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 affect how children form their own identity, whether or not they feel safe and supported, and ultimately, their sense of belonging.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
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 build 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	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parents views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children

S. 3A	Paramount consideration
S. 5AA	Meaning of 'inappropriate conduct' in relation to a child
S. 162A	Child protection training Offence relating to child protection training
S. 162B	Child safety training
S.165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
S. 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
S. 166A	Offence to subject child to inappropriate conduct Offences relating to inappropriate conduct
S.168	Offence related to required programs
S.169	Offence relating to staffing arrangements
Part 6A	Devices in education and care services
73	Educational program
84	Awareness of child protection law
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
117A	Placing a person in day-to-day charge
118	Educational leader
123	Educator to child ratios-centre-based services
126	Centre-based services- general educator qualifications
145	Staff record
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups
157	Access for parents
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies and procedures

RELATED POLICIES

Behaviour Guidance Policy	Open Door Policy
Child Protection Policy	Orientation of Families Policy
Child Safe Environment Policy	Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
Code of Conduct Policy	Protected Disclosure (Whistleblower) Policy
Dealing with Complaints Policy	Relief Staff Policy
Delivery of Children to, and Collection from Education and Care Service Premises	Respect for Children Policy
Educational Program Policy	Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy
Enrolment Policy	Social Media Policy
Family Communication Policy	Staffing Arrangement Policy
Governance Policy	Student and Volunteer Policy
Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy	Supervision Policy
Management Committee Policy	Transition to School Policy

PURPOSE

We aim to build positive and respectful relationships with children, families, and educators through collaboration and interactions, which is reflective of our Service philosophy and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2.0, 2022). Educators will encourage positive relationships between children and their peers as well as with educators and families at the Service, ensuring children feel safe and supported, including when using digital technologies and online environments. We believe that children's safety, rights, and best interests are the paramount consideration for all Service operations, decisions and functions.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, approved provider, nominated supervisor, management, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, the approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for interactions with children (Reg. 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed.

In order to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families and educators at our Service will adhere to our statement of philosophy and the ECA Code of Ethics. We aim to provide a child safe culture where our values and practices, attitudes and behaviour of all staff are guided by the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the implementation of the Child Safe Standards (Vic).

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

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's concerns are always responded to, and children feel empowered to participate in decisions and provide feedback to educators and staff.

Our Service maintains a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate conduct towards children. All interactions must protect each child's dignity, emotional wellbeing and safety. Our Service upholds a strong reporting culture to safeguard children in our care. All educators and staff play a vital role in protecting children from harm by responding to and reporting any incidents, disclosures or suspicions of abuse, harm, neglect or ill-treatment.

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/MANAGEMENT WILL:

- meet obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations
- provide new employees, students and volunteers with a copy of this policy and associated procedure as part of their induction and are advised on how and where the policy can be accessed
- ensure copies of this policy are readily accessible and available for inspection
- ensure that the *Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy* and procedure are considered when interactions with children include digital technologies and online environments
- ensure all staff, educators, volunteers and students are aware of and adhere to legislative requirements relating to taking images or video of children when providing education and care
- create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly and genuine interactions with all educators
- ensure environments are created to ensure children feel safe, valued, understood and supported
- ensure the Service complies with minimum educator to child ratios and qualification requirements
- require the approved provider, nominated supervisor, each staff member, educator, regular volunteers and students on placement complete national child safety training
- ensure all educators and staff are aware of the procedure of reporting allegations of abuse, neglect, harm or ill-treatment
- ensure that no child is subjected to any form of inappropriate conduct including conduct that is threatening, intimidating, humiliating, degrading, hostile or otherwise inappropriate in the circumstances

