

RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN POLICY



Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

- 5.1.1 Each child's health needs are supported
- 5.1.2 Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines
- 5.1.3 Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury
- 5.2.1 Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities
- 5.2.2 Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts
- 5.2.3 The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained at all times

National Regulations

- 155 Interactions with children
- 156 Relationships in groups

AIM

Our service aims to ensure that all educators form positive relationships with children that make them feel safe and supported in the service. Educators, students and volunteers will encourage positive relationships between children and their peers as well as with educators and volunteers at the service.

Interactions with Children:

We recognise early childhood as a unique and valuable stage of life and accept that each phase within this development is important in its own right. Our centre aims to work in partnership with families and the community to provide an environment of security and love that collaboratively works toward positive outcomes for the children, families and staff.

The principles that guide our program are:

1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
2. Partnerships
3. High expectations and equity
4. Respect for diversity
5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice

We believe that children learn and develop through active and constructive involvement in play. The children in our centre will experience a 'hands on' approach to learning where they will be challenged to explore, investigate and discover. We will build on a child's natural desire to learn by providing experiences and routines that are open-ended and flexible.

The children will be encouraged to take control of their own learning through an emergent curriculum to promote confidence, trust and self-esteem. We will ensure that our work with children is based on their Relationships with Children policy

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interests and needs and lets them know the valuable contribution they have to make. Educators will promote learning and development through observation of individuals and evaluation of learning taking place. We believe learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when early childhood educators work in partnership with parents.

We want all people, regardless of age, gender or race, to be able to contribute, feel accepted and have a sense of belonging. We will therefore role model and teach an inclusive, tolerant and respectful attitude toward others.

We will help children learn to interact effectively and honestly and in so doing learn to balance their own rights, needs and feelings with those of others. Further to this, we will engage only in practices that are respectful of and provide security for children and in no way degrade, endanger, exploit, intimidate or harm them psychologically or physically.

The educators at Woodlupine Family Centre 3 year old Kindy recognise that children need to form strong attachments and that these relationships underpin a child's confidence with exploring and persisting in their educational environment. To this end we will ensure that our permanent and relief staff remain consistent throughout the year.

To understand and support each child's learning and development; staff will endeavour to build solid partnerships with parents and guardians through formal and informal, spontaneous and planned events. We promote sustainability and children will be encouraged to care for their environment and to understand the responsibility they have to reduce, re-use and recycle.

We believe it is essential that the centre play an active role in the local community through participation in local activities. We can act as advocates for children helping the broader community understand the significance and importance of early childhood.

In order to maintain positive interactions with children our service and educators will maintain the following:

- Our service will provide a relaxed and happy atmosphere for the children.
- Our service will ensure mealtimes are relaxed and unhurried and educators take the time to sit and talk with children. At morning tea children may choose when and what they would like to eat.
- Our educators will encourage children to initiate conversations about their experiences inside and outside the service as well as what is happening around them, express their ideas and feelings, share humour with the staff and seek assistance as they take on new challenges.
- Our educators will respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and engage them in sustained conversations about their interests in a positive manner.
- Our educators will encourage children to have their own opinions, ideas and comments and let them know that their ideas are valued.
- Our routines, as well as planned and spontaneous experiences will be organised to maximise opportunity for meaningful conversations between children and educators and the service will ensure that all children have equal opportunity to engage in one to one and small group conversations with educators.
- Our statement of philosophy and policy on interactions with children will be available.
- Our educators will participate in children's play using children's cues to guide their level and type of involvement while always maintaining a positive approach when responding to children and offering assistance.

