

Policy title	5.1 Interactions with Children
Policy type	Management
Group	Family and Children

Rationale

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* requires an approved Responsible Person to take reasonable steps to ensure that education and care services are provided to children in a way that:

- encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
- allows their children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child
- gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour
- has regard for the family, cultural values, age, physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for by the service

Further, National Regulation 156 requires the approved Responsible Person of an education and care service to provide children with opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other, staff members and volunteers of the service.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure Council's practices create an environment that promotes equitable and respectful relationships between staff and children as required by the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*.

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Policy statement

Moonee Valley City Council is committed to:

- promoting positive relationships and behaviours, both between staff members, and between staff and the children in their care
- caring for and educating each child through interactions that are meaningful, responsive, respectful, warm and friendly
- acknowledging, valuing and celebrating the differences and similarities that exist in everyone
- providing children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their own behaviour and build confidence and self-esteem

Council understands the very privileged and responsible position that we hold in each child's life. Any interaction between a child and staff member can have a profound effect on the child's self-esteem and overall development. Therefore, it is important that all staff and stakeholders adhere to the Interactions with Children Policy and Procedures in order to maintain the service's duty of care under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*.

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Procedure	5.1 Interactions with Children Procedure
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Action	Approved Provider	Responsible Person or Primary Nominee	Educator/contractor	Families	Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011	Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010	Children's Services Regulations 2009 & Children's Services Act 1996
Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.		✓	✓		r.73-76 r.360-366 r.155-156	s.165 s.167-169	r.40-41 r.50 r.53 r.57 r.60 s.26
Have a sound knowledge and understanding of contemporary child development theory and practice that promotes positive play behaviours, patterns and social interactions.		✓	✓		r.360-366	s.165 s.167-169	r.50 r.53 r.57 r.60 s.26 s.28
Model positive and appropriate interactions that reflect service values, attitudes and commitments.		✓	✓		r.73-76 r.360-366 r.155-156	s.165 s.167-169	r.40-41 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.28 s.29a
Respect the importance of interactions and relationships between children, families, staff and educators/contractors.		✓	✓		r.360-366 r.73-76 r.155-156	s.165 s.167-169	r.50 r.53 r.57 r.60 s.26 s.26B
Consider the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.		✓	✓		r.360-366 r.160-162	s.165 s.167-169 s.175	r.31-34 r.40-41 s.26B s.32B

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Treat children with the same respect and empathy as an adult would expect.		✓	✓		r.360-366 r.73-76 r.155-156	s.165-169	r.40-41 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.29A s.28
Understand why children behave in certain ways in specific circumstances.		✓	✓		r.360-366 r.155-156 r.160-162	s.165-169 s.175	r.31-34 r.50 r.53 r.57 r.60 s.26 s.28
Promote appropriate play and behaviour limits that guide children's safety rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity.		✓	✓		r.360-366 r.73-76 r.155-156	s.165-169	r.50 r.53 r.57 r.60 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.28 s.29A
Encourage children to express themselves and their opinions, and undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.		✓	✓		r.360-366 r.73-76 r.155-156	s.165-169	r.40-41 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.28 s.29a
Inform families about the procedures involved in promoting positive interactions and behaviour guidance strategies, and our commitment to professional development.	✓	✓	✓		r.360-366 r.73-76 r.155-156	s.165-169 s.172	r.40-41 s.26 s.26B
Foster collaborative relationships between the service's stakeholders and external agencies.	✓	✓	✓		r.73-76	s.167	s.26

