

5.01 INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

QUALITY AREA 5 | VERSION 1.24

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 LEVNT EC Services
- each child at a LEVNT EC Service is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

In order to fulfil our mission, LEVNT EC Services operate to educate children in a Christian environment by providing inspiring education opportunities that enable them to reach their full potential. The foundation of Lutheran Education is the gospel of Jesus Christ which informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships and all activities of LEVNT EC Services.

Therefore, LEVNT EC Services are committed to:

- 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 towards all children at LEVNT EC Services.
- 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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, parents/guardians, student educators, volunteers and contractors attending LEVNT EC Services.

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 [Early Years Learning Framework, p. 20; Framework for School Age Care, p. 19]

'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)

The Child Safe Standards 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.

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms refer to the Definitions file of each LEVNT EC policy folder.

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 a positive and effective ways to help children 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 behaviour that:

- 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
- is inappropriate relative to the child's developmental age and background.

Challenging behaviour also includes where a child presents as shy, withdrawn or excessively passive in a way which is inhibiting their learning and/or development.

Disability and Inclusion Program: provides funding and support to enable children with disability or additional needs in NSW not-for-profit community preschools to participate in a quality early childhood education program on the same basis as their peers.

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/disability-and-inclusion-program>

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. ISP is available only to long day care services funded by the Commonwealth Government. For more information visit: www.dese.gov.au

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program (KIS): Supports funded Victorian 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 in Victorian kindergartens is to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in their kindergarten program. For more information visit: www.education.vic.gov.au

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Approved Provider, persons with management and control, nominated supervisor and/or persons in day-to-day charge are responsible for meeting requirements set out in the table below. Actions which are legislated requirements of the ECEC sector are indicated with LR.

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Developing and implementing the Interactions with Children Policy in consultation with stakeholders, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring all stakeholders are provided with a copy of the Interactions with Children Policy and comply with its requirements	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓
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 (refer to Code of Conduct Policy)	LR	✓			
Ensuring children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (refer to Supervision of Children Policy)	LR	✓	✓		✓
Ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure, free from any hazards (refer to Child Safe Environment Policy, Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Supervision of Children Policy) and promotes the active participation of every child	LR	LR	✓		✓
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. Smaller group sizes are considered optimal, to promote intentional teaching strategies and responsive engagement opportunities.	LR	✓	✓		✓
Developing and implementing educational programs that 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 and strengths of each child (refer to Inclusion and Equity Policy)	LR	LR	✓		✓
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 (refer to Curriculum Development Policy)	LR	✓	✓		✓
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 	LR	✓	✓		✓

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
Ensure that LEVNT EC Services provide children with opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the service	LR	✓	✓		✓
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 (<i>refer to Curriculum Development Policy</i>) 	LR	✓	✓		✓
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	LR	✓	✓		✓
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 LEVNT EC Services 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	LR	LR	LR	✓	✓
Promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and program support groups (if required), to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring notifications of serious incidents are made to the regulatory authority through the NQA IT System as soon as is practicable but not later than 24 hours after the occurrence	LR	✓			
Notifying the regulatory authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint or allegation regarding the safety, health and/or welfare of a child at the service	LR	✓			
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	LR	LR	✓		✓
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	LR	✓	✓		✓
Developing links with and referral pathways to services and/or program support groups 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 program support groups (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 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.	✓	✓	✓		

	Approved Provider and/or persons with management and control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teachers, educators and all other staff	Parents, guardians and carers	Contractors, volunteers and those on student placement
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	LR	✓	✓		
Investigating the availability of extra assistance, such as Kindergarten Inclusion Support (VIC) or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer (VIC), specialist children's services officers from the Department of Education or other agencies working with the child (funded kindergarten programs only)	LR	✓	✓		
Investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support such as Inclusion Support Program or training, by contacting their regional Inclusion Agency (long day care programs only)	LR	✓	✓		
Ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan	LR	✓			
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 Privacy and Confidentiality Policy)	LR	✓	✓	✓	✓

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved in relation to issues arising from this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of a policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk

AUTHORISATION & REVIEW

This policy was adopted by Lutheran Education VIC, NSW, TAS and ACT Ltd as Approved Provider for this service on 29th February 2024.

REVIEW DATE April 2027 or earlier as required.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1: Behaviour Guidance – Staff Expectations

