

Interactions and Relationships with Children Policy



POLICY AIM

Sweetpeas aims to ensure that the dignity and rights of every child are maintained at all times they are in our care. Reflecting our Service philosophy and the *Early Years Learning Framework*, this policy indicates the ways that are appropriate for staff to interact with children to ensure that they feel safe, secure, supported, confident, included and respected.

RATIONALE

The *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) identifies secure, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with children as one of the principles that underpin practice. 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 affect how children form their own identity, whether or not they feel safe and supported, and ultimately, their sense of belonging.

Emotional development and social relationships are enhanced through thoughtful and sophisticated approaches to conversation, discussion and the promotion of children's language and communication. Children who experience relationships that are built on respect, fairness, cooperation and empathy are given the opportunity to develop these qualities themselves. When children have positive experiences of interactions, they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected.

SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

- Children
- Educators
- Staff
- Students and Volunteers

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 2 (CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY)

- Standard 2.2 (Safety) - *Each child is protected.*

QUALITY AREA 5 (RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN)

- Standard 5.1 (Relationships between educators and children) - *Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.*
- Element 5.1.1 (Positive educator to child interactions) - *Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.*
- Element 5.1.2 (Dignity and rights of the child) - *The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.*

RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

RELATED SWEETPEAS POLICIES:

- Arrival and Departure Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Ethical Code of Conduct Policy
- Inclusion and Anti-Bias Policy
- Professional Development Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Supervision Policy

RELATED EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Section 165 - Offence to inadequately supervise children
- Section 166 - Offence to use inappropriate discipline
- Section 168 - Offence related to required programs
- Section 169 - Offence relating to staffing arrangements

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- Regulation 73 - Educational program
- Regulation 84 - Awareness of child protection law
- Regulation 115 - Premises designed to facilitate supervision
- Regulation 118 - Educational leader
- Regulation 126 - Centre-based services-general educator qualifications
- Regulation 145 - Staff record
- Regulation 155 - Interactions with children
- Regulation 156 - Relationships in groups
- Regulation 168 - Education and care services must have policies and procedures
- Regulation 170 - Policies and procedures to be followed

RELATED LEGISLATION:

- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
- Children's Guardian Act 2019
- Children's Guardian Regulation 2022

TERMINOLOGY

- **Dignity and rights of the child** - Element 5.1.2 of the National Quality Standard aims to achieve the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability.
 - Article 19 of the Convention states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.
- **Positive interactions between educators and children** - Involves educators viewing each child as capable and competent, with a right to a voice, and able to contribute to decisions that affect them. This enables educators to focus their practices on children's strengths and inclusion in the group environment.
 - Educators who are responsive to children's thoughts and feelings are supporting them to develop a strong sense of wellbeing.
 - By interacting positively and meaningfully with children, educators help each child to feel accepted and to develop a sense of attachment and trust.
 - Children who are supported to understand themselves experience a sense of belonging that fosters self-esteem which contributes to the development of identity and is critical to children's capacity to understand their own strengths, abilities and interests.
 - When children feel safe, secure and supported, they develop confidence to explore and learn.
- **Relationships between children** - When educators create supportive environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships, children respond accordingly.
 - Positive relationships provide children with the confidence and agency to explore and learn about their world. As their relationships become more complex and far-reaching over time, children's interactions with others also help them to extend their knowledge, thinking and ability to apply what they already know in new and unfamiliar contexts.
 - Developing effective relationships with others is a key part of children's social development and these relationships also provide a base for children's learning.
- **Relationships between educators and children** - When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators, they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable and respected.
 - Consistent emotional support contributes to children developing a strong sense of wellbeing and belonging.
 - Relationships are the foundation for the construction of identity, and help shape children's thinking about who they are, how they belong and what influences them.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

- **ACECQA** - Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

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- **ECA** - Early Childhood Australia - the peak early childhood advocacy organisation, acting in the interests of young children, their families and those in the early childhood field.
- **EYLF** - The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- **NQS** - National Quality Standard
- **UN** - United Nations

IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

In order to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, educators of our services will adhere to our statement of philosophy, our *Ethical Code of Conduct Policy* and the ECA Code of Ethics. We aim to provide a child safe culture where our values and practices that guide the attitudes and behaviour of all staff are guided by the implementation of the *Child Safe Standards* and related *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations*.

Children need positive relationships and interactions with educators that are trusting and responsive to their individual needs. Through these experiences and interactions children will develop a positive understanding of themselves and feel a sense of belonging. We promote a respectful, child safe culture where children concerns are always responded to, and children feel empowered to participate in decisions and provide feedback to educators and staff.

MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATORS WILL:

- create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly and genuine interactions with all educators.
- meet educator to child ratio and qualification requirements.
- role-model appropriate language and behaviour.
- support children to be aware of their own feelings as well as the feelings of others.
- encourage children to treat all other children with respect.
- provide children with the opportunity to explore their dispositions for learning by expressing themselves and their opinions.
- ensure children are aware of how to raise concerns or provide feedback.
- respond or report to children about how their feedback has been acted upon.
- assist the children to build resilience and self-assurance through positive interactions.
- guide children's behaviour positively.
- respect the rights, dignity and agency of children.
- support children in the early childhood environment.
- provide appropriate supervision so children feel safe in their interactions with other children.
- speak to children in a positive manner at all times, promoting respect, tolerance and empathy, including the use of non-verbal cues and communication.
- engage in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning of children.
- respect each child's uniqueness, be attuned to, and respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and use the child's own language, communication styles, and culture to enhance interactions.
- listen to children and take them seriously; 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 and made visible in observations, reflections, and programming.
- understand their reporting requirements and respond to any incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse or harm.
- communicate with children by getting down to their level, using eye contact, and showing respect to the child whilst engaging in and promoting effective communication.
- show empathy to children.
- ensure that the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of the child and family are considered and respected.
- ensure that 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.

- facilitate children's individual development extending upon their strengths, interests and abilities.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, FAMILY AND CULTURAL VALUES

Interactions within the setting are greatly enhanced when children's rights and family and cultural values are given due consideration and respect. Administrative procedures, initial conversations, documentation and ongoing communication with children and families are a reference point for interactions and a foundation for authentic and respectful communication.

The Sweetpeas *Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy* provides guidelines for educators on methods for developing inclusive practices and including all children and families through critical reflection of practices.

COMMUNICATING AND LISTENING

The EYLF identifies and highlights the importance of communication; Learning Outcome 5 states that "children are effective communicators". Educators and staff must use listening as a foundation for interactions. Listening is based on:

- observation,
- creating spaces for conversations and communication,
- suspending judgement, and
- giving full attention to children as they communicate.

Truly attending to children's communication promotes a strong culture of listening.

Communicating with Young Children

Each baby is born with an enormous capacity for learning. Language development illustrates this, whereby a baby, born with no language, learns to comprehend speech and in turn speak, within a relatively short period. Babies are born primed for the social and emotional interactions and communications that will allow them to develop into skilled, culturally knowledgeable participants and communicators.

Initially, communication is dominated by the baby's immediate needs for food, rest, comfort and sleep. But babies also have social needs for interaction. From birth, babies respond to voices and imitate facial expressions, cooing and gurgling, attempting to make sounds, squealing with delight or giggling at something amusing. In this way they are responding to stimulus provided by their environment, as well as the people with whom they are having interactive communication.

Role Modelling

Educators model positive interactions when they show care, have empathy and respect for children, educators, staff and families.

PRINCIPLES FOR GUIDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

Staff respect individual children's needs and differences in age, ability and experience regarding issues surrounding guiding behaviour and they are happy to discuss individual family expectations. There may be times when staff will need to negotiate management strategies with families to suit the needs of individual children.

- Wherever possible, children and staff will negotiate and determine boundaries and rules collaboratively.
- Rules and boundaries will consider the age, development and individual characteristics of the children.
- Rules and boundaries will be consistently communicated by all educators.
- Children will be encouraged for positive behaviours. It is the behaviour that is praised or criticised, not the child.
- Educators present a good example through positive role modelling of social interactions, communication and following rules and boundaries.
- Children are encouraged to make safe and kind choices.

In response to negative behaviours, educators will:

- Redirect the child or remove the child from the situation if necessary.

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- Advise children of the consequences of negative behaviours that may be unsafe, unkind or disrespectful (e.g., they or others may be hurt).
- Remind children of boundaries and positive behaviour choices.
- Actively listen to children's feelings and discuss the rules and boundaries.
- Assist children to return to play, modelling positive language and interactions where needed.
- Communicate with family should there be a need.

RESPONSIBILITIES

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE APPROVED PROVIDER

- Ensure the service operates in accordance with the *Education and Care Services National Law* and *Education and Care Services National Regulations* with regard to the delivery and collection of children at all times (see *Arrival and Departure Policy*).
- Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development (see *Professional Development Policy*).
- Ensure the educational program encourages children's self-expression, promotes self-reliance, maintains their dignity and rights, gives positive guidance, and recognises their culture, values and abilities.
- Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor and all staff members at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances (National Law s166).
- Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (National Law s174(B)).
- Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (National Regulation 12, National Law s173(A)).

