

Interactions with Children

Authorised by:	This policy was adopted by the Ripponlea Kindergarten Committee of Management at a committee meeting
Approved date:	8 August 2022
Review date:	August 2025

Purpose

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines to ensure:

- the development of responsive, warm, trusting, and respectful relationships with children that promote their wellbeing, self-esteem, sense of security and belonging at Ripponlea Kindergarten
- each child at Ripponlea Kindergarten is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

Values

Ripponlea Kindergarten is committed to:

- the rights of all children to be safe and to feel 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
 - promoting the safety of trans and gender diverse children and their families in ECEC settings
 - ensuring the LGBTQI+ children and their families feel included and safe
- maintaining the dignity, agency, and rights of each child at the service
- promoting fairness, respect, and equity
- 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*) towards all children at Ripponlea Kindergarten
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service, including family and cultural values, age, gender, 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
- Being guided by the ethos of our philosophy statement and Service policies.

Scope

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Ripponlea Kindergarten, including during offsite excursions and activities.

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. When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators, they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable, and respected. Relationships are the foundation for the construction of identity, and help shape children's thinking about who they are, how they belong and what influences them (Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, p. 20).

'Constructive everyday interactions and shared learning opportunities form the basis of equitable, respectful, and reciprocal relationships between educators and children. Educators who are actively engaged in children's learning and share decision-making with them, use their everyday interactions during play, routines, and ongoing projects to stimulate children's thinking and to enrich their learning. These relationships provide a solid foundation from which to guide and support children as they develop the self-confidence and skills to manage their own behaviour, make decisions and relate positively and effectively to others.' (*Guide to National Quality Framework – refer to Sources*)

Child Safe Standard 3 requires services to have strategies to empower children about their rights, ensure children can participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. When children feel respected and valued, they are much more likely to speak up about issues of safety and wellbeing. Enabling and promoting empowerment and the participation of children within a service has multiple benefits in addition to enhancing the safety of children, including demonstrating a commitment to upholding the rights of children, checking that what the service is doing is what children want and building the communication and leadership skills of children.

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 *Code of Conduct Policy*.

Legislation and standards

This policy is informed by the following legislation and standards:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
- 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

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

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

Sources and Related policies

Sources

- Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Child Safe Standards: www.ccyp.vic.gov.au
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
- Guide to the National Quality Framework, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Inclusion Support Program: www.dese.gov.au

- Kids Matter, an Australian mental health and well-being initiative set in primary schools and early childhood education and care services: <https://beyou.edu.au>
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (DET): www.education.vic.gov.au
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Victorian Inclusion Agency (VIA): www.viac.com.au

Related Policies

- *Child Safe Environment*
- *Code of Conduct*
- *Complaints and Grievances*
- *Curriculum Development*
- *General Definitions*
- *Inclusion and Equity*
- *Occupational Health and Safety*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality*
- *Supervision of Children*

Procedures

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
Developing and implementing the <i>Interactions with Children Policy</i> in consultation with stakeholders, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs, and values of the service	√	√	√	√	√
Ensuring all stakeholders are provided with a copy of the <i>Interactions with Children Policy</i> 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 warm, trusting and reciprocal interactions when working with children and families (<i>refer to Code of Conduct Policy</i>)	√	√			
Ensuring children are adequately supervised (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (<i>refer to Supervision of Children Policy</i>)	√	√	√		√
Ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure, free from any hazards (<i>National Law: Section 167</i>) (<i>refer to Child Safe Environment Policy, Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Supervision of Children Policy</i>) and promotes the active participation of every child	√	√	√		√
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 (Education and Care Services National Regulations: <i>Regulation 156(2)</i>). Smaller group sizes are considered optimal, to promote intentional teaching strategies and responsive engagement opportunities.					
Developing and implementing educational programs that are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework (<i>refer to Definitions</i>), are based on the developmental needs, interests, and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences and strengths of each child (<i>refer to Inclusion and Equity Policy</i>)	√	√	√		√
Ensuring the educational program contributes to the development of children to have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and to be connected, confident, involved, and effective learners and communicators (Education and Care Services National Regulations: <i>Regulation 73</i>) (<i>refer to Curriculum Development Policy</i>)	√	√	√		√
Ensuring that the service provides education and care to children in a way that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (Education and Care Services National Regulations: <i>Regulation 155</i>) 	√	√	√		√
Ensure that Ripponlea Kindergarten provides children with opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the service (Education and Care Services National Regulations: <i>Regulation 156(1)</i>)	√	√	√		√
Recognising the importance of friendships and encourage support from peers, to help children and young people feel safe and be connected	√	√	√		
Ensuring clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developmental needs, interests, experiences, and program participation progress against the outcomes of the educational program (Education and Care Services National Regulations: <i>Regulation 74</i>) (<i>refer to Curriculum Development Policy</i>) 	√	√	√		√
Ensuring that procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents/guardians to share information about children's learning, development, interactions, behaviour, and relationships	√	√	√		√
Supporting ECT/educators/staff to access resources and gain appropriate training, knowledge, and skills for the implementation of this policy, including promoting social, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing	√	√			
Ensuring that staff members at Ripponlea Kindergarten 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 (<i>National Law: Section 166</i>)	√	√	√	√	√

Promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and program support groups (if required) (<i>refer to Definitions</i>), to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences	√	√	√	√	√
Ensuring notifications of serious incidents (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) are made to the regulatory authority (DET) (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) through the NQA IT System (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) as soon as is practicable but not later than 24 hours after the occurrence (Education and Care Services National Regulations: <i>Regulations 174(2)(a) and 176(2)(a)</i>)	√	√			
Notifying DET within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) or allegation regarding the safety, health and/or welfare of a child at the service (Education and Care Services National Regulations: <i>Regulations 174(2)(a) and 176(2)(a)</i>)	√	√			
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 all staff, volunteers and contractors use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others	√	√	√		√
Developing links with and referral pathways to services and/or program support groups (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) to support children experiencing social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties and their families	√	√	√		√
Ensuring that there is a behaviour guidance plan (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) developed for a child if educators are concerned that the child's behaviour may put the child themselves, other children, educators/staff and/or others at risk	√	√	√	√	
Ensuring that parents/guardians and program support groups (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) (as appropriate) are consulted if an individual behaviour guidance plan has not resolved the challenging behaviour	√	√	√	√	
Working collaboratively with educators/staff and program support groups (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.	√	√	√	√	√
Setting clear timelines for review and evaluation of the behaviour guidance plan.	√	√	√		
Providing information, ideas and practical strategies to families, educators, and staff on a regular basis to promote and support health and wellbeing in the service and at home	√	√	√		
Consulting with, and seeking advice from, DET if a suitable and mutually agreeable behaviour guidance plan cannot be developed	√	√	√		
Investigating the availability of extra assistance, such as Kindergarten Inclusion Support (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer (<i>refer to Definitions</i>), specialist children's services officers from DET or other agencies working with the child	√	√	√		
Funded Kindergarten specific					
Ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan	√	√			
Ensuring that educators/staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and their responses to a child/children with challenging behaviour.	√	√			

Informing educators/staff of concerns, events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)				√	√
Maintaining confidentiality (refer to <i>Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i>)	√	√	√	√	√
BOLD tick √ indicates legislation requirement					

Attachments

Nil

Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file on our website.

Adequate 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, sleep, 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 in positive and effective ways to help them gain understanding and learn skills that will help them learn to manage their own behaviour.

Behaviour guidance plan: A plan that documents strategies to assist an educator in guiding a child with diagnosed behavioural difficulties or challenging behaviours to self-manage their behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the nominated supervisor, early childhood teachers, educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professional support agencies as applicable.

Challenging behaviour: behaviour that can be described as:

- infringes on the rights of others
- disrupts others or causes disputes between children
- 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
- a child presenting as shy, withdrawn or excessively passive in a way which is inhibiting their learning and/or development
- is inappropriate relative to the child's developmental age and background.

Inclusion Support Program (ISP): is a key component of the Government's Child Care Safety Net. The program provides support for eligible mainstream Early Childhood Education and Care services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs, alongside their typically developing peers, so all

children have genuine opportunities to access, participate and achieve positive learning outcomes. For more information visit: www.dese.gov.au

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program (KIS): Supports funded kindergartens to plan and implement a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability, developmental delay, or complex medical needs. Long Day Care services can apply for the KIS program for their Victorian Government-funded kindergarten programs.

Program Support Groups (PSG): A program support group brings together key people to support the inclusion of children with disability or developmental delay, or complex medical needs, from the time of enrolment at kindergarten until they move to school. The group may include:

- the early childhood teacher
- the child's parent/carer(s)
- early childhood intervention professionals
- a preschool field officer
- medical practitioners, therapists, or other allied health professionals
- a support person – if the child's parent/carer(s) chooses to use one.

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://beyou.edu.au/>

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program: The role of the PSFO Program to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in their kindergarten program. For more information visit: www.education.vic.gov.au