



INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this Policy is:

- To use a positive approach in guidance and discipline and recognising why children behave in a certain way and encouraging more acceptable forms of behaviour.
- To guide children so they know what appropriate and acceptable behaviour is and what it is not.
- To consult with parents regularly on the positive guidance of behaviour policy and seek constructive solutions to any differences in values.
- To show sensitivity to varying expectations for children related to family background, but encourage children to treat others with respect.
- To involve children in the setting of the rules where these are simple and can be easily understood;
- To involve children in discussions about dealing with conflict;
- To encourage children to show empathy for children who are experiencing difficulties;
- To supervise carefully and act to divert problems before they occur; and
- To have realistic expectations of what children at different stages can understand.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to:

- Little Saints Early learning Centre (the Service) and
- St Andrew's After School & Vacation Care (the Service)

3. Policy Statement:

Our Service aims to ensure that all educators form positive relationships with children that make them feel safe and supported in the Service. Educators will encourage positive relationships between children and their peers as well as with educators and volunteers at the Service.

Guidance and discipline must always encourage the individuality and confidence of children and never lower their self-esteem. There are several important methods of guidance.

Positive guidance of behaviour is the teaching in relation to what is a good thing to do and what is not, what is safe, what pleases other people and what angers and hurts other people.

Positive guidance of behaviour should help children understand the difference between what acceptable behaviour is and what it is not. When a child is re-directed, stopped or reprimanded the

reason for this action should be explained to the child. This will assist the child to make judgements about what he/she can and cannot do. Limits and orders given without explanation make a child dependent on other people for information about what to do.

Therefore the Service's aim is to foster positive guidance of behaviour and behaviour based on control of self and understanding, and appreciation of other people's needs, rights and feelings. It is important when guiding children, to be conscious of the child's developmental stage.

Self-discipline can only be achieved if the children are aware of the limits within the Service and in turn these need to be consistently reinforced by each staff member.

4. Rationale:

It is important to have a policy within the Service regarding positive guidance of behaviour, which will encourage children to cooperate, enhance their self-esteem, encourage their ability to interact in a positive manner with their peers and adults, and guide children in acceptable ways to behave.

5. Guidance

5.1 Indirect Guidance

- Indirect guidance comes from a well-planned, developmentally appropriate programme and environment. Sufficient materials need to be provided so children can play, without the need to have altercations over toys.
- Anticipating difficulties and planning for them or staff intervening early on, will help maintain a friendly atmosphere.
- Staff should also plan sufficient and diverse activities for older children, which will challenge and interest children who may otherwise become bored and difficult to manage.

5.2 Direct Guidance

- Presenting children with clear alternatives will help them develop the ability to make decisions and direct themselves.
- Each room must have clear limits, which the children are made aware of. Each staff member consistently reinforces these limits.
- The presence and attention of a staff member helps children concentrate on an activity. Staff are better able to demonstrate to, guide, gently restrain or remove a child when they are close by.
- Restraining or removing a child from a situation is necessary if he/she or another child is being put at risk of injury.

5.3 Verbal Guidance

- This is used immediately to re-direct a child's behaviour. Language used by caregivers is positive, clear and appropriate to the development of a child and should leave no doubt as to what is required.
- Requests for the desired behaviour should be given with reasons for them, rather than negative commands such as "Don't do that". For example, if a child was standing on a table staff could say "Please hop off the table because it is not safe, you could fall off", rather than "Don't stand on the table".

5.4 Emotional Guidance

Emotional guidance - especially approval - aids the development of a positive self-concept in a child. Approval can be conveyed in many ways, such as friendly words and smiles, holding and hugging and by encouraging a child's efforts to achieve. Expressing approval of children without discrimination between them will meet a deep need of the children and heighten their self-esteem.

6. Interactions with Children – Statement of Philosophy

The Service's statement of philosophy guides our interactions with children.