- ensure that any allegation, concern or suspicion that a child has been subjected to inappropriate conduct is responded to immediately and reported to the regulatory authority, within 24 hours, with mandatory notifications made to other relevant authorities as required and internal incident management procedures
- conduct a review of practices following an incident involving inappropriate conduct at the Service, including an assessment of areas for improvement
- promote a culture where inappropriate conduct is not tolerated and where educators and staff feel safe to report concerns under the *Protected Disclosures (Whistleblower) Policy*
- ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand their obligations as mandatory reporters and are trained to recognise, prevent and respond to inappropriate conduct
- ensure that no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable or inappropriate in the circumstances
- support educators to use trauma-informed practices to recognise and respond to the emotional needs of children (see *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*)
- take reasonable steps to ensure children have opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and with staff members and volunteers of the Service
- have regard to the size and composition of groups of children, the developmental needs of each child, cultural and linguistic diversity and the staffing arrangements required to support positive relationships and effective supervision.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- ensure interactions with children are always respectful, safe, supportive and appropriate to each child's developmental needs, culture, identity and circumstances
- refrain from any behaviour that may be considered inappropriate conduct, including behaviour that is threatening, intimidating, humiliating, degrading, hostile or otherwise inappropriate
- remain aware of the power imbalance inherent in child-adult relationships and avoid behaviour that could misuse or exploit that power
- immediately report any behaviour by another person that may constitute inappropriate conduct towards a child to the nominated supervisor/approved provider and regulatory authority
- monitor and maintain staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision of children
- have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring children are within a child safe environment at all times
- strictly adhere to legislative requirements relating to taking images or video of children when providing education and care

- role-model appropriate language and behaviour
- support and encourage 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
- consider group size and composition when planning activities, intentionally creating groupings that support positive relationships, inclusion and children's developmental needs
- ensure children are aware of how to raise concerns or provide feedback – (child focused complaint handling system- *Dealing with Complaints Policy)*
- report to children and inform them how their feedback has been acted upon
- assist the children to build resilience and self-assurance through positive interactions
- guide children's behaviour positively to promote safe, positive play and children's agency (see *Behaviour Guidance Policy*)
- respect the rights, dignity and agency of children (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- 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 mandatory reporting requirements and respond to any incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse, harm, neglect or ill-treatment they witness or suspect immediately by notifying the approved provider
- 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 staff/educator 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
- document decisions where group size/composition required changes to supervision of program (e.g. temporary changes to groupings, additional staff, or adapted activities) and notify families where appropriate.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN MANAGEMENT, EDUCATORS AND FAMILIES

Effective communication is key to developing and maintaining positive interactions and relationships with others and helps to build trusting and respectful partnerships with families. Educators use positive and open communication with families and siblings in order to create a responsive and inclusive environment for children, staff and families. Interactions with families help to inform educators' knowledge of each child's distinctive interests, skills, cultures and abilities. This helps to build a positive experience and a safe learning environment that encourages children to expand their knowledge and understandings.

MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATORS WILL ENSURE:

- all families are treated equitably without bias or judgement, recognising that each family is unique
- families are provided with information and resources in their first language
- families are asked to identify a preferred method of regular communication with the Service (this may include utilising a translator service)
- families and children are greeted upon arrival in a respectful manner
- they learn the names of family members and use these names when they greet them
- two-way communication is established through leading by example, asking questions and a willingness to share information.
- common terminology (not jargon) is used when talking to parents/guardians regarding their child's development
- privacy and confidentiality are respected at all times
- information about another child or family information is never discussed with a parent or visitor
- they remain sensitive to cultural differences amongst families and encourage families to share cultural aspects with the children and educators at the Service

- the advice and opinion from other professional experts are requested, with parental permission, to assist educators develop and implement strategies to support the inclusion of children with additional needs
- they seek additional resources and professional support for families through a range of organisations such as KU Inclusion Support, Area Health and other specific health professional networks
- verbal communication is always open, respectful and honest
- families are provided with up-to-date service information and notices through Individual Daily Reports, newsletters, communal notice boards, emails and sign-in sheets
- they regularly reflect on parent input into the program and make changes where necessary that will best benefit the service and children
- connections between families are promoted and enhanced through inviting families to participate in routines and events at the service
- families are aware of our complaint handling process- (*Dealing with Complaints Policy*)
- any bribe or gift received by a family that may influence or appear to influence a decision or action is to be declined and reported to management.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN STAFF AND EDUCATORS

The Service recognises that the way educators interact with each other has an effect on the interactions they have with children and families. Educators working within our Service are required to demonstrate mutual respect towards each other and value the contributions made by each educator. This enables our Service to maintain positive relationships and model the type of communication they want children to develop.

