

2.11 Guiding Children's Behaviour

Applies to: All Koorana staff working in Preschools and families attending Koorana Preschools and visitors.

Purpose

1. To teach children socially acceptable behaviour through positive guidance, redirection and reinforcement.
2. To encourage children in our Preschools to become self-disciplined by providing consistent, clear guidelines on what is appropriate behaviour and to develop an understanding of the consequences of their behaviour.
3. To create a safe and healthy environment for children where bullying behaviours are not tolerated.

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Approved by: CEO

Policy context: This policy relates to

Standards or other external requirements	National Quality Standards – Quality Area 5 – Standard 5.2, Elements 5.2.2 & 5.2.3
Legislation or other requirements	Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 Education and Care Services National Regulations [(2)(a)(i) under Regulation 168]
Contractual obligations	N/A
Resources	Community Child Care, Model Policy RUCSN, Fact sheet Let's Talk about Behaviour Guiding Children's Behaviour in Positive Ways: Stonehouse, NCAC 2006 Aggression and Young Children, Diane Louise Szarkowicz, Early Childhood Australia Inc. Bullying No Way (www.bullyingnoway.com.au) Raising Children Network website (www.raisingchildren.net.au)

Documents related to this policy	
Related policies	4.1 Interactions with children/Preschool Code of Conduct
Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents	Behaviour Support Plans as applicable Koorana Code of Conduct Incident, Injury, Illness and Trauma Record

Definitions
<p><i>"Koorana" means Koorana Child and Family Services Incorporated.</i></p> <p><i>"Parents" includes a legal guardian.</i></p> <p><i>"Visitors" includes students, volunteers, visiting professionals, performers and contractors.</i></p> <p><i>"Staff" is a Koorana staff member working in the Preschool, e.g. Educator, Administrator or Key Worker. This may also include other Koorana staff such as Case Managers, Early Linker, Therapists, Head Office Administrators, Home and Community Based Key Workers and Koorana Management when visiting or working in the Preschool.</i></p> <p><i>"Behaviour Support Plan" is a plan to support a child to achieve positive behaviour outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>"Bullying" means an ongoing misuse of power involving a pattern of harmful verbal, physical or social behaviour.</i></p>

POLICY STATEMENT

Children need to be given guidance and support to assist in learning how to respond appropriately to feelings and emotions. Children develop these abilities at varying ages and stages of development. Consistency between parents and staff in guiding behaviour is paramount for a child. When behaviour guidance is positive it does not damage self-esteem, but allows children to feel capable, competent and to experience pleasure from being around others.

Context of the situation

Effective behaviour guidance strategies must take into consideration the context of the situation, bearing in mind the developmental abilities of the children and the environment along with the type of experiences being provided.

Where consistent behaviour issues are evident within a particular context staff will review the following:

- Is the environment stimulating, or under or over stimulating?
- Are the activities age appropriate and providing children with challenges as well as achievement or success?
- Are there sufficient resources to allow children to play alongside one another with similar toys?
- Are the staff engaging the children and interacting with the experiences?

- Are the staff expectations of children's behaviour appropriate and applied consistently and equally with all children?
- What is the reason for the behaviour?

PRACTICES

Support for children

- Staff will provide a varied program that allows children to have access to both quiet and active experiences.
- Staff will provide consistent expectations of appropriate behaviour, and where inappropriate behaviour is displayed respond to this immediately.
- Staff will treat children with respect at all times. Strategies will be used to guide behaviour in a manner that will not make the child feel humiliated or threatened. Staff will accompany these strategies with rational explanations of expectations at a level suitable to the child.
- Staff will focus on the strengths of the child.
- Staff will use supportive, positive words when guiding children's behaviour towards the desired outcome.
- Staff will assist children to identify their feelings and provide the children with alternative means of expressing these feeling.
- Staff will provide children with the language needed to resolve conflict or to ask for assistance, such as "Stop I don't like that".
- Staff will discuss with children how their actions, both positive and negative, affect others.
- Staff will interact and socialise with the children using these opportunities to role model positive behaviours and socially acceptable strategies for resolving a situation.
- Staff will allow children to explain the reason or cause of the behaviour with the desired outcome to identify possible areas of change.
- Staff will use "Redirection" of a child to assist in resolving a situation.
- Staff will label a behaviour, both positive and negative, and not label the child, such as "I really like how everyone is sharing the toys".
- Staff will work as a team, seeking assistance from other staff to create a positive environment for all.
- Staff will involve the children in the development of "rules/limits" so that children can take ownership and be committed to these.
- Staff will give children the opportunity to regulate their own behaviours where possible.
- Staff will be provided with appropriate training on Guiding Children's Behaviour, as required.

