



Interactions with Children and Inclusion Policy

Introduction:

Toukley Preschool will provide a relaxed, happy and positive atmosphere for all children. The wellbeing and inclusion of all children within our centre is promoted through attentive care and quality interactions with children. Emotional development and social relationships are enhanced through thoughtful and engaging approaches to conversation, discussion and promotion of children's language, communication and sense of agency.

Children who experience relationships that are built on respect, fairness, cooperation and empathy are given the opportunity to develop these qualities themselves. When children have positive experiences of interactions they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected and feel a sense of belonging.

Aim:

Educators and staff at our service will:

- ◁ be responsive to children's strengths, interests, abilities;
- ◁ provide opportunities to become self-reliant and develop self-esteem;
- ◁ uphold children's dignity, rights, and agency;
- ◁ provide positive guidance and support towards self regulation;
- ◁ promote a safe, secure and nurturing environment;
- ◁ be authentic and responsive;
- ◁ be based in fairness, acceptance and empathy with respect for cultural and linguistic rights

Implementation:

Children's Rights, Family and Cultural Values

◁ Interactions within the setting are greatly enhanced when children's rights and family and cultural values are given due consideration and respect. Administrative procedures, initial conversations, documentation and ongoing communication with children and families are a reference point for interactions and a foundation for authentic and respectful communication.

◁ Our service will gather information from families during the enrolment introduction, process and form and through ongoing conversations in order to be able to provide for each child during their settling in period and time spent at preschool.

Listening

◁ Educators and staff must use listening as a foundation for interactions. Listening is based on observation and in leaving spaces in conversations and communication, suspending judgement and in giving full attention to children as they communicate. Truly attending to children's communication promotes a strong culture of listening.

◁ Educators will talk with children in a two sided manner, encouraging children to have their own opinions, ideas and comments while acknowledging that their ideas are valued.

Children and Families

◁ A culture of respectful interaction is promoted when children's attempts to communicate are valued. Turn taking and regulating children's conversations promotes active engagement. Respectful communication with families generates greater confidence in interacting.

◁ Our educators will use their interactions with children to support the maintenance of home languages and learning English as an additional language.

Reflection and Consideration

◁ Time is dedicated to reflecting upon interactions within children.

◁ Reflections should consider how to spend extended periods engaged in interactions with children that comprise communication and listening.

◁ Our educators will use techniques such as visuals, sign language and other resources and tools to support children with additional needs. We will consult with other professionals or support agencies to gather information that will guide our interactions with these children.

Role Modelling

Educators model positive interactions when they:

- ◁ Show care, empathy and respect for children, educators and staff and families;
- ◁ Learn and use effective communication strategies.

Principles for Behavioural Management

Staff respect individual children's needs and differences in age, ability and experience regarding issues surrounding behaviour and they are happy to discuss individual family expectations with parents. There may be times when staff will need to negotiate management strategies with parents to suit the needs of individual children.

- ◁ Wherever possible, children and staff will negotiate and determine boundaries and form agreements in relation to expectations.
- ◁ Agreements will be reasonable considering the age, development and individual characteristics of the children.
- ◁ Agreements will be consistent and reflected on to evolve, along with children's developing skills and self-regulation competence.
- ◁ Children will be encouraged to understand the boundaries, agreements and expectations and build their skills to interact with each other within these.
- ◁ It is the child's skill development in relation to their behaviour that is praised or addressed. Children are never shamed.
- ◁ Educators acknowledge that they are there to support and teach skills that build children's self-control and regulation and always present a good example through positive role modelling, compassion and understanding.

