**Behaviour Guidance Policy**

**Rationale:**

To guide children to become responsible for their own behaviour in an environment that promotes respect for self and others through the use of positive guidance techniques.

To outline acceptable forms of behaviour guidance strategies and appropriate behavioural practices

**Policy:**

The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten takes a positive approach to behaviour guidance. We believe the children’s self-esteem, and independence needs to be fostered at all times. We aim to maintain positive methods of behaviour guidance through the use of redirection and indirect strategies.

We believe that every child at The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten has right to feel safe and be protected from aggression by providing a safe and secure environment.

**Aims of Behaviour Guidance**

* To provide an environment where all children feel safe from challenging behaviours and in circumstances where such behaviours are exhibited, they have the skills to respond appropriately and seek assistance from educators.
* Our priority is to help children to learn self-control, so that individuals can be responsible for their own behaviour. Ultimately this will lead to responsible, happy, healthy adults in society. When guiding children’s behaviours, we take into account each child’s personality, health, age, level of development, home situation and also involve the child in the process. Therefore educators/staff are flexible to individual children’s needs.
* We encourage children to express their feelings as much as possible in appropriate ways that do not harm themselves, others or property. This enhances not only their sense of belonging, but also promotes positive self-esteem. We aim to redirect inappropriate behaviour before it occurs by providing adequate stimulation and materials for children and being available to help children solve problems when necessary.
* Children are encouraged to make decisions on their own behaviour, and to be responsible for it. We believe that children have genuine reasons for their behaviour, and it is the role of the educator to help the child develop skills to cope with such. Educators therefore plan a program, which fosters choice and challenge, which is also both age, and developmentally appropriate. Educators/staff are also aware of age appropriate expectations of behaviour. It is important to acknowledge the child’s feelings and to direct them into acceptable behaviour. Educator’s/staff’s aim is to give children responses that will encourage them to behave in more appropriate and positiveway.
* We understand that in some cases, a child may consistently display a challenging behaviour over an extended period of time. We believe that both educators and parents have a role of implementing a plan to manage behaviour.
* The educators have a role in informing the parents of the circumstances and events causing concern. Parents can assist in reinforcing positive guidance techniques while the child is away from The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten.

For children to:

* Learn to direct their own behaviour.
* Be responsible and co-operative.
* Be respected as an individual and have their feelings accepted.
* To experience positive self-esteem experiences.
* To experience routines and rules as positive learning experiences.
* Learn to respect each other.
* Learn to express their feelings in appropriate ways

**Roles and responsibilities of educators and management:**

Management is responsible for:

* Providing educators with guidelines on the centre's expectations of their behaviour, responses and reactions when working with children and their families.
* Supporting educators to gain appropriate training, knowledge and development of appropriate skills for the implementation of this policy.
* Ensuring that all educators, parents/ guardians, students and volunteers are aware of this policy and that it is implemented within the centre.
* Following the procedures outlined in the centre's complaints policy if an adult notices any inappropriate discipline practices by other adults, including educators at the centre.
* Taking immediate and appropriate action if it is identified that an adult has imposed inappropriate behaviour guidance on a child
* Management will do it's best to work with the individual needs of the families to ensure children are placed in the appropriate room.

Educators are responsible for:

