



INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 5

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to ensure:

- the development of positive and respectful relationships with each child at Shine Bright EYM
- each child at Shine Bright EYM is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Shine Bright EYM is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the centre
- encouraging children to express themselves and their opinions, and to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- considering the health, safety and wellbeing of each child, and providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which they can develop and learn
- maintaining a duty of care (refer to *Definitions*) towards all children at the centre
- considering the diversity of individual children at the centre, including family and cultural values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child
- building collaborative relationships with families to improve learning and development outcomes for children
- encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children and staff at the Centre.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider - Shine Bright EYM, Nominated Supervisor, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Shine Bright EYM.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, wealth, birth status or ability. When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators, they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable and respected. 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 [*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 20; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 19]

'Constructive everyday interactions and shared learning opportunities form the basis of equitable, respectful and reciprocal relationships between educators and children. Educators who are actively engaged in children's learning and share decision-making with them, use their everyday interactions during play, routines and ongoing projects to stimulate children's thinking and to enrich their learning. These relationships provide a solid foundation from which to guide and support children as they

develop the self-confidence and skills to manage their own behaviour, make decisions and relate positively and effectively to others.' (*Guide to National Quality Framework* – refer to Sources)

Child Safe Standard 7 requires services to have strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children. When children feel respected and valued, they are much more likely to speak up about issues of safety and wellbeing. Enabling and promoting the participation of children within a service has multiple benefits in addition to enhancing the safety of children, including demonstrating a commitment to upholding the rights of children, checking that what the centre is doing is what children want and building the communication and leadership skills of children.

In developing an *Interactions with Children Policy*, early childhood education and care services must review and reflect on the philosophy, beliefs and values of the centre, particularly with regard to the relationships with children. The development of this policy should also be informed by the *Code of Conduct Policy*.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) **supervision** entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the centre, being in sight and/or hearing of staff at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that staff are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of staff
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for staff to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Behaviour guidance: A means of assisting children to self-manage their behaviour. It differs from traditional 'behaviour management' or 'discipline' which generally implies that an adult is 'managing' children's behaviour or using punishment to control children. Behaviour guidance applies to all forms of behaviour, not just behaviours labelled as 'negative'.

Individual Education Plan: A plan which is developed in consultation with the teacher and educators, the child and families, and other professional support agencies as applicable. This plan documents goals and strategies for the learning and development of each child.

Challenging behaviour: Behaviour that:

- disrupts others or causes disputes between children, but which is part of normal social development
- infringes on the rights of others
- causes harm or risk to the child, other children, adults or living things
- is destructive to the environment and/or equipment
- inhibits the child's learning and relationship with others
- is inappropriate relative to the child's developmental age and background.

Notifiable complaint: The Regulatory Authority is required to be notified of a complaint that alleges:

- a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by a service
- the National Law and/or National Regulations have been contravened.

Complaints of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)). If the Approved Provider is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact DET for confirmation.

Notification of complaints must be submitted within 24 hours through either the NQA IT System portal: <http://www.acecqa.gov.au> or where this is not possible, the Regulatory Authority must be contacted directly.

Inclusion Support Program: Funded by the Commonwealth Government to assist services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs in mainstream services; providing them with an opportunity to learn and develop alongside their typically developing peers: <https://www.education.gov.au/>

Mental health: In early childhood, a child's mental health is understood as a child's ability to 'experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children. Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development. <https://beyou.edu.au/>

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program: The role of the PSFO Program is to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in preschool: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>

Serious incident: A serious incident (regulation 12) is defined as any of the following:

- the death of a child while being educated and cared for at the service or following an incident at the service
- any incident involving serious injury or trauma while the child is being educated and cared for, which
 - a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
 - the child attended or ought reasonably to have attended a hospital e.g. a broken limb*
- any incident involving serious illness of a child while that child is being educated and cared for by a service for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital e.g. severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis*.

- *NOTE: In some cases (for example rural and remote locations) a General Practitioner conducts consultation from the hospital site. Only treatment related to serious injury or illness or trauma are required to be notified, not other health matters.
- any emergency for which emergency services attended. NOTE: This means an incident, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person/s at an education and care service. It does not mean an incident where emergency services attended as a precaution.
- a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for at the service
- a child appears to have been taken or removed from the service in a manner that contravenes the National Regulations
- a child was mistakenly locked in or out of the service premises or any part of the premises.

