

Background

"In the process of learning the complex life skills of cooperation, conflict resolution, acceptable expression of strong feelings, children, like all of us, make mistakes" (Gartrell, 1997).

However, young children are likely to make far more mistakes than adults because their abilities to think and reason are in the early stages of development, their life experience is limited, and they have had little exchange with other children.

Educators can effectively help children to learn social skills by providing them with supportive physical and social environments to learn and practise their social skills. When children make a mistake, educators are best to treat the children with respect and empathy as they guide and encourage them to recognise, manage and learn from the mistake, and to express their emotions in positive, non-threatening and productive ways.

Policy statement

This policy sets out to teach children appropriate ways to manage both positive and negative behaviours by empowering them with a range of strategies to manage conflict situations. To encourage children to take responsibility for their own actions. To use guidance techniques with children in place of physical punishment or emotional coercion.

Strategies and practices

- Educators need to: -
 - Understand the guidance approach used and why it is valued.
 - Have knowledge and realistic expectations of children's developmental stages and individual differences.
 - Recognise that children behave in certain ways for a range of reasons e.g., the environment at the time, their skill level in relation to conflict resolution, because of responses they have received from others etc.
 - See how social problem 'solvers and routines can affect the way children behave.
 - Understand conflict situations are a normal part of life and children need support from adults.
 - Work at building trusting relationships with each child where self-esteem and feelings of competence are developed to assist in coping with conflict.
 - Use the environment as the third teacher so it engages and challenges children.
 - Incorporate the children's interests and ideas into the curriculum.
 - Understand that developing effective interpersonal and intrapersonal skills is a lifelong process and there is a process that children need to go through to become skilled (appropriate to their age level).
 - Support collaborative relationships and open communication between families regarding children's behaviour because it ensures consistency between the home and the Service and may provide insight into possible causes for behaviour.
 - Encourage children to appreciate the capabilities and limitations of others.
 - Believe children are competent thinkers and have the ability to participate in problem solving situations.
 - Listen to children's concerns and problems and use this type of intervention as a tool for preventing potential inappropriate behaviour.

- Encourage acceptable forms of behaviour by using strategies that build confidence and self-esteem.
- Network and consult with behavioural specialists when necessary.
- Understand that appropriate behaviours need to be modelled for the children – what adults do matter as much, if not more than, what they say.
- Encourage and support not just positive behaviours but also the children's awareness of appropriate behaviours.

PREVENTION

Set up a conflict resolution environment

- Model behaviour through the appropriate use of words to encourage children to verbalise their needs and feelings. Communications should be without blame, judgment, or assumptions.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the physical environment to meet the needs of the group and individuals. Look at the environment both indoors and outdoors. This evaluation is then reflected in follow up planning and implementation.
- Anticipate and eliminate potential problems with equipment and activities.
- Establish clear guidelines.

Involve the older children (3-5 years) in establishing guidelines and problem solving through group discussions, role-playing and literature. Use the ABCDE of problem solving: -

- A - Articulate the problem
- B - Brainstorm solutions
- C - Choose one
- D - Do it
- E - EVALUATE IT**

- Acknowledge children's appropriate behaviour using the Language of the Virtues.
- Develop close relationships and an interest in each individual so self-esteem and confidence is constantly built on.
- Allow children verbal pre-warning throughout the day regarding what is happening next with the routine e.g. 'In 5 minutes, we will finish what we are doing because we need to pack away for morning tea.'
- Provide a consistent and respectful approach to guiding behaviour by discussing issues with colleagues and parents.
- Recognise that feelings and emotions are important in resolving conflict and children need opportunities to explore and discuss a variety of emotions. This can be achieved through discussing with children the responses they are seeing from peers and adults, through story books and by using puppets and music.
- Use relaxation and visualization techniques as part of the daily curriculum.

ACTION

- Focus on the child's behaviour e.g. "When you are rough, I am worried that someone is going to get hurt." Let children know they are still loved and valued but the behaviour is inappropriate.
- Implement the Language of the Virtues.
- Provide simple explanations to the child about how their behaviour has affected others and equipment e.g. "If you throw the books on the floor, they might get ripped, let's put them on the shelf together."
- Use positive "I" statements when letting children know how you feel e.g. "I like it when you use your walking feet inside."
- Look for the causes of tantrums and discuss feelings and appropriate responses. "I can see you're really angry at the moment, I'm going to give you some space and time to calm down" or "I can see you're really upset at the moment; would you like a cuddle?" When the child has calmed down discuss their emotional reaction and how to deal with it appropriately.
- Model and acknowledge empathy, encouraging children to assist and support others e.g. "I'm sure that cuddle has made your friend feel better."
- Acknowledge and validate children's feelings. There are 4 steps in this process: -
 1. Listen for feelings
 2. Identify the child's feelings
 3. Validate the child's feelings
 4. Accept the child's feelings, specifying the importance of distinguishing between feelings and actions
- Talk about appropriate actions when the child is feeling e.g., angry/frustrated/impatient.
- Use the Language of Virtues frequently with all children.