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<p>Ensure this Policy and Procedures, which reflect the philosophy of the service, are implemented and regularly reviewed to incorporate contemporary child development strategies and practices that promote positive play behaviours and patterns.</p> <p>Oversee the provision of a safe and secure environment that promotes positive relationships and behaviours between adults and children.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>		<p>r.168-172</p> <p>r.103</p> <p>r.73-76</p> <p>r.360-366</p> <p>r.155-156</p> <p>r.116-117</p> <p>r.153</p>	<p>s.167-169</p>	<p>r.50</p> <p>r.53</p> <p>r.57</p> <p>r.60</p> <p>s.26</p> <p>r.40-41</p> <p>s.26</p> <p>s.26B</p> <p>s.27 s.28</p> <p>s.29 s.29A</p> <p>s.32B</p>
<p>Allocate funds for ongoing professional development to support educators/contractors and staff in their contemporary understanding of children's interactions and behaviour.</p>	<p>✓</p>					<p>s.167</p>	<p>s.26</p> <p>s.28</p>
<p>Ensure all staff/educators volunteers and students implement this Policy and Procedures effectively and consistently.</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>		<p>r.170</p>	<p>s.165</p> <p>s.167</p> <p>s.169</p>	<p>r.40-41</p> <p>s.26</p>
<p>Develop guidance notes for staff/educators and families that draw on contemporary child development strategies and practices for positive interactions and behaviour.</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>			<p>r.73-76</p> <p>r.168-172</p> <p>r.155-156</p>	<p>s.165</p> <p>s.167</p> <p>s.169</p>	<p>r.40-41</p> <p>s.26</p> <p>s.26B</p> <p>s.27</p> <p>s.28</p>

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Work in partnership with families in relation to their child's learning and development, including strategies to support individual children's interactions and behaviour.	✓	✓	✓	✓	r.73-76 r.360-366 r.155-156 r.160-162	s.165-169 s.172 s.175	r.40-41 s.26 s.26B s.28 s.29a s.32B
Assist with referrals to support services and the preparation of an Individual Supported Behaviour Plan (see page 12), when required.		✓	✓		r.73-76 r.360-366 r.160-162	s.175	r.31-34 r.40-41 s.26 s.26B s.32B
Collaborate with schools, other professionals or support agencies working with children who have diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties, and culturally based community organisations.		✓	✓		r.73-76	s.165 s.167 s.169 s.175	r.40-41 s.26 s.26B s.32B
Support volunteers and students in their implementation of this Policy and Procedures.		✓	✓		r.170	s.165 s.167 s.169	s.26 s.27 s.29a
Work together with staff on positive strategies to address their child's individual needs and concerns.				✓	r.73-76 r.360-366 r.168-172 r.160-162	s.165-169 s.172 s.175	r.31-34 r.40-41 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.28 s.29a s.32B

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Communicate with staff/educators any behavioural difficulties faced at home and their child's progress at childcare.				✓	r.73-76 r.360-366 r.155-156 r.160-162	s.165-169 s.175	r.31-34 r.40-41 s.26 s.26B s.27 s.28 s.29a s.32B

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Managing and guiding behaviours

A positive approach to guiding children's interactions and behaviour builds children's confidence and self-esteem. Council's approach is based on the development of responsive, respectful, caring and equitable relationships between educators/contractors and children.

- A child's interactions and behaviour may be affected by their:
 - age and stage of 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, and the time of day
 - relationship with other children and stakeholders, such as staff, students, volunteers and visitors
 - external factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences, or media coverage of traumatic events
- families, staff and educators/contractors display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and not the individual child. In practice, when a child completes a task directed by an adult, such as washing their hands before a meal, respond with 'thank you (child's name) for washing your hands with soap before lunch'. This ensures that the focus is on guiding the interaction and behaviour as opposed to the child as a person. Compare this with traditional labels such as 'good/naughty boy' or 'good/naughty girl', which identify the individual but do not focus on the details of the behaviour.
- while our aim is to be aware of and respect individual children's and family's backgrounds and beliefs, at times it may be necessary to balance these considerations with developmentally appropriate practices and best practice recommendations from recognised authorities for guiding children's interactions and safe behaviours.
- In supporting positive social interaction:
 - respond to and acknowledge children's emotions, such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness and pride
 - acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant
 - understand that children may not have developed the appropriate strategies to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development, or may display behaviours that are not always consistent with their development and/or general disposition

