Interactions with Children Policy

This policy is applicable to: Staff at Victor Harbor Community Kindergarten

Further assistance: Director Chris Taylor

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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1. Policy Title

Interactions with Children Policy
Promoting Positive Behaviour

2. Purpose
At this centre we believe children develop trust and confidence and positive self esteem through a supporting and nurturing environment. Children learn through an environment which allows them to create social groups, test out ideas, challenge each others thinking and build new understandings. Underlying this is the importance of positive relationships that are built on trust, acknowledgment and promote a sense of feeling secure and valued. This policy outlines a guidance approach to supporting children self regulate their emotions and behaviour.

3. Background Information
Young children require time to develop the skills to manage their feelings and behaviour. It needs to be seen as a process that is influenced by their temperament, abilities, developmental needs and family circumstances. Each child is an individual and will develop at their own pace. Educators provide that sense of security by their calm and consistent approach and expectations. Children feel secure knowing what is expected of them and having routines to follow. They also need to know they are accepted and valued even if they lose control. The approach to dealing with difficulties must maintain the relationship between educator and child. The child knows they can trust the educator and the educator is in charge.
4. POLICY DETAIL

4.1 Strategies to Promote Positive Behaviour

1. Providing an active learning environment
   * Playground equipment and spaces influence engagement, exercise and special places
   * Quiet areas away from noisy areas
   * Appropriate materials to promote peer interactions
   * Open ended experiences to allow engagement by a range of peers with varying abilities
   * Sense of physical order and routine
   * Uninterrupted blocks of time for free play
   * New and Challenging experiences encouraging exploratory play
   * To have a sense of physical self and awareness of own capabilities

2. Educator to Facilitate children’s play.
   * Educator to participate actively in promoting positive play and interactions.
   * To be responsive to the children in the role of stage manager, mediator or player and engage in listening, modelling and questioning to guide children’s interests and behaviour.

3. Planned experiences
   * Promoting a safe environment through agreed safety rules.
     These are reviewed each term with the children in small group time discussions, board maker visuals and posters and story telling with props.
   * Promoting positive relationships through peer interaction games in group times. Provide opportunities to learn to share wait for a turn and be cooperative.
   * Promote safety and well being through the “Keeping Safe Child Protection Curriculum”- exploring the 4 components over the year to provide children with knowledge and strategies to be safe.
   * Support social and emotional well being using “Kidsmatter” strategies- Component Two “Developing Children’s Social and Emotional Needs”
* To communicate and express ideas through a range of media to promote positive behaviour- e.g. puppet shows, acting out well known stories, story table props, felt board stories, CDs, DVDs books.
* Use the “Primary Educator” approach where each child has a educator that will focus on their needs and arrange for a parent interview as early as possible, especially when there are indicators of difficulties for the child. Use this interview time to develop a good rapport with families and gather useful background information for greater understanding of the child’s disposition and needs. Develop and maintain this relationship through the child’s attendance at Kindergarten to assist in any potential difficulties in the future.

4.2 Strategies to Manage Children with Difficult behaviours

* Staff inquire about the child’s well being as they arrive – be informed to their emotional well being.
* Make own observations of the child – observe body language, quickness of reactions, compliance, social engagement or lack of, fast/slow pace, need to control situations around them, need to be on the move. Collecting this information will alert staff to any possible escalating behaviour and be ready to diffuse it.

* Use guidance approach to behaviour management – not control – this will escalate the behaviour. Most of these children have high sensory needs and are unable to sit for long periods -if at all. For mat time, they may need items to hold to meet their sensory needs, cushioned mats to sit on and an adult sitting with them to provide support. It may mean they need to lie down at the back because they are tired. If they are distracting to the group, then diffuse the situation by asking them to be a helper with the next part of the routine /provide full body sensory input/ or move them away in an appropriate manner. Offer distraction -“Come see what I have” and be prepared with something in mind to occupy them while the group is engaged.

* Remember adults are in charge and support children to develop self regulation. We are their guides and keep them safe in body and mind. Some children are unable to regulate their own emotions and sensory needs at this young age and require us to help them.