When dealing with behaviours such as hitting, biting, pushing, or kicking: -

- Use a calm voice.
- Gain the child's eye contact.
- Discuss with the child that these behaviours are inappropriate by tone of voice and facial expression. Discuss appropriate responses.
- Use age-appropriate responses, for example:-

For a 2-year-old say:

- "Stop! Biting hurts."
- Turn your back on the biter and attend to the victim.
- Encourage the biter to assist with the ice pack to make the child feel better.
- Talk about what the child could have done instead of biting.
- Praise the biter for touching and caring for their peer appropriately.

For a 3 - 5-year-old:

- Stop and think before proceeding any further
- Find out what happened (what's happened? /what's the problem?)
- Identify the problem from everyone's perspective
- Encourage children to brainstorm alternative possible solutions (what else could you do? /How could you do this?)
- Help children identify the consequences of their possible solutions (what might happen if.....?)
- Restate the problem, the proposed solutions and accompanying consequences
- Help children find and agree on a solution they are satisfied with. If no solution can be reached, make some suggestions for the children to choose from
- Work out a fair plan of action with the children, identifying what each child needs to do (who, what, how, when) to follow through with the plan
- Work out with the children what to do next time

Use quiet/reflection time

- If an older child continues to participate in dangerous play, remove the child to a quiet space. Quietly sit with the child and discuss how the play/behaviour has affected others. The child will then be encouraged to reflect on the incident. Later the child is assisted with an activity which allows for positive reinforcement which in turn helps the child to build feelings of competence and self-esteem.
- Inform parent/guardian about the incident in the afternoon.
- If a serious incident has occurred, the Nominated Supervisor will contact the parent/guardian to notify them.

IF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR CONTINUES TO BE AN ISSUE: -

- Observe the child and look for triggers to the behaviour. Once you have a week's worth of observations, look at them to see if you can find any patterns.
- Consult with parents. Allow them time to ask you questions too.
- Reflect on the curriculum. In what ways might your curriculum be contributing to the behaviour?
- Help the child to develop and use more appropriate responses.
- Examine the environment and the pattern of the day in conjunction with the child's own pattern.

Additional safe practices for babies

- To prioritise continuity and consistency of the educators in the babies' room(s) in the Service roster to promote the establishment and/or continuity of relationships between educators, children and parents.

Responsibilities of parents

- To provide the Service with up-to-date information on their child and on any external circumstances affecting the child.
- To collaborate with educators in establishing any Behaviour Management Plans required.
- To seek professional help for their child when recommended by the Service.

Procedures and forms

- Behaviour Management Plan
- Speak Language Handout
- Virtues Definitions
- Virtues Poster

Links to other policies

- Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Educational Program Policy
- Interactions with Families Policy
- Staffing Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

Regs	155	Interactions with children
	156	Relationships in groups
QA	1.1.1	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators
	1.2.2	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback
	1.2.3	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world
	1.3.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection
	2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
	2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
	2.2.3	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
	5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included
	5.1.2	The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained
	5.2.1	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other
	5.2.2	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts
	6.1.2	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing
	6.2.2	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program
	7.1.1	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations

Sources

- Abbey, B. (2007). Behaviour management of children in long day care centres: The effects of training on carers' practices. PhD thesis <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:158467> accessed 23 June 2025
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Gartrell, D. (1995). Misbehaviour or mistaken behaviour. *Young Children*. 50(5) 27-34 accessed 23 June 2025
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018

Further reading and useful websites

- Early Childhood Australia: accessed 23 June 2025
- ACECQA- Supporting children to regulate their own behaviour accessed 23 June 2025
- The Virtues Project. accessed 23 June 2025
- Interactions with children. <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-08/InteractionsWithChildrenGuidelines.pdf> accessed 23 June 2025

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Kaylene Harper	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018.	January 2019
2	13 February 2019	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed and updated.	February 2020
3	31 January 2020	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed and updated.	January 2021
4	14 October 2020	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed.	October 2021
5	28 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed	September 2022
6	6 October 2022	Linda Hollard	Policy reviewed Accessed sources and additional information	October 2023
7	22 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed and updated.	August 2024
8	1 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Policy reviewed Sources accessed	July 2025
9	23 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Annual review; sources, further reading and useful websites	June 2026

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