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INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND STAFF POLICY

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

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National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children		
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
6.1.2	Parents views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law Act
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The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) identifies secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children as one of the principles that underpin practice. Within an early childhood community many different relationships are negotiated with and between children, educators and families. The way in which these different relationships are established and maintained, and the way in which they remain visible impacts on how the early childhood community functions as a whole. Relationships directly affect how children form their own identity, whether or not they feel safe and supported, and ultimately, their sense of belonging.

Introduction

At Woden Early Childhood Centre (WECC) we aim to build positive relationships with children, families and educators through collaboration and quality interactions. Children's emotional development and social relationships are enhanced through thoughtful and sophisticated approaches to conversation, discussion and promotion of children's language and communication.

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.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the Service.

Goals – What are we aiming to do?

Interactions with children will:

- promote a safe, secure and nurturing environment
- be authentic and responsive
- be based on fairness, acceptance and empathy with respect for culture, rights, community and the individual

Strategies – How will it be done?

Interactions with children

The Nominated Supervisor or Director and Educational Leader 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 differences

Educators will:

- respond to children's communication in a just and consistent manner
- create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly and genuine interactions

- use appropriate language and role model appropriate behaviour
- respond sensitively to children's attempts to initiate interactions and conversations
- initiate one on one interactions with children, particularly babies and toddlers during daily routines, and converse with each child
- support children's efforts, assisting and encouraging as appropriate
- support children's secure attachment through consistent and warm nurturing relationships
- support children's expression of their thoughts and feelings
- encourage children to express themselves and show an interest and participate in what the child is doing
- encourage children to make choices and decisions
- respect the rights of children
- speak to children in a positive manner at all times, promoting respect, tolerance and empathy; this includes children using non-verbal cues
- communicate with children by getting down to their level, showing respect to the child whilst promoting effective communication and eye contact
- acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration, alternative perspectives and social inclusion. Guidance strategies should be reflective of this approach
- acknowledge each child's uniqueness in positive ways
- respect cultural differences in communication and consider alternative approaches to their own

Interactions with families

Effective communication is the key to developing and maintaining positive interactions and relationships with others. Educators working at WECC are required to demonstrate mutual respect towards each other and the contributions made by each educator. This enables our centre to maintain positive relationships between its staff and model the type of communication we want children to develop. Educators also need to use positive communication with families and children in order to create a responsive and inclusive environment for all.

The Nominated Supervisor, Director and Educators will ensure:

- all families are treated equitably without bias or judgement, recognising that each family is unique
- families and children are greeted upon arrival
- two-way communication is established through leading by example and asking questions
- common terminology is used when talking to parents regarding their child's development
- never to discuss another child or family information with another parent or visitor
- they remain sensitive to cultural differences amongst families and encourage families to share cultural aspects with the children and educators at WECC
- they always endeavour to seek the advice and opinion of experts with family permission, to help with regards to a child with additional needs or to support a family, through resources available from support agencies
- they endeavour to tailor their communication with families to suit each family's preferred way
- verbal communication is always open, respectful and honest
- families are provided with up to date service information and notices through Daily Reports, Newsletter, communal signs, emails and sign-in sheets
- they regularly reflect on parent input into the program and make changes where necessary that will best benefit the service and children
- children are treated and programmed for as individuals

Interactions with Staff and Educators

To maintain professionalism at all times, Educators will:

- communicate in a professional manner, in order to create an effective work environment and to build

positive relationships with educators, children and families. Communication amongst colleagues creates a positive atmosphere and a professional service for families. Communication between staff and families ensure that important information is being passed on in a consistent manner

- work collaboratively as a team communicating effectively and sharing room roles and responsibilities through the use of a roster where necessary
- be respectful when listening to each other's point of view and ideas
- use staff meetings to communicate their professional reflections and ideas for continuous improvement as a team
- attend in-service training to update and refresh individual skills and knowledge
- refer to the *Grievance and Complaint Management* policy if they feel a situation with another educator is not being handled respectfully and with professionalism
- recognise and value each other's strengths and different contribution
- work collaboratively to enhance the quality of the education and care offered at WECC
- welcome diverse views and perspectives
- respect each other's positions and opinions
- develop and share networks and links with other agencies
- resolve differences promptly and positively, using the experience to learn more effective methods of working together

To enhance communication and teamwork, Educators will:

- provide new educators with relevant information about the Service and program through an educators handbook, induction and daily communication
- maintain confidentiality
- treat each team member with respect
- be sensitive to the feelings and needs of other team members
- provide constructive feedback to each other
- trust each other
- value the role and contribution of each educator
- provide opportunities for all educators to have input and evaluate the program
- appreciate and utilise educator skills and interests
- provide support and assistance to each other
- share responsibilities
- have a flexible attitude towards the team
- greet each other by name
- show genuine interest in other people by using active and reflective listening
- communicate ideas and opinions clearly and professionally
- use a communication book or daily diary to pass on messages and record relevant information
- hold regular educator meetings
- use appropriate conflict resolution techniques to solve problems

Children's rights, family and cultural values

Interactions within WECC are greatly enhanced when children's right 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.

Listening

Educators must use listening as a foundation for interactions. Listening is based on observation and on learning 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.

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.

Reflection and consideration

Time will be 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

Role modelling

Educators model positive interactions when they:

- show care, empathy and respect for children, families and educators
- learn and use effective communication strategies

Quality interactions increase children's knowledge and understanding of themselves and of each other as unique individuals and develop the skills and understandings they need to interact positively with others.

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, and planning for children and families.

Related policies /documents

- *Behaviour guidance*
- *Confidentiality*
- *Excursions*
- *Inclusion, diversity and anti-bias*
- *Nappy change*
- *Promoting positive risk in play*
- *Settling in and grouping of children*
- *Supervision*

Statutory legislation and considerations

- Children's Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Sources and references

- DEEWR (2009). *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. www.deewr.gov.au
- Revised National Quality Standards
- Early Years Learning Framework
- Respectful Relationships – <http://www.cscentral.org.au/Resources/Publications/respectful-relationships.pdf>

Authorisation

John Rothwell
President
2017-18 WECC Management Committee