

Interactions with Children Policy

Document Title	NQS5.37 Interactions with Children Policy	Version	4
Date Approved	March 2025	Date for Review	March 2028
Warning - Ensure you are using the latest version of this policy.			
DCC Network/All Organisation Information/Policies/Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children			

1. Policy Statement

River Region Early Education (RREE) has a commitment to ensuring that children's learning, development, and wellbeing are firmly anchored in reciprocal, responsive, and respectful relationships that are attuned to the context of children's lives within their families and community. This includes understanding and ensuring that:

- Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child,
- Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and reciprocal relationships,
- No child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances, and
- Children are valued, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives as an important component of the RREE commitment to child safety.

2. Rationale

Educators' practices and the relationships they form with children and their families have a significant effect on children's participation in early childhood education, engagement in learning opportunities and success as learners. Children thrive when they, their families and their educators work together in partnership to support their learning, development and wellbeing.

Early Years Learning Framework 2.0

Education and Care Services National Regulations require approved providers to ensure no child attending services experiences corporal punishment or unreasonable discipline, that education and care is provided in a manner that supports the learning, development and wellbeing of children, that interactions with children are positive and respectful and policies and procedures are in place related to interactions with children. Child Safe Standards identify the importance of children's participation in decisions, and family and community involvement as being important factors in providing a child safe environment. This policy provides guidance for employees as to expectations around their behaviours and interactions with children, reasonable and unreasonable discipline, and inclusion of child, family and cultural values, strengths and abilities in program, practice and routines.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers, including students, trainees, and Board.

4. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Board as Approved Provider to:

- Ensure that no child being educated and cared for by services is subjected to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances,

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- Take reasonable steps to ensure that services provide education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions,
 - allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem,
 - maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child,
 - gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour, and
 - has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for by the service,
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that services provide children being educated and cared for with opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and with staff members of, and volunteers at, the service, including having regard to the size and the composition of the groups in which children are being educated and cared for by the service,
- Notify the Regulatory Authority within the required timeframe where a serious incident has occurred, including corporal punishment and/or unreasonable discipline,
- Ensure the service has in place policies and procedures in relation to interactions with children,
- Ensure nominated supervisors and staff members of, and volunteers at, the service follow the policies and procedures required under regulation,
- Ensure copies of the current policies and procedures required under regulation are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, educators, and volunteers, and are readily available for inspection at the education and care service premises at all times that the service is educating and caring for children or otherwise on request, and
- Ensure parents of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure referred to in regulation that may have a significant impact on the provision of education and care or a family's ability to use the service, or as soon as practicable if the notice period would pose a risk to the safety, health, or wellbeing of any child enrolled in the service.

It is the responsibility of the General Manager to:

- Carry out or delegate the responsibilities of the Board as listed above,
- Support Nominated Supervisors to ensure the educational program supports regulatory requirements for interactions with children as defined above and as far as is reasonable,
- Support Nominated Supervisor to ensure that all persons working directly with children understand that corporal punishment and unreasonable discipline are prohibited,
- Include training relevant to interactions with children and reasonable discipline in the annual training plan where required, and
- Notify the Board within the required timeframe where a serious incident has occurred, including corporal punishment and/or unreasonable discipline.

It is the responsibility of Nominated Supervisors to:

- Guide professional development and practice to promote interactions with children that are positive and respectful,
- Establish practice guidelines and support educators to provide education and care in a manner that,

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- encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions,
- allows the children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem,
- maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child,
- gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour, and
- has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for by the service,
- Ensure all employees and volunteers are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful, and appropriate behaviour and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families, including a prohibition on corporal punishment and unreasonable discipline,
- 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,
- Support educators to access training or professional development relevant to interactions with children and reasonable discipline where required, and
- Notify the General Manager as soon as possible and within 24 hours of being made aware of a serious incident, including corporal punishment and/or unreasonable discipline.

It is the responsibility of educators to:

- Respect children's agency and encourage them to express themselves and their opinions,
- Actively listen and be attuned to children, and believe and respect their ideas and experiences,
- Maintain at all times the dignity and rights of each child and support them to take part in discussions about their safety,
- Allow children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem,
- Give each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour,
- Build trusting relationships with children and ensure language, body language and tone of voice is warm, encouraging, and respectful and promotes confidence and self-esteem,
- Have regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for by the service and advocate for equity and inclusion,
- 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,
- Undertake training or professional development relevant to interactions with children and reasonable discipline where required, and
- Never use corporal punishment or unreasonable discipline to stop or change a child's inappropriate or undesired behaviour.

