BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE: BULLYING POLICY

Bullying can occur among children of any age, sex or background. In most instances, children need adult assistance to deal with bullying. This includes adults taking responsibility to develop strategies for the prevention of bullying, and for dealing fairly and effectively with allegations of bullying.

Being, Belonging and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia identifies secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children as one of the principles that underpin practice. Within the 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 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 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
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: 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.

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.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. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
S. 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
73	Educational program
84	Awareness of child protection law
123	Educator to child ratios- centre based services
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups
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

RELATED POLICIES

Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy Behaviour Guidance Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Code of Conduct Policy Enrolment Policy	Interactions with Children, Family and Staff Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Respect for Children Policy

PURPOSE

To create a safe and healthy environment for children where bullying behaviours are not tolerated. As reflected in our Service philosophy and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), educators will encourage positive and respectful relationships between children and their peers. We believe that children's safety, rights, and best interests are the paramount consideration for all Service operations, decisions and functions. Our Service ensures that child safety, wellbeing and best interests take priority over all other considerations, including financial interests or other obligations of management, and are embedded in our daily practices, policies and procedures.

SCOPE

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

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service does not tolerate bullying of any kind. Bullying is never OK!

The priority of our Service is to provide a safe and inclusive environment to prevent bullying. We aim to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child experiencing bullying behaviour and take any allegation of bullying seriously.

Although there may be underlying reasons causing a child to display or use bullying behaviour towards others, it is essential that the child experiencing bullying behaviour receives the adult attention and support in the first instance. It is important that the needs of the child who uses or displays bullying behaviour do not overshadow the needs of the child being bullied.

TYPES OF BULLYING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The most common types of bullying in the early childhood setting are physical and verbal. Some children may also bully others by social isolation/exclusion or through cyber technology.

Physical bullying includes:

- hitting, punching, kicking, pinching- directed at the same child/ren over an extended period of time.

Verbal bullying includes:

- calling children names, taunting them, making sexist/racist statements, making cruel statements about personal attributes, clothing etc.

Social bullying includes:

- excluding individual children or groups of children from play or social situations

Cyber bullying includes:

- using technologies such as texting or e-mailing to taunt, insult, intimidate or harass another child.

(source: kids helpline bullying)

SIGNS OF BULLYING

In many cases, bullying occurs without adults being aware of it. Bullying can include physical violence (hitting, shoving), teasing or name-calling, social exclusion, or intimidation. It often occurs over a period of time. Possible signs a child is experiencing bullying behaviour might include:

- unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches
- changes in behaviour, such as becoming moody, teary, depressed
- bedwetting

- complaints of physical ailments such as headaches or stomach-aches
- having few friends, or a breakdown in a previous friendship (if age appropriate)
- does not want to attend care
- does not want to attend parties, visit other children.

Children may also disclose to a trusted adult that they are being bullied.

EFFECTS OF BULLYING

Children who are experiencing bullying behaviour are more likely to be depressed, lonely, and anxious and have low self-esteem. They may frequently feel sick and avoid interactions with others.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

Bullying thrives where there is not enough supervision. If required, and where possible, our Service will increase our educator to child ratios above those set out in the National Regulations.

Our daily program is designed to meet the needs and interests of all children in attendance to prevent periods of boredom. Educators model appropriate behaviours towards other staff and children, including refraining from teasing, humiliating, or talking 'behind another's back'. This also includes educators using appropriate language when supporting children to recognise, manage and learn about their behaviour and develop an understanding of how their behaviour affects others. Children are encouraged to verbalise their emotions and to develop empathy and compassion.

TALKING ABOUT BULLYING

Educators play an important role in helping children understand and guide their own behaviour as they learn about positive and healthy relationships with others.

Behaviours in early childhood may be *precursors* to bullying rather than true bullying. This could include making faces, refusing to play together, telling lies or stories about another child, grabbing objects, pushing, pinching or shoving another child. Without intervention, these behaviours could turn into a pattern of bullying.

Early childhood educators assist children recognise bullying behaviour and assist children in developing strategies to develop positive relationships and prevent bullying. Skills to develop to assist in preventing bullying include:

- empathy- understanding and responding to what others feel

- problem solving- how to resolve problems constructively without using aggression
- language- understanding what to say when the child is feeling targeted by another child- 'stop it!'

EDUCATORS WILL:

- teach social skills through role-plays, stories, puppets and games
- avoid using terminology such as 'bully' or 'victim' when describing behaviour being displayed
- focus and guide children to practice more appropriate ways to interact with others positively and respectfully when talking about bullying
- maintain and respect the dignity and rights of children
- refrain from any behaviour that may be considered inappropriate conduct or inappropriate discipline, including behaviour that is threatening, intimidating, humiliating, degrading, hostile or otherwise inappropriate.