Educators, staff and volunteers will model positive behaviour and guide children's behaviour in ways that promote their self esteem by:

- ◁ encouraging children to be cooperative and helpful, to express their feelings and responses to others' behaviour confidently and constructively, and to respectfully guide the behaviour of other children when it is disrespectful or unfair.
- ◁ supporting children to explore different identities and points of view, to negotiate their rights and the rights of others in a positive, respectful way and to communicate effectively when resolving disagreements.
- ◁ discussing emotions and issues of inclusion and exclusion, fairness and bias.
- ◁ encouraging children to listen to other children's ideas, consider alternate behaviour and co-operate to solve problems
- ◁ using positive language, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them, and remaining calm, gentle, patient and reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration or anger
- ◁ using their knowledge of children's personalities and friendships to help them manage their own behaviour and develop empathy
- ◁ using information from families about their children's social skills and relationship preferences to engage children in experiences that support their social development
- ◁ intervening sensitively when children have difficulty resolving a disagreement, and helping them remove themselves from situations where they are experiencing frustration, anger or fear
- ◁ interacting with children and teaching them how to play in different ways: movement play, object play (understanding and solving problems), imaginative play (emotional resilience, creativity and empathy), social play (friendship and belonging, rough and tumble play, celebrations and ritual play), storytelling (my world, myself and where I fit in), creative play (new behaviours and thoughts) role play.
- ◁ promoting children's agency by allowing them to be as independent as possible, to try things they see for themselves and experience the consequences of their choices while considering the risk and benefit to others. This may include teaching children how to use things
- ◁ supporting children with strategies to deal with their raw emotions e.g. anger, fear, panic and being patient when children revert to old behaviour if they are stressed, tired, hungry etc. This includes listening empathetically to children when they express their emotions and reassuring them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions
- ◁ supporting children who appear to be insecurely attached by sensitively building relationships with the child and family

- ◁ allowing children to have uninterrupted play where they can continue their engagement in learning as they explore and improvise (the reasoning behind our progressive morning teas), and not interrupting a child who is actively engaged in an activity, or forcing a child to share when they are engaged with a resource.
- ◁ providing clear instruction for routines and learning
- ◁ understanding that children's comprehension of vocabulary concepts or instructions may require support such as visuals, signing, two step instructions or allowing time for a child to process the instruction or information.
- ◁ understanding that children may not be able to interpret or understand some words. For example 'sharing' may not be understood as taking turns.

The Role of the Staff

Educators and staff understand that inappropriate behaviour is a child's way of saying they need support. Educators will reflect on the reasons for the child's behaviour and develop strategies or a plan which can be implemented by all educators to ensure consistent responses to the child's behaviour at the service.

Children's behaviour may be inappropriate for a variety of reasons. Some of these include:

- ◁ insecure attachment to educators or families
- ◁ emotional immaturity
- ◁ insufficient language skills to express their needs and wishes
- ◁ used to gaining attention from negative behaviour
- ◁ condition or number of toys, resources and equipment
- ◁ a diagnosed or undiagnosed spectrum disorder.

In response to challenging behaviour, staff:

- ◁ may ignore the negative behaviour, praising the positive behaviour (while ensuring the safety of all children), and ensuring all body language is consistent with actions and words
- ◁ build strong social bonds through a focus on attachment theory and Circle of Security approaches
- ◁ use key words with signing and objects or visuals to help children with communication difficulties
- ◁ use minimal steps in directions then allowing time for a child to understand
- ◁ use terminology that children understand such as 'my turn' 'your turn' rather than assuming children understand what it means to "share" or that saying "sorry" does not mean they can repeat the behaviour
- ◁ allow children to develop their reasoning and emotional knowledge by helping them to reflect on their actions
- ◁ talk with children about the consequences of their actions, our agreements and why we have them
- ◁ provide sufficient opportunities for exercise including running which can calm anxious or agitated children through the production of certain brain chemicals
- ◁ intentionally teach behaviours like walking inside, never assuming children know how to do things or behave, and reaffirming those and other positive behaviours
- ◁ Will recognise the situation as an opportunity to help the child develop skills, including their language and communication, attention and working memory, emotion and self-regulation, cognitive flexibility and social thinking skills.
- ◁ Acknowledge the child's intent with that behaviour.
- ◁ use empathy and put themselves in the child's position to try and understand where the behaviour came from.
- ◁ Recognise certain reactions as understandable behaviour, a reflection of communication and social development.
- ◁ Redirect the child or remove the child from the situation if necessary.
- ◁ Remind children of appropriate behaviour and consequences of continuing with the behaviour.
- ◁ Actively listen to children's feelings and discuss the agreements.
- ◁ Clarify the preferred skills to be used and teach, role model and practice how to use them.
- ◁ Explain to children how their behaviour made others feel.
- ◁ Actively listen to children's feelings and discuss the skills to use in future.
- ◁ Help children to return to play.
- ◁ Document incidences of inappropriate behaviour and when they are occurring and developing a behaviour plan with parents and if relevant other professionals.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Approved Provider will:-

