



Policy Title	Interactions with Children
Quality Area	5
Category	Mandatory

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines to ensure:

- the development of responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children that promote their wellbeing, self-esteem, sense of security and belonging at Thornbury Kindergarten
- each child at Thornbury Kindergarten is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Thornbury Kindergarten is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity, agency and rights of each child at the service
- promoting fairness, respect and equity
- 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 (*refer to Definitions*) towards all children at Thornbury Kindergarten
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service, including family and cultural values, age, gender identity, sex, sexuality, 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, families and staff at the service.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, staff, students, volunteers, parents/carers, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Thornbury Kindergarten, including during offsite excursions and activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Staff	Parents/carers	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Developing and implementing the <i>Interactions with Children Policy</i> in consultation with stakeholders, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service	R	√	√	√	√
Ensuring all stakeholders are provided with a copy of the <i>Interactions with Children Policy</i> and comply with its requirements	R	√	√	√	√
Ensuring all staff are aware of the service’s expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and warm, trusting and reciprocal interactions when working with children and families (<i>refer to Code of Conduct Policy</i>)	R	√			
Ensuring children are adequately supervised (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times (<i>refer to Supervision of Children Policy</i>)	R	√	√		√
Ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure, free from any hazards (<i>National Law: Section 167</i>) (<i>refer to Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy, Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Supervision of Children Policy</i>) and promotes the active participation of every child	R	R	√		√
Ensuring 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 (<i>Regulation 156(2)</i>). Smaller group sizes are considered optimal, to promote intentional teaching strategies and responsive engagement opportunities.	R	√	√		√
Developing and implementing educational programs that are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework (<i>refer to Definitions</i>), are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences and strengths of each child (<i>refer to Inclusion and Equity Policy</i>)	R	R	√		√
Ensuring the educational program contributes to the development of children to have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and to be connected, confident,	R	√	√		√

involved and effective learners and communicators (<i>Regulation 73</i>) (refer to <i>Curriculum Development Policy</i>)					
Ensuring 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 abilities of each child being educated and cared for (<i>Regulation 155</i>) 	R	√	√		√
Ensure that Thornbury Kindergarten provides children with opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the service (<i>Regulation 156(1)</i>)	R	√	√		√
Recognising the importance of friendships and encourage support from peers, to help children and young people feel safe and be connected	√	√	√		√
Ensuring clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation progress against the outcomes of the educational program (<i>Regulation 74</i>) (refer to <i>Curriculum Development Policy</i>) 	R	√	√		√
Ensuring that procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents/carers to share information about children's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships	R	√	√		√
Supporting staff to access resources and gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy, including promoting social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing	√	√			
Ensuring that staff members at Thornbury Kindergarten 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 (<i>National Law: Section 166</i>)	R	R	R	√	√
Promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and program support groups (if required) (<i>refer to Definitions</i>), to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences	√	√	√	√	√
Ensuring notifications of serious incidents (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) are made to the regulatory authority (Department of Education) (<i>refer to Definition</i>) through the	R	√			

National Quality Agenda (NQA) IT System (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) as soon as is practicable but not later than 24 hours after the occurrence (<i>National Law: Section 174(2)(a), Regulations 176 (2)(a)</i>)					
Notifying Department of Education (DE) within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) or allegation regarding the safety, health and/or welfare of a child at the service (<i>National Law: Section 174(2)(b), Regulations 176 (2)(a)</i>)	R	√			
Ensuring 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	R	R	√		√
Ensuring all staff, volunteers and contractors use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others	R	√	√		√
Developing links with and referral pathways to services and/or program support groups (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) to support children's social, emotional and behaviour growth and their families	√	√	√		√
Ensuring staff develop responsive relationships (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) to support and guide children to begin to regulate their behaviour. Staff provide a safe, secure base for the wellbeing of the child, other children and staff in order to mitigate any risk.	√	√	√	√	
Ensuring staff develop collaborative and respectful partnerships with families/carers and program support groups (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) to provide a holistic and consistent approach to all interactions with children.	√	√	√	√	
Families/carers develop collaborative and respectful partnerships with staff and program support groups (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) to provide a holistic and consistent approach to all interactions with their child.	√	√	√	√	√
Critically reflect and review the support and guidance provided for the child's wellbeing on an ongoing basis.	√	√	√		
Providing information, ideas and practical strategies to families and staff on a regular basis to promote and support health and wellbeing in the service and at home	√	√	√		
Consulting with, and seeking advice from, DE if further strategies and assistance are required.	R	√	√		
Investigating the availability of extra assistance, such as Kindergarten Inclusion Support (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer (<i>refer to Definitions</i>), specialist children's services officers from DE or other agencies working with the child	R	√	√		
Funded Kindergarten specific					

Ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to support the wellbeing of the child.	R	√			
Ensuring that staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to reflect on their pedagogical decisions and role in supporting children to begin to regulate their own behaviour.	√	√			
Informing staff of concerns, events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling)				√	
Ensuring staff at the service are provided with appropriate training and support to effectively use coregulation strategies	√	√	√		
Maintaining confidentiality (<i>refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy</i>)	R	√	√	√	√



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

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 identity, sex, sexuality, language, religion, opinions, wealth, birth status or ability. When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators, they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable and respected. Relationships are the foundation for the construction of identity, and help shape children's thinking about who they are, how they belong and what influences them [Early Years Learning Framework, p. 20; Framework for School Age Care, p. 19]

'Constructive everyday interactions and shared learning opportunities form the basis of equitable, respectful and reciprocal relationships between educators and children. Educators who are actively engaged in children's learning and share decision-making with them, use their everyday interactions during play, routines and ongoing projects to stimulate children's thinking and to enrich their learning. These relationships provide a solid foundation from which to guide and support children as they develop the self-confidence and skills to manage their own behaviour, make decisions and relate positively and effectively to others.' (*Guide to National Quality Framework – refer to Sources*)

Child Safe Standard 3 requires services to have strategies to empower children about their rights, ensure children can participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. When children feel respected and valued, they are much more likely to speak up about issues of safety and wellbeing. Enabling and promoting empowerment and the participation of children within a service has multiple benefits in addition to enhancing the safety of children, including demonstrating a commitment to upholding the rights of children, checking that what the service is doing is what children want and building the communication and leadership skills of children.

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 development of this policy should also be informed by the service's *Code of Conduct Policy*.

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)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

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

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Adequate 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).

Responsive relationships: are a means of assisting children in positive and effective ways to gain understanding and learn skills that will help them learn to manage their own behaviour.

Responsive Relationships Review: critically reflect and review the support and guidance provided for the child's wellbeing on an ongoing basis. Consult with the nominated supervisor, staff, parents/carers and families, and other professional support agencies as applicable.

Coregulation: Co-regulation involves various types of responses, including but not limited to: a warm, calming presence and tone of voice, verbal acknowledgement of distress, modelling of behaviours that can modulate arousal, and the provision of a structured environment that supports emotional and physical safety.

Coregulation Support: when children's behaviour that can be described as:

- infringes on the rights of others
- disrupts others or causes disputes between children
- 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
- a child presenting in ‘freeze’ mode, withdrawn or excessively passive in a way which is inhibiting their learning and/or development
- is inappropriate relative to the child’s developmental age and background.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program (KIS): Supports funded kindergartens to plan and implement a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability, developmental delay or complex medical needs. Long Day Care services can apply for the KIS program for their Victorian Government-funded kindergarten programs.

Program Support Groups (PSG): A program support group brings together key people to support the inclusion of children with disability or developmental delay, or complex medical needs, from the time of enrolment at kindergarten until they move to school. The group may include:

- the early childhood teacher
- the child’s parent/carer(s)
- early childhood intervention professionals
- a preschool field officer
- medical practitioners, therapists or other allied health professionals
- a support person – if the child’s parent/carer(s) chooses to use one.

Mental health: In early childhood, a child’s mental health is understood as a child’s ability to ‘experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children. Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development. <https://beyou.edu.au/>

Serious incident: An incident resulting in the death of a child, or an injury, trauma or illness for which the attention of a registered medical practitioner, emergency services or hospital is sought or should have been sought. This also includes an incident in which a child appears to be missing, cannot be accounted for, is removed from the service in contravention of the Regulations or is mistakenly locked in/out of the service premises (Regulation 12). A serious incident should be documented in an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record (sample form available on the ACECQA website) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident. The Regulatory Authority (DEECD) must be notified within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Regulation 176(2)(a)). Records are required to be retained for the periods specified in Regulation 183.

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program: The role of the PSFO Program to support the access and participation of children with additional needs (children of all abilities) in their kindergarten program. For more information visit: www.education.vic.gov.au

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES



SOURCES

- Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Child Safe Standards: www.cryp.vic.gov.au
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
- Guide to the National Quality Framework, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Kids Matter, an Australian mental health and well-being initiative set in primary schools and early childhood education and care services: <https://beyou.edu.au>
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (DE): www.education.vic.gov.au
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Victorian Inclusion Agency (VIA): www.viac.com.au

RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
 - Code of Conduct
 - Compliments and Complaints
 - Curriculum Development
 - Inclusion and Equity
 - Occupational Health and Safety
 - Privacy and Confidentiality
 - Supervision of Children
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EVALUATION



In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the 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
 - notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk ([Regulation 172 \(2\)](#)).
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ATTACHMENTS

- Nil
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AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Thornbury Kindergarten on 20th August 2024.

REVIEW DATE: 20/08/2027

