BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE: BULLYING POLICY

Bullying can occur among children of any ages, sex or background. In most instances, children need adult assistance to deal with bullying. This includes adults taking responsibility to develop strategies for the prevention of bullying, and for dealing fairly and effectively with allegations of bullying.

Being, Belonging and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia identifies secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children as one of the principles that underpin practice. Within the early childhood community many different relationships are negotiated with and between children, educators and families. The way in which these relationships are established and maintained, and the way in which they remain visible impacts on how the 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.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
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: 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.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
73	Educational program
123	Educator to child ratios- centre based services
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

RELATED POLICIES

Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy	Interactions with Children, Family and Staff Policy
Behaviour Guidance Policy	Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
Child Safe Environment Policy	Termination of Enrolment Policy
Code of Conduct	Respect for Children Policy

PURPOSE

To create a safe and healthy environment for children where bullying behaviours are not tolerated. As reflected in our Service philosophy and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), educators will encourage positive and respectful relationships between children and their peers.

SCOPE

This policy applies to educators, families, staff, management, Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* require approved providers to ensure policies and procedures are in place for in relation to interactions with children.

Our service does not tolerate bullying of any kind. Bullying is never OK!

The priority of our Service is to provide a safe and inclusive environment to prevent bullying. We aim to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child being bullied and take any allegation of bullying seriously.

Although there may be underlying reasons causing a child to bully others, it is essential that the child being bullied receives the adult attention and support in the first instance. It is important that the needs of the child who bullies does not overshadow the needs of the child being bullied.

TYPES OF BULLYING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The most common types of bullying in the early childhood setting are physical and verbal. Some children may also bully others by social isolation/exclusion.

Physical includes:

hitting, punching, kicking, pinching- directed at the same child/ren over an extended period of time.

Verbal includes:

calling children names, taunting them, making sexist/racist statements, making cruel statement about personal attributes, clothing etc.

Social isolation:

Excluding individual children or groups of children from play or social situations

Cyber:

Using technologies such as texting or e-mailing to taunt, insult, intimidate or harass another child.

[source: Startingblocks.gov.au]

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. Possible signs a child is being bullied might include:

- unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches
- changes in behaviour, such as becoming moody, teary, depressed
- bedwetting
- complaints of physical ailments such as headaches or stomach-aches
- having few friends, or a breakdown in a previous friendship **(if age appropriate)**
- does not want to attend care
- does not want to attend parties, visit other children.

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

EFFECTS OF BULLYING

Children who are bullied are more likely to be depressed, lonely, and anxious and have low self-esteem. They may frequently feel sick and avoid interactions with others.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

Bullying thrives where there is not enough supervision. If required, and where possible, our Service will increase our educator: child ratios above those set out in the National Regulations.

Our daily program is designed to meet the needs and interests of all children in attendance to prevent periods of boredom. Educators model appropriate behaviours towards other staff and children, including refraining from teasing, humiliating, or talking 'behind another's back'. This also includes educators using appropriate language when supporting children to recognise, manage and learn about their behaviour and develop an understanding of how their behaviour affects others. Children

are encouraged to verbalise their emotions and to develop empathy and compassion.

TALKING ABOUT BULLYING

Educators play an important role in helping children understand and guide their own behaviour as they learn about positive and healthy relationships with others.

Behaviours in early childhood may be *precursors* to bullying rather than true bullying. This could include making faces, refusing to play together, telling lies or stories about another child, grabbing objects, pushing, pinching or shoving another child. Without intervention, these behaviours could turn into a pattern of bullying.

Early childhood educators assist children recognise bullying behaviour and assist children in developing strategies to develop positive relationships and prevent bullying. Skills to develop to assist in preventing bullying include:

- empathy- understanding and responding to the what others feel
- problem solving- how to resolve problems constructively without using aggression
- language- understanding what to say when the child is feeling targeted by another child- 'stop it!'

Educators will teach social skills through role-plays, stories, puppets and games.
Educators will guide children to practice how to interact with others positively and respectfully when talking about bullying.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- teach social skills through role-plays, stories, puppets and games.
- avoid using terminology such as 'bully' or 'victim' when describing behaviour being displayed
- focus and guide children to practice more appropriate ways to interact with others positively and respectfully when talking about bullying
- maintain and respect the dignity and rights of children.

