

POLICY: 2.1 Interactions with Children

Procedure: 2.2 Guiding Children's Behaviour

Behaviour guidance means assisting children to self-regulate and manage their behaviour. It differs from traditional 'behaviour management' or 'discipline', which generally implies that an adult is 'managing' children's behaviour or using punishment to control children. Behaviour guidance applies to all forms of behaviour, not just behaviours labeled as 'negative'.

2.2.1 Linking to Policy

This procedural guidance should be read in conjunction with the Service's **2.1 Interactions with Children Policy** and will assist the Approved Provider, management, staff (Nominated Supervisors, Coordinators and administrative staff members), Educators (and Educator Assistants where applicable) and parents to implement this policy. The procedure covers:

[2.2.2 Roles and Responsibilities - Guiding Principles for Educators and Staff](#)

[2.2.3 Proactive versus Reactive](#)

[2.2.4 Behaviour Guidance Strategies](#)

[2.2.5 Consequences](#)

[2.2.6 Biting and Hitting](#)

[2.2.7 What to do when Behaviour Guidance Strategies are not Effective](#)

2.2.2 Roles and Responsibilities - Guiding Principles for Educators and Staff

Educators will promote children's sense of *belonging*, trust in others and feel confident in *being* and optimistically engage in experiences that contribute to *becoming*.

Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing and take increasing responsibility for their own health, physical wellbeing and build their agency, capacity to make decisions that impact or influence their experience at child care.

When thinking about assisting children in developing the skills to self-regulate, Educators, Educator Assistants and staff will:

- Develop clear strategies to assist the child in developing self-management and regulation of their behaviour with input from the child and their parents
- Promote cultural awareness and will seek advice to ensure that behaviour guidance strategies are culturally sensitive and appropriate

- Be flexible and when necessary, adapt guidance methods to take account of children's individual differences
- Role-model acceptable behaviours, acknowledge and affirm children's efforts during their interactions with all children, other Educators, Educator Assistants and service staff, parents and other persons while conducting the business of the Service
- Clearly express in positive terms and reinforce appropriate behaviour consistently and in a developmentally appropriate way
- Attend training to enhance their knowledge of current best practice in behaviour guidance in early childhood settings
- Advise parents of the Service policies and procedures and expectations concerning behaviour guidance via the Service Information Handbook. The handbook is provided to all parents as part of the enrolment procedure by the service staff
- Encourage parents to discuss this behaviour guidance procedure with their Educator before their child commences care
- Inform parents that it is not permissible for them to discipline their child using any form of physical punishment or inappropriate language while in the presence of children in care or at the Educator's residence.

2.2.3 'Proactive' versus 'Reactive'

The Service promotes a proactive approach to supporting and guiding children's behaviour. The most common strategies used in guiding behaviour are known as 'reactive.' Reactive strategies are ones that occur or are implemented after an event or incident. They usually involve what is known as 'punishment' or 'consequences' and attempt to stop inappropriate behaviour. While reacting in some way to inappropriate behaviour is part of guiding children, the reactive approach is neither the most important nor usually the most effective strategy in the longer term.

The Service's aim of working with children is to help promote in them a sense of what is known as '**intrinsic motivation**', to encourage young children to behave because they know it assists themselves and others in productive ways.

'Extrinsic motivation' to behave is about avoiding punishment or getting a reward and is not the most effective means of helping children develop responsibility for their actions and behaviours.

An example of extrinsic motivation: Educators may say to children when they get into the car. "You had better put on your seatbelts or the policeperson will get us."

This example places fear of punishment as the reason and rationale for doing something like putting on a seat belt. **Rather Educators will use intrinsic motivation:**

An example of intrinsic motivation: for Educators to help children to develop appropriate behaviours based on intrinsic reasons the Educator could have said, "You need to put your seat belt on so that you are safe in the car".

In order to promote more opportunities for children to develop intrinsic motivation and to gain understanding as they grow older about taking responsibility for their behaviours, the proactive approach is the first and most important strategy we can use with young children.

The proactive approach differs from the reactive because the proactive attempts to establish an environment that avoids as many opportunities as possible for high levels of frustration in children and attempts to reflect an encouraging environment, respects the individual and provides a range of learning experiences that help children to express and explore feelings and behaviours in ways that are safe and secure.

The proactive approach requires parents and Educators to spend energy in thinking, planning and setting up an environment that is most likely to support, encourage and minimise frustration for children, even before they arrive.

The proactive approach attempts to 'get in first' before the need arises to 'react' to inappropriate behaviour.

