

# Behaviour Guidance Policy

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## 1. Policy statement

### Values

The centre is committed to:

- Providing children with a safe and secure environment and the opportunity for positive and respectful interactions with adults and children.
- Recognising that children's behaviour reflects their level of development and is influenced by a range of factors, including family and culture.
- Providing a learning environment that supports the growth and development of each child's self-concept and self-esteem.
- Providing a physical and learning environment that aims to prevent behavioural difficulties.
- Helping children learn the consequences of their behaviour and thus develop an understanding of how their actions affect others.
- Working in partnership with parents/guardians and other professionals in issues relating to the guidance of a child's behaviour.
- Helping children to learn to interact effectively, and in doing so to learn to balance their own rights, needs, and feelings with those of others.
- Engaging only in practices which are respectful of, and provide security for, children and in no way degrade, endanger, exploit, intimidate, or harm them psychologically or physically.
- Complying with regulatory and legislative requirements.

### Purpose

To achieve the above listed values by providing a developmentally appropriate behavioural guidance structure for all staff and any other persons involved in the care and education of the children.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, the committee/board and any other persons involved in the care and education of the child.

## 3. Background and Legislation

- *Children's Services Act 1996.*

*Section 28(1) The proprietor of a children's service must ensure that no child being cared for or educated by the service is subjected to:*

- any form of corporal punishment; or*
- any discipline which is unreasonable in the circumstances.*

*Section 28(2) A staff member of a children's service must not subject any child being cared for or educated by the service to:*

- any form of corporal punishment; or*
- any discipline which is unreasonable in the circumstances.*

- *Children's Services Regulations 2009*

*Regulation 41(e) requires a Behaviour Management/Guidance policy be available for inspection at the centre at all times the centre is operating.*

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- *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
  - *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995*
  - *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
  - *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*

#### **4. Definitions**

**Adequate supervision:** Every child at the centre is supervised constantly, actively and diligently.

**Challenging behaviour:** Behaviour that disrupts others or causes dispute between children, but which is part of normal social development.

**Considerate behaviour:** Behaviour that demonstrates self-discipline, appropriate expression of feelings, cooperation, integrity, empathy and thought about the effect of the behaviour on others.

**Difficult/unacceptable behaviour:** Behaviour that violates others' rights, hurts, frightens or harms others or the environment, or interrupts the group and prevents group members from functioning. It could be:

- Normal behaviour that occurs too often or when a child could be developmentally expected to have learned more appropriate behaviour.
- Combination of normal behaviours that present management problems.

**Supervision:** Observing and interacting with individual children and groups of children.

**DHS:** Department of Human Services

**DEECD:** Department of Education and Early Development

#### **5. Procedures**

**The committee/board are responsible for:**

- Providing staff with guidelines on the centre's expectations of their behaviour, responses and reactions when working with children and their families.
- Supporting staff to gain appropriate knowledge and develop appropriate skills for the implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring that all staff, parents/guardians, students, and volunteers are aware of this policy and that it is implemented within the centre.
- Approving any changes to the policy.
- Approving any additional expenditure or resources.

**Qualified staff are responsible for:**

- The day-to-day implementation of this policy and where possible resolving behavioural guidance issues directly with the parents/guardians and children concerned.
- Working collaboratively with other staff in implementing this policy and informing staff of the implementation requirements of behavioural guidance plans.
- Using their professional knowledge and experience to develop, in consultation with the centre staff, attitudes and practices that are based on realistic expectations of children's needs and abilities.

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- Ensuring procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents/guardians to understand issues outside the centre that may impact on a child's behaviour (refer to the *Communication Policy*).
  - Providing a program that is age appropriate and based on the individual needs and interests of each child.
  - Providing a program that supports the use of positive techniques of guidance, redirection and reinforcement, as opposed to comparison, competition or criticism.
  - Working cooperatively with parents/guardians on issues relating to the guidance of their child's behaviour, keeping them informed of the techniques and methods used.
  - Providing a set of basic developmentally appropriate behavioural guidelines which:
    - o Emphasise positive actions
    - o Give children reasons for the limits
    - o Are implemented in a consistent manner
    - o Are reinforced regularly
    - o Are reviewed regularly for age and cultural appropriateness
  - Interacting with children as outlined in *Schedule 1*.