Partnerships with families

Parents need to be involved in setting the expected behaviours and strategies used by the Preschool to guide children's behaviours, as well as supporting the staff to implement this policy.

- Staff and parents need to openly communicate to ensure that they are working towards the same outcome.

- Staff and parents need to share information regarding a child to ensure that consistent positive guidance strategies are implemented at the service, as well as at home.
- Staff will discuss with individual parents any behavioural concerns and together develop a strategy based on observations of the child's behaviour.
- Where determined appropriate staff will provide information to families regarding support Koorana can offer in relation to challenging behaviour as well as external support agencies that may be able to assist the service and the family.

Partnerships with Key Workers and other Professionals

- Staff will apply the same principles as stated above where the child and their family are involved with a Key Worker and/or other Professionals.
- Staff will be guided by the expertise from Key Workers and other Professionals and implement behaviour support plans.

Awareness of age appropriate conflicts

As children develop they progress through many stages of self-awareness. Staff and parents need to be aware of behaviours that are age appropriate and therefore typical for that age group, and those behaviours that are more serious or dangerous that are not age related.

Children over 3 years of age are able to better understand their roles and responsibilities within society. They are continuing to develop negotiation skills that assist with turn taking, establishment of leadership roles, following games with rules, accessing social situation, and development of impulse control. Positive environments guide children to the appropriate responses to situations that do not turn out as planned. Staff will use strategies with this group that reflect their individual abilities and needs.

Managing Difficult Behaviours

Where a child demonstrates consistent inappropriate behaviour the staff will:

- Ensure the child is aware of the limits and what is appropriate behaviour.
- Ensure the expectations are appropriate for the child's level of development and understanding.
- Discuss the issue with the parents and where appropriate the child and gain permission to involve other Koorana staff or agencies if determined appropriate.
- Record all incidents, indicating what happened before and after the incident, time, date and who was involved. Develop a plan of action involving behaviour management in discussion with all parties involved as required.
- If a child is displaying physical behaviours that are deemed dangerous to staff and other children, staff are to ensure the immediate safety of others by removing the child or others from the immediate area.
- Staff are not to physically restrain the child unless it is considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child itself or others. If restraint is necessary staff are only to use a holding grasp (such as a bear hug) on a child. At no time are staff permitted to use any other form of restraint unless this has been prescribed by a suitably qualified Clinical Psychologist.

Children with a diagnosed disability

The above stated practices may not be able to be applied to all children with a diagnosed disability. In consultation with Educators, Key Workers, other Professionals and the family specific behaviour support plans and practices may be implemented for some children with a diagnosed disability.

Biting

Biting is not an uncommon behaviour amongst young children, particularly if they do not yet have the words or social skills to express their wishes, needs and frustrations. As children's social and language skills develop they learn to use communication as the tool to express their needs and feelings, and are less likely to bite. Children are more likely to bite if they are teething, frustrated or tired and over stimulated. Biting often worries and upsets both the parent of the child that was bitten, and the parents of the child that did the biting.

How to handle biting:

- 1) Be aware of which children are likely to bite. That is, those frustrated, overtired, or developing language and social skills.
- 2) Divert the child and prevent biting where possible.
- 3) Ensure enough space for children to have freedom of movement and enough resources to minimise conflict.
- 4) Record biting on the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness form.

Bullying

Whilst bullying is more common in children over Preschool age, it can still occur in the Preschool.

"In short, bullying is an ongoing misuse of power involving a pattern of harmful verbal, physical or social behaviour." (<http://news.bullyingnoway.gov.au/the-facts/Pages/What-is-bullying.aspx>)

Signs of Bullying

In many cases, bullying occurs without adults being aware of it. Bullying can include physical violence (hitting, shoving), teasing or name-calling, social exclusion, or intimidation.

It often occurs over a period of time. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Possible signs a child is being bullied might include:

- Unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches
- Changes in behaviour, such as becoming moody, teary, depressed
- Complaints of physical ailments such as headaches or stomach aches
- Having few friends, or a breakdown in a previous friendship
- Does not want to attend Preschool
- Does not want to attend parties, visit other children

Children may also disclose to a trusted adult that they are being bullied.

Strategies for dealing with bullying

- Make it clear to the bully that this type of behaviour is not acceptable.
- Encourage the child who is being bullied to report any further occurrences to the staff.
- Encourage and support the child who is being bullied to develop other friendships.
- Ask the child who is bullying for possible reasons for the bullying. Address any issues raised as appropriate.

Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence

However, these conflicts still need to be addressed and resolved.