

Behaviour Guidance Policy

The term discipline is often associated with punishment because it has previously been defined by what adults do to children to control behaviours (Stonehouse, 2004, 47). It is also used as a threat or consequence of inappropriate behaviour. The term behaviour guidance is preferred because it includes all forms of behaviour and not just those behaviours labelled as 'negative'.

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 persons¹.
- Families and staff 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.
- Bute and District Kindergarten and Rural Care is committed to a Behaviour Guidance Policy because it:
 - reflects the values, attitudes and current recommended strategies that promote positive play behaviours and patterns;
 - respects the importance of interactions and relationships between children, families and staff;
 - understands 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;
 - defines clear and transparent caregiving strategies that communicate how behaviour guidance is implemented by the service;
 - informs the service's stakeholders about the procedures involved in behaviour guidance management plans; and
 - Explains the service's commitment to professional development and utilisation of external agencies.
- The purpose of the service's Behaviour Guidance Policy is to:
 - encourage acceptable forms of 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 the service's stakeholders and external agencies.
- The service recognises and understands that a child's behaviour may be affected by their:
 - age and development;
 - general health and wellbeing;
 - 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's care giving strategies and practices, which includes how those strategies are implemented;
 - relationship with other children and stakeholders, such as students, volunteers and visitors; and

¹ For the purpose of this policy, 'persons' include children, families, staff, cleaners, volunteers, visitors, local community, licensee, service owner.

- 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.
Staff, other children and families should refrain from labelling a child's inappropriate or negative behaviour as 'naughty' or 'bad'. Similarly, traditional labels such as 'good boy' or 'good girl' identify the individual but not the positive behaviour. For example, when a child completes a task directed by an adult, such as washing their hands before a meal, staff/carers should identify the behaviour that reinforces the achievement and not label the worth of the individual. Instead of 'good boy/girl', the staff/carer can respond with "thank you (child's name) for washing your hands with soap before lunch" or "thank you for remembering to clean your hands before you eat".
- 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*² states that employers have a duty of care to their employees to ensure that the working environment supports emotional and mental wellbeing.
Staff who are implementing behaviour guidance strategies and/or plans for children that display inappropriate behaviours, (especially if the behaviour is aggressive towards other children or adults) are provided with continued support and assistance from other staff. This Service recognises a duty of care to ensure that employees' mental and emotional wellbeing is considered, as well as the child's need for positive behaviour guidance strategies.

Rationale

The rationale represents a statement of reasons that detail why the policy and/or procedures have been developed and are important to the service.

Important:

- The use of physical punishment³ by staff, volunteers and visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- The use of isolation, humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling by staff, volunteers and visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- Rural Care and Kindy program families will be informed of the Centre's Behaviour Guidance Policy by being provided with a copy of the Policy.
- In meeting the service's duty of care under DECD legislation there is a shared responsibility between the service and its stakeholders that the Behaviour Guidance Policy and procedures are adhered to.
- Our Centre's Behaviour Guidance Policy is guided by the:
 - *United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child*
 - *Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics (2005)*.

² 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.

³ 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.

Strategies and practices

Behaviour guidance strategies

- Our site provides a safe, secure and supportive environment in which children are guided in learning appropriate behaviours.
- Our site uses a positive approach in behaviour guidance that takes into account the child's age and environmental factors.
- Our site works in partnership with families, care givers and the community to address children's needs.
- Our Centre understands that behaviour guidance and expectations vary according to the child's age in relation to:
 - **Babies** - the comfort and health of babies are considered when understanding their behaviour ie babies need for food or drink, a nappy change, possible illness or need for play and interaction or rest/ sleep.
 - **Toddlers** - younger children need more guidance to learn appropriate behaviours and *will experiment* with a range of behaviours as they learn to interact socially with other children and adults. Modelling and explicit teaching are used to encourage children to use words to communicate with each other as language develops.
 - **Pre school** – as children develop socially the Centre environment enables relationships to develop and social skills to be practiced. The pre-school program provides incidental and explicit teaching and learning opportunities. Children are encouraged to interact cooperatively in learning opportunities and use positive language to develop friendships.
 - **School age** – children 5 – 12 years of age have vastly different levels of skill in communicating positively with their peers and adults. Staff will support children learning to self – monitor their behaviour and reflect upon the consequences of positive and negative behaviours.

