

# Behaviour guidance policy

## Purpose

This policy will provide guidelines to ensure staff, committee and adults:

- Are aware of the importance of positive caring relationships to assist children to develop socially and emotionally
- Are able to implement appropriate behavioural guidance practices that take into account the physical, emotional and social context; the individual developmental needs of the child; and the needs of the other children in the service
- Use acceptable forms of behaviour guidance strategies that build children's confidence and self-esteem.

## Policy statement

### 1. Values

Boroondara Preschool is committed to:

- Respecting the importance of positive interactions and relationships between children, families, staff and committee
- Acknowledging that children have the same rights as adults and recognising the diversity that exists in everyone
- Protecting children from aggression by providing them with a safe and secure environment, and the opportunity for positive and respectful interactions with adults and other children
- Recognising that children's behaviour reflects their level of development and is influenced by a range of factors
- Providing a learning environment that supports the growth, wellbeing and development of the whole child
- Respecting cultural practices and beliefs and working in partnership with parents/guardians and other professionals with issues relating to the guidance of a child's behaviour
- Encouraging children's learning in identifying their own rights, needs and feelings with those of others, to interact effectively and, in doing so, to gain an understanding of empathy
- Engaging only in practices that are respectful of, and provide security for, children and that in no way degrade, endanger, exploit, intimidate or harm them psychologically or physically
- Reflecting the values, attitudes and current recommended strategies that promote positive behaviours.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, parents/guardians, committee members, students, professionals and any other persons involved in the care and education of the children at Boroondara Preschool.

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### 3. Background and legislation

Behaviour guidance is part of the daily program in a children's service and is occurring at all times, whether children are displaying challenging behaviour or not. Managing children's behaviour in a way that assists young children to express their feelings and needs when they find words are inadequate, even in the early years of school, is one of the most common challenges for early childhood educators.

Children need adults who can listen, understand and help them learn how to cope with a situation that they have not yet learned to manage. Responding to young children's behaviour is about teaching and not punishment. How professionals and parents respond to children's behaviour has a lasting effect on how they learn to regulate their emotions.

This policy provides a sound framework for centres to adopt, review and reflect on the philosophy, beliefs and values of the centre with regard to behaviour guidance of children. An effective behaviour guidance policy is one that has been developed in consultation with staff, parents/guardians and committee, where everyone agrees on the values and goals that underlie the centre's practices.

Relevant legislation may include but is not limited to:

- *Children's Services Act 1996 (CSA)*
- *Children's Services Regulations 2009 (CSR)*
- *Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic.)*
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.*

### 4. Definitions

**Behaviour guidance:** Describes a way of assisting children to self-manage rather than the more traditional 'behaviour management' or 'discipline' that generally implies an adult 'managing' children's behaviour or using punishment to control children. It includes all forms of behaviour and not just behaviours labelled as 'negative'.

**Challenging behaviour:** Describes 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 equipment
- Inhibits child's learning and relationship with others
- Is inappropriate to the child's developmental age and background.

**Cool down time:** A 'quiet, relaxed, neutral break; a cooling-down period for the child to regain self-control'. (Greenman J. & Stonehouse A. 1996, *Prime Times*)

**Time out:** Means different things to different people. Generally, time out is defined as a behaviour guidance strategy in which the child is removed for a period of time to an alternative place and in isolation. This practice is not recommended as an effective behaviour guidance strategy in early childhood services.

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**Restraint:** The action of restraining, a device that limits or prevents freedom of movement; for example, holding a child down.

**Supervision:** Observing and interacting with individual children and groups of children.

**Adequate supervision:** Every child at the centre is supervised constantly, actively and diligently.

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD):** The state government department responsible for the funding, licensing and regulation of children's services in Victoria.

**Inclusion support facilitator (ISF):** Employed by inclusion support agencies funded by the Commonwealth Government to provide advice on inclusive practice in childcare services. ISFs also help centres to access a range of practical supports.

**Preschool Field Officer (PSFO):** Employed by local government authorities or other agencies to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in funded kindergarten programs. The PSFO service is part of the kindergarten inclusion support services program.

**Qualified staff:** A staff member who is a teaching staff member or has successfully completed a two-year full-time, or part-time equivalent, post-secondary approved early childhood qualification, or an approved qualification that is substantially equivalent or superior to that qualification.

## 5. Sources and related centre policies

### Sources

- Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP), Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA)
- DEECD, *Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria*

### Centre policies

- Child protection
- Code of conduct
- Communication
- Complaints and grievances
- Inclusion and equity
- Privacy
- Program participation
- Supervision

## Procedures

### The committee is responsible for:

- Providing staff with guidelines on the centre's expectations of their behaviour, responses and reactions when working with children and their families
- Supporting staff to gain appropriate training, knowledge and development of appropriate skills for the implementation of this policy