It is the responsibility of families to:

- Work collaboratively with services regarding their family and cultural values and the learning, development, behavioural and wellbeing needs, and aspirations of their child, including the development of a Behaviour Support Plan if recommended, and
- Inform services of any concerns or events or changes at home that may affect their child's behaviour, such as a new sibling or moving house.

5. Definitions

Agency – Defined by EYLF 2.0 as being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world.

Active listening - Defined by EYLF 2.0 as concentrating on more than what is being said (such as gestures, facial expression and body language) and involves listening to and acknowledging what is being said in ways that enhance mutual understanding.

Attuned/Attunement - Defined by EYLF 2.0 as being fully aware and responsive to children, comprehending their feelings and embodied communication such as through their facial expression, vocalisations, body movements, gestures and eye contact.

Self-regulation - Defined by EYLF 2.0 as the ability to manage energy states, emotions, behaviour and attention; the ability to return to a balanced, calm and constant state of being. Self-regulation is a key factor for mental health, wellbeing and learning.

Discipline – Defined by ACECQA as action taken by adults towards children to stop or change behaviour that is inappropriate or not desired.

Corporal punishment - The use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain or discomfort to correct or punish a child's behaviour. Includes smacking, spanking, slapping or hitting with a hard object as well as requiring a child to kneel, sit or stand in uncomfortable positions or on painful objects for a length of time.

Unreasonable (inappropriate) discipline – Defined by ACECQA as any form of corporal punishment as well as:

- Verbal abuse, yelling at, belittling, or humiliating a child,
- Force-feeding or depriving a child of food or drink,
- Unreasonable periods of restraint, for example in a high chair,
- Isolation from play areas or friends or exclusion from events or experiences as a punishment, and
- Physical abuse, physically dragging a child or locking them in a room.

6. Guidelines

The National Quality Standards provide guidance around how to build respectful and equitable relationships with children and how to support them to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.

a) Positive educator to child interactions

This may be observed by educators:

- Sitting and engaging in relaxed and unhurried two-way conversations with children, particularly at mealtimes,
- Assisting new children to settle into the program by talking with them or their families about their interests, curiosities and funds of knowledge,
- Responding openly, positively and respectfully to children's comments, questions, concerns and requests for assistance,
- Engaging with children in conversations throughout the day or session, talking about what is happening around them and what they are learning and thinking about,
- Engaging in sustained conversations with each child about their individual interests,

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- Showing enthusiasm and respect when interacting with all children and their families,
- Comforting children who cry or show other signs of distress, fear or discomfort,
- Responding positively to the varying abilities and disabilities and the individual strengths, interests and confidence of all children, and facilitating their involvement in the service,
- Acknowledging children's efforts and achievements and supporting children to experience success,
- Supporting children to persist and persevere in self-chosen tasks, including when faced with challenges and when first attempts are not successful,
- Adjusting and tailoring their interactions to best support the differing ages, capabilities, strengths and interests of children attending the service,
- Demonstrating that they know each child well and have developed a unique, reciprocal relationship with each child,
- Affirming and actively supporting the maintenance of each child's home language and culture where interactions with the family supports this approach,
- Respectfully participating in children's play and using children's cues and signals to guide their level and type of involvement,
- Modelling reasoning, predicting, reflective processes and appropriate language,
- Collaborating with children about routines, rituals, transitions and experiences and providing opportunities for them to make decisions and choices, and
- Using appropriate techniques, such as sign language, visual supports and other resources and tools, to support communication with all children.

b) Dignity and rights of the child

This may be observed by educators:

- Pre-empting potential conflicts or challenging behaviours by monitoring children's play and supporting interactions,
- Using positive language, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them,
- Responding promptly to children's disruptive behaviour by acknowledging their feelings, spending time with them and suggesting alternative ways of responding,
- Being patient, gentle, calm and reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration or anger,
- Talking to children about the importance of empathy, treating others equally and celebrating differences,
- Encouraging each child's sense of identity,
- Supporting children to treat each other with dignity and respect in their interactions,
- Using diverse resources to explore and celebrate different cultures, heritage, backgrounds, traditions,
- Modelling and encouraging children to identify and challenge discrimination when they observe inappropriate behaviour, or hear inappropriate comments,
- Respectfully considering information received from families, other professionals, resource agencies and schools, and responding appropriately to support the rights of children,
- Encouraging children to reflect on and consider the impact of their behaviour, and
- Guiding all children's behaviour in ways that: are focused on supporting children to develop skills to regulate and manage their emotions and preserve and promote children's self-esteem and confidence.