Children

Children are active participants in the development, implementation and monitoring of behaviour guidance management plans, and are consistently communicated with during the process.

Establishing limits

- Children are involved in establishing play and safety limits in the service, which reflect recommended best practices, and the consequences involved when limits are not adhered to.
- Reflective questions are used to engage children to think about their practices and environment. Through this children are encouraged to develop limits and consequences, reinforcing ownership of the service's practices.
- Behaviour guidelines are defined in terms of a 'positive' instead of 'negative' assisting children to remember what to do rather than what not to do. Establishing limits depends on the developmental level of children.
- For younger children safety and guidance limits are established for them by adults. Staff vary their communication style and language with older children to negotiate limit setting.

Establishing spaces

- Children are involved in establishing play and learning spaces in the environment which includes areas where children can find solace, peace and relaxation.

Support

- The service provides opportunities for children to seek information that can assist them in dealing with their emotions.
- Each staff member communicates with all children on Kindy days where all staff supports the learning of each child. The Rural Care staff swap shifts regularly so that all children have

an opportunity to develop a relationship with both staff. The child has a greater choice in staff to talk to if there is something they would like to discuss.

- After school-age children are informed that The Children, Youth and Women's Health website (www.cyh.com.au) provides a wide range of information for children and youth on a variety of topics such as, health, safety, feelings, divorce, child protection, bullying and relationships.

Families

Enrolling, orientating and settling families into care

- The service informs families about the behaviour guidance policy on enrolment and seeks information from families about the behaviour guidance strategies used at home.

Establishing lines of open communication and expectations

- During enrolment and at any time families are welcome to express their thoughts, expectations and feelings openly with staff/carers.
- Families should recognise that some behaviour guidance strategies or practices established in the home cannot be enforced in the service's environment.

Staff

The following is a set of guidelines that can assist staff when recognising and implementing behaviour guidance strategies and practices:

- Staff respond to, and acknowledge children's emotions, such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride.
- Staff acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant.
- Staff understand that children may not have developed the appropriate strategies to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Staff attitudes and care giving strategies demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their development and/or general disposition for example a situation unknown to the staff may cause a child to behave out of character.
- Staff
 - interact with children, families and peers equitably and respectfully;
 - use language that promotes empathy and understanding;
 - actively monitor children's behaviours – may use any of the "We can make a difference" monitoring tools if concerned about a child/ren;
 - encourage empathy towards others;
 - avoid making comparisons between children and families;
 - are aware of situations, group dynamics and scenarios that may contribute to children's behaviours; and
 - support and encourage children to be fair and respectful of others.

Knowledge of developmentally appropriate behaviours and practices

- Staff are supported to maintain their knowledge of developmentally appropriate behaviours and teaching practices by undertaking all required training opportunities and optional training as needed. Staff are also encouraged to use the internet and site resources to maintain current knowledge.

Knowledge of individual children in care

- Each staff member has a responsibility to maintain developmental anecdotes of the children in their care.

Knowledge of group dynamics

- Group dynamics are observed and discussed by staff in a confidential manner with a view to behaviour guidance as needed at staff meetings.

Supporting other staff

- Staff are supported by other staff in guiding children's behaviour by offering someone to talk to confidentially and regularly assessing the effectiveness of our strategies. Staff are aware of DECD counselling services and the relevant phone numbers are posted in the staff office.

Compliance with legislation

- All staff are mandated notifiers and have a responsibility to notify of suspected child abuse or neglect. If a parent or carer uses physical punishment to discipline children while at the Centre a staff member will discuss the incident and support for parenting may be offered.

Confidentiality and privacy

- Please refer to the service's Confidentiality and Privacy Policy.
- Staff acknowledge the paramount importance of confidentiality and privacy in regards to children's developmental records and any behavioural management plans.
- Staff and volunteers are committed to maintaining and respecting an individual's privacy when behaviour management strategies are developed and implemented into the service's play and learning experiences.
- Outside agencies may only be involved following discussion with and signed consent of parents/ carers.

Selection and recruitment

- Staff will be questioned about their knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices during selection and recruitment.
- Staff will be inducted into all site Policies during induction, and will sign the appropriate induction checklist.