- ◁ Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development.
- ◁ Ensure the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators (Regulation 73).
- ◁ Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor and all staff members at the service 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).
- ◁ Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing, within 24 hours of receiving a notifiable complaint (Section 174(2), Regulation 176(2)(b)).
- ◁ Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Section 174, Regulation 176).

The Nominated Supervisor will:-

- ◁ Guide professional development and practice to promote interactions with children that are positive and respectful.
- ◁ Establish practice guidelines that ensure interactions with children are given priority and those interactions are authentic, just and respect difference.
- ◁ Will plan service rosters in a way that promotes continuity for children.
- ◁ Ensure all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families.
- ◁ Consider the size and composition of groups to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service.
- ◁ Develop and implement 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.
- ◁ Ensure that staff provide education and care to children in a way that encourages children to express themselves and their opinions and allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.
- ◁ Under section 166 of the Education and Care National Law, a staff member, nominated Supervisor and Approved Provider may receive a penalty for up to \$10,000 (up to \$50,000 in the case of Approved Provider) for subjecting a child to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances.

Early Childhood Educators will:-

- ◁ Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- ◁ Acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration and alternative perspectives and social inclusion.
- ◁ 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 one another.
- ◁ Respect children's agency and encourage them to express themselves and their opinions.
- ◁ Maintain the dignity and the rights of each child at all times.
- ◁ Have regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for.
- ◁ Offer positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour.
- ◁ Ensure that routines such as toileting, nappy change and rest times are used for positive one to one interactions with children and a time that they can get to know more about the child.
- ◁ Genuinely seek children's input, respect their ideas and take their suggestions on board.
- ◁ Support babies to build trusting attachments with one or two educators in order to develop a secure base for their exploration and learning.
- ◁ Form warm relationships with each child.

Families will:-

- ◁ Read and comply with this policy.
- ◁ Engage in open communication with staff about their child.
- ◁ Inform staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, a new sibling).
- ◁ Inform staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour.
- ◁ Work collaboratively with staff and others to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.

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 person 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 instills in each child a sense of self identity, dignity and tolerance for all people;
- ◁ Our service will explore cultures, knowledge and understanding with each child in partnership with their family, educators and community and other children within the service.
- ◁ Our service will explore family compositions, customs and lifestyles of children and families in many cultures;
- ◁ Our service will assist wherever possible families who are new to Australia with a transition to a new and different culture.
- ◁ Our educators will accept that all children can learn and that differences in lifestyles and languages does not mean ignorance;
- ◁ 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 work with families to encourage positive attitudes to diversity and an anti-bias ethos.
- ◁ 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 (taking into consideration COVID and centre food restrictions);
- ◁ 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.

Evaluation

Interactions between educators and children are genuine, positive and responsive and based on respect, fairness, acceptance, co-operation and empathy. This is evident in conversations, communication, pedagogy, planning/documentation and Preschool Philosophy for children and families.

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Legislative Requirements: ◁ Education and Care National Law Act 2010: Sections 166, 167

◁ Education and Care National Regulations: 73, 74, 155, 156, 157, 168(2)(j)

◁ Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998

◁ Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998

◁ Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Links to National Quality Standard: - ◁ National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with children – Standards 5.1, 5.2

◁ National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership – Standard 7.1.2

Sources: ◁ Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – www.acecqa.gov.au

◁ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – www.unicef.org.au

◁ The Supporting young children's rights: Statement of intent (2015-2018) – www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

◁ Australian Human Rights Commission – www.humanrights.gov.au