PROCEDURE WHEN A CHILD DISCLOSES ALLEGED BULLYING OR AN EDUCATOR SUSPECTS BULLYING IS OCCURRING. EDUCATORS WILL:

- refer to the *Behaviour Guidance- Bullying Response Procedure* for steps to undertake when approaching a bullying situation
- immediately report any behaviour by another person that may constitute inappropriate conduct towards a child to the nominated supervisor/approved provider and regulatory authority
- 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 and
- listen when a child attempts to talk about behaviours that might indicate bullying
- respond to incidents in a constructive, supportive and timely manner
- learn as much as possible about the children involved and the tactics used
- summarise the problem they are discussing
- ensure the child knows that the educators at the Service are there to help them
- provide support and empathy
- empathise with the child and reassure them that it is not their fault
- ask the child what they think could be done to help, what will make them feel safe
- encourage and support the child who is experiencing bullying behaviour to contribute to discussions on actions to challenge or stop bullying behaviours
- notify the nominated supervisor of the allegation

- document the incident and record strategies used to guide and support the child (see *Bullying Incident Report form*)
- inform and communicate with families regarding instances of bullying involving their child (See *Involving Families* section below)

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND MANAGE BULLYING WHEN IT OCCURS

- adopt this policy to ensure zero tolerance for bullying
- model respectful ways of interacting with colleagues, children and families
- ensure children are adequately supervised at all times and be aware of any indicators of bullying if it occurs
- teach children strategies to challenge bullying-type behaviours- e.g., "*I don't like it when you call me names"*.
- critically reflect on environmental factors within the Service to support children and foster positive, respectful relationships
- take action when they suspect a child is experiencing bullying behaviour
- try to talk with the child who is alleged to be using or displaying bullying behaviours about their behaviour and the outcomes of their behaviour on others
- let them know that this type of behaviour is not acceptable and provide guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour
- don't force a meeting between the child who is alleged to be using or displaying bullying behaviours and the child who is experiencing bullying behaviour. Forced apologies are not constructive.
- ask the child who is suspected of bullying for possible reasons for the bullying
- consider the age, cultural values, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child
- support children's agency by assisting the child to move toward more considerate actions
- develop a *Behaviour Guidance Plan* in collaboration with the child, family and support agencies if required.

INVOLVING FAMILIES

Our Service will seek the cooperation and support from families for bullying prevention initiatives and reinforcement of positive interactions with other children.

We will:

- ensure families are aware of our *Service Philosophy*, *Behaviour Guidance- Bullying Policy* and *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- provide information to families about the nature and harmful consequences of bullying- e.g., newsletters, parent information sessions
- openly communicate with families of children who use or display bullying behaviours or experience bullying, and work in partnership with them to implement appropriate strategies to support the children involved (*refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Code of Conduct Policy)*
- if required, seek further strategies from relevant inclusion Support Services (implementation of *Behaviour Guidance Plan*)
- support families to guide their child's behaviour with effective strategies and provide support – such as Kids Helpline
- ensure notification is made to parents/guardians as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, if their child is involved in a serious incident/situation at the Service. Details of the incident/situation are to be recorded on the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record.*

POTENTIAL FURTHER ACTIONS

Possible actions may be required to ensure our Service provides a child safe environment for all children. Any action taken by management will be dependent on each individual case following regular communication with families, professional support and intervention. Should the bullying behaviour continue and children's wellbeing and safety is at risk, management may request a:

- temporary exclusion of the child from the Service, or
- permanent exclusion from the Service (See *Enrolment Policy*).

The approved provider will ensure that any allegation, concern or suspicion that a child has been subjected to inappropriate conduct or inappropriate discipline 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.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Behaviour Guidance - Bullying 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

Behaviour Guidance Audit Behaviour Guidance Biting Guide Behaviour Guidance Bullying Incident Report Behaviour Guidance Bullying Response Procedure Behaviour Guidance Guide Promoting and Supporting Positive Behaviour	Behaviour Guidance Incident Report Behaviour Guidance Observation Record Behaviour Guidance Plan Behaviour Guidance Procedure Behaviour Guidance Review Form Bullying, Discrimination & Harassment Procedure

RESOURCES

Bullying- NO WAY!

Kids Help Line

Kids Help line Dealing with bullying

NSW Department of Education Anti-bullying Parents and carers tips Fact sheet

Raising Children Signs of bullying in children and teenagers

Queensland Government Early Childhood Education and Care Managing conflict and recognising bullying

SOURCES

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

Australia Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2026). *Inappropriate Discipline.*

Australian Government Department of Education. *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.V2.0, 2022*

Australian Government. Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2014). *Helping your child stop bullying. A guide for parents*

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law (NSW) (NSW services only)

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 *Anti-bullying- Parents and carers tips- Fact Sheet* (2020).

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) 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	V11.05.26		
MODIFICATIONS	MAY • annual policy review • terminology has been updated to support inclusive and respectful practice to avoid labelling children and to emphasise behaviours rather than identities • merged- Educators will not section • sources updated as required JANUARY • updated policy to include amendments to Children (Education and Care Services) National Law • included additional points to strengthen child safe practices including inappropriate conduct • spelling and grammar edits		
PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS			
MAY 2025	• annual policy review • sources checked and updated as required		