

GUIDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR POLICY



USEFUL DEFINITIONS

Social Competency: The social skills, attitudes and abilities the child demonstrates through the environment, other children, staff, their family and the community. For example: The child's ability to show responsiveness and sensitivity to the social context and to others; the child's capacity for humour, empathy and participation in the program; the ability to initiate and sustain positive contact with others and counter play rejections with alternative options.

Attachment: The emotional connection between the child and an adult that helps the child to feel secure, valued, needed and capable. Attachment influences the child's sense of worth and their capacity to form relationships with others.

Positive Relationships: Characteristics of positive relationships include: respect, trust, responsiveness, interest, authenticity, humour, delight, inquiry, engagement, shared story telling.

Emotionally available: The extent to which the adult is observant, responsive and present to the child's cues, feelings and needs

Social context: The environmental, cultural and social elements and group dynamics that impact on the child's learning and experiences as a member of the kindergarten/day care, family and the community.

VALUES

- ▶ Young children are developing the skills they need to communicate with others and participate as a member of a group. They need support and understanding from adults as they practice and refine these skills and learn to get along with others.
- ▶ Young children who have positive attachments and relationships with their families and teachers are more likely to feel secure and confident in child care and kindergarten settings. Such confidence supports the child in their day to day interactions with others and their environment.
- ▶ Adults who have positive relationships with children have a greater potential to influence children's behaviour.
- ▶ Adults who strive to :
 - Recognise children as competent and capable members of the childcare/kindergarten community
 - "Listen to" and attempt to understand the messages young children convey through their behaviour, feelings, expressions and play
 - Be emotionally available, responsive and approachable and are well situated to support young children in building social competency and relationships with others
- ▶ Each child brings with them their own unique family and cultural experiences and beliefs, personality, temperament, strengths and abilities. Staff who consider children in this social and cultural context are able to build mutually respectful relationships with children and families.
- ▶ The environments in which children live and learn and the way adults respond to children has an impact on:
 - children's ability to relate confidently with others
 - their emotional and mental health- e.g.: managing feelings and sense of self-worth and esteem
 - educational success
- ▶ Some children have great difficulty in managing emotions and impulses, in expressing ideas and needs and in relating to others. It is important that staff and families work together in partnership to understand and support children and each other.

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- ▶ When staff and parents are finding it difficult to support children it can be helpful to seek additional input from other professionals which may include but are not limited to: Sparkways Area Managers, Sparkways Community and Development Worker, Community health, Speech pathologists, psychologists, preschool field officers, inclusion support facilitators
- ▶ The environment has an impact on children's behaviour. Aesthetic Environments that are carefully planned to incorporate calm colours, uncluttered spaces, indoor outdoor play, use of natural materials, open ended experiences and opportunities for uninterrupted and unhurried play support children's learning and their sense of competence. Such environments encourage children to explore, investigate and create in small groups with their peers and teachers. Staff act to encourage and facilitate positive approaches to interacting, conflict resolution, expression of feelings and care and respect for self, others and the environment.

PURPOSE

To maximise the potential for each child to be able to relate effectively to others; to manage and express feelings and emotions; to participate and contribute as a compassionate and constructive member of the community.

PROCEDURES

In relation to the family, staff will:

- ▶ Each child's behaviour, interactions and relationships are guided effectively.
- ▶ Behaviour guidance strategies preserve the dignity and rights of the child at all times.
- ▶ Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
- ▶ Be respectful of cultural and social beliefs and values,
- ▶ Develop positive relationships with families,
- ▶ Share positive information about children with families on a regular basis,
- ▶ Consult with families when challenges arise,
- ▶ Work cooperatively with families to develop strategies to support children's behaviour,
- ▶ Maintain confidentiality at all times,
 - Carefully plan environments so they are welcoming, safe, supportive and inclusive,
 - Abide by Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, regulation 181.

In relation to children

- ▶ Be aware of the factors that influence a given situation: age, ability, experience, culture, environment, attachment, personality and temperament.
- ▶ Be emotionally available to children by recognising that their behaviour and often "misbehaviour" indicates that they are in need of attention or affection.
- ▶ When children approach adults, they engage with them, they are sensitive, responsive and playful.
- ▶ Help set fair and consistent rules and limits for children while at the same time being able to negotiate with children.
- ▶ Encourage children to respect themselves and their peers and to value similarities and differences.
- ▶ Encourage children to take responsibility for their actions and to realise that there are consequences.
- ▶ Assist children to identify, express and distinguish feelings in appropriate ways.
- ▶ Support children in expressing their feelings while helping them to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of others (empathy).

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- ▶ Assist children in monitoring and reflecting on their own behaviour.
- ▶ Support children in understanding that hurting others physically – on the outside – and emotionally – on the inside – is not ok. It is never ok to make unfair or unkind comments about another’s identity or beliefs.
- ▶ Use a range of strategies including: encouragement of positive behaviours, redirection of behaviour, model problem solving.

