

## Sturt St Early Learning Centre

### Behaviour Guidance Policy

**Link to CCQA Principles**    *Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) Quality Practices Guide (2005) – Principle 1.2*

#### **Legislation**

*Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA)*

<http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/lz/c/a/childrens%20protection%20act%201993/current/1993.93.un.pd>

*Children's Protection Regulations 2006 (SA)*

#### **Policy statement**

---

- The service's Behaviour Guidance Policy:
  - emphasises that children have the same rights as adults; and
  - recognises, values and celebrates the differences and similarities that exist in all persons<sup>1</sup>.
- Families and staff/carers should use appropriate strategies to guide children to recognise, manage and learn from their behaviours and express their emotions in positive, non-threatening and productive ways.
- The Service is committed to a Behaviour Guidance Policy because it:
  - reflects the values and current recommended strategies that promote positive play behaviours and patterns;
  - respects the importance of interactions and relationships between children, families and staff;
  - seeks to understand why children behave in certain ways in specific circumstances;
  - promotes realistic play and behaviour limits that guide children's safety and security rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity; and
  - defines clear and transparent caregiving strategies that are implemented in the centre so that these can be understood by staff , families and other stakeholders.
- The purpose of the Service's Behaviour Guidance Policy is to:
  - encourage appropriate behaviour by using strategies that build children's confidence and self-esteem;
  - provide children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their own behaviour; and
  - promote collaborative approaches to behaviour guidance between staff, parents, children and other agencies where necessary.
- The Service recognises and understands that a child's behaviour may be affected by their:
  - age and development;
  - general health and wellbeing;

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this policy, 'persons' include <children, families, staff, carers, carers' family, management, coordination unit staff, ancillary staff (administrative staff, kitchen staff, cleaners, maintenance personnel), students, volunteers, visitors, local community, school community, licensee, sponsor and/or service owner>.

- relationships with their family;
  - play and learning environments, which includes the physical indoor/outdoor settings, the weather, the time of year, the time of day;
  - staff/carers' caregiving strategies and practices, which includes how those strategies are implemented;
  - relationship with other children and staff at the Service
  - external factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences, or media coverage of traumatic events.
- Families and staff display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and not the individual child. This means that behaviours are managed, not children.
  - While staff are aware and respect individual children's and families' backgrounds and beliefs, it may be necessary to balance the individual needs of stakeholders with staff knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognised authorities.
  - The *Occupational Health and Safety Act*<sup>2</sup> states that employers have a duty of care to their employees to ensure that the working environment supports emotional and mental wellbeing. Supporting children's behaviour can be stressful. A high level of team work and professional support needs to be provided for staff to support their emotional wellbeing, as well as children's need for positive guidance and support.

## **Rationale**

---

### **Children need**

- to have their feelings acknowledged and accepted, and to be able to express their emotions appropriately,
- to have their cultural, religious and racial diversity respected,
- consistent expectations

### **Parents need**

- clear guidelines about acceptable behaviours,
- involvement in determining appropriate strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour,
- avenues of support for parenting skills,
- non-judgemental communication from staff.

### **Staff need**

- training to deal appropriately with behaviour issues and ensure that programmes are meeting the child's developmental, social, emotional and cognitive needs,
- support from parents and management in dealing with difficult behaviours.

### **Management needs**

- appropriately trained staff,
- adequate budget to sustain programmes,

---

<sup>2</sup> There are legislative Acts and regulations for each state and territory that address the issue of Occupational Health and Safety. Services are advised to seek information that is relevant to their jurisdiction.

- support from relevant agencies and professionals to make appropriate decisions in the best interests of the individual child and other children in the child care setting.

### **Important:**

- The use of physical punishment<sup>3</sup> by any adult as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- The use of isolation, humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling by any adult as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- In meeting the Service's duty of care under the SA Children's Services Regulations 1998; there is a shared responsibility between the Service and its stakeholders ( parents, caregivers, licensing authorities) that the Behaviour Guidance Policy and procedures are adhered to.

## **Strategies and practices**

---

### **Behaviour guidance strategies**

- The following appropriate behaviour are encouraged and supported through acknowledgement, positive and specific verbal feedback and teaching within our programme.
  - Sharing and taking turns
  - Negotiating with peers
  - Active listening to staff/carers
  - Identifying a problem and attempting to solve it
  - Displaying empathy for others
  - Managing emotions and behaviour appropriately
  - Looking after resources and equipment
- The following inappropriate behaviours are discouraged through redirection, specific verbal feedback and logical consequences that support children to learn positive behaviour.
  - Biting
  - Physical aggression such as pushing, hitting, kicking, pinching
  - Verbal put downs, harassment and exclusion of others
  - Inappropriate use of and/or damage to resources and equipment
  - Disregard for instructions and guidance from staff / carers

### **Establishing a positive environment**

#### **Planning the learning environment:**

In programming meetings, staff will reflect on the behaviour of children. They will evaluate how the experiences, interactions and routines have impacted on children's behaviour both positively and negatively, in order to plan positive strategies for the next programming period.

