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## Interactions with Children

### Policy

Children have the right to be themselves, to be accepted for who they are, their beliefs and where they come from. Children have the right to be provided with opportunities for rest, play and a wide variety of leisure activities. At South Turramurra OOSH (OOSH/service) we value the importance of educators creating nurturing, equitable, secure and safe relationships with children. We believe that through these relationships we can help children to reach their full potential and develop a positive sense of self.

Child safety is of paramount importance at OOSH. In accordance with the Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW), the service ensures the safety, rights and best interests of every child are the paramount consideration in all decisions, actions and operations. Where competing priorities arise, the child's best interests will prevail, and decision-making will clearly demonstrate how this principle has been applied.

### Legislative Requirements

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: 5AA, 165, 166, 166A, 168, 169
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 73, 84, 115, 117, 118, 123, 126, 145, 155, 156, 168(2)(j), 170, 171, 172

### Definitions

#### Dignity and Rights of the Child

- Element 5.1.2 of the National Quality Standard ('Dignity and rights of the child') aims to achieve the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability. Article 19 of the Convention states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically, or mentally.

#### Positive interactions between Educators and Children

- Involves educators viewing each child as capable and competent, with a right to a voice, and able to contribute to decisions that affect them. This enables educators to focus their practices on children's strengths and inclusion in the group environment.
- Educators who are responsive to children's thoughts and feelings are supporting them to develop a strong sense of wellbeing. By interacting positively and meaningfully with children, educators help each child to feel accepted and to develop a sense of attachment and trust.
- Children who are supported to understand themselves experience a sense of belonging that fosters self-esteem which contributes to the development of identity and is critical to children's capacity to understand their own strengths, abilities, and interests. When children feel safe, secure and supported, they develop confidence to explore and learn.

## Relationships between Children

- When educators create supportive environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships, children respond accordingly.
- Positive relationships provide children with the confidence and agency to explore and learn about their world.
- As their relationships become more complex and far-reaching over time, children's interactions with others also help them to extend their knowledge, thinking and ability to apply what they already know in new and unfamiliar contexts.
- Developing effective relationships with others is a key part of children's social development and these relationships also provide a base for children's learning.

## Relationships between Educators and Children

- When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators, they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable and respected. Consistent emotional support contributes to children developing a strong sense of wellbeing and belonging.
- Relationships are the foundation for the construction of identity, and help shape children's thinking about who they are, how they belong and what influences them.

## Implementation Strategies – how will it be done?

### The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will:

- ensure that the service provides education and care to children in a way that:
  - **encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions.**
  - **allows the 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 to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.**
- ensure that the service provides **children with opportunities to interact and develop respectful relationships with each other and with educators, staff and volunteers**, having regard to the size and the composition of the groups in which children are being educated and cared for.
- ensure the service meets **minimum educator and staff requirements**, such as qualifications and educator to child ratios.
- ensure all educators and staff, including volunteers and students, have undertaken current **child protection legislation training**, including for the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their jurisdiction.
- ensure that **no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment**, or any discipline that is unreasonable or inappropriate in the circumstances.
- devise methods to **lead the development and implementation of quality practices** across the service that ensure that the requirements of regulations 155 and 156 are met.
- **support educators to promote quality practice approaches to interactions with children.**
- **apply the paramountcy principle** by ensuring children's safety, wellbeing and best interests take priority over all other considerations.

### Educators and staff will:

- contribute to the development of, and **implementation of quality practices** that ensure that the requirements of regulations 155 and 156 are met.
- **promote quality practice approaches to interactions with children.**
- **be aware of current child protection legislation**, including the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations.

- **monitor and maintain staff to child ratios** to ensure adequate supervision of children.
- **support children in line with the strategies** in the ACECQA [Relationships with children information sheet](#).
- **apply the paramountcy principle** by ensuring children's safety, wellbeing and best interests take priority over all other considerations.

## Procedure

- In accordance with national regulations 155 and 156, South Turramurra OOSH will take reasonable steps to provide care in a way that:
  - encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions
  - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
  - maintains the dignity and rights of each child
  - gives each child positive guidance and encouragement
  - positively role models appropriate behaviours
  - regards each child's family and cultural values, age and physical and intellectual development.
- South Turramurra OOSH will provide opportunities for children to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and staff members of, and volunteers at, the OOSH.