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NOMINATED SUPERVISOR

- Notify the *Office of the Children's Guardian* of allegations of **reportable conduct** within seven business days of becoming aware of the information.
 - The *Children's Guardian Act 2019* defines reportable conduct as being:
 - a sexual offence committed against, with or in the presence of a child,
 - sexual misconduct with, towards or in the presence of a child,
 - ill-treatment of a child,
 - neglect of a child,
 - an assault against a child,
 - behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child,
 - any offence under section 43B or 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900*, whether or not, with the consent of the child.
 - The notification forms capture the relevant information the Nominated Supervisor is required to provide: <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme/reportable-conduct-notification-forms>
- Establish practice guidelines that ensure interactions with children are given priority and those interactions are authentic.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the Service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families (see *Ethical Code of Conduct Policy*).
- Consider the size and composition of groups to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service.
- Develop and implement educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, which are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child.
- Ensure that educators provide education and care to children in a way that encourages children to express themselves and their opinions and allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.

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RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDUCATIONAL LEADER

- Guide professional development and practice to promote interactions with children that are positive and respectful through the use of the *ECA Code of Ethics* and *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
- Reflect and refine the educational program to ensure it encourages children's self-expression, promotes self-reliance, maintains their dignity and rights, gives positive guidance, and recognises their culture, values and abilities.
- Ensure educators are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to interact positively with the children and promote relationships between children.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDUCATORS

- Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- Form warm relationships with each child.
- Acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration and alternative perspectives and social inclusion.
- Respect children's agency and encourage them to express themselves and their opinions.
- Interact with children and families in the manner outlined in the *ECA Code of Ethics* and the Service philosophy statement.
- Maintain the dignity and the rights of each child at all times.
- Have regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for.
- Offer positive guidance and encouragement towards positive behaviours.
- Ensure that routines such as toileting, nappy change and rest times are used as opportunities for positive one-to-one interactions with children and getting to know more about each child.
- Genuinely seek children's input on the program and environment, respect their ideas and take their suggestions on board.
- Listen empathetically to children when they express their emotions, reassure them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions and guide children to remove themselves from situations where they are experiencing frustration, anger or fear.
- 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.
- Model reasoning, prediction and reflection processes and language.
- Collaborate with children about routines and experiences.
- Use techniques such as sign language, visuals and other resources and tools to support children with additional needs.
- 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.
- Use interactions with children to support the maintenance of home languages and learning English as an additional language.
- Use information from observations of interactions with children to extend children's thinking and learning.
- Support children to build secure attachments with one, and then many, educators.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILIES

- Read and comply with this policy.
- Engage in open communication with educators about your child.
- Inform educators of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g., moving house, a new sibling, death in the family etc).
- Inform educators of any concerns regarding your child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour.
- Inform educators of any concerns or questions about your child's development, potential or confirmed diagnoses, or anything else that could impact the strategies utilised to interact with your child.
- Work collaboratively with educators and others to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.

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REFERENCES

- ACECQA, National Quality Standard (Revised 2018): <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>
- ACECQA. (2021). Policy and Procedure Guidelines- Interactions with Children
- Australian Childhood Foundation: <https://www.childhood.org.au/>
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/>
- Australian Government Department of Education (2022). Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (V2.0).
- Australian Human Rights Commission: <https://humanrights.gov.au/>
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
- Child Protection Training Online - <https://www.childprotectiontraining.com.au/>
- Child Safe Scheme - <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme>
- Child Safe Standards - <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme/why-we-have-child-safe-standards>
- Children (Education and Care) National Law Act 2010
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2012
- Children's Guardian Act 2019
- Children's Guardian Regulation 2022
- Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics: <https://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/>
- Education and Care National Regulations 2011
- Office of the Children's Guardian - <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/>
- Reportable Conduct notification forms: <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme/reportable-conduct-notification-forms>
- Sweetpeas Philosophy
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: <https://www.unicef.org.au/>
- United Nations Human Rights <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy reviewed and critically reflected upon by all educators as new educators have been hired	February 2021	Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
2.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviewed and issued to our new hires.	February 2022	Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor)
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cosmetic changes for new formatting template and colours• Reworded policy aim• Extended rationale	June 2023	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager) Janine Evans (Nominated Supervisor, Managing Director)

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Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Added references to Child Safe Standards and the National Principles for Child Safe OrganisationsAdded section “Management and Educators will” to better highlight expectations and how we are meeting the Regulations.Changed heading “Principles for Behavioural Management” to “Principles for Guiding Children’s Behaviour”.Reviewed wording in points regarding behaviour guidance.Rewording of some points to ensure clarification and/or correct grammatical errors.Reviewed and updated references		