Examples of serious incidents include amputation (e.g. removal of fingers), anaphylactic reaction requiring hospitalisation, asthma requiring hospitalisation, broken bone/fractures, bronchiolitis, burns, diarrhoea requiring hospitalisation, epileptic seizures, head injuries, measles, meningococcal infection, sexual assault, witnessing violence or a frightening event.

If the approved provider is not aware that the incident was serious until sometime after the incident, they must notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of becoming aware that the incident was serious.

Notifications of serious incidents should be made through the NQA IT System portal (<http://www.acecqa.gov.au>). If this is not practicable, the notification can be made initially in whatever way is best in the circumstances.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Behaviour guidance practice note series* (DET): <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) *Code of Ethics*: <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/>
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP), Department of Education: <http://education.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program>
- Be You , an Australian mental health and well-being initiative set in primary schools and early childhood education and care services: <https://beyou.edu.au/>
- *The Kindergarten Guide* (DET): <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: <https://www.unicef.org/>
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm

Service policies

- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Code of Conduct*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Curriculum Development Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Confidentiality and Privacy Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider – Shine Bright EYM is responsible for:

- developing and implementing the *Interactions with Children Policy* in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, staff and parents/guardians,
- ensuring educators develop warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promotes a sense of security, confidence and inclusion
- ensuring parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and all staff have access to a copy of the *Interactions with Children Policy* and comply with its requirements
- ensuring the Nominated Supervisor, and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct*)
- ensuring the size and composition of groups is considered to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service (Regulation 156(2)). Smaller group sizes are considered optimal but this is not always achievable due to other considerations.
- ensuring educational programs are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
- ensuring 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 (Regulation 73) (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- ensuring that the service provides education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for (Regulation 155)
- ensuring clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's:
 - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
 - progress against the outcomes of the educational program (Regulation 74) (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- supporting educators/staff to gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy
- ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to *Child Safe Environment Policy, Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Supervision of Children Policy*)
- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor, 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 (National Law: Section 166)
- promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and staff and other professionals, to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences
- informing DET, in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (refer to *Definitions*) (Section 174(4), Regulation 176(2)(b))
- notifying DET, in writing, within 24 hours of a serious incident (refer to *Definitions*) occurring at the service (Section 174(4), Regulation 176)
- making every reasonable attempt to ensure that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises

- ensuring all staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- ensuring that individual education plans (refer to Attachment 1 & 2) are developed for all children and that children in consultation with the child's teacher, staff, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies where appropriate (refer to *Sources*) and that these are reviewed regularly or as the need arises.
- developing links with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).
- provide extra assistance to services, if appropriate, in response to applications using the 'Additional Support and /or Special Consideration Requests' form refer to Attachment 3

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- implementing the *Interactions with Children Policy* at the service
- ensuring educators develop warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promotes a sense of security, confidence and inclusion
- Staff will greet and farewell children and families daily
- When staff are taking a rostered break they will inform children who will be replacing them.
- Staff will gain children's attention by approaching them and addressing them by name
- Staff will in consultation with the children, develop simple rules of safety and respect for others, as to foster ownership.
- Staff will use positive techniques such as redirection, distraction, and specific positive feedback to guide children's behaviour and develop empathy with others.
- Staff will be aware of the potential for conflict in groups of children and will set up environments to reduce this potential.
- ensuring, staff and parents/guardians have access to the *Interactions with Children Policy* and comply with its requirements
- ensuring 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 (refer to *Code of Conduct*)
- ensuring children are adequately supervised (refer to *Definitions*), that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy*) and the environment is safe, secure and free from hazards (refer to *Child Safe Environment Policy*, *Supervision of Children Policy* and *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*)
- considering the size and composition of groups when planning program timetables to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service. Smaller group sizes are considered optimal but this is not always achievable due to other considerations.
- developing and implementing 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 (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
- ensuring 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 (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- ensuring that staff provide education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for

