

## Background

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*“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

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This policy sets out the Services expectations for educators’ relationships with young children and to facilitate the children’s friendships with each other. It also details the approach to children who have difficulty relating to others and following guidelines that uphold the safety, dignity, and rights of other children.

## Strategies and practices

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- The Services wide variety of resources, materials and equipment meets the needs and interests of the children and supports children’s learning and harmonious play. Refer to the Services Educational Program Policy.
- The educational program is based on the knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities, and interests of each child as communicated to educators by their parents, observed by educators, and contributed to by the children. Refer to the Services Interactions with Families Policy. In addition, each child’s learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documentation, and evaluation.
- The Services expectation that educators relate to children in accordance with this policy and the Services Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy is emphasised during their induction.
- The Services’ rosters ensure continuity of care so that the children are with educators who know them well and children are comfortable in sharing what they think, feel, and do. Further, the educators promote the children’s wellbeing, self-esteem, and sense of security by being responsive, warm, trusting, and respectful.
- Educators devote time to babies, one-on-one, and are attuned to them and their cues.
- Educators consistently model positive social skills in their everyday interactions with other adults and children.

- The Service provides educators with professional development in relating with children and in positive behaviour guidance.
- Educators ensure children's dignity and rights are maintained throughout all interactions and routine times.
- The Service is committed to working in partnerships with parents to best meet the education and care needs of their children. Refer to the Services Interactions with Families Policy. The communication between home and the Service is especially important when children who find relating to others a challenge and ensures that each party is aware of what is occurring in the child's life.
- The program has extended periods of uninterrupted play which accommodates child-initiated, educator-initiated, and emergent activities. This blend provides children the opportunities to make choices, contribute their own ideas, thoughts, and feelings, and to develop social competence. Children then know that they are valued as capable and competent.
- Routines are unhurried, largely social occasions. Refer to the Services Educational Program Policy.
- Educators collaborate with the children to construct simple rules expressed in a positive way and discuss with them how these rules help everyone feel safe and secure.
- Educators intentionally teach children to play and to complete projects together, and to resolve social conflicts that arise from time to time.
- Educators encourage children's efforts, rather than praise the child.
- Educators intentionally teach children protective behaviours.

**When responding to children who have difficulty relating to others or following guidelines, educators:**

- Take a positive approach to guiding children's behaviour. They accept children's behavioural mistakes as a natural part of acquiring social skills and view any mistake as a teaching/learning opportunity rather than as a distraction.
- Draw upon strategies that do not diminish the child in the eyes of others and, at the same time, do not negatively affect onlooking children. Strategies could include; redirection, reminders of the rules without censure, suggesting alternatives, offering choices and encouraging children to think about how others might feel.
- Question aspects of the environment that might contribute to the behaviour: -
  - Is adequate and safe playing space available?
  - Do the resources, materials and equipment meet the children's needs?
  - Can children choose freely from the resources, materials, and equipment?
  - Has sufficient personal play space been provided?
  - Is a quiet play space available?
  - Is an active play space available?
- Consider other influences on the child: -
  - Specific circumstances

- Specific times of day
  - Developmental challenges
  - Prior experiences, particularly those within their family
- Adopt a problem-solving approach which involves the children in deciding what to do in the situation, ensuring their dignity and rights are always maintained.

## **When managing children with recurrent difficulty relating to others or following guidelines, educators:**

- Maintain written records of dates, times, circumstances, and possible causes of the incidents.
- Discuss with the parents any concerns about their child's behaviour. Collaborate with them in constructing a behaviour guidance plan to help the child acquire the social skills necessary to play and learn happily with others. When practicable, have the child contribute to the plan.
- Refer parents to an external support agency, when appropriate, and work collaboratively with that agency to ensure a consistent approach.

## **Additional safe practices for babies**

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- 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**

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- To inform the Service of any changes in their child's education and care needs.
- To contribute to the program.
- 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 guidance plan required.
- To seek professional help for their child when recommended by the Service.

## **Procedures and forms**

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- N/A

## **Links to other policies**

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- 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**

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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
	1.1.2	Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program
	1.1.3	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning
	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
	3.2.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments
	3.2.2	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning
	4.1.2	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service
	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
	6.1.1	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
	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
	7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision making and operation of the service

## 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 26 June 2025
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Gartrell, D. (1995). Misbehaviour or mistaken behaviour. *Young Children*. 50(5) 27-34 accessed 26 June 2025
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018

## Further reading and useful websites

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/> accessed 26 June 2025
- Early Childhood Australia <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/> accessed 26 June 2025
- ACECQA- Information sheet – QA5 - [https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-01/QA5\\_Supporting\\_children\\_to\\_regulate\\_their\\_own\\_behaviour.pdf](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-01/QA5_Supporting_children_to_regulate_their_own_behaviour.pdf) Accessed 26 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	4 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	25 September 2020	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed and updated.	September 2021
5	9 September 2021	Kaylene Harper	Policy reviewed	September 2022
6	30 September 2022	Linda Hollard	Policy reviewed Accessed sources and further readings added	September 2023
7	23 August 2023	Grace McKinstry	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed	August 2024
8	9 July 2024	Tiffany Boeske	Reviewed policy Accessed sources	July 2025
9	26 June 2025	Gen Mahaki	Policy reviewed. Sources and further readings accessed and updated.	January 2019