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- be aware of situations, learning environments, group dynamics and scenarios that may contribute to children’s interactions and behaviours
- plan for the inclusion of children who have specifically diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties
- assist children to recognise and label their feelings, and to develop an awareness and respect for other people’s feelings
- role model the use of positive and respectful language when communicating with children; for example, ‘I feel ...’
- when communicating with children, kneel or sit down at the child’s level, and use language that promotes empathy as well as active listening by the child
- provide opportunities for children to enlist adult support and seek information that can assist them in dealing with their emotions
- the use of physical punishment by staff, educators/contractors, students, volunteers and visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- the use of isolation (including time out), humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling by staff, educators/contractors/students/volunteers/visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- children are not to be isolated for any reason other than illness or a pre-arranged appointment with parental consent. When a child requests separation from a group of children, ensure the learning environment provides a passive, quiet and peaceful area to facilitate the child’s request.

Cultural considerations and physical contact

Different cultures have different attitudes and traditions surrounding the concept of appropriate touch. A number of children attending education and care services in Moonee Valley have recently arrived in Australia. Some have backgrounds of severe trauma, ranging from the observation of extreme physical violence and abuse to being victims of such violence and abuse. The needs of these children and their families are acute, and therefore establishing what will be appropriate touch is essential.

- educators/contractors/staff have a responsibility to become as familiar as possible with the values of the various cultural groups enrolled at their service so that embarrassment or offence can be avoided for everyone, and particularly for children.
- educators/contractors/staff will employ considerable diplomacy, care and effort in their interactions with the children and families that are known or suspected

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- to have escaped traumatic circumstances. Additional assistance will be sought from other professionals within the community by the Responsible Person, in consultation with the educator/contractor, to support children and families that have experienced trauma.
- At times, educators/contractor/staff will be required to give practical assistance to a child who is hurt or needs particular support or encouragement. Examples of appropriate physical contact are:
 - administering first aid
 - supporting children and young people who have hurt themselves
 - supporting children who are settling into the program or need additional physical comfort
 - assisting with the toileting and personal care needs of children while encouraging children to become independent users of the toilet
 - comforting gestures to comfort a child who is experiencing grief and loss or distress
 - When involved in toileting children, changing their clothes and comforting them for a range of distresses that is typical in early childhood, educators/contractors and staff members will adopt the following good practices.
 - When children indicate they want comfort, ensure that it is provided in a public setting. Accompany a comforting touch with positive and encouraging words.
 - Signs of discomfort in children such as stiffening, pulling away or walking away must be respected. In these situations the child must continue to be observed/monitored until his/her distress is managed.
 - Children must not be left in states of high distress for long periods. Families need to be contacted under these circumstances.
 - Staff should follow the service centre's Toileting and Nappy Change Procedure and individual child toileting plans where these have been documented with families.
 - If a child has a toileting accident and/or, wet or dirty clothes, staff need to ensure they are appropriately respecting the needs of the child by asking permission to assist them with changing their clothing. Once permission is granted, change the child's clothing in the bathroom or a location that ensures unwanted attention is not drawn to the child, making them feel embarrassed or overwhelmed.

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Play and learning spaces

- Establish play and learning spaces that:
 - are appropriate for the strengths, interests, ages and stages of the children as well as group size
 - provide the children with a balance of active, loud and energetic play spaces with passive, quiet and peaceful areas where children can find solace, peace and relaxation
 - provide easy movement within and between areas
 - ensure children are not hurried and can therefore have the time to fully engage in the learning environment and experiences at a pace that suits individual children
 - offer a balance of child initiated experiences with intentional teaching experiences that provide children with decision-making opportunities

