

Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) identifies secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children as one of the principles that underpin practice. Within an early childhood community many different relationships are negotiated with and between children, educators and families. The way in which these relationships are established and maintained, and the way in which they remain visible impacts on how the early childhood community functions as a whole. Relationships directly effect how children form their own identity, whether or not they feel safe and supported, and ultimately, their sense of belonging.

We aim to build positive relationships with children, families and educators through collaboration and interactions, which is reflective in our Centre philosophy and the Early Years Learning Framework. Educators will encourage positive relationships between children and their peers as well as with educators and families at the Centre, ensuring children feel safe and supported.

In order to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families and Educators our Centre will adhere to our philosophy and code of ethics to guide:

Interactions with Children

To maintain positive interactions with children our centre will ensure that all educators form positive relationships with children that make them feel safe and supported in the Centre. Educators will encourage positive relationships between children and their peers as well as with educators and volunteers at the Centre.

Children need positive relationships with Educators that are trusting and responsive to their needs.

Management and Educators will:

- Create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly and genuine interactions with all Educators
- Use appropriate language and behaviour will be role modelled by Educators
- Our centre 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 centre as well as what is happening around them, express their ideas and feelings, share humor with the nominated supervisor, educators, coordinators and educators and seek assistance as they take on new challenges and try to do things for themselves.
- Provide children with the opportunity to explore their dispositions for learning by expressing themselves and their opinions
- Support children to be aware of their own feelings as well as the feelings of others
- 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.
- Encourage children to treat all children with respect as their friend
- Assist the children to build resilience and self-assurance through positive interactions
- Respect the rights of children
- Support children in the early childhood environments
- Engage in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning of children
- Respect each child's uniqueness, are attuned to and respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and will use the child's own language, communication styles and culture to enhance their interactions
- Listen to children and take them seriously; they will support and encourage children to use appropriate language in their interactions with adults and peers. Educators will extend upon children's interests and ideas through questions and discussions, supported in observations, reflections and programming



- Communicate with children by getting down to their level, showing respect to the child whilst promoting effective communication and eye contact.
- Show empathy to children
- Ensure that the values, beliefs and cultural practices of the child and family are considered and respected
- No child is ever isolated for any reason other than illness, accident or pre-arranged appointment with parental consent. During this time they will be under adult supervision
- Regularly reflect on their relationships and interactions with children and how these can be improved to benefit each child
- 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 centre 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 centre 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 centre will support the development of trusting relationships between educators, babies and toddlers to allow them to feel secure in the centre.
- 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 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 favorite toy or comfort item to help them feel secure in the centre. 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 Centre.
- Our centre 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 centre.
- 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 centre will implement strategies to assist all children to develop a sense of belonging and confidence through positive interactions between the children and educators.
- Our centre's roster will be planned in a way that promotes continuity for children.



- Our centre 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 centre 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 centre's approach to equity and inclusion will be documented in our statement of philosophy.
- Our centre 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.

Group Relationships

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

- Our centre 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 centre will ensure that the children have many opportunities for peer scaffolding.
- Our educators will promote a sense of community in the centre.
- Our centre 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 and guide children's behaviour positively
- Our centre will ensure that the program and routines of the centre will include regular opportunities for children to engage in social play and group experiences.
- Our centre will ensure that food is being used appropriately and not as a reward or punishment.
- Our centre 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 centre.

Supporting Children through Difficult Situations

When a child, family, educator or the centre 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 individuals 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, but only if they really are.
- 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 individuals (for example, all children if the event has affected the whole centre or the children that have been affected) and letting everyone have their say including children.
- Talking to the children about how individuals 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 centre, 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 endeavor to work with families and children to support all parties through the situation.

Should it be required, educators will liaise with appropriate authorities, such as the Department of Education and Children's Services, and follow any recommendations made by these authorities.

Interactions with Families

Effective communication is the key to developing and maintaining positive interactions and relationships with others. Educators working within or centre are required to demonstrate mutual respect towards each other and value the contributions made by each educator. This enables our Centre to maintain positive relations and model the type of communication they want children to develop. Educators also need to use positive communication with families and children in order to create a responsive and inclusive environment for all.