## Supporting Children's Need and Abilities

When supporting children's needs and abilities, educators will:

- Interact with all children with respect, courtesy and understanding through maintaining a positive attitude in all interactions.
- Interact with all children equally regardless of race, cultural background, religion, sex or ability. All interactions between educators and children will reflect this.
- Encourage confidence and learning through the use of positive behaviour guidance strategies and not through shouting, threats of corporal punishment or refusing basic needs such as food.
- Respect children's ideas by listening carefully, showing interest and allowing them the freedom to voice their opinions, concerns and ideas without stigma or bias.
- Provide opportunities to develop respectful and positive relationships through interactions with peers, educators and visitors.
- Ensure that physical contact is appropriate in interactions where it is required, for example applying first aid, comforting a child or for the safety of a child.
  - Educators will define and role model personal space for children.
  - Educators will identify when interactions with a child are inappropriate and refer to South Turramurra OOSH's *Child Protection* and *Providing a Child Safe Environment* policies.

When communicating with children, educators will:

- ensure they communicate at the child's level and use encouraging body language, facial expressions and tone of voice.
- approach children in a sensitive manner when they are having difficulty communicating and regulating their emotions and aid in providing strategies to create an inclusive environment.
- try to engage with all children, learning each child's likes, dislikes and interests.
- Ensure a collaborative approach is taken when considering and creating routines and programs. Ensure that children's ideas and interests are reflected in the routine and program.
- Utilise visual cues and other resources to facilitate communication that suits each child and their needs.

## A Positive Environment

- South Turrumurra OOSH identifies that children are separate to their behaviour and that challenging behaviour is a symptom of circumstances.
- The environment of South Turrumurra OOSH promotes collaboration between children, staff and families, and creates a sense of security for all.
- The environment is set up in a way to promote meaningful interactions through play and leisure in both small and large groups.
- Rules and expectations of OOSH are created collaboratively with staff, children and families to promote continuity and equal expectations.
  - Rules and expectations are devised with the common goal of creating respectful and safe interactions and relationships between families, children and staff.
  - All educators are role models in demonstrating respectful and safe interactions and relationships, by following the rules and expectations.
  - All behaviour management will be relevant to the situation and non-demeaning. Where inappropriate behaviour is observed educators will support children by using a behaviour guidance approach and develop strategies for better solutions in future occurrences. Educators will use respectful language and tone when speaking to children, families and each other.
  - South Turrumurra OOSH will continue to collaborate with Turrumurra Public School and families to ensure a continuity of expectations and consequences.
- To develop a positive environment, educators will use positive reinforcement techniques to promote appropriate behaviour.
- Educators will employ conflict resolution skills to help children develop their own conflict resolution skills and self-regulation.
- South Turrumurra OOSH will provide training and resources to support educators in developing positive behaviour management and conflict resolution skills.

## Professional Boundaries in Child Interactions

Educators, staff, volunteers and students must always maintain professional boundaries.

Interactions must not:

- create emotional dependency
- involve favouritism
- involve secret keeping
- involve private communication
- involve unnecessary physical contact
- involve prolonged physical affection
- involve behaviour that may reasonably be interpreted as grooming
- involve conduct that a reasonable person would consider inappropriate within an education and care service.

Children may be subjected to inappropriate conduct directly or indirectly, including as witnesses.

## The Role and Responsibility of the Children

- Children will be encouraged to role model respectful and inclusive behaviour to their peers.
- Children will be encouraged to role model respectful and inclusive behaviour to their peers online.
- Children are encouraged to express their identity and culture and collaborate on routines and programs with staff and peers.
- Children are expected to respect OOSH environments and equipment as well as Educators and each other, including their need for rest, relaxation and solitude.

- Children understand that all emotions are ok but not all behaviour is ok. Children will be supported to regulate their own emotions and behaviour so that they can collaborate with the OOSH community.

## Children's Rights, Family and Cultural Values

- Interactions in OOSH are enhanced when children's rights and family and cultural values are given consideration and respect.
- South Turrumurra OOSH will use administrative procedures, conversations, documentation and ongoing communication with children and families as a reference point for interactions and a foundation for authentic and respectful communication.
- A culture of respectful interaction is promoted when children's attempts to communicate are valued.
- Respectful communication with families generates greater confidence in the relationship.

## Listening

- Educators and staff use listening as a foundation for interactions.
- Listening is improved by leaving spaces in conversations and communication, suspending judgement and in giving full attention to children as they communicate.

## Reflection and Consideration

- Time is dedicated for educators to reflect upon their interactions within children.
- Educators consider how to spend extended periods of time engaged in interactions with children based upon 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 Behaviour Guidance

- Refer to South Turrumurra OOSH - *Behaviour Guidance Policy*.
- Educators 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 educators 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 to and acknowledged for displaying desirable behaviour.
  - Behaviour will be praised or criticised, as opposed to the individual.
  - Staff will present a good example through positive role modelling.
  - Children are encouraged to make appropriate choices.
- In response to unacceptable behaviour, educators will:
  - 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.

