



Parkdale Preschool Association Inc A-0003637F

## INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

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### Mandatory – Quality Area 5

#### PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines to ensure:

- the development of positive and respectful relationships with each child at **Parkdale Preschool**
- each child at **Parkdale Preschool** is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

##### 1. VALUES

Parkdale Preschool is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the service, particularly the rights of all children to feel safe, and be safe at all times, including:
  - promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children
  - promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
  - promoting the safety of children with a disability
- encouraging children to express themselves and their opinions, and to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- considering the health, safety and wellbeing of each child, and providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which they can develop and learn
- maintaining a duty of care (refer to *Definitions*) and taking all reasonable steps for each child's safety and wellbeing at all times
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service, including family and cultural values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child
- building collaborative relationships with families to improve learning and development outcomes for children
- encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children, families and educators/staff at the service.

##### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Parkdale Preschool.

##### 3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

###### Background

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, wealth, birth status or ability. Developing responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children promotes their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security. Positive interactions between educators/adults and children can empower children to feel valued, competent and capable.

Actively engaging in children’s learning and decision-making during play, daily routines and ongoing activities can stimulate children’s thinking, enrich their learning and encourage them to explore and manage their feelings and behaviour.

“Having supportive relationships with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members enables children to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves, work through differences, learn new things and take calculated risks” (*Guide to the National Quality Standard* – refer to *Sources*).

Regulation 155 of the National Regulations requires an Approved Provider of children’s services to take reasonable steps to ensure that the service provides education and care to children in a way that encourages them to express themselves, and develop self-reliance and self-esteem, maintains their dignity and rights, provides positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour, and respects their cultural and family values.

Regulation 156 requires the Approved Provider to ensure that the service provides children with opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the service. To meet these requirements, the Approved Provider is expected to consider the size and composition of the groups in which the children are educated and cared for.

In developing an *Interactions with Children Policy*, early childhood education and care services must review and reflect on the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service, particularly with regard to the relationships with children. The development of this policy should also be informed by the service’s *Staff Code of Conduct Policy* (including Professional Standards for Staff attachment) and *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy* (including *Code of Conduct* attachment).

#### Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2011
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic), as amended 2012
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

#### 4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

**Adequate supervision:** (In relation to this policy) **supervision** entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

**Behaviour guidance:** A means of assisting children to self-manage their behaviour. It differs from traditional 'behaviour management' or 'discipline' which generally implies that an adult is 'managing' children's behaviour or using punishment to control children. Behaviour guidance applies to all forms of behaviour, not just behaviours labelled as 'negative'.

**Behaviour guidance plan:** A plan that documents strategies to assist an educator in guiding a child with diagnosed behavioural difficulties to self-manage his/her behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professional support agencies as applicable.

**Challenging behaviour:** Behaviour that:

- disrupts others or causes disputes between children, but which is part of normal social development
- infringes on the rights of others
- causes harm or risk to the child, other children, adults or living things
- is destructive to the environment and/or equipment
- inhibits the child's learning and relationship with others
- is inappropriate relative to the child's developmental age and background.

**Inclusion Support Program:** Funded by the Commonwealth Government to promote and maintain high quality, inclusive education and care, for all children, including those with ongoing high support needs, in eligible early childhood education and care settings. This is achieved by increasing the knowledge and skills of educators, and the capacity of education and care services, through providing professional development, advice and access to additional resources as well as inclusion support. Details are available at: <https://www.education.gov.au>

**Mental Health:** In early childhood, a child's mental health is understood as a child's ability to 'experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children.' Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development. <https://kidsmatter.edu.au>

**Notifiable complaint:** A complaint that alleges a breach of the Act or Regulation, or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised. Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider to the secretary of DET within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)). If the Approved Provider is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact DET for confirmation. Written reports to DET must include:

- details of the event or incident
- the name of the person who initially made the complaint
- if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant)

- contact details of a nominated member of the Grievances Subcommittee/investigator
- any other relevant information.

Written notification of complaints must be submitted using the appropriate forms, which can be found on the ACECQA website: [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)

**Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program:** Early intervention outreach services that are universally available within state-funded preschools for any child with developmental concerns. The primary role of the PSFO Program is to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in preschool.

Details available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/needs/pages/kinderinclusionsupport.aspx>

**Serious incident:** An incident resulting in the death of a child, or an injury, trauma or illness for which the attention of a registered medical practitioner, emergency services or hospital is sought or should have been sought. Eg: whooping cough, broken limb, anaphylaxis reaction. This also includes an incident in which a child appears to be missing, cannot be accounted for, is removed from the service in contravention of the Regulations or is mistakenly locked in/out of the service premises (Regulation 12). A serious incident should be documented in an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record* (sample form available on the ACECQA website) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident. The Regulatory Authority (DET) must be notified within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Regulation 176(2)(a)). Records are required to be retained for the periods specified in Regulation 183.