In order to maintain positive interactions with children our service and educators will maintain the following:

- Our service will provide a relaxed and happy atmosphere for the children.
- Our service will ensure mealtimes are relaxed and unhurried and educators take the time to sit and talk with children.
- Our educators will encourage children to initiate conversations about their experiences inside and outside the service as well as what is happening around them, express their ideas and feelings, share humour with the nominated supervisor, educators, coordinators and educators and seek assistance as they take on new challenges and try to do things for themselves.
- Our educators and coordinators will respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and engage them in sustained conversations about their interests in a positive manner.
- Our educators will talk with children in a two-sided manner. That is, encourage children to have their own opinions, ideas and comments. Educators should support children with this and let them know that their ideas are valued.
- Our service will have in place predictable personal-care routines that are enjoyable experiences for babies and toddlers and will respond to babies and toddlers when they practice their verbal communication skills.
- Our routines, as well as planned and spontaneous experiences will be organised to maximise opportunity for meaningful conversations between children and educators and the service will ensure that all children have equal opportunity to engage in one to one and small group conversations with educators.
- Our educators will be knowledgeable in the communication strategies and non verbal cues of babies and toddlers and staffing and grouping arrangements within the service will support the development of trusting relationships between educators, babies and toddlers to allow them to feel secure in the service.
- Our statement of philosophy and policy on interactions with children will be visible
- Our educators will participate in children's play using children's cues to guide their level and type of involvement while always maintaining a positive approach when responding to children and offering assistance.
- Our educators will model reasoning, prediction and reflection processes and language.
- Our educators will collaborate with children about routines and experiences.

- Our educators will use techniques such as sign language and other resources and tools to support children with additional needs.
- Our educators will engage in give and take communication by adding to interactions initiated by babies and toddlers by describing objects and talking about routine activities with babies and toddlers.
- Our educators will use their interactions with children to support the maintenance of home languages and learning English as an additional language.
- Our educators and coordinators will use information from their observations of interactions with children to extend the children's thinking and learning.
- Our educators will also support children to build secure attachments with one and then many educators and use a favourite toy or comfort item to help them feel secure in the service. Most toddlers suffer a form of separation anxiety when away from their families. Educators need to reassure the toddler and work with the toddler's family in order to make the child feel safe and happy at the Service.
- Our service will ensure that there are many opportunities for babies and toddlers to experience relaxed physical contact and close interactions with familiar educators.
- Our nominated supervisor, educators and coordinators will learn more about the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families using the service.
- Our educators will frequently talk with families to get an idea of the non-verbal forms of communication used by their children in order to convey messages such as hunger, needing the toilet, tiredness and emotions.
- Our educators will allow time to talk to parents about their children. This allows educators to gain insight into their home life.
- Our service will implement strategies to assist all children to develop a sense of belonging and confidence through positive interactions between the children and educators.
- Our service's roster will be planned in a way that promotes continuity for children.
- Our service will gather information from families in the enrolment form in order to be able to provide support for children during the settling in process.
- When children have special needs our service will consult with other professionals or support agencies that work with children to gather information that will guide our interactions with these children. This information will be recorded in the child's file.
- Our service's approach to equity and inclusion will be documented in our statement of philosophy.
- Our service will ensure that educators document the knowledge gained about children, through their interactions, in the child's file for reference for other educators and will continually review the experiences that are planned for children in light of this information.

7. Group Relationships

In order to encourage respectful and positive relationships between children and their peers and educators our service will adhere to the following practices:

- Our service will encourage children to participate in enjoyable interactions with their peers, respond positively to ideas, negotiate roles and relationships, contribute to shared play, and develop friendships.

- Our educators will engage children in ongoing group projects that involve research, planning, problem solving and shared decision making.
- Our educators will model strategies for children to initiate interactions and participate in group play and social activities and assist them when they have trouble understanding or communicating with each other.
- Our service will ensure that the children have many opportunities for peer scaffolding.
- Our educators will promote a sense of community in the service.
- Our service will coordinate the staffing and grouping arrangements to support positive relationships between children.
- Our educators will support and promote children's interpersonal relationships and support the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and capabilities in group play, projects and experiences.
- Our educators will learn about children's shared interests and will use this information to plan further experiences that provide collaborative learning opportunities.
- Our educators will pre-empt potential conflicts or challenging behaviours by monitoring children's play and supporting interactions where there is conflict.
- Our service will ensure that the program and routines of the service will include regular opportunities for children to engage in social play and group experiences.
- Our service will ensure that food is being used appropriately and not as a reward or punishment.
- Our service will ensure that corporal punishment is not used as part of behaviour guidance or any other aspect of our interactions with children. Corporal punishment is never to be used in our service.