* The day-to-day implementation of this policy and, where possible, addressing behavioural issues directly with the child/ren concerned and informing the parents/ guardians.
* Working collaboratively with other educators/staff in implementing this policy.
* Providing parents/ guardians with information about the cenre's approach to behaviour guidance.
* Using their professional knowledge and experience to develop attitudes and practices that are based on realistic expectations of children’s needs and abilities.
* Ensuring that all educators/staff has a consistent approach to guiding children who are displaying challenging behaviour.
* Collaborating with educators and parents when professionals from other support services become involved in assisting with a behaviour guidance program for a child.
* Informing support professionals about the behaviour guidance policy in the centre so that there is consistency with any behaviour guidance strategies that may be developed.
* Providing a program that is age-appropriate and based on the individual needs and interests of each child.
* Providing a program that supports the use of positive strategies of guidance, redirection and reinforcement.
* Working cooperatively with parents/ guardians on issues relating to the guidance of their child/ren's behaviour and keeping them informed of the strategies and methods used.
* Analysing and developing strategies for daily practice and for responding to challenging behaviour
* Educators will ensure they keep developmental portfolios on every child attending The Avenue Children's Centre and Kindergarten. These portfolios will be accessible to families and educators of the children at all times.
* Adapting the physical environment and organisation of the program to ensure that children have the space and opportunity to explore, experiment and feel safe.
* Planning the physical environment with developmentally appropriate materials and equipment so that children are stimulated and do not become bored or frustrated.
* Providing a physical environment with adequate equipment, variety and challenges for the children.
* Discussing behaviours that cause concern with other staff.
* Providing effective supervision that will assist them to anticipate potentially unacceptable behaviours and eliminate situations and physical arrangements that may encourage inappropriate behaviour.
* Promoting positive, empathetic relationships between children and their peers.
* Respecting the confidentiality of both the parents/ guardians and child when dealing with issues of behaviour guidance concerning an individual child.
* Ensuring that children are not put in a position where they feel frightened, ashamed, embarrassed, insecure or isolated.
* Recognising that, from time to time, they will need assistance, advice and/ or support and seeking that whenever necessary.
* Modelling positive attitudes, behaviour and appropriate use of language.
* Nurturing the development of children's social skills, assisting them to learn how to relate well to others.
* Supporting children to learn to think for themselves and be considerate.
* Guiding children to reflect on the effects of their behaviour on other children and to look for solutions together.
* Foster a positive self-esteem by acknowledging children's efforts.
* Give children feedback about their achievements.
* Implementing strategies based on respect that build on the child's self-esteem and confidence, and considering the child's developmental stages of understanding, ability to cope and skill acquisition.
* Planning routines or transition times that ensure children are not rushed.
* Encouraging children to resolve potential conflicts for themselves providing support with strategies and suggestions when appropriate.
* Recording observations, in the context of the educational program and collating information so that educators can make informed decisions about whether individual behaviour guidance strategies are required.
* Taking a proactive approach that looks at the reasons underlying the behaviour, not just the symptoms.

The parents/ guardians are responsible for:

* Engaging in open communication with educators/staff about their child.
* Informing educators of any events in the child's life outside the centre that may impact on their behaviour; for example, moving to a new house, relationship issues, a new sibling etc.
* Informing educators of any concerns they have regarding the behaviour of their child or the impact of other children's behaviour on their child.
* Working collaboratively with educators to develop a behaviour guidance plan if required.
* Contributing to the development and review of their child's behaviour guidance strategies.
* Contributing to the policy review process
* Agreeing to work within the policy and promoting a partnership approach.

**Strategies and practices:**

1. The environment will be arranged to provide quiet and noisy areas and sufficient equipment for children.
2. Children will be supervised at all times and educators aim to observe potential conflicts so that they can intervene to help solve problems before conflict occurs
3. Children will be challenged with interesting activities but there should also be opportunities to relax or release aggression.
4. Children will be given clear directions about routines and appropriate behaviour and if appropriate, should be involved in making decisions about centre’s rules.
5. Routines will be developmentally appropriate and should not make unreasonable demands on children.
6. Children will be given an opportunity to behave appropriately and their behaviour redirected in a positive manner.
7. Management strategies will be appropriate to the developmental levels of individual children. For example, younger children require less verbal and more physical redirection. Older children will be encouraged to solve problems amongst themselves – adults can help with discussions about ways to solve the conflict.
8. All children will be encouraged to express their feelings assertively – a strategy such as saying “I don't like it, it hurts me/ makes me angry” should be modeled as an alternative to hitting, biting, or pushing other children. Educators could also direct children to use their voices when expressing their frustration or anger. Children should never be told that their feelings are unacceptable.
9. Educators will model appropriate behaviour and speak to children in a pleasant, controlled voice – educators should aim to speak to children individually, rather than calling across the room/ yard.
10. The children will not be expected to move as a group but allowed to show independence in routines and transitions.
11. Positive speech will be used by educators, e.g. “Walk inside, run outside” instead of “Don't run”.
12. Reasons for rules will be stated e.g. “Chairs are for sitting on”.
13. Educators will not label the child, they will identify their behaviour, e.g. “What is making you angry?” E.g. “I am feeling very upset about what you have just done”. “I” statements take ownership of your feelings and lets the children know that you are cross. Do not say, “You have made me angry/sad” say “You are feeling angry/sad.” Label the feeling, not the child.
14. Teach children to recognize when their behaviour is successful.
15. Foster a positive self-esteem through acknowledging children’s efforts.
16. Give children information about the things they have achieved that you appreciate and respect and that impress you rather than an evaluation or a judgment of them as a person or their work.
17. Modify the program (or room/ outdoor setup) as required to limit situations that may encourage inappropriate behaviour.
18. Encourage children to resolve potential conflicts for themselves but step in with strategies and suggestions when needed.
19. Acknowledge a child’s good intentions (even if the behaviours do not match the intentions)
20. Use language that does not label the child, only the behaviour.