## Quality Interactions

- The creation of a positive atmosphere and wellbeing of children at OOSH is promoted through attention, care and quality interactions with children.
- Emotional development and social relationships are enhanced through thoughtful approaches to conversation, discussion and the promotion of children's language and communication.
- Children who experience relationships that are built on respect, fairness, co-operation 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.
- South Turramurra OOSH will:
  - value the important role our educators and staff play in children's education and care.
  - equip educators with the knowledge and skills to enable them to interact positively with children and promote relationships between children.
  - implement a program which encourages the children's self-expression, promotes self-reliance, maintains their dignity and rights, gives positive guidance, and recognises their culture, values, and abilities.
  - regularly reflect on and refine the program.
  - provide inclusive learning environments that support the participation of all children, reflect diversity, and uphold equity for all children ensuring no child is excluded from OOSH.
  - promote a safe, secure, and nurturing environment and be authentic and responsive to children.
  - focus on maintaining the dignity and rights of each child and promoting fairness, respect, and equity in our interactions.
  - be provided with the resources and support to reflect and consider their interactions.
  - empower children to be involved in decisions that affect them as children are safer when organisations teach them about their right to be heard, listened to, and believed.
  - actively seek the opinions of children and when doing so considers their age, development, maturity, understanding, abilities and how they communicate.
  - engage in regular discussions with children about what makes them feel safe.
  - actively anticipate children's diverse circumstance and pay particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children with disabilities.

## Supporting Child to Child Interactions

- Educators will promote interactions between children by:
  - supporting children to become effective communicators.
  - providing time for children to engage in uninterrupted play experiences with their peers.
  - facilitating opportunities for children to learn from and help each other; share their knowledge, skills and experiences; and respond positively to ideas and suggestions from others.

## Use of Technology in Child Interactions

South Turramurra OOSH recognises that technology can be a valuable tool to enhance children's learning, creativity, and communication when used intentionally and safely. Educators use technology to engage positively with children, promote exploration and digital literacy, and strengthen relationships through shared learning experiences.

Technology is used:

- To support children's self-regulation, transitions, and engagement during the program.
- As an extension of play and inquiry-based learning, allowing children to explore, create and communicate ideas.
- To document children's learning and experiences, using only centre-owned devices in line with our Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy.
- To model safe, respectful, and balanced digital practices and guide children in developing positive relationships with technology.

All technology use aligns with our duty of care and the principles of the National Model Code for taking images and videos of children. Educators ensure that interactions using technology are always purposeful, supervised, and uphold the dignity, privacy, and safety of every child.

For further information, refer to the Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy.

## References and Related Policies and Procedures

### References

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- Australian Children's Education and Care quality Authority )ACECQA) National Quality Standards <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard/quality-area-5-relationships-with-children>
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – [www.unicef.org.au](http://www.unicef.org.au)
- The Supporting young children's rights: Statement of intent (2015-2018) – <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Supporting-young-childrens-rights-statement-of-intent-2015-2018.pdf>
- Australian Human Rights Commission – [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)
- Child Australia Cultural Connections Booklet. (2017) <https://childaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Cultural-Connections.pdf>
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016) <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ECA-COE-Brochure-web-2019.pdf>
- Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. My Time, Our Place- Framework for School Age Care in Australia. (2022) <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-01/MTOP-V2.0.pdf>

### Related Policies and Procedures

- Behaviour Guidance
- Child Protection
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Providing a Child Safe Environment
- Staffing Arrangements
- Governance and Management
- Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments

## Approval and Revision History

| Review Date | Reviewed By      | Approved By   | Next Review |
|-------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 15/07/2020  | Courtney Sparkes | Scott Everard | July 2021   |
| 09/08/2021  | Scott Everard    | Anna Tran     | August 2022 |
| 19/08/2022  | Courtney Sparkes | Scott Everard | August 2023 |
| 21/07/2023  | Courtney Sparkes | Amy Kitto     | July 2024   |
| 10/07/2024  | Courtney Sparkes | Amy Kitto     | July 2024   |

|            |               |               |              |
|------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 25/07/2024 | CELA          | Scott Everard | July 2025    |
| 16/10/2025 | Jay Stephens  | Scott Everard | October 2026 |
| 10/08/2026 | Scott Everard | Scott Everard | August 2027  |