**All staff are responsible for:**

- Working collaboratively with other staff in implementing this policy and behavioural guidance plans.
- Discussing behaviours that cause concern with other staff.
- Providing a physical environment with adequate equipment, variety and challenges for the children.
- Respecting the confidentiality of both the parents/guardians and child when dealing with issues of behaviour guidance concerning an individual child.
- Ensuring that children are not put in a position where they feel frightened, ashamed, embarrassed, insecure, or isolated.
- Recognising that from time to time they will need assistance, advice and/or support and seeking that whenever necessary.
- Interacting with children as outlined in *Schedule 1*.

**The parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Engaging in communication with staff about their child. (Refer to the *Communication Policy*)
- Informing staff of any events in the child's life outside the centre which may impact on their behaviour (for example, moving house, relationship issues, new sibling).
- Informing staff of any concerns they have regarding the behaviour of their child or the impact of other children's behaviour on their child.
- Working collaboratively with staff and/or the complaints/grievance committee to develop a behaviour guidance plan if required.

**Procedures for the guidance of ongoing unacceptable behaviour**

When dealing with ongoing unacceptable behaviour, the qualified staff will:

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### Step 1:

- Enter into collaborative problem solving with the parents/guardians. Invite parents/guardians to help solve the problem through discussing:
  - o The ongoing unacceptable behaviour displayed by the child.
  - o The parents/guardians and the centre's overall aspirations for the child.
  - o The types of solutions (strategies) possible in the circumstances.
  - o What has worked or failed in the past, whether at home or in the centre.
  - o The child's personal characteristics, such as his/her interests, temperament, age or size.
  - o Resources/changes required for the individual child's and group program to be implemented (for example, changes to routines, transitions)
  - o Other resources available such as Preschool Field Officers, referral for specialist assessment, additional adult support. (Written consent from parents/guardians must be given before any intervention/assessment is obtained.)

### Step 2:

The qualified staff member will develop a behaviour guidance plan which is:

- Based on the observations of the child, this may include broader observations of the culture of the room and the interactions of the whole group, including other staff working with the child. Items to consider may include:
  - o Who is included in the child's play
  - o Who is excluded from the child's play
  - o How does the child gain entry into play
  - o What resources are used in the child's play
  - o How the staff in the room interacting with the child.
- Acceptable to the parents/guardians and any other professionals involved in the care and education of the child.
- Clear and easily followed by all staff, parents/guardians and/or volunteers working with the child.

### Step 3:

- A date is set to review, reflect, evaluate and replan. This initially should be within a two-week time frame.

### **The relevant subcommittee (generally complaints/grievance or staffing) will become involved when:**

- The staff member is concerned that the child's behaviour may put themselves, other children, staff, or others at risk.
- The consultation with the parents/guardians and other professionals and the development of a behavioural guidance plan has not resolved the problem.
- A complaint is received concerning a child's behaviour, for example, the safety of other children is threatened.
- Additional resources are required.

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The subcommittee will attempt to resolve the issue as soon as possible.

In the event that a sub-committee becomes involved, the staff will:

- Not divulge confidential information provided by the parents/guardians without first obtaining their written consent.
- Provide only relevant information to the subcommittee in order to assist with the resolution of the issue.

**Please refer to *Schedule 2* for the process for resolution where a sub-committee becomes involved.**

## **6. Related documents**

- A list of the contact numbers of individuals, agencies and organisations providing support and/or advice in relation to the behavioural guidance of children, for example the Preschool Field Officer, Children's Services Adviser and KPV.
- DHS *Children's Services Guide*, [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood)
- DHS, *Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria 2007-2009*

## **Centre policies**

- Communication
- Complaints
- Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs
- Privacy

## **7. Authorisation**

This policy was adopted by the Parkdale Preschool committee, at the committee meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

## **8. Review date**

This policy will be next reviewed in 2012.