8. Positive re-enforcement:

In the application of emotional guidance - Staff reward desired and acceptable behaviour in appropriate ways, such as positive language: "Well done", a stamp, a cuddle etc.

If a child's actions are not going to injure the child or another child, the behaviour may be ignored by staff (eg. if a child is using inappropriate language). Sometimes drawing attention to this behaviour may encourage the child to repeat it, to see if more attention is given. If the inappropriate behaviour continues, the child will be re-directed towards more acceptable behaviours.

Redirection and constructive solutions shall be the techniques used by staff. Emphasis on the positive is essential in guiding young children. Give the child a choice of activities rather than the threat of removal from an activity. Be specific, "You can stay and build with the blocks or you can play with the dough", NOT "Go and find something else to do. Acknowledge and praise children's efforts. Guide children to solve their own problems - encourage them to do this using a quiet voice and in a calming manner e.g. "I don't like it when you hit me, it hurts". We aim to use as many positive phrases as possible or use the positive before the negative. A child is more likely to respond favorably to "show me how you can dig a hole" or "we use the shovels for digging", instead of "Do not hit". Presenting children with clear alternatives helps them develop the ability to make decisions and direct themselves e.g. we provide several activities in our programme for children to choose. Staff show toddlers (model) what we want them to do if they are doing something unacceptable e.g. throwing sand in the air, show child how to play constructively with sand toys.

9. Clear expectations

Expectations should be expressed positively. When inappropriate behaviour occurs let the child know what is acceptable and why the inappropriate behaviour cannot continue. Explanations should be clear and brief. All staff should build on the positive, providing attention and encouragement when positive interactions are taking place. Language needs to be clear, positive and appropriate to the developmental level of the child. For example “We need to walk inside”, not “Stop running”, “Keep hands in your lap”, and not “Stop doing that”. Avoid using “Don’t” or “No”. “NO” should be used mainly in emergencies i.e. on rare occasions for safety reasons. Encouragement, intervention, explanation, and reconciliation are positive goals to strive for. Cooperative games and team building activities should be emphasized. Avoid giving negative direction i.e. using “DON’T/ DON’T DO THAT” rather show the children what they can do than what they shouldn’t do or ask older children what they think they should be doing. Use ‘do’s instead of ‘don’t’s.

9.1 Consequence

Be clear about the consequences for the child when behaviour differs from the expectation.
Be consistent. Follow through with the consequence.

9.2 Requests

Children tend to cooperate more with a request rather than a command. Use a firm, calm manner. Concentrate on the behaviour not the child. Children should be encouraged to “use words” rather than physical aggression and to express their feelings about what has happened. Deal only with the situation at hand. Do not recall past situations where guidance, redirection etc. was used.

9.3 Group Discussions

Expectations can be reinforced by discussing incidents as a group. Older children can develop their own simple rules, which can be displayed. Limits can be readdressed prior to activities. Older children can be encouraged to resolve differences between themselves. Staff should be present to ensure the rights of each child are respected. What is important is that they understood the consequence of their actions. Children need time to modify their behaviour. Do not expect an immediate change. Acknowledge any small step towards making the change. It is important to restore a positive relationship with a child soon after an incident has passed.