* Articulate what is happening - “Say What You See”-
  “I can see you are feeling …………….wriggly, upset, tired……………….. you can do this or this” - provide 2 choices- it may mean moving away from the activity /group . It may mean they need to rest - some children have very full week with care /kindy everyday. It’s a lot for a young child to manage.
* Let’s look to meeting their needs, building a trusting relationship, being calm in interactions, finding ways to diffuse behaviour quickly – children find it quite overwhelming to lose control.

*Don’t let the child push your buttons - it’s not personal. Take a deep breath and step back a moment if you feel your temperature rising.*

* If the child’s behaviour escalates and you can do nothing about it - move other children to safety. Call other staff for assistance. One staff member to be near upset child and help through “melt down”. Be aware of the child’s needs concerning physical contact from adults. In most cases it would be advisable not to be engaged physically for child protection reasons and staff safety. Use quiet voice and calm body language. The child may need to get it out of their system. Be there for them.

*In order not to fracture the relationship between Educator and child, a calm approach is required.*

If the child has obstructed another child, use quiet voice, calm body movements and firm direction.

“I wouldn’t let anyone hurt you, so I can’t let you hurt anyone.”

Take the child by the hand and walk around until the child is calm

Remember ABC: Antecedents –What happened before
   Behaviour –that occurred
   Consequences – what happened after

Document your observations for reflection and opportunities to improve.
(See attached sheet.)

* In cases of children who are non-compliant - saying “No, No, No” - it may be best to leave them to calm down in their own safe space e.g. under the table until they are ready to come back to group or what the activity was.

* As issues arise for children’s mental health or well being, the staff team will discuss individual children at staff meetings. They will reflect on strategies to assist them and develop agreed actions to support the child and their family. One staff member will be nominated to work closely with the family and consider options for resolving issues and possible interagency expertise. Families may have different expectations from the service in relation to guiding children’s behaviour and this information needs to be shared. Families are encouraged to make an appointment to discuss this further.

* Some situations may require a formal meeting for parents, staff, special needs team and outside agencies to discuss the child and their needs. An Individual behaviour guidance plan can be developed for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties in consultation with families, other professionals and support agencies.
4.3. Bullying

The program will incorporate intentional teaching to address appropriate behaviours and positive and respectful interactions. (Refer to site behaviour code.)

Sometimes relationships are not always positive and the beginnings of bullying and children developing into bullies can be observed. Bullying can be seen as the harassment of others through an abuse of power. Bullying can take many forms-physical (hitting, punching), verbal (name calling, teasing, racist/sexist comments) and psychological (excluding children from play or rejecting children). It is essentially about the abuse of power in some form. Observant educators can help in the early intervention of possible types of bullying in the kindergarten.

It is important to acknowledge that young children are unlikely to be able to manage bullying on their own. They will need help and support. It needs to be clear that bullying will not be tolerated and that all children have a right to expect kindergarten is a safe and comfortable place for be.

**Intervention strategies to be considered:**

* Awareness raising discussions on behaviour in small group time - make sure all participants have a say to share their thoughts and seek clarification.
* Clear policy statement for families
* Incorporate positive behaviour in the program - Use the “Child Protection Curriculum” to develop children’s skills and provide useful language and vocabulary
* Empower children to use conflict resolution strategies and to help others when bullying occurs.
* Working cooperatively with parents.
* That children see their educator as a safe and trusted person to go to when they feel they are being bullied or mis-treated by another child or adult.
5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Director

- Responsible for maintenance and regular review of this policy

Employees

- Responsible to follow and implement strategies of this policy

6. REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed annually

7. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Within this document, the following terms have the meanings given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guidance approach</td>
<td>As opposed to control – adults to use a guiding approach to managing children’s behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Educator</td>
<td>Children are organised into smaller groups with the same nominated educator who has them in small group time, undertakes assessment and reporting for that child.</td>
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<td>bullying</td>
<td>The systematic abuse of power</td>
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8. SOURCES

*"Supporting and managing children's behaviour"* - an early childhood resource DECS 2004
*"Children are People too"* Louise Porter
*Kidsmatter Component 2 “Developing Children's social and emotional needs”* Department of Health and Aging 2012
*Starting School - a handbook for early childhood educators* Sue Dockett and Bob Perry 2006

APPROVED AND CHECKED BY:

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