



Guiding Children's Behaviour

Children's Services Policy No 2.17

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Aim:

- To teach children socially acceptable behaviour through positive guidance, re-direction and reinforcement.
- To encourage children in our care to become self-disciplined by providing consistent, clear guidelines on what is appropriate behaviour and to develop an understanding of the consequences of their behaviour.

Background Information:

Children need to be given guidance and support to assist in learning how to respond appropriately to feelings and emotions. Children develop these abilities at varying ages and stages of development. Consistency between parents/carers and staff in guiding behaviour is paramount for a child. When behaviour management is positive it does not damage self-esteem, but allows children to feel capable and competent; and to experience pleasure from being around others.

Relevant Legislation:

- [Education and Care National Regulations Amendment Regulations 2020](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [Children \(Education and Care Services National Law Application\) Act 2010](#)

Resources:

- [Scope Australia, Challenging Behaviour Factsheet](#)
- [Care for Kids – Positively Guiding Children's Behaviour](#)
- [Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority - National Quality Standard](#)
 - **Quality Area 5:**
 - Standard 5.2 - Elements 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.

Note: In this policy "staff" and "educators" refers to staff employed within Children's Services by Willoughby City Council.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with **Children's Services Policy 1.5 - Code of Conduct** and **Children's Services Policy 2.18 – Bullying**.

Practices:

This policy will provide general information on guiding children's behaviour for staff, educators, and parents/carers. Services may have their own Behaviour Management Procedures that are designed to provide specific or individual guidelines for a particular

service, group of children or child.

For behaviours that are considered “Bullying”, please refer to **Children’s Services Policy 2.18 – Bullying**.

Context of the situation

Effective behaviour guidance strategies must take into consideration the context of the situation, bearing in mind the age and developmental abilities of the children, the environment in which the care is taking place, along with the type of experiences being provided.

Where consistent behaviour issues are evident within a particular context staff will review the following:

- Is the environment stimulating, or over stimulating?
- Are the activities age appropriate and providing children with challenges as well as achievement or success?
- Are there sufficient resources to allow children to play alongside one another with similar toys?
- Are the staff engaging the children and interacting with the experiences?
- Are the staff expectations of children’s behaviour appropriate and applied consistently and equally with all children?
- Is the behaviour actually inappropriate or is it just annoying?

Guidance practices that support children

- Staff will provide a varied program that allows children to have access to both quiet and active experiences.
- Staff will provide consistent expectations of appropriate behaviour, and where inappropriate behaviour is displayed and they will respond to this immediately.
- Staff will treat children with respect at all times. Strategies will be used to guide behaviour in a manner that will not make the child feel humiliated or threatened. Staff will accompany these strategies with rational explanations of expectations.
- Staff will focus on the strengths of the child.
- Staff will use supportive, positive words when guiding children’s behaviour towards the desired outcome.
- Staff will assist children to identify their feelings and provide the children with alternative means of expressing these feelings.
- Staff will provide children with the language needed to resolve conflict or to ask for assistance, such as “Stop; I don’t like that”.
- Staff will discuss with children how their actions, both positive and negative, affect others.
- Staff will interact and socialise with the children using these opportunities to role model positive behaviours and socially acceptable strategies for resolving a situation.
- Staff will allow children to explain the reason or cause of the behaviour with the desired outcome to identify possible areas of change.
- Staff will use “Redirection” of a child to assist in resolving a situation.
- Staff will label a behaviour, both positive and negative, and not label the child, such as “I really like how everyone is sharing the toys.”
- Staff will work as a team, seeking assistance from other staff to create a positive environment for all.
- Staff will involve the children in the development of “service rules” so that children can take ownership and be committed to these.
- Staff will give children the opportunity to regulate their own behaviours where

- possible.
- Staff will be provided with appropriate training on Guiding Children's Behaviour, as it is required.

Please also refer to **Children's Services Policy 1.5 – Code of Conduct**.

Partnerships with families

Parents/carers need to be involved in setting the expected behaviours and strategies used by the service to guide children's behaviours, as well as supporting the staff to implement this policy

- Staff and parents/carers need to openly communicate to ensure that they are working towards the same outcome.
- Staff and parents/carers need to share information regarding a child to ensure that positive guidance strategies are implemented at the service, as well as at home.
- Staff will discuss with individual parents/carers any behavioural concerns and together develop a strategy based on observations of the child's behaviour.
- Where determined appropriate, staff will provide information to families regarding external support agencies that may be able to assist the service and the family.