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- Our educators will model reasoning, prediction and reflection processes and language.
- Our educators will collaborate with children about routines and experiences.
- Our educators will use techniques such as sign language and other resources and tools to support children with additional needs and they will use their interactions with children to support the maintenance of home languages and learning English as an additional language.
- Our educators will use information from their observations of interactions with children to extend the children's thinking and learning.
- Our educators will also support children to build secure attachments with one and then other educators and may use a favourite toy or comfort item to help them feel secure in the service. Some children suffer a form of separation anxiety when away from their families. Educators need to reassure the child and work with the child's family in order to make the child feel safe and happy at the service, and we will ensure that there are many opportunities for children to experience relaxed physical contact and close interactions with familiar educators.
- Our Nominated Supervisor, and educators will learn more about the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families using the service.
- Our educators will frequently talk with families to get an idea of the non-verbal forms of communication used by their children in order to convey messages such as hunger, needing the toilet, tiredness and emotions.
- Our educators will allow time to talk to parents about their children. This allows educators to gain insight into their home life.
- Our service will implement strategies to assist all children to develop a sense of belonging and confidence through positive interactions between the children and educators.
- Our service will gather information from families in the enrolment form and in the "All About Me" form in order to be able to provide support for children during the settling in process.
- When children have special needs our service will consult with other professionals or support agencies that work with children to gather information that will guide our interactions with these children. This information will be recorded in the child's file.
- Our service's approach to equity and inclusion will be documented in our statement of philosophy.
- Our service will ensure that educators document the knowledge gained about children, through their interactions, in the child's file for reference for other educators and will continually review the experiences that are planned for children in light of this information. This information will always be available to parents upon request.

Group Relationships:

In order to encourage respectful and positive relationships between children and their peers and educators our service will adhere to the following practices:

- Our service will encourage children to participate in enjoyable interactions with their peers, respond positively to ideas, negotiate roles and relationships, contribute to shared play, and develop friendships.
- Our educators will engage children in ongoing group projects that involve research, planning, problem solving and shared decision making.

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- Our educators will model strategies for children to initiate interactions and participate in group play and social activities and assist them when they have trouble understanding or communicating with each other.
- Our service will ensure that the children have many opportunities for peer scaffolding.
- Our educators will promote a sense of community in the service.
- Our service will coordinate the staffing and grouping arrangements to support positive relationships between children.
- Our educators will support and promote children’s interpersonal relationships and support the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and capabilities in group play, projects and experiences.
- Our educators will learn about children’s shared interests and will use this information to plan further experiences that provide collaborative learning opportunities.
- Our educators will pre-empt potential conflicts or challenging behaviours by monitoring children’s play and supporting interactions where there is conflict.
- Our service will ensure that the program and routines of the service will include regular opportunities for children to engage in social play and group experiences.
- Our service will ensure that food is being used appropriately and not as a reward or punishment.
- Our service will ensure that corporal punishment is not used as part of behaviour guidance or any other aspect of our interactions with children. Corporal punishment is never to be used in our service.

Inclusion:

Australia is a pluralistic society regardless of specific regional variations in cultural profiles. In order to reduce bias and ensure that no child is excluded our service will abide by the following practices:

- Our service will promote and value cultural diversity and equity for all children, families and educators from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Our service will recognise that children and adults from all cultures have similar needs and that each individual is unique and valuable.
- Our service will develop a positive self concept for each child and adult in the group by exploring the cultural backgrounds of each family and child.
- Our service will endeavour to provide a foundation that instils in each child a sense of self identity, dignity and tolerance for all individuals.
- Our service will increase the knowledge and understanding each child has about his or her own cultural ethnic heritage in partnership with their family, educators and community and other children in the service.
- Our service will explore family compositions, customs and lifestyles of children and families in many cultures.
- Our service will assist, in partnership with parents, extended family and the community in exploring their own “roots” as they involve children in the culturally diverse environment of the service.
- Our service will provide support for fostered or adopted children to develop a sense of heritage and belonging.
- Our service will avoid common stereotypes and recognise individual differences within a cultural or ethnic group.

