences involved when limits are not adhered to.
- Reflective questions engage children to think about their practices and environment.
- Encourage children to develop their play through learning the limits of acceptable behaviour (such as walking when inside) and the consequence for not following limits (redirection to alternative activity). This strategy aims to reinforce ownership of the centre's practices and create a sense of belonging.
- Defining limits in terms of a 'positive' instead of a 'negative' assists children to remember what to do rather than what not to do. For example, 'children walk inside' is preferable to 'children do not run inside'.
- Establishing limits depends on the developmental level of children. Younger children require safety and guidance limits established for them by adults, while staff can vary their communication style and language with older children to negotiate limit setting.

6. Establishing spaces

- Children are involved in establishing play and learning spaces in the environment which includes areas where children can find solace, peace and relaxation.
- Environments need active, loud and energetic play spaces balanced with passive, quiet and peaceful areas. BCCC endeavours to provide both types of spaces, especially for those children who recognise that they require time apart from their peers.

7. Support

- Opportunities are provided for children to seek information that can assist them in dealing with their emotions.
- Children are aware of and able to enlist adult support and receive information when required.
- Educators are encouraged to access external support agencies and Early Intervention Services to support educators in working effectively with children.

References

- National Quality Standard 5.1 – Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.
- National Quality Standard 5.2 – Each Child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Melbourne City Childcare Centre Policy Manual
- The Children's Centre (East Geelong) policy manual
- Articles 29 & 31, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)