Awareness of age appropriate conflicts

As children develop they progress through many stages of self-awareness. Staff and parents/carers need to be aware of behaviours that are age appropriate and therefore typical for that age group, and those behaviours that are more serious or dangerous that are not age related.

Biting is a common behaviour for young children. However, it is a behaviour that has tremendous impact on other children. Services will adopt individual Biting Procedures that will be implemented as required. Where a service experiences a child with a severe biting habit, parents/carers will be consulted and an appropriate strategy put in place.

Young children aged under 3 years of age find it difficult to identify how they fit into the world around them, are not able to identify with the needs of others, have limited language to express feelings; and project a self-immersed response to life. These responses, such as hitting, snatching, pushing and punching are disruptive behaviours; however, whilst disruptive to the group, are not necessarily considered dangerous or inappropriate. These behaviours will be managed by positive guidance strategies as determined by each service.

Children over 3 years of age are able to better understand their roles and responsibilities within society. They are continuing to develop negotiation skills that assist with turn taking, establishment of leadership roles, following games with rules, assessing social situations, and development of impulse control. Positive environments guide children to the appropriate responses to situations that do not turn out as planned. Staff will use strategies with this group that reflect their individual abilities and needs.

Children over 5 years of age are socially adaptable, able to negotiate for their needs, and generally have effective self-control. Children of school age are developing the skills to take on responsibilities and to be held accountable for their actions. This age group understands consequences and is aware of what is socially acceptable behaviour, language and protective behaviours. However, often within this age group, children begin to tease, bully and mistreat others and may try to test boundaries that have been imposed on them.

Additional Strategies for School Children

As children grow they develop a greater sense of self, self-esteem and confidence.

Challenging behaviours that are emerging in older children often require an individual response.

- Staff will treat a child with respect and allow both or all children involved in the conflict to state their concerns and reasons for the behaviour. Children in this age group are more capable of expressing their likes and dislikes.
- Staff can use these discussions to negotiate with children and ask for them to consider more appropriate responses to a conflict.
- Respond in a calm but firm manner, indicating to the child what is expected, what choices the child has; and the consequence should the inappropriate behaviour continue.
- Attempt to distract or diffuse the situation.

Additionally, with this age group conflict can result in violence, threats and injury. Children, parents/carers and staff must work together to instil empathy, trust and mutual respect with each other.

If a child's behaviour is an ongoing concern, the parents/carers of the child will be informed and consulted to determine if there are other factors affecting the child's behaviour. Strategies can then be developed which are consistent with the families' child rearing practices

Managing Difficult Behaviours

Where a child demonstrates consistent inappropriate behaviour the staff will:

- Ensure the child is aware of the limits and what is appropriate behaviour.
- Ensure the expectations are appropriate for the child's level of development and understanding.
- Discuss the issue with the parents/carers and the child and gain permission to involve other agencies if determined appropriate.
- Record all incidents, indicating what happened before and after the incident, time, date and who was involved.
- Develop a plan of action involving behaviour management in discussion with all staff, parents/carers, school, and other professionals as required.

Exclusion for inappropriate behaviour

Whilst an education and care service is responsible for providing care and education to all children, a service must also ensure that all those involved in the service (staff, children, parents/carers and visitors) are provided with a safe, healthy and secure environment.

Aggressive, violent, threatening, dangerous or consistently disruptive behaviours will result in the enrolment of the child being reviewed. These behaviours include:

- infringe on the rights of others;
- present a clear risk of harm to others;
- limits the opportunities for others or self to participate in the program; or
- results in the mishandling of objects as weapons.

The service will review the child's enrolment in consultation with the Children and Youth Services Team Leader, Community Life Manager, Safety Management Specialist and the Community, Culture and Leisure Director.

Exclusion will be considered only after:

- Adequate support has been offered to the child;
- Parents/carers have been notified and given the opportunity to discuss their child's

behaviour;

- Parents/carers have been referred to other agencies, where necessary; and
- Careful consideration has been given to the safety of others by management

If so determined that the child's enrolment in the service is to be withdrawn this decision will take effect immediately and there may not be any recourse for renegotiation or re-enrolment.