#### **Modelling**

Staff will use a calm speaking voice when working with children.

Staff will demonstrate the appropriate behaviours (listed above) and refrain from inappropriate behaviours during the course of their interactions with all children.

---

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this policy, physical punishment includes smacking, hitting, slapping, kicking, pinching, pulling, pushing, shoving or the inappropriate manhandling of a child by an adult.

## **Establishing expectations and limits**

Limits to behaviour will be clearly expressed in positive terms and reinforced consistently in a developmentally appropriate way.

Staff will deal with conflicts by encouraging problem solving and by diverting children to more socially appropriate behaviour. This will differ depending on the age and language capacity of the children involved .

Babies and toddlers may be manually supported to understand a limit – eg helping a child to be gentle with another child or equipment - by showing them and guiding them. Lifting a child from a dangerous situation – eg climbing up on a table, while also providing verbal encouragement eg Come down now – that's not safe

Older children will participate in setting some rules and in thinking through problem solving situations using prompts such as What would be fair ? What would you like to happen ?

Visual cues, sound cues and songs are used to reinforce messages about limits and expectations eg

- a bell as a sign to listen
- photos and pictures of appropriate behaviours and inappropriate behaviours; and
- songs and rhymes to support packing up, being kind to others, talking about problems and other pro-social skills

## **Feedback, reinforcement and consequences**

Positive feedback and appreciation for appropriate behaviour, needs to be voiced in a specific way – eg not Good girl or good boy; rather - Thank you for packing that up so well; I liked the way you took turns with the train

Staff will use voice intonations, facial expressions and explanations to encourage desired age appropriate behaviour.

When children are displaying negative behaviour, the following strategies or consequences may be used:

- A reminder or feedback about the inappropriate behaviour – eg I saw you hit ..... – that's not OK
- a few minutes away from the group with an adult may be beneficial to the child.
- Removal from the activity to an alternate activity
- Support to handle the situation in a different way – eg encouragement to use words rather than actions to express feelings; help to negotiate with another child; help to move away from a person who is bothering you

A positive approach will be used to build on each child's strengths and achievements. If a child is having difficulty showing appropriate behaviour – time will be spent to support and encourage the child, to talk with parents/caregivers, to get to know what interests them, and to give them the opportunity to practice doing the right thing and get acknowledgement for this. This may be specifically detailed in a learning plan – to ensure consistency and common understandings between carers and families. Children often respond positively when they know that carers and families are communicating and being consistent.

If children consistently display socially unacceptable behaviour the team leader will ensure:

- the expectations of the child's behaviour are realistic
- the child understands the limits
- there is communication about expectations between the staff and parents

- the child's needs are being met
- the child has no impediments which may cause the unacceptable behaviour
- the consequences of the behaviour do not encourage it to persist
- strategies are consistently followed by all carers in contact with the child.

If the socially unacceptable behaviour persists the Director or senior staff member may jointly with the parent seek advice from a professional or appropriate agency.

After the child has been given every chance to respond positively and if all methods fail to result in an improvement in behaviour, the Director or senior staff member may discuss alternative care with the parent / guardian, in consideration of the safety of the other children in care.

## **Responsibilities:**

### **Families**

*Enrolling, orientating and settling families into care*

- Families will receive information about our behaviour guidance policy on enrolment. Families are invited to share strategies that they find successful at home – and to discuss any issues or dilemmas that families have regarding children's behaviour.

*Establishing lines of open communication and expectations*

- Staff communicate with families about children's progress and development as part of daily interactions and at regular opportunities throughout the year. If parents or staff feel that it is appropriate to make a behaviour plan to support a child – this is not viewed as an extreme situation – rather as an opportunity to make sure that our combined efforts are consistent and supportive for a child's positive development.

### **Staff/Carers**

Guiding children's behaviour is a complex process involving

- Understanding of child development – particularly the areas of social and emotional development
- Underlying respect for children demonstrated by acknowledgement of their feelings, thoughts and ideas
- Careful observation and building relationships to discover how children are motivated, what upsets or frustrates them and what comforts them in order to develop effective strategies that will suit individual children's needs as well as cater for the impact of group dynamics
- Staff reflecting on their own values, attitudes and responses to children's behaviour – for instance – recognising when a child's behaviour is getting under your skin – when you need the support of a team member or senior staff member.
- High levels of communication and negotiation as part of a team to ensure that behaviour guidance is consistent, positive and continually evaluated.