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- Our service will assist wherever possible families who are new to Australia with a transition to a new and different culture.
- Our educators will become aware of their own beliefs, attitudes, cultural backgrounds, their relationship with the larger society and their attitudes to individuals.
- Our educators will acknowledge that they too have been influenced by their own background prejudices and their points of view.
- Our educators will accept that all children can learn and that differences in lifestyles and languages does not mean ignorance.
- Our educators will broaden their own cultural and ethnic group awareness and help children to understand themselves in relation to their family, community and other cultures.
- Our educators will be actively involved in the development of appropriate resources, support and implement an anti bias, cross cultural program throughout the service environment which is reflective of all families/children and the diversity present in Australian society and network with community agencies involved with cross cultural issues wherever possible.
- Our educators will be actively involved with children, showing respect, sharing ideas and experiences and asking questions.
- Our educators will reflect on the service’s philosophy and ensure that practices and attitude concur with the philosophy.
- Our educators will ensure that relief staff, students or visitors to the service are aware of these practices and respect these values.
- Children will listen to music and practice singing songs in different languages.
- Children will learn words and phrases in a language not native to children in their group.
- Children will talk to other children using the words from their culture.
- Children will be encouraged to become independent wherever possible and be actively involved with their peers.
- Children will explore with foods from other cultures (e.g. have family members from different home cultures come in and cook, to have “food tasting” parties).
- Our service will encourage children to bring in real objects and artifacts used by their families that may be historical or typical of that child’s/family’s cultural group including food.
- Our service will help children to develop ease with and have a respect for physical, racial, religious and cultural differences.
- Our service will encourage children to develop autonomy, independence, competency, confidence and pride.
- Our service will provide all children with accurate and appropriate material that provides information about their own and other’s disabilities and cultures.
- Our service will not isolate a child for any reason other than illness, accident or a prearranged appointment with parental consent.

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Supporting Children through Difficult Situations:

When a child, family, educator or the service as a whole experiences a stressful or traumatic situation such as a bushfire, car accident, sudden illness or death, crime or violent situation, it is important to provide appropriate support so they can recover from the ordeal. A child's reaction to a stressful or traumatic situation will depend on factors such as their age, stage of development and impact of the event on individuals around them. A child may react in ways that you don't expect and sometimes will act normally at first but be wary of a delayed reaction. Some reactions include:

- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches.
- Being anxious or clingy.
- Suffering from separation anxiety.
- Having sleeping problems or nightmares.
- Re-living the experience through drawing or play.

Our educators will work with families to encourage positive attitudes to diversity and an anti-bias ethos.

- Losing interest in activities.
- Loss of self-confidence.
- Regressing to "babyish" activities.

Our educators will talk with a child about the event to bring any issues out into the open. The ways our educators will approach this are:

- Reassuring the child that they are safe, but only if they really are.
- Talking to the child about what happened in a way that they will understand and without going into frightening or graphic detail. Our educators will not leave out important information though, as children will fill in the gaps.
- Ensuring the child hasn't jumped to conclusions. Some children will think they are to blame in a tragic event; our educators will make sure they know this isn't so.
- Talking about the event with appropriate individuals (e.g. all children if the event has affected the whole service or the children that have been affected) and letting everyone have their say including children.
- Talking to the children about how individuals react to stressful or traumatic situations and that the feelings they are feeling are normal.

Coping Mechanisms Some strategies that our educators will use to help children cope in these situations are:

- Giving children a sense of control of their environment and life. Letting the child make minor decisions, such as what to eat for lunch, what to wear or what toy to play with will make the child feel more in control.
- Allowing the children plenty of time to play and to do physical exercise; this will help the child burn off stress chemicals and allow for more sleep.
- Helping the children physically relax with story times and cuddles.

It is important to remember how you respond to the stressful or traumatic event will affect your child's response. Children look to their families and educators to find ways to deal with a situation they probably don't understand. Children need their family members (and other adults who are close to them) to help

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them understand the situation and their emotions and also offer comfort and support. If adults are distressed about a situation it is important for them to seek help for themselves.

At the service, we wish to help in whatever way we can if your family has undergone a tragedy. Talk to educators and we will endeavour to work with families and children to support all parties through the situation.

Should it be required, educators will liaise with appropriate authorities, such as the Department of Education and Children's Services, and follow any recommendations made by these authorities.

Sources:

National Quality Standard Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 Early Years Learning Framework