In relation to self and other staff

- ▶ Work together as a team to implement this policy and agreed individualised plans
- ▶ Focus on what the team can do to make a difference rather than what the child is doing wrong
- ▶ Develop environments that promote collaborative and engaged play and interactions
- ▶ Maintain confidentiality while sharing information, resources and approaches
- ▶ Reflect together on strategies and learn from each other
- ▶ Report any major concerns to your supervisor or next in charge
- ▶ Participate in professional development opportunities to strengthen and build expertise in this area
- ▶ Keep abreast of current and innovative approaches to guiding children’s behaviour

Families will

- ▶ Choose to share information about their child’s needs and interests as they feel comfortable,
- ▶ Work together with staff to develop and support strategies for their children when challenges arise,
- ▶ Be invited to attend meetings at suitably convenient times if required,
- ▶ Provide feedback to the staff on the strategies they use.

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- ▶ Provide professional development and support to staff,
- ▶ Support staff and families when requested in the development of behaviour plans for staff and children,
- ▶ Support services in locating and accessing necessary support services,
- ▶ Support staff through observations and suggestions if requested by the service and authorised by the parent.

Strategies

Children tend to behave appropriately if they are engaged in functional, worthwhile, interesting activities at their developmental levels in predictable environments.

Direct

- ▶ Use of positive language modelled by carer acknowledging the child’s age/stage of development.
- ▶ Set clear consistent guidelines giving simple explanations and offering alternatives so that a child can make choices.
- ▶ Actively listen to children acknowledging their feeling and support their learning in conflict situations.
- ▶ Build on the successes working with the child’s interests and strengths to promote and reinforce desired behaviour.

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- ▶ Expect the best from children and communicate frequently the individual and unique value of the child. The emphasis should be on the child's behaviour and not on their value as a person.

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Indirect

- ▶ Create a safe, secure environment which is quiet, relaxing and aesthetically pleasing.
- ▶ Maximise the use of space and avoid space restrictions. Have organised and well defined spaces that clearly indicate what activity takes place in that area.
- ▶ Ensure the provision of multiple resources to avoid conflict.
- ▶ Provide age appropriate choices giving children as many opportunities as possible to make decisions.
- ▶ Model positive supportive behaviour when assisting children and families to solve problems.

Four main aspects of the plan

1. Define the behaviour.
2. Assess the current level of behaviour.
3. Develop the plan (intervention program).
4. Evaluate the results.

The six-step approach to planning

Step 1. Identify (pre-test prior to intervention)

- ▶ Gather all available information and document-why?
 - a. measure frequency, intensity or duration of behaviour
 - b. reduces the influence of memory (ensures accuracy of data)
 - c. reduces the emotional reactions (promotes objectivity)
 - d. allows us to check if the behaviour is well defined
 - e. patterns of behaviour may be seen
- ▶ State the behaviour you want to modify or change.
 - a. Be very clear and exact in identifying it.

Step 2. Observe/record

- a. When does the behaviour happen?
- b. What seems to trigger it?
- c. Who is involved?
- d. What actually occurs?
- e. Consider the implications-what may happen if the behaviour is not modified or changed?

Step 3. Find the pattern

- a. Look for the before and after pattern to change the existing behaviour. Find out what usually occurs BEFORE the inappropriate behaviour and what happens AFTER.

Step 4. Change the before and afters (explore the alternatives)

- a. Change the before and after pattern to change the behaviour.
- b. Encourage new and appropriate behaviour to replace the old.
- c. Consider all possibilities (the behaviour does not always stem directly from the child). Assess the physical environment, the use of space, materials and activities, appropriate experiences, management of time, daily routines and adult's actions and reactions to the behaviour.

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Step 5. State the goal/implement the plan

- a. When stating the goal for the child it will vary according to the child, the setting, the staff and the parent's expectations. Having a goal before starting is a way progress can be measured.
- b. Plan the procedural strategies and incorporate into the program. For the plan several consecutive steps need to be outlined, e.g., The guidance strategies agreed upon such as ignoring, redirection, etc.

Step 6. Keeping track of the behaviour (monitor/evaluate)

- a. Keep recording to see how the plan is progressing.
- b. Maintaining the changes—once a goal is reached it is important to maintain it.
- c. Gradually phase out the program when the inappropriate behaviour has stopped and new appropriate behaviour has replaced it.
- d. It is very important that you wait until the new behaviour is firmly established.
- e. Phase it out gradually and gently.
- f. Provide on-going positive reinforcement.

Sources

- ▶ ACECQA, Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 <http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/national-regulations/> - retrieved July 2017
- ▶ "Behaviour, belief and action" Sue Roffey Every Child Vol 13 no 2 2007 p16
- ▶ The Circle of Security Robyn Dolby Early Childhood Australia 2007
- ▶ Early Childhood Australia website www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au:
- ▶ Encouraging social skills in young children Jacquelyn Mize Ellen Abell
- ▶ The teaching pyramid Lisa Fox et al July 2003
- ▶ Beth McGregor "Letting Children in" SDN Brighter Futures training session 2007
- ▶ Jeanette Harrison Understanding Children
- ▶ Louise Porter

We also recommend The South Australian Parenting website as it has useful downloads and information sheets for families.

APPENDIX

Any plan (intervention program) must be carried out by all people involved with the child as this maintains consistency and helps the child predict outcomes for his/her behaviour.

The key purpose of this process is for all those involved to understand the reasons behind the child's challenging behaviour and to work together to change or modify this behaviour by Sparkwayising to see situations from the point of view of the developing child.

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