Educators are to:

* Recognise that some causes of inappropriate behaviour include anger, frustration, boredom, desire for attention, imitation, tiredness, excitement, jealousy, social clumsiness, high activity levels and too much choice or lack of choice
* Support children to learn to think independently and be considerate.
* Assist them to think about the effects of their behaviour on other children and look for solutions together. This could involve speaking with the child about the effect of their behaviour on others and then asking the child, “What do you think we could do to make sure it doesn’t happen again?”
* Role model considerate and respectful behaviour in all interactions with peers, children and other adults.
* Allow appropriate choices in decision-making and be prepared to accept the child’s decision.
* Give attention to all children involved in a situation.
* Comfort a child who may be hurt or upset.
* Empower the child who has been hurt/ upset to express to the other child how they feel.
* Always respond to a situation in a calm manner. Where appropriate use ‘cool down’ strategies; however, it is important to note that this strategy is to be used as an opportunity for the adult to assist the child in developing self-calming behaviours and to allow the child to gain composure and control. It is viewed as a learning opportunity, not as punishment.
* Occasionally, there could be circumstances in which a child becomes over-stimulated and out of control and may need to be redirected to another experience or play area. However, this approach should only be used when there is immediate danger of the child being hurt or hurting another child and when other strategies to guide children’s behaviour have not worked.
* Children should experience natural and logical consequences of their actions (whenever appropriate and safe) and to be given choices and consequences so as to learn responsibility for their own behavior. Children will be informed that their behavior is inappropriate and given the opportunities to behave appropriately. If the child decides not to model appropriate behavior, they will be redirected to other activity and their behavior discussed with them as appropriate for their age. Explain to the child what has happened and to return to the situation when and if they are ready.
* Appropriate behaviour will be acknowledged by educators/staff with positive responses and negative behaviour through withdrawal of attention (when possible).

**In setting limits for children, staff should:**

* Be sure limits are reasonable and can be met.
* Be consistent in setting limits so that children are not confused by experiencing different approaches from each staff member.
* Use positive actions and words to guide children.
* Give brief and simple explanations when setting limits so that a child knows why the limit has been set.
* Remember, children need reminding about limits

**In encouraging appropriate behaviour, staff should:**

* Use do’s instead of don’ts to tell a child what to do (not just what not to do!).
* Praise the child for desirable behaviour.
* Avoid letting undesirable behavior be the best way of getting attention.
* Praise a child for good intentions, even when the child’s intentions were carried out inappropriately.
* Remember to remind children how well they are playing, behaving etc

**In setting up an environment to minimise difficulties, staff should**:

* Allow choices, but only if prepared to accept the child’s decision
* Eliminate the situations and physical set-ups that they know from experience, encourage inappropriate behaviour.
* Keep aware of possible difficulties so that they can minimise inappropriate behaviour before it happens. However, avoid stepping in too early, which may hinder children from solving the problem themselves or developing conflict resolution strategies.
* Aim for consistency in behavioural expectations (remembering children’s individual needs)

**Inappropriate Methods**

* Children are not physically punished, humiliated, deprived of food, threatened, isolated or made to experience unsafe consequences.
* Children are not compared to others
* Educators/staff will not take sides in disputes or talk about children’s behaviour in front of others.
* Any inappropriate behaviour that is persistent will be dealt with in consultationwith parents.
* Educators will attempt to find the triggers of the child’s behaviour and develop appropriate strategies that may also be implemented by parents at home. Other professionals may also be consulted in liaison with parents.

**Procedures for the dealing with ongoing challenging behavior**

The crucial part of dealing with challenging behaviours is a child’s relationship with a caring adult who can help with the learning and emotional support needed.

When dealing with children with ongoing challenging behavior, the diploma qualified educator or kindergarten teacher will enter into a collaborative management strategy with the parents/ guardians.

**Step 1**

Invite parents/ guardians to assist in managing the behavior by discussing:

* The ongoing behaviour displayed by the child, identifying improvements and celebrating successes.
* The parents’/ guardians’ and the centre’s overall aspirations for the child.
* Recommend strategies that will support the child’s development and reviewing and evaluating those strategies.
* The child’s personal characteristics, such as his/her interests, temperament, age and cultural backgrounds.
* Any resources or changes to the environment or program that may be required for the individual child’s and group plan to be implemented, for example, changes to routines and transitions.
* Available support resources, such as maternal child health nurse, preschool field officers, referral for specialist assessment and additional adult support (written consent is required from parents/ guardians before any intervention/ assessment is obtained).

