**Interactions with Children Policy**

**Rationale:**

This policy has been devised to ensure that all interactions between children and staff are in adherence with our centre philosophy and are in tune with the overall wellbeing of each child. We believe that any interaction between a child and staff member can have a profound effect on the child’s self-esteem and overall development. We, as educators and carers, understand the very privileged and responsible position that we hold in each child’s life and therefore aim to care and educate each child through interactions that are meaningful, caring, respectful, warm and friendly. By doing this we hope to pass on the same values and attitudes to the children in their own future interactions.

This policy will provide guidelines to ensure:

* the development of positive and respectful relationships with each child at The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten
* each child is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

**Policy:**

The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten encourages educators, staff, students and volunteers to develop positive, warm, nourishing and supportive relationships with children and promotes a safe, secure and nurturing environment with respect for culture, rights, community and the individual.

The Avenue Children’s Centre and Kindergarten is committed to:

* maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the centre 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 towards all children at the centre
* considering the diversity of individual children at the centre, including family and cultural values, age, 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 centre.

**Definitions:**

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 plan: A plan that documents strategies to assist an educator in guiding a child with diagnosed behavioural difficulties or challenging behaviours to self-manage his/her behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the coordinator/2IC, educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professional

support agencies as applicable.

Challenging behaviour

Behaviour that:

* disrupts others or causes disputes between children, but which is part of normal social development
* infringes on the rights of others
* 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
* is inappropriate relative to the child’s developmental age and background.

Notifiable complaints: The Regulatory Authority is required to be notified of a complaint that alleges:

* a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by a service
* the National Law and/or National Regulations have been contravened.

Complaints of this nature must be reported by the Nominated Supervisor to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)). If the Nominated Supervisor is unsure whether the matter is a notifiable complaint, it is good practice to contact DET for confirmation.

Notification of complaints must be submitted within 24 hours through either the NQA IT System portal: http://www.acecqa.gov.au or where this is not possible, the Regulatory Authority must be contacted directly.

Inclusion Support Program: Funded by the Commonwealth Government to assists services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs in mainstream services; providing them with an opportunity to learn and develop alongside their typically developing peers: <https://www.education.gov.au/>

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 is to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in preschool: http://www.education.vic.gov.au

Serious incident: A serious incident (regulation 12) is defined as any of the following:

* the death of a child while being educated and cared for at the service or following an incident at the service
* any incident involving serious injury or trauma while the child is being educated and cared for, which
* a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
* the child attended or ought reasonably to have attended a hospital e.g. a broken limb
* any incident involving serious illness of a child while that child is being educated and cared for by a service for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital e.g. severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis

Only treatment related to serious injury or illness or trauma are required to be notified, not other health matters.

* any emergency for which emergency services attended. NOTE: This means an incident, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person/s at an education and care service. It does not mean an incident where emergency services attended as a precaution.
* a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for at the service
* a child appears to have been taken or removed from the service in a manner that contravenes the National Regulations
* a child was mistakenly locked in or out of the service premises or any part of the premises.

Examples of serious incidents include amputation (e.g. removal of fingers), anaphylactic reaction requiring hospitalisation, asthma requiring hospitalisation, broken bone/fractures, bronchiolitis, burns, diarrhoea requiring

hospitalisation, epileptic seizures, head injuries, measles, meningococcal infection, sexual assault, witnessing violence or a frightening event.

If the management is not aware that the incident was serious until sometime after the incident, they must notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of becoming aware that the incident was serious.

Notifications of serious incidents should be made through the NQA IT System portal (<http://www.acecqa.gov.au>). If this is not practicable, the notification can be made initially in whatever way is best in the circumstances.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

**The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day to Day Charge are responsible for:**

* developing and implementing the Interactions with Children Policy in consultation with educational leaders, staff and parents/guardians, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the centre
* ensuring parents/guardians, and all staff are provided with a copy of the Interactions with Children Policy and comply with its requirements
* ensuring all staff are aware of the centre’’s expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families
* ensuring children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times
* 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 (Regulation 156(2)). Smaller group sizes are considered optimal
* ensuring educational programs are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child
* 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 (Regulation 73)
* ensuring that the centre provides education and care to children in a way that:
* 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 (Regulation 155)
* ensure that the centre provides children with opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the centre(Regulation 156(1)
* ensuring clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child’s:
* developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
* progress against the outcomes of the educational program (Regulation 74)
* supporting and organising 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 the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children and promotes the active participation of every child
* ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor/Persons in day-to-day Charge and all other staff members at the centre 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 (National Law: Section 166)
* promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and educators, staff and other professionals, to improve the quality of children’s education and care experience
* informing DET, in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (Section 174(4), Regulation 176(2)(b))
* notifying DET, in writing, within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Section 174(4), Regulation 176)
* ensuring that where the centre 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 centre’s premises
* ensuring educators and staff 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 professionals to support children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and their families
* ensuring that there is a behaviour guidance plan 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 other professionals and support agencies (as appropriate) are consulted if an individual behaviour guidance plan has not resolved the challenging behaviour
* ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan
* ensuring that educators/staff at the centre are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and responses of a child/children with challenging behaviour.
* developing warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion
* supporting each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with others
* using positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
* implementing a behaviour guidance plan and incorporating identified strategies and resources into thecentre’s program
* undertaking relevant training that will enable them to guide children who exhibit challenging behaviour
* maintaining ongoing communication and consultation with parents/guardians
* documenting assessments and evaluations for each child to inform the educational program (Regulation 74)
* being 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
* maintaining confidentiality at all times