There are three major areas that the proactive approach includes:

1. The environment
2. The program
3. The Educator

1. The Environment

The environment is set up in ways that best suits the stage of development of the children. Environments need to reflect a range of characteristics to help respect the child and minimise frustrations for children. Some of these characteristics include:

- Enough space for children to move easily and freely around the room without bumping into things
- Enough cosy corners and 'escape' places such as little cubby houses made from a blanket, for children to have some personal space and time away from others
- Light and bright feeling (well ventilated and natural light), it is not stuffy and not too hot or cold in winter or summer
- Play areas where not too many children have to compete for the same equipment or activity
- Plenty of similar equipment and materials as it is hard for children to wait their turn
- Lots of time outdoors. Children need ample time to be outdoors even though adults may feel the cold, children don't tend to

2. The Program

The actual activities, learning experiences, resources, equipment and materials provided for the children can also impact their behaviour.

The following lists some of the program considerations to enable a proactive approach:

- Educators only allow short periods where children are sitting and/or waiting

- Allowing children choices in experiences and activities, to develop their capacity to be decision-makers
- Use the interest of each child as the basis of the program and where possible, support children to lead play experiences
- Be conscious of play spaces which in the past are spaces of conflict and discuss with children how to improve their experience in this space
- Provide creative art opportunities without expecting children to reproduce. Eg. Copying the creation from an art book often leads to frustration. This practice also shows a lack of respect for the child's creativity and learning
- Provide plenty of time for long, uninterrupted playtime that is constructive and promotes learning.

3. The Educator

The Educator's role is the most critical in the proactive approach to guiding children's behaviour. Listed below are some of the aspects that promote a proactive approach:

- Establishing a real and respectful relationship with each child through listening and responding quickly to children
- Providing opportunities for children to attach and develop trust with them. This means being responsive and available at all times
- Respecting and reflecting the feelings of each child – thinking about how you support children's capacity to express and have their feelings acknowledged
- Respecting the culture and family of each child by engaging with families and researching their culture to ensure the child and family feel welcome and included
- Holding realistic expectations of young children – continue to develop your skills in understanding age-appropriate behaviour and responding accordingly
- Using language that is appropriate to a child's understanding, speaking slowly and concisely. This includes body language and facial expressions
- Avoiding the use of sarcasm, 'put downs' or negative language with a child
- Using encouragement with each child and making a point of affirming something they have done during each day
- Modelling appropriate (expected) behaviour in your interactions with children.

Additionally, reflect on possible consideration for why inappropriate behaviour is present, remembering to consider what is age-appropriate behaviour. Children are learning to socialise and control their emotions. There are a number of reasons that children may behave inconsiderately. These may include:

- Their basic needs not being met - the child may be hungry, thirsty, tired or sick. This should always be the first consideration

- The expectations of adults sometimes aren't aligned with what is typical behaviour of children, meaning the child's response to incidents is in fact age-appropriate
- The new experience of children sharing, remembering in an early childhood setting that children are required to share time, attention and resources for extended periods. This can be challenging and needs Educators to be patient and present to assist them
- Lack of appropriate stimulation – curriculum not meeting the needs of the child creating frustration and conflict between children
- Attention - negative behaviour may become the most effective way of getting attention – this requires the Educator to change their practice and be more attentive about noticing positive behaviour and acknowledging this behaviour
- Imitation – children may model the behaviour they have observed
- Excitement - some children lose control when over-excited. Consider the time of day experiences occur. Educators need to be conscious of how a child responds to new experiences
- Jealousy - hurting others may be an expression of jealousy. Observe the child to determine what are the triggers and who is present
- Developing social skills - some children do not have the social skills to initiate social interaction. Support the child as they enter new play episodes
- High energy levels - opportunity to release this energy may be limited at times and may cause a child to find different ways to release energy
- Developing communication skills - either due to age or ability. Support the child's language acquisition and vocabulary to build these skills
- Additional needs – some children may have learning difficulties or delays that require additional support.

2.2.4 Behaviour Guidance Strategies

Positive behaviour will be encouraged by diverting children to more appropriate activities, demonstrating appreciation for appropriate behaviour and acknowledging and building on each child's strengths and achievements. Educators and staff may within acceptable limits, raise and lower their voice in order to use intonation to emphasise points being made, but never in a frightening or negative way.

Educators will assist children:

- To negotiate their rights in relation to the rights of others
- To develop resilience and ability to take increasing responsibility for their behaviour
- To develop an increased capacity to understand, self-regulate and manage their own emotions in ways that reflect the feelings and needs of others.

Educators will use appropriate voice intonations, facial expressions and explanations in implementing behaviour management strategies designed to encourage acceptable behaviour.

Shouting at children is not appropriate.