**Supervision:** see **adequate supervision** in *Definitions* above.

## 5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### Sources

- *Behaviour guidance practice note series* (DET): <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>
- *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics*: <http://earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/>
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, ACECQA: [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- Inclusion Support Program (ISP), Department of Education and Training, Australian Government: <https://www.education.gov.au>
- Kids Matter, and Australian mental health and well-being initiative set in primary schools and early childhood education and care services: <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/>
- *The Kindergarten Guide* (DET): <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: [www.unicef.org/](http://www.unicef.org/)
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>

### Service policies

- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Staff Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

## PROCEDURES

### The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- developing and implementing the *Interactions with Children Policy* in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff and parents/guardians, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service
- ensuring parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and all staff have access to a copy of the *Interactions with Children Policy* and comply with its requirements
- ensuring the Nominated Supervisor, educators and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families (refer to *Staff Code of Conduct Policy*)
- ensuring children are adequately supervised (refer to *Definitions*) and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times
- ensuring the size and composition of groups is considered to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service (Regulation 156(2)). Smaller group sizes are considered optimal
- ensuring educational programs are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
- ensuring the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators (Regulation 73)
- ensuring that the service provides education and care to children in a way that:
  - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
  - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
  - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
  - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
  - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for (Regulation 155)
- ensuring clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's:
  - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
  - progress against the outcomes of the educational program (Regulation 74)
- supporting educators/staff to gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy, including promoting social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing
- ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to *Child Safe Environment Policy* and *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*) and promotes the active participation of every child
- ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor, educators 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: Section 166)
- promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and educators, staff and other professionals, to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences
- referring notifiable complaints (refer to *Definitions*), grievances (refer to *Definitions*) or complaints that are unable to be resolved appropriately and in a timely manner to the Grievances Subcommittee/investigator (refer to *Complaints and Grievances Policy*)
- informing DET, in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (refer to *Definitions*) (Section 174(4), Regulation 176(2)(b))
- notifying DET, in writing, within 24 hours of a serious incident (refer to *Definitions*) occurring at the service (Section 174(4), Regulation 176)

- ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring educators and staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- ensuring that individual behaviour guidance plans (refer to Attachment 1 – Developing a Behaviour Guidance Plan) are developed for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, as appropriate and in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to *Sources*)
- developing links with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).

**The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:**

- implementing the *Interactions with Children Policy* at the service
- ensuring educators, staff and parents/guardians are given access to the *Interactions with Children Policy* and comply with its requirements
- ensuring 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 (refer to *Staff Code of Conduct Policy*)
- ensuring children are adequately supervised (refer to *Definitions*), that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times and the environment is safe, secure and free from hazards (refer to *Child Safe Environment Policy*, and *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*)
- considering the size and composition of groups when planning program timetables to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service. Smaller group sizes are considered optimal
- developing and implementing educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, that are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
- ensuring the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators
- ensuring that educators provide education and care to children in a way that:
  - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
  - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
  - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
  - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
  - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for
- ensuring clear and straightforward documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's:
  - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
  - progress against the outcomes of the educational program (Regulation 74)
- organising appropriate training for educators/staff to assist with the implementation of this policy
- ensuring educators 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: Section 166)
- ensuring that procedures are in place for effective regular communication with parents/guardians to share information about children's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships
- informing the Approved Provider of any notifiable complaints (refer to *Definitions*) or serious incidents (refer to *Definitions*) at the service



- ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring educators and staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- ensuring that individual behaviour guidance plans (refer to Attachment 1 – Developing a Behaviour Guidance Plan) are developed for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, as appropriate and in consultation with educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to *Sources*)
- co-operating with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).

**Educators are responsible for:**

- assisting with the development and implementation of the *Interactions with Children Policy*, in consultation with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, parents/guardians and families
- providing access to the *Interactions with Children Policy* to parents/guardians and families
- complying with the requirements of the *Interactions with Children Policy*
- being aware of service expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families (refer to *Staff Code of Conduct Policy*)
- providing adequate supervision of children at all times (refer to *Definitions*)
- communicating and working collaboratively with parents/guardians and families in relation to their child's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships
- delivering educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, that are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
- delivering programs that develop a sense of wellbeing and identity, connection to community, and provide skills for lifelong learning in all children
- providing education and care to children in a way that:
  - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
  - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
  - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
  - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
  - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for
- developing warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion
- supporting each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with others
- using positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- developing individual behaviour guidance plans (refer to Attachment 1 – Developing a Behaviour Guidance Plan) for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, as appropriate and in consultation with parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to *Sources*)
- documenting assessments and evaluations for each child to inform the educational program (Regulation 74)
- being 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
- maintaining confidentiality at all times (refer to *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*).

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- reading and complying with the *Interactions with Children Policy*
- engaging in open communication with educators about their child
- informing educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)
- informing educators/staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour
- working collaboratively with educators/staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.

**Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.**

**EVALUATION**

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1: Developing a Behaviour Guidance Plan

**AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Parkdale Preschool on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**REVIEW DATE: JUNE 2021**