Relief staff

Role and responsibilities

- Relief staff are provided with a copy of the induction folder prior to starting work. Relief staff are inducted into the sites behaviour guidance strategies before commencing work at the site.
- Staff are the primary role models to relief staff and are required to model and reinforce all policies.

Protective Behaviours and Practices

Staff and volunteers as role models

- Children learn through example and modelling is an important way to teach children behaviour guidance practices.
- Staff and volunteers must comply with the Behaviour Guidance Policy. Modelling clear and consistent expectations is an important tool in behaviour guidance management strategies.

Communication with Different Stakeholders

Accessing external support agencies

- Children are able to be supported through privately Healthy Families. This organisation can liaise with the site with parent/ caregiver consent.
- Rural Care children requiring assistance to participate in the program can be supported via Novita (Inclusion Support Services). Pre-school children are able to be supported through DECD support services.
- Parents can self-refer to Healthy Families.
- Support through Novita and DECD Support Services can only be enlisted following discussion and signed consent of the parent/ caregiver.

Behaviour Guidance Management Plans

- In the event that a child demonstrated consistently inappropriate behaviour such as swearing, hitting, smacking, or kicking other children or adults; or potentially causing harm to themselves staff will develop a behaviour management plan.
- The plan will;
 - be based on evidence collected via anecdotes that the displayed behaviour is inappropriate;
 - be observed and documented over a period of time that suggests a pattern is emerging;
 - include inappropriate behaviours that occur consistently;
 - include inappropriate behaviours that occur with consistent triggers;
 - identify that the behaviour could possibly harm another child or adult;
 - define the context within which the behaviour occurs;
 - Will be developed collaboratively with the child's family.
 - Will enlist the support of external agencies with signed parent/ caregiver consent.
 - The plan will be used to plan, implement and evaluate strategies to support the child in developing appropriate behaviours. The plan will include regular review dates and include liaison with all stakeholders.

Policy Review

- The service will review the Behaviour Guidance Policy and guidelines annually and as necessary.
- Families are encouraged to collaborate with the service to review the policy and procedures.
- Staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

Procedures

Appropriate behaviours and their consequence strategies

- Positive behaviours are encouraged at all ages by using behaviour specific feedback (ie I like the way you let ... have a turn – that's great sharing). Inappropriate behaviours are discouraged by using a firm, calm voice to ask the child to stop, and redirect the behaviour (ie stop, toys are not for throwing, they are for playing).
- Behaviour Guidance Steps
 1. Gain the attention of the child – remind of appropriate behaviour (ie toys are not for throwing they are for playing with)
 2. Acknowledge feelings (ie I can see you are angry, you can ask for a turn instead of yelling...)
 3. Children from age 3 who display inappropriate behaviour that persists after the above approaches will have a plan put in place after consultation with staff and family that is suitable to the individual child.
 4. School age children who persist after the above approaches are used are not permitted to use certain favoured equipment for a period of time nominated by staff. Parents are notified of the behaviour and consequences.
- Children are encouraged to develop the following positive behaviours;
 - Sharing and taking turns
 - Negotiating with peers
 - Active listening to the speaker (other child, staff member or parent/ carer)
 - Identifying a problem and attempting to solve it
 - Displaying empathy for others
 - Managing emotions and behaviour appropriately;
 - Inappropriate behaviours such as biting, physical aggression and bullying are discouraged.

Enrolment

- New children and families that are enrolled into the Rural Care program will be enrolled by the Rural Care staff.
- New children and families that are enrolled into the Pre-school program will be enrolled by the Preschool Director.
- Upon enrolment the relevant staff will ensure that parents are provided with a copy of the behaviour guidance policy.
- During enrolment staff will discuss behaviour guidance expectations and strategies used at home and the Centre. Parents will be informed that strategies that are employed at home may not be able employed at the Centre.

Links to other policies

- Child protection
- Grievances and complaints management
- Occupational health and safety
- Supporting children's individual health needs

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_australias_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* (2nd 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

Useful Websites

- Children, Youth and Women's Health - www.cyh.com.au

Policy created date

May 2008

Issue No: 7

Policy last reviewed

May 2016

Policy review date

May 2017

Signed:

**Chairperson – Governing Council
(Lauren Krieg)**

**Director – Bute & District Kindergarten
(Claire Ricketts)**