Keep a record of the child’s observations including time and environment

**Step 2**

Develop a Behaviour Management Plan in cooperation with other educators and parents/ guardians that is:

* Based on observations of the child, including broader observations of the environment, culture of the centre, and the interactions of the whole group and other staff working with the child.
* Appropriate to the needs of the child and accepted and agreed on by the parents/ guardians and other professionals involved in the care and education of the child.
* Clear and easy to follow by all educators, parents/ guardians and/or volunteers working with the child.

**Step 3**

Continually review, reflect, evaluate and revise the strategies that have been implemented.

**Step 4**

The Committee of Management may become involved when:

* Educators are concerned that the child’s behaviour may put themselves, other children, staff and others at risk.
* The consultation with the parents/ guardians and other professionals and the development of a Behaviour Management Plan has not resolved the problem.
* A complaint is received about the child’s behaviour, such as when the safety of other children is threatened.
* Additional resources are required. All attempts will be made to resolve the issue as soon as possible by consultation and investigation.

**Consultation**

The Management is responsible for:

* Consulting educators for professional evaluation of the situation and expertise in relation to strategies to be implemented and resources needed.
* Meeting with the parents/ guardians of the child concerned.
* Meeting with any support agencies involved with the child, if appropriate.
* Supporting educators by assessing educators’ skills and identifying additional training needs for educators in the area of behaviour guidance.
* Investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support or training by contacting the regional preschool field officer or specialist children’s services officers from other agencies involved with the child.

Educators and staff will:

* Not disclose confidential information provided by the parents/ guardians without first obtaining their written consent.
* Provide only relevant information to the sub-management to assist with the resolution of the issue.

**Implementation**

When the investigation has been completed, the managament will authorise a representative to consult with educators, staff, parents/ guardians, specialist staff and other relevant parties regarding the implementation of a range of strategies that may include:

* A behavioural and/or developmental assessment of the child (if not already undertaken).
* Utilising behaviour intervention programs or specialists, such as from a preschool field officer.
* Changes to the amount of time the child attends the centre or requesting the parent/ guardian to remain with the child.
* Additional educators/staff for the room (depending on availability of funds).
* A referral to a parent support program to obtain assistance or other support services for the family.
* The development of an individual Behaviour Management Plan that is mutually acceptable to all parties.
* Clear timeframes for review and evaluation.

Educators will:

* Incorporate the identified strategies into their program.
* Consult with other educators responsible for the care and education of the child in regard to the implementation of the behaviour guidance plan.
* Maintain ongoing consultation with parents/ guardians – this may be a joint responsibility of the sub-management.
* Maintain confidentiality in relation to information gained about the child and their family.

Reporting to the management

The COM will present information to its monthly meetings if:

* Additional financial resources are required.
* A suitable and mutually agreeable behavioural guidance plan has not been achieved (in these situations, the management will seek appropriate advice, such as from ELAA, Community Childcare Association etc.

Educators will provide regular progress reports to the management on the successful (or otherwise) implementation of the agreed strategies and behaviour guidance plan.

Please note: Excluding a child from a centre should be a last resort. Such a decision should not be seen as part of the collaborative management of a child’s behaviour and based on the joint decision of the family, educators and any other professionals involved in the care and education of the child.

**Additional Support**

The centre may have access to a range of existing support services in place that they can contact, including:

* Early childhood intervention services.
* Preschool field officers for children attending the funded kindergarten program.
* Inclusion support facilitators.
* Pediatric services.
* Specialist children’s services.
* Other health professionals, such as psychologists, speech pathologists or occupational therapists.

Parental consent is required when a referral for intervention is requested by staff.

**Links to other policies:**

* Communication with Families Policy
* Enrolment Procedure
* Family Concerns and Complaint Policy
* Room Allocation Policy
* Planning and Programing Policy
* Supervision of Children Policy
* Privacy Policy
* Interaction with Children Policy
* Child Safe Environment Policy
* Code of Conduct Policy
* Complaints and Grievances Policy
* Inclusion and Equity Policy
* Cultural Diversity Policy
* Occupational Health and Safety Policy
* Privacy Policy
* Supervision of Children Policy

**Sources and further reading:**

* Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework
* Code of Ethics, http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/code\_of\_ethics.html
* Guide to the National Quality Standard
* Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
* Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP), Department of Education, Australian Government: http://education.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program
* United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org/crc
* Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm
* Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services
* National Regulations
* Louise Porter “Young Children’s Behaviour “

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