PROCEDURE WHEN A CHILD DISCLOSES ALLEGED BULLYING OR AN EDUCATOR SUSPECTS BULLYING IS OCCURING

Educators will:

- refer to the *Behaviour Guidance- Bullying Response Procedure* for steps to undertake when approaching a bullying situation

- listen when a child attempts to talk about behaviours that might indicate bullying
- respond to incidents in a constructive, supportive and timely manner
- learn as much as possible about the children involved and the tactics used
- summarise the problem they are discussing
- ensure the child knows that the educators at the service are there to help them
- provide support and empathy
- empathise with the child and reassure them that it is not their fault
- ask the child what they think could be done to help, what will make them feel safe
- encourage and support the child who is being bullied to contribute to discussions on actions to challenge or stop bullying behaviours
- notify the Nominated Supervisor of the allegation
- document the incident and record strategies used to guide and support the child (see *Bullying Incident Report form*)
- inform and communicate with families regarding instances of bullying involving their child (See Involving Families section below)

EDUCATORS WILL NOT:

- exhibit negative behaviour, sarcasm, or any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or inappropriate
- humiliate a child
- negatively label a child or family
- verbally or physically threaten a child
- exclude a child from events

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND MANAGE BULLYING WHEN IT OCCURS

- adopt this policy to ensure zero tolerance for bullying
- model respectful ways of interacting with colleagues, children and families
- ensure children are adequately supervised at all times and be aware of any indicators of bullying if it occurs
- teach children strategies to challenge bullying-type behaviours- e.g., "*I don't like it when you call me names"*.
- critically reflect on environmental factors within the service to support children and foster positive, respectful relationships
- take action when they suspect a child is being bullied

- try to talk with the alleged bully about their behaviour and the outcomes of their behaviour on others
- let them know that this type of behaviour is not acceptable and provide guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour
- don't force a meeting between the bully and the victim. Forced apologies are not constructive.
- ask the child who is suspected of bullying for possible reasons for the bullying
- consider the age, cultural values, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child
- support children's agency by assisting the child to move toward more considerate actions
- develop a *Behaviour Guidance Plan* in collaboration with the child, family and support agencies if required.

INVOLVING FAMILIES

Our Service will seek the cooperation and support from families for bullying prevention initiatives and reinforcement of positive interactions with other children.

We will:

- ensure families are aware of our *Service Philosophy*, *Behaviour Guidance- Bullying Policy* and *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- provide information to families about the nature and harmful consequences of bullying- e.g., newsletters, parent information sessions
- openly communicate with families of children who bully or are bullied and work in partnership with them to implement appropriate strategies to support the children involved (*refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Code of Conduct Policy)*
- if required, seek further strategies from relevant inclusion Support Services (implementation of Behaviour Guidance Plan)
- support families to guide their child's behaviour with effective strategies and provide support – such as Kids Helpline

POTENTIAL FURTHER ACTIONS

Possible actions may be required to ensure our service provides a child safe environment for all children. Any action taken by management will be dependent on each individual case following regular communication with families, professional support and intervention. Should the bullying behaviour continue and children's wellbeing and safety is at risk, management may request a:

- temporary exclusion the child from the Service, or
- permanent exclusion from the Service (*Termination of Enrolment Policy*)

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Behaviour Guidance - Bullying Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with children, families, staff, educators and management.

RESOURCES

Bullying- NO WAY!

Kids Help Line

Kids Help line Dealing with bullying

NSW Department of Education Anti-bullying Parents and carers tips Fact sheet

Raising Children Signs of bullying in children and teenagers

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2025). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*
Australia Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). *Inappropriate Discipline.*
Australian Government Department of Education. *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.V2.0, 2022*
Australian Government. Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2014). *Helping your child stop bullying. A guide for parents*
Education and Care Services National Regulations. (Amended 2023).
NSW Department of Education *Anti-bullying- Parents and carers tips- Fact Sheet* (2020).

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Krystle Hills	Centre Manager	20/05/2025
POLICY REVIEWED	May 2025	NEXT REVIEW DATE	May 2026
MODIFICATIONS	• annual policy review • sources checked and updated as required		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
March 2024	• minor edits		March 2025
DEC 2023	• major review of policy • additional information added re: Inclusion Support; Behaviour Guidance Plans • removed term 'sanctions' • related resources added sources checked		DEC 2024