No child shall, at any time, receive any form of corporal punishment, be smacked or placed in isolation, made immobile, frightened or humiliated in any way or have food or drink withheld as a form of punishment.

There is a number of 'reactive' techniques for guiding behaviour. Educators need to choose the one that:

1. Suits the situation and children
2. Can be applied by the Educator with confidence

Techniques may include (but are not limited to):

- Distraction
- Compromise
- Rewards
- Logical Consequences
- Role modelling
- Negotiation
- Arbitration
- Delegating responsibility to the disruptive child
- Allowing children to settle conflicts
- Humour
- Redirection

Educators will always avoid using judgemental terms when talking with children at the times when their behaviour is inappropriate. Eg. never include words such as:

Naughty
Difficult
Bad
Hopeless

Discussions with adults in respect to a child's undesirable behaviour will not take place in the presence of children.

2.2.5 Consequence

The Educator must not view a consequence as a threat or as a punishment, but rather as an opportunity to let the children or child make a decision, change their behaviour or find a solution. These are important life skills and children need to be provided with opportunities to problem solve and sort out their difficulties and frustrations.

If a child repeatedly uses behaviour that is inappropriate and/or is causing real harm to others or disruption to the program, quietly but firmly leading them to another part of the room may be appropriate.

This is not to be mistaken with the old view of 'time out' where children were punished by being put on a 'naughty chair,' put in a corner or made to stay away from everyone for a prolonged time where they were humiliated.

The removal should only be for a short time, perhaps 30 seconds or until the child chooses to move away themselves. This removal away from the disruption allows the child to calm themselves. This should occur with the Educator.

The removal place should still be within the program and room and not be seen by any child as the punishment area - just a place away from where the disruption occurred.

It is not productive to try to reason with an angry child or a child who is having a tantrum. In the heat of the moment, they are unlikely to reason with you or to be calm enough to hear or understand.

Children can be guided away from an experience and encouraged to find an alternate experience if required. Educators should assist and encourage the child to re-join the experience and give praise for appropriate behaviour. **NO** further consequence should be given and the child will be reminded in positive terms of acceptable behaviour.

Educators will always use a positive example when redirecting children. Eg. "please walk inside", instead of "don't run inside". This not only redirects the child from not running, it helps them to know what to do instead - walk not run. Instead of staying at the lunch table, 'sit nicely" say, 'sit still or sit quietly, or use your quiet voice".

2.2.6 Biting and Hitting

For children under 3, biting can be a result of teething, a way of experimenting or a way of expressing their feelings/communicating. It is usually a stage they work through quickly with help. Educators have a great deal of experience in such situations and a range of strategies that help guide a child through this stage such as:

- Redirection
- Shadowing the child
- Providing chew toys or teething rings and crunchy foods
- Responding to the child's need for sleep/food etc.

Older children who bite are given tools to help in difficult situations. For example:

- Recognising their own emotions so that they can learn to be in control of them and learn appropriate ways to express them
- Practicing being assertive with toys or props, so that the child can use their words when they feel angry at their peers, such as practice with puppets and through storybooks
- Giving children alternative ways to gain control of their emotions, such as listening to music, being physically active or using quiet time away to calm down
- Supporting children with positive peer interactions for them to develop friendships.

Biting and hitting are normal behaviours in the development of most children, often caused by an inability to verbally communicate. If a child bites or hits another child, the following procedures should be followed:

- Attend first to the child who was bitten, to comfort and assess the injury
- First aid will be applied. Universal precautions should be followed, especially if the skin is broken
- Parents will be notified of the incident.

Immediately after attending to the child who was bitten or if possible while attending the child:

- Talk about the incident with the child who bit or hit, explaining the consequences of their actions in words they understand
- Show disapproval for the child's actions using tone of voice and facial expressions (in accordance with the above policy) and encourage the child to help make the other child feel better through positive and gentle touching
- Acknowledge the child who was bitten and assist them to understand what they are feeling
- Suggest an alternative to biting or hitting to deal with the issue and follow this up by reminding the child who bites or hits often, how to resolve their issues in a more constructive manner
- Encourage the child who bit or hit to ask for what they want and assist them in learning how to verbalise their feelings.

Advise parents of the child who has been bitten and the parents of the child who bit of the incident, keeping in mind the Service's confidentiality policy and advise them of the following:

- Any strategies you will put in place to mitigate the risk of further biting or hitting
- Document the incident on the Incident, Injury, Illness and Trauma Form.

If the behaviour is an ongoing concern with a particular child, the Educator will discuss the situation with the Coordination Unit and parents, with the aim of developing consistent strategies that both the Educator and the parent will implement to alter the behaviour.

