

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 5

Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited is the Approved Provider of children's services known in these policies as Uniting Early Learning.

Overarching Policy Statement:

The *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (refer to *Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church's activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Policy statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the service;
- 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 service;
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service, 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 and educators/staff at the service.

Purpose:

This policy provides guidelines to ensure:

- the development of positive and respectful relationships with each child at the service;
- each child is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

Summary of Procedures relating to this Policy:

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 Policy should ideally be developed and implemented jointly with all service management and staff and parents and be informed by the Code of Conduct Policy (particularly Attachment 2 – Professional standards for staff).

Everyone at the service needs to be aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families. Educational programs must be delivered in accordance with an approved learning

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framework, be based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child. The service should provide 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.

Scope:

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisors, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents, children and others attending the programs and activities of Uniting Early Learning.

The responsibilities of each party listed in the previous paragraph are noted at Attachment 1.

Background and legislation:

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. Developing responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children promotes their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security. Positive interactions between educators/adults and children can empower children to feel valued, competent and capable.

Actively engaging in children's learning and decision-making during play, daily routines and ongoing activities can stimulate children's thinking, enrich their learning and encourage them to explore and manage their feelings and behaviour.

"Having supportive relationships with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members enables children to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves, work through differences, learn new things and take calculated risks" (*Guide to the National Quality Standard – refer to Sources, Attachment 2*).

National Regulation 155 requires an Approved Provider of children's services to take reasonable steps to ensure that the service provides education and care to children in a way that encourages them to express themselves, and develop self-reliance and self-esteem, maintains their dignity and rights, provides positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour, and respects their cultural and family values.

Regulation 156 requires the Approved Provider to ensure that the service provides children with opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the service. To meet these requirements, the Approved Provider is expected to consider the size and composition of the groups in which the children are educated and cared for.

Attachment 2 contains a list of the legislation and sources relevant to this policy, including Acts and Regulations.

Evaluation:

In order to assess whether the goals and purposes of this 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;
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required;
- notify parents at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

Definitions:

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) **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 to self-manage their behaviour. It differs from traditional 'behaviour management' or 'discipline' which generally implies that an adult is 'managing' children's behaviour or using punishment to control children. Behaviour guidance applies to all forms of behaviour, not just behaviours labelled as 'negative'.

Behaviour guidance plan: A plan that documents strategies to assist an educator in guiding a child with diagnosed behavioural difficulties to self-manage his/her behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, parents 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 complaint/incident: The Approved Provider is required to notify the Regulatory Authority of certain circumstances and information in the required timeframe. Notification must occur within 24 hours if it relates to:

- complaints (either written or verbal) alleging the health, safety or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised, or that the law has been breached;
- an incident that requires the approved provider to close, or reduce the number of children attending, the education and care service for a period;
- additional children being educated and cared for in an emergency (e.g. flood or fire)

Written notification of complaints must be submitted using the appropriate forms, which can be found on the ACECQA website. Further information about notifications can be found in Section 173 and 174 of the National Law and in National Regulations 174 and 175.

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program: Early intervention outreach services that are universally available within state-funded preschools for any child with developmental concerns. The primary role of the PSFO Program is to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in preschool.

Serious incident: For the purposes of section 174(5) of the Law, the following are prescribed as serious incidents—

- (a) the death of a child—
 - (i) while being educated and cared for by an education and care service; or
 - (ii) following an incident while being educated and cared for by an education and care service;
 - (b) any incident involving serious injury or trauma to, or illness of, a child while being educated and cared for by an education and care service—
 - (i) which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
Examples Whooping cough, broken limb, anaphylaxis reaction.
 - (ii) for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital;
 - (c) any incident where the attendance of emergency services at the education and care service premises was sought, or ought reasonably to have been sought;
 - (d) any circumstance where a child being educated and cared for by an education and care service—
 - (i) appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for; or
 - (ii) appears to have been taken or removed from the education and care service premises in a manner that contravenes these Regulations; or
- (iii) is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the education and care service premises or any part of the premises.

The Approved Provider must notify the Regulatory Authority (DET) in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Regulation 176(2)(a)). The Notification of serious incident form (available on the ACECQA website) is to be completed and submitted online using the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS). Records are required to be retained for the period specified in Regulation 183.

Supervision: see **adequate supervision** in *Definitions* above.