Management and Educators will ensure:

- All families are treated equitably without bias or judgement; recognising that each family is unique
- Families and children are greeted upon arrival
- Two way communication is established through leading by example and asking questions
- Use common terminology when talking to parents regarding their child's development
- Never to discuss another child or family information with a parent or visitor
- Remain sensitive to cultural differences amongst families and are to encourage families to share cultural aspects with the children and Educators at the Services



- Always endeavour and seek the advice and opinion from experts with family permission, to help with regards to a child with additional needs or support a family through resources available from such support agencies as KU Inclusion Support Agency, Area Health or the private sector
- Endeavour to recognise and implement a number of different ways to communicate with families in their preferred chosen way
- Ensure verbal communication is always open, respectful and honest
- Provide families with up to date centre information and notices through Daily Reports, Newsletter, communal signs, emails and sign-in sheets
- Regularly reflect on parent input into the program and make changes where necessary that will best benefit the centre and children

Interactions with Staff and Educators

The Centre recognises that the way Educators interact with each other has an effect on the interactions they have with children and families.

Maintain Professionalism at all times

Educators will:

- Preserve professional communication in order create an effective work environment and to build a positive relationship with Educators, Children and Families. Communication amongst colleagues creates a positive atmosphere and a professional Centre for families. Communication between staff and families ensures that important information is being passed on and that consistency occurs.
- Collaborate together as a team sharing room roles and responsibilities through the use of a roster where necessary
- Be respectful when listening to each other's point of view and ideas
- Maintain effective communication to ensure that teamwork occurs
- Use staff meetings to communicate their professional reflections and ideas for continuous improvement as a team
- Attend In-service training to update and refresh individual skills and knowledge
- Refer to the Staff Grievance Policy/Procedure if they feel a situation with another Educator is not being handled with professionalism, respect and quality
- Recognise each other's strengths and valuing the different work each does
- Work collaboratively to reach decisions which will enhance the quality of the Education and care offered at the Centre
- Welcome diverse views and perspectives
- Work together as a team and engaging in open and honest communication at all times
- Respect each other's positions and opinions.
- Develop and share networks and links with other agencies
- Resolve differences promptly and positively and using the experience to learn more effective methods of working together

Enhance Communication and Teamwork

Educators will:

- Provide new educators with relevant information about the Centre and program through an Educator handbook, induction and daily communication
- Maintain confidentiality
- Treat each team member with respect
- Be sensitive to the feelings and needs of other team members
- Provide constructive feedback to each other
- Trust each other
- Value the role and contribution of each educator
- Provide opportunities for all educators to have input and evaluate the program
- Appreciate and utilise educator skills and interests
- Provide support and assistance to each other
- Share responsibilities



- Have a flexible attitude towards team roles and responsibilities
- Greet each other by name
- Show genuine interest in the other person by using active and reflective listening
- Communicate ideas and opinions clearly and professionally
- Use a communication book or daily diary to pass on messages and record relevant information
- Hold regular educator meetings
- Use appropriate conflict resolution techniques to solve problems
- Ensure policies and procedures are up to date regarding communication, expected behaviour and grievances
- Opportunities for professional development

Source: National Quality Standard, Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, Early Years Learning Framework, Respectful Relationships <http://www.cscentral.org.au/Resources/Publications/respectful-relationships.pdf>

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National Quality Standard – NQS	
Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements	
4.2	Educators, coordinators and educators are respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
4.2.2	Educators, coordinators and educators work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills, to improve practice and relationships.
4.2.3	Interactions convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills.
Quality Area 5 : Relationships with children	
5.1.1	Each child's health needs are supported.
5.1.2	Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines.
5.1.3	Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.
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.
Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnership with families and communities	
6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
6.1.3	Current information about the service is available to families
6.2.1	The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing
Education and Care Service National Regulations	
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups
Early Years Learning Framework	
Learning Outcome 1 - Children have a Strong Sense of Identity	
1.1	Children feel safe, secure, and supported.
1.2	Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency.
1.3	Children develop knowledgeable and confident self identities.
1.4	Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.
Learning Outcome 2 - Children are Connected with and Contribute to their World	
2.1	Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation.



2.2	Children respond to diversity with respect.
2.3	Children become aware of fairness.
2.4	Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