## **9. Evaluation**

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the committee/board will:

- Use a quality assessment tool, such as the Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist.
- Assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved in relation to behavioural issues raised.
- If appropriate, conduct a survey in relation to this policy or incorporate relevant questions within the general parents/guardians survey.
- Take into account feedback from staff regarding the policy.
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the behaviour of the children attending the centre.

### Explanatory notes

This policy provides a sound framework for centres to adopt, or review to reflect the philosophy, beliefs and values of their centre with regard to the behaviour guidance of children. Porter (2003) provides a detailed approach for centres in the development of a behaviour guidance policy. Porter notes that many policies express a philosophy which fits within a guidance approach yet provide procedures which reflect an authoritarian or controlling approach. Porter suggests centres discuss their practices to ensure they reflect the philosophy of the centre and explore three questions:

- Where do you locate children's control?

*For example, if you believe children are controlled internally your practices will reflect a guidance approach, however if you believe that children can and should be controlled externally, this will reflect a controlling approach and the use of rewards and punishments.*

- What do you assume causes disruptive behaviour?
- What is your view of children and of their mistakes?

*How do you view developmental mistakes versus behavioural, do you respond to these differently?*

An effective behaviour guidance policy is one which has been developed in consultation with staff, parents/guardians, committee/board where everyone agrees on the values and goals that underlie practices.

### Legislation

In relation to the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995* and the *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, exceptions relating to education in both Acts would only apply to a kindergarten, if a kindergarten is considered an educational authority or institution under these acts. Whether a kindergarten is, or is not, considered an educational authority or institution under both these Acts, has not been specified in the Act or in a court of law. KPV has requested in a review of the Victorian legislation for kindergartens to be classified as an educational institution, however it is unclear whether this will occur.

### Unacceptable behaviour

In any matters relating to children exhibiting unacceptable behaviour, it is important that they be managed in a careful manner. It is vital to respect the rights of all concerned, and to seek further advice, where and when appropriate.

If the committee/board becomes involved in relation to a child's behaviour, it could approach the regional Children's Services Adviser, Preschool Field Officer or Specialist Children's Services Officers at the Department of Human Services to investigate the availability of extra assistance.

Please note this policy does not outline excluding children from a centre. This should be a last resort, centres which have excluded children have reached this decision as part of the collaborative management of a child's behaviour. The decision to exclude a child is usually based on the joint decision of the family, staff and any other professionals involved in the care and education of the child.

### References:

Porter, Louise (2003) *Young Children's Behaviour. Practical Approaches for Caregivers and Teachers*, Second Edition, Elsevier Australia Pty Ltd.