Authorisation:

This policy was adopted by Uniting Victoria and Tasmania Limited on: 1/7/2017

Review Date: August 2017**This Policy should be read in conjunction with:**

- *Child Safe Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Educational Program and Practice Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

Attachment 1: Responsibilities relating to the Interactions with Children Policy

Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed S'visor	Certified S'visor; Educators	Parents
Develop and implement the <i>Interactions with Children Policy</i> in consultation, ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service	x	x	x	x
Ensure educators, staff and parents have access to this Policy and comply with its requirements	x	x		
Ensure the Nominated Supervisor, educators and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families (refer to <i>Code of Conduct Policy</i>)	x	x		
Ensure children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times	x	x		
Ensure 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 (Reg. 156(2)). Smaller group sizes are considered optimal	x	x		
Develop and implement educational programs 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	x	x		
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)	x	x		
Ensure 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 	x			

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Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed S'visor	Certified S'visor; Educators	Parents
abilities of each child being educated and cared for (Regulation 155)				
Ensure clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation, and progress against the outcomes of the educational program (Regulation 74)	x	x		
Support educators/staff to gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy	x			
Ensure the environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children	x	x		
Ensure educators and all staff 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)	x	x		
Promote collaborative relationships between children/families and educators, staff and other professionals, to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences	x			
Refer notifiable complaints and grievances (refer to <i>Definitions</i>) or complaints that are unable to be resolved appropriately and in a timely manner to the Grievances Subcommittee/investigator (refer to <i>Complaints and Grievances Policy</i>)	x			
Inform the Regulatory Authority (DET), in writing, within 24 hours of a serious incident or notifiable complaint/incident (refer to <i>Definitions</i> , Regulation 176(2)(b)) at the service	x			
Ensure 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	x	x		
Ensure 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	x	x		
Ensure that individual behaviour guidance plans are developed for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, in consultation with educators, parents and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to <i>Sources</i> and Attachment 3)	x	x		

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Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed S'visor	Certified S'visor; Educators	Parents
Develop links and co-operate with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required	x	x	x	
Maintain confidentiality at all times	x	x	x	
Implement this Policy at the service		x		
Consider the size and composition of groups when planning program timetables 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		x		
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		x		
Ensure that educators provide 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 		x		
Organise appropriate training for educators/staff to assist with the implementation of this policy		x		
Ensure that procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents to share information about children's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships		x		
Inform the Approved Provider of any notifiable complaints or serious incidents (refer to <i>Definitions</i>) at the service		x	x	
Be aware of service expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families			x	

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Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed S'visor	Certified S'visor; Educators	Parents
Provide adequate supervision of children at all times			x	
Communicate and work collaboratively with parents and families in relation to their child's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships			x	
Deliver 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			x	
Deliver programs that develop a sense of wellbeing and identity, connection to community, and provide skills for lifelong learning in all children			x	
Provide 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 			x	
Develop warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion			x	
Support each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with other			x	
Use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others			x	
Develop individual behaviour guidance plans for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties, in consultation with parents and families, and other professionals and support agencies (see <i>Sources</i> , Attachment 3)			x	
Document assessments and evaluations for each child to inform the educational program (Reg. 74)			x	
Be aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is			x	

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Action	Approved Provider	Nom'ed S'visor	Certified S'visor; Educators	Parents
unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances				
Read and comply with this Policy			x	x
Engage in open communication with educators about your child				x
Inform educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on your child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)				x
Inform educators/staff of any concerns regarding your child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour				x
Collaborate with educators/staff and other professionals/ support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for your child, where appropriate				x

Note: Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures

Attachment 2: Legislation and Sources

Legislation and standards:

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*: Sections 166, 167
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 73, 74, 155, 156, 157, 168(2)(j)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children
 - Standard 5.1: Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child
 - Standard 5.2: Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

Sources:

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*:
http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf
- Department of Education and Training (DET) *Behaviour Guidance Practice Note 6* Reviewed May 2015:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/regulation/pracnotesbehavpol-12-05-2015.pdf>
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) *Code of Ethics* (2006):
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/code_of_ethics/early_childhood_australias_code_of_ethics.html
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au and <http://acecqa.gov.au/links-and-resources/national-quality-framework-resources/>
- Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP):
<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programmes-services/early-childhood-child-care/inclusion-and-professional-support-program>

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- *Keeping Children Safe Policy* of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved June 2015:
<http://victasintranet/hr/Documents/Keeping%20Children%20Safe%20Policy.pdf>
- *The Kindergarten Guide*, DET:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/default.aspx>
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org/crc
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/edcare/Pages/default.aspx>

Attachment 3:

Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour guidance plan

These procedures recommend steps that services can follow to develop a behaviour guidance plan for a child exhibiting challenging behaviour. These procedures should be adapted to suit individual services. For further information see DET's Behaviour guidance practice note series (refer to Sources).

