

Relationships with Children

Bella Grace Early Learning Centre

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 the Service’s 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

- The Service’s wide variety of resources, materials and equipment meets the needs (e.g. age, development, culture) and interests of the children, and supports children’s learning and harmonious play. Refer to the Service’s *Educational Program Policy*. QA 3.1.1, 3.2.2
- 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 Service’s *Interactions with Families Policy*. In addition, each child’s learning and development are assessed as part of the programming cycle of planning, documentation and evaluation. QA 1.1.2, 5.1.3, 5.2.1, 6.1.2, 6.2.1, 7.3.5
- The Service’s expectation that educators relate to children in accordance with this Policy and the Service’s *Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy* is emphasised during their induction. QA 7.1.2
- The Service’s rosters ensure continuity of care so that the children are with educators who know them well and are interested in 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. QA 5.1.1, 7.1.3
- Educators devote time to babies, one-on-one, and are attuned to them. QA 1.1.1, 5.1.1

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- Educators consistently model positive social skills in their everyday interactions with other adults and children. QA 5.2.2
- The Service provides educators with professional development in relating with children and in positive behaviour guidance. QA 5.2.2, 7.2.2
- The Service is committed to working in partnerships with parents to best meet the education and care needs of their children. Refer to the Service's *Interactions with Families Policy*. The communication between home and the Service is especially important when children experience difficulty relating to others, and ensures that each party is aware of what is occurring in the child's day. QA 5.2.2, 6.1.2, 6.2.1, 6.3.3, 7.2.1
- The program has extended periods of uninterrupted play which accommodate child-initiated, educator-initiated and co-constructed 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. QA 1.1.3, 5.1.1
- Routines are unhurried, largely social occasions. Refer to the Service's *Educational Program Policy*. QA 1.1.1, 1.1.3, 5.2.3
- 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. QA 2.1.2, 2.3.2, 5.2.2
- Educators intentionally teach children to play and to complete projects together, and to resolve social conflicts that arise from time to time. QA 5.2.2, 5.2.1, 5.2.3
- Educators encourage children's efforts, rather than praise the child. QA 5.1.3
- Educators intentionally teach children protective behaviours. QA 1.2.2, 2.3.4

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. QA 5.2.2
- 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 (empathy). QA 5.2.3
- 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? QA 3.1.1, 1.1.6

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- Consider other influences on the child
 - Specific circumstances
 - Specific times of day
 - Developmental issues
 - Prior experiences, particularly those within their family.
- Adopt a problem-solving approach which involves the children in deciding what to do in the situation. QA 5.2.2

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. QA 1.2.1, 7.3.1
- 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. QA 5.2.2, 6.2.1, 6.3.3
- Refer parents to an external support agency, when appropriate, and work collaboratively with that agency to ensure a consistent approach. QA 5.2.2, 6.3.1, 6.3.3

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 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.

Links to other policies

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

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

Regs	155	Interactions with children
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	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	The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning
	1.1.6	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and influence events in their world
	1.2.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation
	1.2.2	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning
	2.1.2	Each child's comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
	2.3.2	Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury
	2.3.4	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect
	5.1.1	Interactions with each child are warm, responsive and build trusting relationships
	5.1.3	Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included
	5.2.1	Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities
	5.2.2	Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts
	5.2.3	The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained at all times
	6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
	6.2.1	The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing
	6.3.1	Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained
	6.3.3	Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated
	7.1.2	The induction of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is comprehensive
	7.1.3	Every effort is made to promote continuity of educators and co-ordinators at the service
	7.2.1	A statement of philosophy is developed and guides all aspects of the service's operations
	7.2.2	The performance of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is evaluated and individual development plans are in place to support performance improvement
	7.3.1	Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements
	7.3.5	Service practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and reviewed regularly

Sources

- Abbey, B. (2007). *Behaviour management of children in long day care centres: The effects of training on carers' practices*. PhD thesis.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- Gartrell, D. (1995). Misbehaviour or mistaken behaviour. *Young Children*. 50(5) 27-34.
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011.

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Further reading and useful websites

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/> accessed 5 February 2016
- Early Childhood Australia – <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/> accessed 5 February 2016
- Tebyani, V. (2009). *Guiding children's behaviour in child care*.
http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/family-resources/factsheets/guiding_children's_behaviour.pdf
accessed 5 February 2016

Policy review

Bella Grace Early Learning Centres encourage 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.

Date reviewed: April 2016

Next review Date: April 2017