Porter, Louise (2006), *Children are People Too, Small Poppies*

**Staff practices**

- Understand the needs of individual children and those in the group and acknowledge that most children's behaviour is influenced by their developmental stage, the environment, the time of day, actions (modelling) of staff and other children, family experiences and the family cultural background.
- Recognise that some causes of inappropriate behaviour include, anger, frustration, boredom, desire for attention, imitation, tiredness, excitement, jealousy, social clumsiness, high activity levels and too much choice or lack of choice.
- Support children to learn to think for themselves and to be considerate. Help them to think about the effects of their behaviour on other children and look for solutions together. This could involve speaking with the child about the effect of their behaviour on others and then ask the child "What do you think we could do to make sure it doesn't happen again?"
- Teach children to recognise when their behaviour is successful. For example, instead of saying "Good boy for packing up the toys" we can say "Thank you, I appreciate that you packed up the toys".
- Instead of using phrases such as that's wonderful, good boy/girl; you're great, acknowledge the child and use descriptive words that the child will understand, for example, "You've done very well indeed, I hope you're pleased with yourself".
- Foster a positive self-esteem through acknowledging children, for example, "Wow, look at you, did you know you could do that", "I appreciate you doing that". Instead of saying "What a beautiful painting" you could say "What do you think of that?". This encourages children to notice their behaviour.
- Giving children information about the things they have achieved that you appreciate and respect and impress you rather than an evaluation or a judgement of them as a person or their work.
- Assist and encourage children to talk about and manage their feelings; Encourage children to think about how others might feel (empathy).
- Anticipate potentially unacceptable behaviours and eliminate situations and physical arrangements that may encourage inappropriate behaviour.
- Encourage children to resolve potential conflicts for themselves, but step in with strategies and suggestions when needed.
- Acknowledge a child's good intentions, (even if they were carried out inappropriately).
- Acknowledge that it is the behaviour that is inappropriate and not the child.
- Acknowledge and accept the child's feelings of anger, frustration or jealousy, even if the reaction seems out of proportion to the cause. Distinguish feelings from the response the child has to those feelings. Encourage the child to talk about their feelings. For example, make it clear that the feelings are not bad, only the response (action) to those feelings is unacceptable.
- Use language that does not label the child but labels the behaviour.
- Role model considerate and respectful behaviour in all interactions with peers, children and other adults.
- Allow appropriate choices in decision-making and be prepared to accept the child's decision.

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- Give attention to all children involved in a situation. Comfort a child who may be hurt or upset and talk to the aggressor. Empower the child who has been hurt/upset to express to the other child how they feel.
  - Always respond to a situation in a calm manner.

## **Process for resolution where a subcommittee becomes involved**

### **Step 1: Consultation and investigation phase**

The subcommittee is responsible for:

- If a complaint has been received, in addition to the procedures outlined below following the procedures outlined in the *Complaints Policy* to ensure compliance with centre policy and regulatory and legislative requirements.
- Asking staff for their professional evaluation of the situation and what they believe needs to be done in relation to strategies to be implemented and resources needed.
- Meeting with the parents/guardians of the child displaying the behaviour.
- Meeting with any support agencies involved with the child, if appropriate.
- Assessment of staff skills in the area of guidance.
- Identifying additional training needs for staff in the area of guidance.
- Investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support, or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer or Specialist Children's Services Officers at the Department of Human Services, or agencies involved with the child.

### **Step 2: Resolution phase**

The subcommittee, following consultation and investigation, will seek to put in place a behavioural guidance plan that has been developed by all parties and is mutually acceptable to all parties and implemented by the staff.

This behaviour guidance plan could include:

- Behavioural assessment of the child and utilising behaviour intervention programs or specialists (if not already undertaken).
- Incorporation of the identified strategies into the qualified staff member's program at the centre.
- Consultation with other staff responsible for the care and education of the child in regard to the implementation of the behaviour guidance plan.
- Maintaining ongoing consultation with parents/guardians. This may be a joint responsibility of the qualified staff member and the subcommittee.
- Reducing the amount of time the child attends the centre, or requesting the parent/guardian to remain with the child.
- Additional staff for the room (depending on the availability of funds).
- A behavioural and/or developmental assessment of the child (if not already undertaken).
- A behavioural intervention program or obtaining specialist advice (for example, from a Preschool Field Officer).
- A referral to a parent support program to obtain assistance or other support services for the family.
- Reporting process to the committee/board.
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to information gained about the child and their family.
- Clear timeframes for review and evaluation.

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Where the subcommittee is able to resolve the situation, it would inform the committee/board at their next meeting of the successful resolution of the issue.

**Step 3: Referral to the committee/board**

The matter will be referred to the committee/board in the event that:

- Additional financial resources are required that need committee/board approval
- The subcommittee is not able to establish a suitable and mutually agreeable behavioural guidance plan.

In situations where a suitable and mutually agreeable behavioural guidance plan has not been achieved, the committee/board will seek appropriate advice, for example, from DEECD, KPV.