2.2.7 What to do when Behaviour Guidance Strategies are not Effective

If after employing all the approaches and strategies above, the child continues to consistently display undesirable behaviour, the Educator will talk with the Coordinator to discuss whether:

- Strategies and expectations are realistic and consistent with the child's level of development
- Strategies are culturally appropriate
- The child understands the limits

- There is any conflict between the expectations of the child's behaviour at home and the Educator's expectations
- The child's needs are being met
- The child has any additional needs that may be the cause of unacceptable behaviour
- The child is not copying observed behaviour
- Events at the Educator's home have not encouraged the behaviour
- Consequences of the behaviour do not encourage it to persist (i.e. extra attention)
- Strategies are consistently followed.

Coordinators will:

- Be available to discuss and assist Educators and parents with concerns they have in respect of a child's behaviour or participation in the group of children
- Recommend that Educators document behaviour (see steps below)
- Consider if a Behaviour Management Plan should be developed in collaboration with the Educator, parent and where appropriate, the child
- If a child continues to exhibit undesirable behaviour after methods have failed, discuss with the Educator whether an alternate placement is required for the child
- Future placements will be made taking into consideration the child's previous care history. If necessary, families will be encouraged to seek outside assistance for their child eg. Child Psychologists.

Steps to consider:

Service staff and Educators are committed to working with families to achieve positive interactions within the care environment. Family support meetings should be arranged to discuss any issues and develop strategies to positively guide children's behaviour.

Working in partnership with families to understand typical behaviour and how behaviour can be influenced by the environment and program offered and where necessary, further support services can be accessed with the parent's permission.

Step 1 – Observe

Observing children's challenging behaviour can identify if a Behaviour Management Plan to support a child in self-managing their behaviour is required.

The Educator will observe challenging behaviour, including in the broader context of the environment:

- The interactions with other children
- Frequency and severity of the inappropriate behavioural episode

- Where, when and what happens before, during and after an event
- Who was involved and what occurred
- What else did you notice about the situation.

Step 2 – Discussion

Educators will work with the parents first to discuss what they have noticed including:

- The ongoing behaviour displayed by the child, including highlighting improvements and celebrating successes
- Their aspirations, as well as the Service's aspirations for the child
- The child's individual characteristics, including interests, temperament, age and cultural background
- Recommended strategies to support the child's development and how these strategies will be reviewed and evaluated
- Resources or changes to the environment/program that may be required for a guidance plan to be implemented e.g. changes to routines and transitions
- Ask the parent if they are experiencing the behaviour and what support is already accessed by the family to assist with managing the child's behaviour
- Identify other support available, such as a referral for specialist assessment and additional adult support (written consent is required from parents/guardians before any intervention/assessment is undertaken)
- Build a shared understanding and consistent approach between the home and care environment
- Any other matter that will assist with the development of a Behaviour Management Plan

Step 3 – Develop

The Educator and Coordinator will develop an individual Behaviour Management Plan, based on the consultation with the child's parents and other support agencies that is:

- Appropriate to the needs of the child and accepted/agreed to by parents and other professionals involved in the education and care of that child
- Clear and easy to follow for all (Educators, parents and/or volunteers/students) people working with the child.

Step 4 – Monitor and review

The Educator, Coordinator and parents will:

- Continually review, reflect, evaluate and revise the strategies that have been implemented
- Communicate openly regarding the child's progress and involve them in evaluating and revising the strategies.

Review

	Date	Details
Revision 00	07/2015	Original Policy Issued
Revision 01	12/2016	Reviewed
Revision 02	08/2017	Reviewed
Revision 03	10/2020	Reviewed and separated from the Policy

Related Documents

Policies

2.1 Interactions with Children

Procedures

2.5 Supervision of Children Procedure

Forms

Behaviour Management Plan

References

Refer to 2.1 Interactions with Children Policy

Quality Area 5 Relationships with children: Standard 5.1 Relationships between educators and children: Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child

5.1.1 Positive educator to child interactions: Responsive and meaningful interactions building trusting relationships which engage and support each child' to feel secure, confident and included.

5.1.2 Dignity and rights of the child: The dignity and rights of every child are maintained

5.2 Relationship between children

5.2.1 Collective learning: Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.

5.2.2 Self-Regulation: Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflict

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children](#) Article 12 1991

[Belonging, Being and Becoming The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) 2009

[My Time Our Place Framework for School Age Care](#) 2011

Early Childhood Australia – Code of Ethics and *Supporting young children's rights statement of intent (2015 – 2018)*

IPSP; Planning and Strategies for Positive Behaviour

<https://www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/planning-and-strategies-to-promote-positive-behaviour-babies-to-5-years.pdf?sfvrsn=4>