**Educators and all other staff are responsible for:**

* assisting with the development and implementation of the Interactions with Children Policy, in consultation with Nominated Supervisor, parents/guardians and families
* providing access to the Interactions with Children Policy for parents/guardians and families
* complying with the requirements of the Interactions with Children Policy
* being aware of centre’s expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families
* providing adequate supervision of children at all times
* communicating and working collaboratively with parents/guardians and families in relation to their child’s learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships
* delivering educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, that are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child
* delivering programs that develop a sense of wellbeing and identity, connection to community, and provide skills for lifelong learning in all children
* providing education and care to children in a way that:
* 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 abilitiesof each child being educated and cared for
* developing warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion
* supporting each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with others
* using positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
* to develop a behaviour guidance plan in consultation with parents/guardians, coordinator/2IC and other professionals as appropriate implementing a behaviour guidance plan and incorporating identified strategies and resources into the centre’s program
* undertaking relevant training that will enable them to guide children who exhibit challenging behaviour
* maintaining ongoing communication and consultation with parents/guardians
* providing regular progress reports to the Nominated Supervisor on the implementation and effectiveness of the agreed strategies contained in an individual behaviour guidance plan
* documenting assessments and evaluations for each child to inform the educational program (Regulation 74)
* being 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
* maintaining confidentiality at all times

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

* reading and complying with the Interactions with Children Policy
* engaging in open communication with educators about their child
* informing educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child’s behaviour at the centre (e.g.moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)
* informing educators/staff of any concerns regarding their child’s behaviour or the impact of other children’s behaviour
* working collaboratively with educators/staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate

**Volunteers and students are responsible for following this policy and its procedures**.

**Strategies and practices:**

All interactions with children need to ensure that all children:

* are encouraged to express themselves and their opinions
* are given the opportunity to become self-reliant and to develop self-esteem.
* have their dignity and rights maintained at all times
* are given guidance as to positive and responsible behaviour.
* have their family’s and cultural values, age, physical and intellectual development and abilities acknowledged and respected.
* have support offered if regarding children’s learning experiences.
* are given emotional support.
* are interacted within a warm and friendly manner

All staff will:

* provide opportunities for each child to interact and develop positive relationship with each other and with staff members
* ensure a child is not separated from the other children for any reason other than illness or an accident
* participate in children’s play
* be accessible to each child often during the day
* provide opportunities for interaction in play and routines
* greet and farewell every child
* use children’s names often
* respect children’s names by using them correctly
* respond to children positively
* engage in meaningful conversation, using language appropriate to the individual child’s age and stage of development
* acknowledge children’s efforts and achievements
* collaborate with children
* allow children to make choices
* respond to all cues of infants and toddlers
* give frequent physical contact appropriate to the child’s preferences; for example, holding hands in a circle, being a dancing partner, helping with dress-ups
* model positive interaction appropriate to age groups and cultural differences
* use nonverbal communication with children; for example, smiling, clapping, waving and acknowledging the children
* move down to the child’s eye level and making eye contact
* allow the children to participate at their own skills level
* make sure facial expressions and body language match your words
* give children time to think about things before they respond

**Links to other policies:**

* Staffing Policy
* Supervision of Children Policy
* Behaviour Guidance Policy
* Inclusion and Equity Policy
* Cultural Diversity Policy
* Code of Conduct Parent/Guardian Policy/Staff
* Planning and Programming Policy
* Complaints and Grievances Policy
* Occupational Health and Safety Policy
* Privacy and Confidentiality of Records Policy
* Supervision of Children Policy

**Sources and further reading:**

* Education & Care Services National Regulations 2011
* The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

<http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>

* Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

[www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm)

* The Kindergarten Guide (DEECD): <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>
* United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: [www.unicef.org/crc](http://www.unicef.org/crc)
* Early Childhood Australia (ECA) *Code of Ethics*: <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/codeofethics.htmlNati>
* Behaviour guidance practice note series (DET): http://www.education.vic.gov.au
* Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: https://www.education.gov.au/
* Guide to the National Quality Framework, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
* Inclusion Support Program (ISP), Department of Education and Training: https://www.education.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): http://www.education.vic.gov.au
* Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au>
* Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children’s Centre:http://www.bwfcc.org.au/

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