10. Thinking Time:

Is only used for older children who are at a developmental stage where this would be an effective means of guidance. It is used when verbal disapproval does not work. Thinking Time for a child is:

- a time for reflection
- a time to calm down
- a time to consider a different approach next time
- a positive experience through interactions with a staff member
- used as a last resort

Thinking Time is not used as a means of

- excluding children from their friends or environment
- scaring children into appropriate behaviour
- a ‘cop out’ for staff

11. Biting:

Reasons for biting and ways for dealing with it differ with under 3's and over 3's. Over 3's usually have more understanding of how hurtful and disapproved biting is, and they should be able to control their urges to bite. Under 3's may bite because:

- they are teething
- they might bite impulsively
- they have been bitten by older children and are passing on the same behaviour
- they may bite because something happened
- frustration may be expressed through biting

A good way to stop biting is to be there to prevent it as much as possible. This can be done through distraction, and by setting up an appropriate environment that encourages both the sharing of toys as well as individual experiences. Also consistent reactions of disapproval to biting are important. Manner and tone of voice should convey the severity of what has been done.

Steps to take after a biting incident:

1. Get child's attention (attacker) to stop behaviour e.g. "Charlie - stop"
2. Attend to child (victim) - administer first aid if necessary, cuddles, reassurance, encourage child to use words to express how they feel e.g. "I feel sad", "I'm hurting", "Please be gentle", and "My turn".
3. Deal with the negative behaviour at the child's level and with positive communication e.g. "biting hurts, it makes Wendy Sad".
4. Redirect children if necessary to another activity.
5. Allowing time, to give both children the attention they might need.

Toddlers find it difficult to take turns and don't understand the importance yet, so they need adult's encouragement in developing these skills. Children under 2 do not yet understand that they are hurting by biting, pushing etc. and cannot be scolded for doing so. Obviously preventing the situation from occurring is most desirable, but toddlers and babies can be quick in their actions even if a caregiver is nearby. It is inevitable that these accidents will occur in a child-care setting, but staff are constantly working towards minimising biting/hitting behaviour.

12. Bullying:

In order to overcome bullying in our service, our educators will be aware of the following information and maintain the following practices:

12.1 Children who Bully

Our educators will be aware of the following characteristics in children who bully -

- Children of all backgrounds can bully
- Preconceived notions of children who bully should be avoided
- The child who bullies may also be the victim of bullying
- The child who bullies will often think that they are innocent, and that the child being bullied is somehow deserving of this negative experience.
- Recent research demonstrates that aggressive behaviour and bullying inclinations begin in some children as early as three years old, which highlights the importance of children's services educators in effectively responding to children who bully.

12.2 Victims of Bullying

Our educators will be aware of the following characteristics of victims of bullying -

- Children of all backgrounds can fall victim to bullying
- Preconceived notions of children who fall victim to bullying should be avoided
- Boys and girls are equally likely to be victims of bullying.
- Victims may have low self-esteem, lack of confidence, lack social skills or be viewed as unpopular.
- It is important to remember that victims are often sensitive and easily hurt, and feel incapable of preventing such negative experiences.

12.3 Overcoming Bullying

Our educators will implement the following strategies to overcome bullying -

- Our educators will practice all-encompassing and socially inclusive care.
- Daily programs will recognise, value and reflect the social and cultural diversity of our community.
- Our educators will role model and actively encourage appropriate behaviours.
- Our educators will form a close relationship with family members in order to work cooperatively to overcome instances of bullying.
- Our educators will empower children by giving them responsibilities that will make them feel valued.
- Our educators will help children deal with their anger. This includes offering alternative dispute resolution techniques that are socially acceptable.
- Our educators will seek the support of children's services professionals when it is necessary.
- Our educators will respond promptly to children's aggressive or bullying behaviour.

13. Supporting Children through Difficult Situations

When a child, family, educator or the service as a whole experiences a stressful or traumatic situation such as a bushfire, car accident, sudden illness or death, crime or violent situation it is important to provide appropriate support so they can recover from the ordeal. A child's reaction to a stressful or traumatic situation will depend on factors such as their age, stage of development and impact of the event on people around them. A child may react in ways that you don't expect and sometimes will act normally at first but be wary of a delayed reaction. Some reactions include:

- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches.
- Being anxious or clingy.