Establishing limits

- use a positive approach to facilitate children’s positive interactions. These may include strategies such as positive reinforcement, redirection, encouragement, collaborative problem solving and logical consequences.
- involve children in establishing play and safety limits (which reflect recommended best practices), as well as the consequences involved when limits are not adhered to.
- establishing limits depends on the developmental level of children. While we have high expectations for every child, younger children or children with limited experience may require adults to establish safety and guidance limits.
- define limits in terms of ‘positive’ desired behaviour; for example, ‘We walk inside’ is preferable to ‘We do not run inside’. This assists children to remember what to do rather than what not to do.
- vary staff/educator/contractor communication style and language with older children to negotiate limit setting.
- work collaboratively with the child’s family to assist with strategies, taking into consideration the culture and family background. Families may need to be advised that some practices established in their home, such as hitting or biting back, cannot be enforced in the service environment.

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- observe the child, identify the triggers, issues, and environmental considerations that may be impacting on the child's interactions.
- ensure that limits are consistent, carried out in a calm, firm manner, and followed through.

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Individual Supported Behaviour Plan (ISBP)

- An Individual Supported Behaviour Plan (ISBP) may need to be implemented when a child is non-compliant to the established limits of play and interactions. For example: swearing; hitting, smacking or kicking other children or adults; or potentially causing harm to themselves.
- An ISBP must be discussed with the family and where appropriate the child concerned. An ISBP is to be documented and include background information, observations, planning/strategies, implementation and evaluation. The plan needs to include:
 - family priorities, cultural background, languages spoken
 - the environments where the child lives and plays
 - the activities and the people in the child's life
 - health, diet and medication
 - medical history and current situation diagnoses/disabilities
 - social networks, family, living situations and history
- Observations should include:
 - skills (both strengths and needs across all areas including communication)
 - behaviour (both challenging and appropriate)
 - interactions with people in a variety of situations
 - children's experience in the group setting
 - where the child is the most settled and engaged
 - what calms the child most effectively
 - the child's early warning signs and what behaviours follow
 - which adult the child prefers to be with (who is available at the beginning of the day?)
 - which peers this child seeks out
 - observations about exactly what behaviours are of concern, their frequency, the situations in which they occur and any possible triggers
- Analyse what the function of the behaviour may be: What is the child trying to tell you? Formulate a theory as to what you think is happening and what skills the child can be taught and how they can be taught to respond in a different way.
- State clearly the rationale for the planned approach to follow.
- Work in a collaborative approach with the child's family and set ongoing goals that are reviewed on a regular basis with all educators/staff, the child (as appropriate), the child's family, and other professionals.
- Seek referrals where necessary such as with the preschool field officer and/or inclusion support facilitator.

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Link to Council Policies

Council's *Excellence in Governance* Booklet and Values support this Policy and Procedures as well as the Victorian Government's *The Best Interests of the Child Framework*.

Resources and useful websites

This Policy and Procedures are aligned to the following National Quality Standard

<http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/the-national-quality-standard>

Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009), *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*.

https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf

Boschetti, C with Stonehouse, A. (2006), *A piece of cake: inclusive practices in Early Childhood settings*, Yooralla, Victoria.

Dukes, C and Smith, M (2009), *Building better behaviour in the early years*. SAGE, UK.

Early Childhood Australia (2006), *The code of ethics*.
<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/>

Early Childhood Australia Inc. – www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Government of South Australia, Department of Education and Children's Services (2011) *Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people*

National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program – <http://www.ecrh.edu.au/>

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Porter, L (2008), *Young children's behaviour: Practical approaches for caregivers and teachers* (3rd Edition). Paul H Brookes Publishing, Australia.

Raising Children Network – <http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

Sara, H (2009), *Optimistic carers and children: Pathways to confidence and wellbeing*. Early Childhood Australia, Canberra

Stonehouse, A. & Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2004), *Making links: A collaborative approach to planning and practice in early childhood services*.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (2004), *Physical punishment and discipline (including smacking)*.

UNICEF Fact sheet: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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