1.1 Educators will:

- Seek to understand the feelings and emotions behind the behaviour.
- Consistently reflect on their practice and implement changes where identified, including in relation to their own beliefs, attitudes and experience and how that influences guiding behaviour.
- Reflect on how they manage situations where they experience challenges in relation to guiding the behaviour of a child or group of children.
- Review strategies used to support children's self-regulation and implement changes as needed.
- Reflect on how the environment may impact on the behaviours and interactions of children and adults.
- Reflect on what opportunities they personally provide to children to make decisions about rules, expectations and outcomes in relation to their own and other's behaviour.
- Be responsive to children.
- Use positive, respectful language, including:
 - Choice of words
 - Tone and volume
 - Facial expressions and body language.
- Support each other as a team and ask for help when feeling stressed or experiencing difficulty coping with a child's behaviour.
- Involve families and other professionals to support children.
- Discuss emotions, feelings and issues of inclusion and exclusion, fair and unfair behaviour, bias and prejudice with children.
- Encourage children to listen to other children's ideas, consider alternative behaviours and solve problems together.
- Talk with children about the outcomes of their actions, and the rules and reasons for these.
- Prompt and support children to remove themselves from situations where they are experiencing frustration, anger or fear.
- Listen empathetically to children when they express their emotions and reassure children that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times.
- Support children to negotiate with others.
- Allow children to make choices and to experience the consequences of these where there is no risk of physical or emotional harm to the child or another person.
- Acknowledge when children make positive choices in managing their own behaviour.
- Ensure spaces, resources and routines are arranged to minimise times when children are likely to experience stress or frustration, ensure ample resources are available for sharing.
- Use knowledge of children to pre-empt potential conflicts or challenging behaviours.
- Support interactions when conflict arises.
- Use redirection as a strategy for resolving conflict and provide children with choices when redirecting.
- Use reflective questioning with children to encourage them to consider the impact of their behaviour on others.
- Be patient, gentle, calm and reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration or anger.
- Clearly communicate about children's behaviour with families, other professionals and resource agencies.
- Respond promptly to children's disruptive behaviour by acknowledging their feelings, spending time with them and suggesting alternative ways of responding.
- Document behaviours to assist in communicating to families and resource agencies.
- Develop individual behaviour guidance plans or Strategic Inclusion Plans for children in consultation with families, other professionals and support agencies.
- Ensure learning environments and programs are exciting, stimulating and engaging to reduce boredom-related behaviours or behaviours that arise through frustration or confusion.
- Talk to children about the importance of empathy, treating others equally and celebrating differences.
- Ensure active supervision of all children in all areas of the Service/FDC Educator home at all times.
- Communicate with other educators to ensure consistency contributes to positive behaviours.
- Reflect on situations, responses, emotions and the environment.

1.2 Educators should remember to always:

- Set clear, consistent, simple limits in a positive way.
- Provide simple explanations for limits.
- Focus on the behaviour not the child.
- Provide choices to the child.
- Recognise and reinforce positive behaviour.
- State expectations.
- Provide a caring environment where children feel secure.
- Allow time for a child to respond.
- Encourage children to seek help.
- Seek to understand the feelings and emotions behind the behaviour.
- View children as capable and competent.
- Approach situations from a strengths-based perspective.
- Encourage children to use a range of communication strategies to express their needs, wants and feelings.
- Involve families and be supportive and non-judgemental.
- Be reflective, both individually and as a team.

1.3 Educators must not:

- Isolate children for any reason other than illness, accident or a pre-arranged appointment with parental consent.
- Use words which are negative, disrespectful or hurtful.
- Engage in inappropriate physical contact including, but not limited to, dragging, restraining or hitting a child.
- Use food as a reward or punishment.

1.4 Consider the Environment

- Educators will ensure that environmental factors support children and foster positive relationships including:
 - providing adequate space and a balance of activities, that provide for challenge and inspire a sense of wonder.
 - organising intentional grouping of children in small groups throughout the day based on their rhythms, interests and routines.
- implementing a flexible routine, where educators respond and adjust to children's needs.
- minimising transitions and ensuring they are planned and considered to reduce anxiety and stress.
- offering a variety of materials, equipment and experiences that engage children's interests, are culturally relevant and create a sense of belonging and security.
- ensuring lighting and noise levels that are calming.

1.5 Responding to Biting

- Educators will use their understanding and knowledge of each child and should 'shadow' children who are biting to try and pre-empt future occurrences.
- Educators will provide families with information about biting which is sourced from recognised authorities.
- Educators will be mindful of times of the day where biting may be more likely to occur such as during transition times.
- If a child does bite another child, educators will give first aid first.
- Educators will complete an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Form for the child that was bitten and communicate with families reassuring them that steps are being taken to prevent further occurrences. Confidentiality must be maintained.
- Seeking to understand the trigger for biting is important to support the child.
- Educators will look critically at the environment and practices and:
 - reflect on the program, routines and how the environment is set up
 - reduce factors which increase the likelihood of a child biting such as over or under-stimulation, competition for toys and sudden changes
 - reflect on supervision and placement.

2. Behaviour Guidance – Age-appropriate

2.1 Birth to 2 year olds:

- Educators will remember that this age-group can be ego-centric and like to see the effect their efforts have on the world around them.
- Educators will talk about 'feelings' with children.
- Developmentally, some toddlers may find it difficult to share and co-operate with others, therefore Educators will ensure that there is sufficient 'similar' equipment.
- Educators will aim to understand the individual child and use distraction and re-direction when inappropriate behaviour appears.

2.2 3 to 5 year olds

- Educators will support children to manage their own behaviour, to respond appropriately to others, to make positive choices and to resolve conflict with others.
- Educators will negotiate with children about the expectations for their group and the reasons for them, in an open, collaborative way.
- Educators will organise the environment for optimum learning and minimal conflict.
- Educators will talk to children about feelings, empathy, frustration, patience with others and making good choices.
- Children who need support regulating their behaviour will be redirected to a different activity and the action explained to them.

REFERENCES

LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
- 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)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

SOURCES

- Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Child Safe Standards (VIC): www.cryp.vic.gov.au
- Child Safe Standards (NSW): <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/working-in-early-childhood-education/child-safety/standards>
- 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
- NSW Start Strong Community Preschools Program Guidelines: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/grants-and-funded-programs/start-strong-funding/start-strong-for-community-preschools/2023-start-strong-for-community-preschools-program-guidelines>
- 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): ww.viac.com.au
- NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency: <https://inclusionagencynswact.org.au>

RELATED POLICIES

- Curriculum Development
- Inclusion and Equity
- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Supervision of Children
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Code of Conduct
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Compliments and Complaints