- Suffering from separation anxiety.
- Having sleeping problems or nightmares.
- Re-living the experience through drawing or play.
- Losing interest in activities.
- Loss of self-confidence.
- Regressing to “babyish” activities.

Our educators will talk with a child about the event to bring any issues out into the open. The ways our educators will approach this are:

- Reassuring the child that they are safe at Little Saints.
- Talking to the child about what happened in a way that they will understand and without going into frightening or graphic detail. Our educators will not leave out important information though, as children will fill in the gaps.
- Ensuring the child hasn’t jumped to conclusions. Some children will think they are to blame in a tragic event; our educators will make sure they know this isn’t so.
- Talking about the event with appropriate people (for example, all children if the event has affected the whole service or the children that have been affected) and letting everyone have their say including children.
- Talking to the children about how people react to stressful or traumatic situations and that the feelings they are feelings are normal.

Coping Mechanisms

Some strategies that our educators will use to help children cope in these situations are:

- Giving children a sense of control of their environment and life. Letting the child make minor decisions, such as what to eat for lunch, what to wear or what toy to play with will make the child feel more in control.
- Allowing the children plenty of time to play and to do physical exercise; this will help the child burn off stress chemicals and allow for more sleep.
- Helping the children physically relax with story times and cuddles.

It is important to remember how you respond to the stressful or traumatic event will affect your child’s response. Children look to their families and educators to find ways to deal with a situation they probably don’t understand. Children need their family members (and other adults who are close to them) to help them understand the situation and their emotions and also offer comfort and support. If adults are distressed about a situation it is important for them to seek help for themselves.

At the service, we wish to help in whatever way we can if your family has undergone a tragedy. Talk to educators (or confidentially to the Nominated Supervisor) and we will endeavour to work with families and children to support all parties through the situation.

Should it be required, educators will liaise with appropriate authorities, and follow any recommendations made by these authorities.

14. Measuring Tools:

Staff, Relief Staff, Volunteers, Visitors will receive a copy of this policy before they commence duties with the children. Core staff are to monitor relief staff and visitors to ensure that this policy is being followed which will provide consistency within the Centre for the children.

14.1 The Child

Get to know the child. Develop a positive relationship with them. Talk to parents about their home background. Assess their stage of development, their needs and skills.

14.2 The Environment

Provide enough space for children to engage in activities comfortably and to be able to move easily between them. Define areas. Avoid wide-open spaces. There should be a balance of active and quiet activities to avoid over-excitement. Provide enough activities to occupy all children. Ensure adequate duplication of equipment to avoid arguments. Assist children who are unsettled to move to another activity.

14.3 Transitions/routines

Give sufficient notice when a change in activity is imminent. This also includes outdoor activities. Children should not be expected to sit inactively for extended periods. Be prepared for transition times.

14.4 Role modeling

Children should be presented with positive models of acceptable behaviour. Staff actions and interactions set the tone through their body language, actions and voice level. Children copy what they see and hear. If we wish to provide a peaceful and cooperative environment for children to grow and to learn, then we must demonstrate this in our actions and voice. Avoid using loud voices, when voice levels are soft and calm the children set their tone in a similar fashion. It is better to get down to the children's level and speak softly. Adults need to model appropriate expression of their feelings. Children observe the way staff interact with each other and parents as well. When a child is playing inappropriately join in and model appropriate play. Aim to provide good behaviour for children to imitate.

15. Sources & Further Reading:

- Early Childhood Australia Inc (2007) *Code of ethics*
- Porter L (2003) *Young Children's Behaviour*
- Harrison Jeantee *Beyond time out*
- Stone house Anne 92204) *Making links: A collaborative approach to planning and practice in early Childhood services*
- Tansey S (2006) *Equity for children and families*
- UNICEF
- Goryl, Neilsen-Hewett, Sweller (2013) *Teacher education, teaching experience and bullying policies: Links with early childhood teachers' perceptions and attitudes to bullying*
- National Quality Standard
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Early Years Learning Framework

16. Links to Other Policies:

- Curriculum and Child Progress Policy
- Biting Policy