c) Collaborative learning

This may be observed by educators:

- Supporting children's progress through different stages of play, to help them gain confidence in interacting with their peers,
- Modelling collaborative behaviour through their interactions with children and colleagues, to help children to initiate interactions and join in play and social experiences with peers,
- Respectfully and thoughtfully engaging in children's group play and projects,
- Supporting children to understand or communicate with each other and encouraging friendships,
- Planning experiences that encourage children to work together to achieve success,
- Allocating time for relaxed, unhurried experiences that enable children to collaborate and direct their own learning together,
- Creating opportunities for peer scaffolding in small and large group play,
- Asking follow-up questions to extend children's learning in group situations,
- Promoting a sense of community in the service,
- Providing opportunities and resources for children to assume leadership roles and direct play experiences with their peers, and
- Acknowledging older children's complex relationships and sensitively intervening in ways that promote social inclusion.

d) Self-regulation

This may be observed by educators:

- Implementing planned and spontaneous discussions about emotions, feelings and issues of inclusion and exclusion, fair and unfair behaviour, bias and prejudice,
- Modelling respectful behaviour and providing supportive language to enable children to vocalise their concerns,
- Encouraging children to listen to other children's ideas and points of view, consider alternative behaviours and solve problems together,
- Talking with children about the consequences of their actions,
- Planning and implementing strategies to support individual children's behaviour,
- Discussing with and supporting children to identify their feelings, and providing a safe place for them to explore and build strategies to calm the body and mind,
- Listening empathetically to children when they express their emotions, acknowledging their feelings and reassuring children that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times, and
- Supporting children to negotiate their rights in relation to the rights of others and intervening sensitively when children experience difficulty in resolving a disagreement.

e) Appropriate discipline or behaviour guidance

Behaviour guidance

River Region Early Education adopts a positive approach to help children gain understanding and learn skills that will help them to manage their own behaviour. This supports each child to self-regulate, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts. Behaviour guidance includes:

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- Role modelling and intentional teaching of positive and collaborative behaviours as outlined above,
- Active listening and attunement with children and the use of respectful and inclusive language, tone of voice, and body language,
- Individual support to help children self-regulate behaviours, such as a cool down time where an educator stays with a child to support them to regain self-control,
- Managing the size and composition of groups to support children's positive relationships and interactions, and
- Communication and collaboration with families as to the best ways to support their child's learning, development and wellbeing.

Corporal punishment and unreasonable discipline of children are prohibited at River Region Early Education services.

Where children need more individualised support with behaviour guidance, a Behaviour Support Plan will be developed in collaboration with families and support services in line with *NQS5.38 Inclusion Policy*.

Restraint

Occasionally, there may be circumstances where a child becomes a risk to themselves or others and may need to be removed from the situation or physically restrained to prevent harm to themselves or others. Children should be physically restrained only in emergency situations and when other strategies to guide the child's behaviour have not worked, such as when a child is:

- In a clearly unsafe situation, for example, attempting to scale a fence or run onto a road,
- Physically threatening other children or adults, or
- Behaving in ways that are destructive to themselves, other people or the environment.

These situations may require the supportive holding of children for only long enough to remove them from the situation or address the emergency. This will be managed as an incident in accordance with *NQS2.11 Incident Injury Illness and Trauma Policy*.

7. Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Standards

Legislation - Education and Care Services National Law	
166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
Education and Care Services National Regulation	
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups
National Quality Standards	
5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
5.2.1	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
5.2.2	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

Child Safe Standards	
2	Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
4	Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
Early Years Learning Framework Learning Outcomes	
1	Children have a strong sense of identity
2	Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4	Children are confident and involved learners
5	Children are effective communicators
Early Years Learning Framework Principles	
	Secure, respectful, and reciprocal relationships
	Respect for diversity
Early Years Learning Framework Practices	
	Responsiveness to children
	Cultural responsiveness

8. Related Documents

Doc #	Attachments

Doc #	Intersections with other key documents
NQS5.38	Inclusion Policy
NQS2.60	Child Safety and Protection Policy
NQS2.11	Incident, Illness, Injury and Trauma Policy

9. Document Control

Doc #	Doc Title	Version	Approved	Next Review
	Relationships and Interactions with Children Policy	1	October 2013	October 2015
NQS5.37	Interactions with Children Policy	2	July 2018	July 2020
NQS5.37	Interactions with Children Policy	3	June 2021	June 2024
NQS5.37	Interactions with Children Policy (minor changes)	3a	January 2024	June 2024
NQS5.37	Interactions with Children Policy	4	March 2025	March 2028