- ensuring clear and straightforward documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's:
 - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
 - progress against the outcomes of the educational program (Regulation 74) (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- ensuring 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 (National Law: Section 166)
- ensuring that procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents/guardians to share strength based information about children's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships
- informing the Approved Provider – Shine Bright EYM of any notifiable complaints (refer to *Definitions*) or serious incidents (refer to *Definitions*) at the service
- informing the Approved Provider – Shine Bright EYM of any incidents, via the Incident, injury, trauma and illness record found in the Policy – Area 2 involving the health safety and wellbeing of a child
- referring notifiable complaints (refer to *Definitions*), grievances (refer to *Definitions*) or complaints that are unable to be resolved appropriately and in a timely manner to Shine Bright EYM Central Office (refer to *Complaints Policy and Complaints Guideline (Complaints from Families)* – Staff to log into the secure section of the website to access this form.
- making every reasonable attempt to ensure that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- ensuring that individual education plans (refer to Attachment 1 & 2) are developed for children with identified behavioural difficulties, in consultation with staff, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to *Sources*) and that these are reviewed regularly and as necessary applying for extra assistance from Shine Bright EYM if appropriate, using the 'Additional Support and /or Special Consideration Requests' form refer to Attachment 3
- co-operating with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).

Staff are responsible for:

- developing warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion
- Staff will greet and farewell children and families daily
- When educators are taking a rostered break they will inform children who will be replacing them.
- Staff will gain children's attention by approaching them and addressing them by name
- Staff will in consultation with the children, develop simple rules of safety and respect for others, as to foster ownership.
- Staff will use positive techniques such as redirection, distraction, and specific positive feedback to guide children's behaviour and develop empathy with others.
- Staff will be aware of the potential for conflict in groups of children and will set up environments to reduce this potential.
- assisting with the development and implementation of the *Interactions with Children Policy*, in consultation with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, parents/guardians and families
- providing access to the *Interactions with Children Policy* for parents/guardians and families
- complying with the requirements of the *Interactions with Children Policy*

- being aware of service expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct*)
- providing adequate supervision of children at all times (refer to *Definitions* and *Supervision of Children Policy*)
- communicating and working collaboratively with parents/guardians and families in relation to their child's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships, educators will make themselves available to meet with families outside of their contact time with children
- delivering 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 (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*) and that these are reviewed regularly or as the need arises.
- delivering programs that develop a sense of wellbeing and identity, connection to community, and provide skills for lifelong learning in all children (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- providing education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for
- supporting each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with others
- using positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- ensuring that individual education plans (refer to Attachment 1 & 2) are developed for children with identified behavioural difficulties, in consultation with educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to *Sources*) and that these are reviewed regularly and as required
- If at any time a child's or adults safety is compromised for any reason staff are to complete an incident report and have the parent/guardian sign it as per our normal procedure, this incident report is to be forwarded to your Early Years Advisor immediately.
- Where a child's or staffs safety is repeatedly comprised and where Individual Education Plans have been updated and reviewed with parent/guardian and any key workers involved with the child, staff are to notify and work with their Early Years Advisor. If after all attempts to work with all involved the kindergarten is not safe for children and or staff, the child may have their enrolment at the kindergarten suspended until further help/assistance is provided to enable the child to self-regulate. Staff will work with the family to provide assistance and support to get the professional help they need to support their child's health and wellbeing, documenting assessments and evaluations for each child to inform the educational program (Regulation 74). Suspension of a child's enrolment at any time is at the discretion of the Early Years Advisor (in consultation with the Early Years Manager) or the Early Years Manager or their delegate.
- Suspension of a child's enrolment can also occur in other limited circumstances, including after a one off incident, where the Early Years Managers or their delegate deems given the seriousness of the situation and to protect the safety and/or welfare of the child, other children or educators if it is deemed necessary.
- being 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
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).
- attending appropriate training to assist with the implementation of this policy as per their PDEP.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with the *Interactions with Children Policy*
- engaging in open communication with staff about their child
- informing staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)
- informing staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour at enrolment and throughout the year
- informing staff of any concerns regarding the impact of other children's behaviour
- working collaboratively with staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop and regularly review an individual education plan for their child.
- Working collaboratively with the kindergarten teacher, key workers associated with the child and other professional support agencies to get the help and support needed to support the child's continued development, health and well-being. This may involve the child's enrolment being temporarily suspended while the child gets the support he/she needs to be able to self-regulate so that he/she can participate safely in the educational program at the centre.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider – Shine Bright EYM will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: [Individual Education plan](#)

Attachment 2: [Request for additional support](#)

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Shine Bright EYM in August 2020

REVIEW DATE: 2023