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- Ensuring that all staff, parents/guardians, students and volunteers are aware of this policy and that it is implemented within the centre
  - Assessing the skills and knowledge of staff and their commitment to ensuring that their behaviour management strategies reflect best practice
  - Compliance with legislation and/or regulatory requirements. CSR Regulation 41(d) requires a behaviour management policy be available for inspection at the centre at all times the centre is operating
  - Following the procedures outlined in the centre's complaints policy if an adult notices any inappropriate discipline practices by other adults, including staff members at the centre
  - Taking immediate and appropriate action if it is identified that an adult has imposed inappropriate behaviour guidance on a child
  - Reporting to the DEECD within 24 hours followed by written notification as soon as practicable of any incident involving injury or trauma to a child while being cared for or educated by a children's service requiring the attention of a registered medical practitioner or when a complaint alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of any child within the children's service may have been compromised (CSR r90 and CSA s29)
  - Supporting staff in implementing the procedures outlined in Attachment 1, 'Procedures for the guidance of challenging behaviours'
  - Maintaining a commitment and respecting an individual's privacy when behaviour management strategies are being implemented
  - Compliance with the centres privacy policy.

**Qualified staff are responsible for:**

- The day-to-day implementation of this policy and, where possible, addressing behavioural issues directly with the child/ren concerned and informing the parents/guardians
- Working collaboratively with other staff in implementing this policy
- Providing parents/guardians with information about the services approach to behaviour guidance
- Providing other staff with information about strategies that have been developed as part of any specific behavioural guidance plans
- Using their professional knowledge and experience to develop, in consultation with the other staff, attitudes and practices that are based on realistic expectations of children's needs and abilities
- Following the procedures outlined in Attachment 1, 'Procedures for the guidance of challenging behaviours'
- Ensuring that procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents/guardians to understand issues outside the centre that may impact on a child's behaviour (refer to the Communication policy)
- Ensuring that all staff working in the children's room, even if only for a short period each day, are aware that there is a specific behaviour guidance program to be followed for a particular child
- Ensuring that all staff have a consistent approach to guiding children who are displaying challenging behaviour

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- Collaborating with other staff and parents when professionals from other support services become involved in assisting with a behaviour guidance program for a child
  - Informing support professionals about the behaviour guidance policy in the children's service so that there is consistency with any behaviour guidance strategies that may be developed
  - Providing a program that is age-appropriate and based on the individual needs and interests of each child
  - Providing a program that supports the use of positive strategies of guidance, redirection and reinforcement
  - Working cooperatively with parents/guardians on issues relating to the guidance of their child/ren's behaviour, and keeping them informed of the strategies and methods used
  - Analysing and developing strategies for daily practice and for responding to challenging behaviour
  - Evaluating behaviour guidance strategies
  - Providing a set of basic developmentally appropriate behavioural guidelines that:
    - Emphasise positive actions
    - Give children reasons for the limits
    - Are implemented in a consistent manner
    - Are proactive and non-judgemental
    - Are reinforced positively and regularly
    - Are reviewed regularly for age and cultural appropriateness
  - Adapting the physical environment and organisation of the program to ensure that children have the space and opportunity to explore, experiment and feel safe
  - Providing a physical environment with adequate equipment, variety and challenges for the children
  - Informing the responsible officer in the regional office at DEECD of the strategies in place for a particular child when there is an inspection of a children's service
  - Interacting with children as outlined in [Attachment 2](#), 'Guidelines to assist staff in implementing the Behaviour guidance policy'.

**All staff are responsible for:**

- Working collaboratively with other staff in implementing this policy and behavioural guidance plans
- Discussing behaviours that cause concern with other staff
- Providing effective supervision that will assist them to anticipate potentially unacceptable behaviours, and eliminate situations and physical arrangements that may encourage inappropriate behaviour
- Promoting positive, empathetic relationships between children and their peers
- Respecting the confidentiality of both the parents/guardians and child when dealing with issues of behaviour guidance concerning an individual child
- Ensuring that children are not put in a position where they feel frightened, ashamed, embarrassed, insecure or isolated (CSR r28)

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- Recognising that, from time to time, they will need assistance, advice and/or support and seeking that whenever necessary
  - Modelling positive attitudes, behaviour and appropriate use of language
  - Nurturing the development of children's social skills, assisting them to learn how to relate well to others
  - Supporting children to learn to think for themselves and to be considerate
  - Guiding children to reflect on the effects of their behaviour on other children and to look for solutions together
  - Foster a positive self-esteem by acknowledging children's efforts
  - Give children feedback about their achievements
  - Implementing strategies based on respect that build on the child's self-esteem and confidence, and considering the child's developmental stages of understanding, ability to cope and skill acquisition
  - Planning routines or transition times that ensure children are not rushed
  - Planning the physical environment with developmentally appropriate materials and equipment so that children are stimulated and do not become bored or frustrated
  - Interacting with children as outlined in Attachment 2, 'Guidelines to assist staff in implementing the Behaviour guidance policy'
  - Encouraging children to resolve potential conflicts for themselves, providing support with strategies and suggestions when appropriate
  - Recording observations, in the context of the educational program, and collating information so that staff can make informed decisions about whether individual behaviour guidance strategies are required
  - Taking a proactive approach that looks at the reasons underlying the behaviour, not just the symptoms.