A caring relationship with an adult, who can provide the learning and emotional support required, is pivotal to dealing with a child's challenging behaviour (refer to *Definitions*). Challenging behaviour is best managed through a collaborative strategy developed between service staff and parents.

Excluding a child from the service should only be a last resort. This decision should be made as part of the collaborative management of a child's behaviour, and based on a joint decision by the parents and family, and the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators and other professionals involved in the education and care of the child (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*).

Procedures

Step 1 – Observe

- Observe children exhibiting challenging behaviour, including in the broader context of their environment, the culture of the service, and the interactions of the whole group and other educators working with the child.
- Identify, based on observations, whether there is a need to develop an individual behaviour guidance plan for the child.

Step 2 – Discuss

Invite parents to a meeting to discuss:

- the ongoing behaviour displayed by the child, including highlighting improvements and celebrating successes
- their aspirations, as well as the service's aspirations, for the child
- the child's individual characteristics, including interests, temperament, age and cultural background
- recommended strategies to support the child's development, and how these strategies will be reviewed and evaluated
- resources or changes to the environment/program that may be required for a behaviour guidance plan to be implemented e.g. changes to routines and transitions
- the support already accessed by the family to assist with managing the child's behaviour
- other support available, such as a Preschool Field Officer (refer to *Definitions*), referral for specialist assessment and additional adult support (written consent is required from parents before any intervention/assessment is undertaken)
- any other matter that will assist with the development of a behaviour guidance plan.

Step 3 – Consult

- If appropriate, and with the permission of parents, consult with other support agencies or service providers who are already working with the child, to assist with the development of a behaviour guidance plan.

Step 4 – Develop

Develop an individual behaviour guidance plan, based on consultation with the child's parents and other support agencies, that is:

- appropriate to the needs of the child and accepted/agreed to by parents and other professionals involved in the education and care of that child
- clear and easy to follow for all educators, staff, parents and/or volunteers/students working with the child.

Step 5 – Monitor and review

- Continually review, reflect, evaluate and revise the strategies that have been implemented.
- Communicate with the parents regarding the child's progress and involve them in evaluating and revising the strategies.

Roles and responsibilities

The following are the roles and responsibilities of the various individuals working with the child at the service.

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- 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 and other professionals (as appropriate) are consulted if an individual behaviour guidance plan has not resolved the challenging behaviour
- consulting with, and seeking advice from, DET if a suitable and mutually agreeable behaviour guidance plan cannot be developed
- ensuring that they are notified if a complaint is received about a child's interactions or behaviour e.g. when the safety of other children is in question
- ensuring that, if a complaint is received, every attempt is made to resolve the issue by consultation and investigation as soon as possible
- ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan
- ensuring that educators/staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and responses of a child/children with challenging behaviour.

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- developing the behaviour guidance plan in consultation with the Certified Supervisor, educators and the parents of the child, and other professionals and services as appropriate
- consulting the *Complaints and Grievances Policy* to ensure compliance with service procedures, and regulatory and legislative requirements
- consulting educators for their professional evaluation of the situation, and drawing on their expertise in relation to developing strategies and identifying resources required
- meeting with the parents of the child concerned to develop and implement a behaviour guidance plan
- supporting educators by assessing skills and identifying additional training needs in the area of behaviour guidance
- investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer (refer to *Definitions*), specialist children's services officers from DET or other agencies working with the child
- setting clear timelines for review and evaluation of the behaviour guidance plan.

Certified Supervisors and other educators/staff are responsible for:

- observing children's challenging behaviour and identifying the need to develop a behaviour guidance plan to support a child in self-managing their own behaviour
- assisting the Nominated Supervisor to develop a behaviour guidance plan in consultation with parents and other professionals as appropriate
- implementing a behaviour guidance plan and incorporating identified strategies and resources into the service program
- undertaking relevant training that will enable them to guide children who exhibit challenging behaviour
- maintaining ongoing communication and consultation with parents
- providing regular progress reports to the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor on the implementation and effectiveness of the agreed strategies contained in an individual behaviour guidance plan
- maintaining the confidentiality of information provided by parents unless written consent is provided to disclose information to relevant parties
- providing their observations, professional evaluation and expertise in reviewing individual behaviour guidance plans
- providing other information, as relevant, to the Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor to assist with the resolution of any issues.