TO MAINTAIN PROFESSIONALISM AT ALL TIMES, EDUCATORS WILL:

- engage in professional communication in order to 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 image for families. Communication between staff and families ensures that important information is being passed on consistently.
- champion a child safe culture through their attitudes, behaviours and actions
- 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 and add to individual skills and knowledge
- keep up to date with current legislation to child protection including mandatory reporting requirements – (*Child Protection, Reportable Conduct Scheme)*
- refer to the *Dealing with Complaints Policy (Staff) /Procedure* if they feel a situation with another educator is not being handled with professionalism, respect, and fairness
- recognise each other's strengths and value the contribution each person makes to different work roles
- work collaboratively to reach decisions which will enhance the quality of the education and care offered at the Service
- welcome diverse views and perspectives
- work together as a team and engage 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 use the experience to develop more effective methods of working together.

TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK, MANAGEMENT WILL:

- provide new educators with relevant information about the Service and program through a *Staff Handbook*, induction program, and daily communication
- treat educators with respect
- be sensitive to the feelings and needs of educators
- provide constructive feedback to educators as part of their professional learning plan support
- value the role and contribution of each educator
- demonstrate commitment to ongoing collaboration and engagement to support staff wellness
- provide opportunities for all educators to have input into the program development and evaluation
- appreciate and utilise educator skills and interests
- provide support, assistance and mentoring to educators
- hold regular educator meetings to encourage and support professional growth and reflective practice
- use appropriate conflict resolution techniques to solve problems
- ensure policies and procedures are up to date regarding communication, expected behaviour and grievances and providing a child safe environment
- provide opportunities for professional development

TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK, EDUCATORS WILL:

- maintain privacy and confidentiality
- be respectful, caring and inclusive of all colleagues
- be sensitive to the feelings and needs of other team members
- support colleagues during difficult situations
- provide constructive feedback to each other
- trust each other
- value the role and contribution of colleagues
- appreciate and utilise colleague skills, strengths and interests regardless of qualification and experience
- 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
- use appropriate conflict resolution techniques to solve problems
- engage in opportunities for professional development.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Interaction with Children, Families and Staff Policy* will be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance or incidents related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management and notification of any change to policies will be made to families within 14 days.

RELATED RESOURCES

Communication Audit Interaction Audit	Management of Inappropriate Conduct Procedure Teamwork Audit

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2025). *Interactions with children Policy and procedure guidelines*
Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2018). *Relationships with children.*
Australian Human Rights Commission. Child Safe Organisations.
Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW) (NSW services only)
Early Childhood Australia *Code of Ethics*.
Australian Government Department of Education (2022). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. V2.0.*
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
Education and Care Services National Regulations (NSW) (2025) (NSW services only)
NSW Department of Education. (2021). *Implementing the Child Safe Standards: A guide for early childhood education and outside school hours care services.*
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (Cth).
Western Australian Legislation Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012 (WA Services only)
Western Australian Legislation Education and Care Services National Regulations (WA) Act 2012 (WA Services only)

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	[NAME] Amy Flockhart	[POSITION] office admin	[DATE] 09/07/2026
POLICY REVIEWED	MAY / JANUARY 2026	NEXT REVIEW DATE	MAY 2027
VERSION NUMBER	V14.05.26		
MODIFICATIONS	MAY • annual policy review • minor edits (removal of start date for child safety training) • sources checked and updated hyperlinks JANUARY • additional edits to include the service having regard to the size and composition of groups of children • updated policy to include amendments to Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW) • updated policy to include amendments to Education and Care Services National Law • added- mandatory national child safety training		
PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS			
MAY 2025	• annual policy maintenance • additional information added re: mandatory reporting any allegations of child abuse, harm, neglect or ill treatment • sources checked for currency and updated as required		