Communicating regarding Children's behaviour

- When a carer notices that a child's behaviour is needing particular guidance, eg if they feel it is extreme, or is developing into a negative pattern, or there is an increase in occurrence they need to
  - Act appropriately to guide the behaviour in the first instance
  - Speak to the child's primary carer or a senior staff member about the behaviour, whether it has been observed before, what strategies are recommended and how to communicate with parents/caregivers about the behaviour

Follow up actions can then be taken – such as

- Communication with parents/caregivers

- Noting the concerns, and follow up observations to discuss in a programming meeting
- Seeking the opinion of senior staff

### **Management/Coordination unit staff**

Management have the responsibility to provide a suitable child safe environment under the Child Protection Act. This means that attention will be given to children's physical, social and emotional safety and in accordance with this principle, behaviour guidance will occur in positive, clear and consistent ways.

It is management's responsibility to communicate with staff about issues relating to children's behaviour and to provide induction, support and ongoing professional learning about behaviour guidance.

It is also management responsibility to supervise staff and ensure that centre policies are being followed. Appropriate support for behaviour guidance will be acknowledged and reinforced. Inappropriate actions in behaviour guidance will be addressed and monitored through performance management and professional development processes.

*Selection and recruitment:*

Criminal History checks are maintained for all staff working at our centre.

Appropriate training in child safe environments is provided

As part of induction staff are provided with information on our guiding behaviour policy; this is then followed through with them in context. For example a staff member will work with a new staff member to coach them in appropriate ways of guiding children's behaviour and will provide specific feedback to them about how they implement this policy in their interactions with children.

*Confidentiality and privacy:*

Families have the right to privacy regarding sensitive information about their child.

*Staff/Carer professional development opportunities:*

Guiding children's behaviour is a topic at programming meetings.

Professional development involving current scenarios is also offered as part of staff meetings.

Opportunities for professional development offered by other agencies is also advertised and promoted.

### *Relief staff/carers*

*Role and responsibilities:* Relief staff are provided with induction into the guiding behaviour policy. They have a responsibility to model, support and guide positive behaviour as part of their interactions at the centre. They also have a responsibility to communicate about behaviour guidance regarding individual children to the team leader so that further support can be offered. Relief staff are not responsible for communicating about individual children's behaviour to families – this is the role of the child's primary caregiver – or of the regular qualified staff member in the room in the absence of the child's primary caregiver.

### *Students and volunteers*

*Role and responsibilities:* Students and volunteers are provided with induction into the guiding behaviour policy. They have a responsibility to model positive behaviour as part of their interactions at the centre - and also to intervene to ensure children's safety. Students and volunteers must communicate with staff about behaviour guidance so that they can be supported to follow strategies that are consistent with centre policy. Students and volunteers are not responsible for communicating about children's behaviour to

families – this is the role of the child's primary caregiver – or of the regular qualified staff member in the room in the absence of the primary caregiver.

### **Accessing external support agencies**

Inclusion SA is the agency that our centre uses to refer children needing behaviour support. A referral is made when both parents/caregivers and staff have identified that further support is needed and after the usual centre processes outlined above have been followed.

### **Policy review**

---

- The Service will review the Behaviour Guidance Policy and guidelines every 2 years
- Families are encouraged to collaborate with the Service to review the policy and procedures.
- Staff/carers are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

### **Sources and further reading**

---

- Early Childhood Australia Inc. (2007). *The code of ethics*. Retrieved May 2, 2007, from [http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/code\\_of\\_ethics/early\\_childhood\\_alias\\_code\\_of\\_ethics.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/code_of_ethics/early_childhood_alias_code_of_ethics.html)
- National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc. (2005). Diversity in programming. *Family Day Care Quality Assurance Factsheet #4*. NSW: Author.
- Porter, L. (2003). *Young children's behaviour: Practical approaches for caregivers and teachers* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). NSW: MacLennan & Petty.
- Porter, L. (2006). *Children are people too: A parent's guide to young children's behaviour*. Adelaide: East Street Publications.
- Stonehouse, A. (2004). *Dimensions: Excellence in many ways*. NSW: National Family Day Care Council of Australia.
- Stonehouse, A., & Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2004). *Making links: A collaborative approach to planning and practice in early childhood services*. NSW: Pademelon Press.
- Tansey, S. (2006). Equity for children and families. *Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance Factsheet #8*. NSW: National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc.
- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians. (2004). *Physical punishment and discipline (including smacking)*. Retrieved May 2, 2007, from <http://www.racp.edu.au/index.cfm?objectid=A4254F55-2A57-5487-DFE129631BCB4C59>
- UNICEF (n.d.). *Fact sheet: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved April 4, 2007, from [http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

### **Useful Websites**

---

- Children, Youth and Women's Health - [www.cyh.com.au](http://www.cyh.com.au)

**Policy created date** November 2008 ; ratified ELC Advisory Committee 16/2/09

**Policy review date** February 2011