**The parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Engaging in open communication with staff about their child
- Informing staff of any events in the child's life outside the centre that may impact on their behaviour; for example, moving house, relationship issues or a new sibling
- Informing staff of any concerns they have regarding the behaviour of their child or the impact of other children's behaviour on their child
- Working collaboratively with staff to develop a behaviour guidance plan if required
- Contributing to the development and review of their child's behaviour guidance strategies
- Contributing to the policy review process
- Agreeing to work within the policy and promoting a partnership approach.

## Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes, the committee will:

- Use a quality assessment tool, such as the Preschool Quality Assessment Checklist
- Evaluate and reflect on the relevance of the policy in relation to current research in child development and behaviour management principles
- Assess whether a satisfactory resolution has been achieved in relation to behavioural issues raised
- If appropriate, conduct a survey in relation to this policy or incorporate relevant questions within the general parents'/guardians' survey
- Take into account feedback from staff and parents/guardians regarding the policy
- Monitor complaints and incidents regarding the behaviour of the children attending the centre.

## Attachments

- Attachment 1: Procedures for the guidance of challenging behaviours
- Attachment 2: Guidelines to assist staff in implementing the Behaviour guidance policy

## Authorisation:

This policy was approved by the Boroondara Preschool committee of management at a committee meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

**Review date: 25 / 10 / 2012**

## **Procedures for the guidance of challenging behaviours**

The pivotal part of dealing with challenging behaviours is a child's relationship with a caring adult who can help with the learning and emotional support needed.

When dealing with challenging behaviour, the qualified staff will enter into a collaborative management strategy with the parents/guardians.

### **Step 1**

Invite parents/guardians to assist in managing the behaviour by discussing:

- The ongoing behaviour displayed by the child, identifying improvements and celebrating successes
- The parents'/guardians' and the centre's overall aspirations for the child
- Recommended strategies that will support the child's development and reviewing and evaluating those strategies
- The child's personal characteristics, such as his/her interests, temperament, age and cultural backgrounds
- Any resources or changes to the environment or program that may be required for the individual child's and group plan to be implemented; for example, changes to routines and transitions
- Available support resources, such as preschool field officers, referral for specialist assessment and additional adult support (written consent is required from parents/guardians before any intervention/assessment is obtained).

### **Step 2**

Develop a behaviour guidance plan that is:

- Based on observations of the child, including broader observations of the environment, culture of the service, and the interactions of the whole group and other staff working with the child
- Appropriate to the needs of the child, and accepted and agreed on by the parents/guardians and other professionals involved in the care and education of the child
- Clear and easy to follow by all staff, parents/guardians and/or volunteers working with the child.

### **Step 3**

Continually review, reflect, evaluate and revise the strategies that have been implemented.

### **Step 4**

The committee or relevant subcommittee, such as complaints or staffing, may become involved when:

- Staff are concerned that the child's behaviour may put themselves, other children, staff and others at risk
- The consultation with the parents/guardians and other professionals and the development of a behavioural guidance plan have not resolved the problem

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- A complaint is received about a child's behaviour, such as when the safety of other children is threatened
  - Additional resources are required.

All attempts will be made to resolve the issue as soon as possible by consultation and investigation.

## **Consultation**

The subcommittee is responsible for:

- Following the procedures outlined in the Complaints policy to ensure compliance with centre policy and with regulatory and legislative requirements
- Consulting staff for professional evaluation of the situation and expertise in relation to strategies to be implemented and resources needed
- Meeting with the parents/guardians of the child concerned
- Meeting with any support agencies involved with the child, if appropriate
- Supporting staff by assessing staff skills and identifying additional training needs for staff in the area of behaviour guidance
- Investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support or training by contacting the regional preschool field officer or specialist children's services officers from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, or other agencies involved with the child.

The staff will:

- Not divulge confidential information provided by the parents/guardians without first obtaining their written consent
- Provide only relevant information to the subcommittee to assist with the resolution of the issue.

## **Implementation**

When the investigation has been completed, the subcommittee will authorise a representative to consult with staff, parents/guardians, specialist staff and other relevant parties regarding the implementation of a range of strategies that may include:

- A behavioural and/or developmental assessment of the child (if not already undertaken)
- Utilising behaviour intervention programs or specialists, such as from a preschool field officer
- Changes to the amount of time the child attends the centre, or requesting the parent/guardian to remain with the child
- Additional staff for the room (depending on the availability of funds)
- A referral to a parent support program to obtain assistance or other support services for the family
- The development of an individual behaviour guidance plan that is mutually acceptable to all parties
- Clear timeframes for review and evaluation.

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Qualified staff will:

- Incorporate the identified strategies into their program
- Consult with other staff responsible for the care and education of the child in regard to the implementation of the behaviour guidance plan
- Maintain ongoing consultation with parents/guardians - this may be a joint responsibility of the subcommittee
- Maintain confidentiality in relation to information gained about the child and their family.

### **Reporting to the committee**

The subcommittee will inform the committee if:

- Additional financial resources are required
- A suitable and mutually agreeable behavioural guidance plan has not been achieved (in these situations, the committee will seek appropriate advice, such as from DEECD and KPV).

The qualified staff member will provide regular progress reports to the committee on the successful (or otherwise) implementation of the agreed strategies and behaviour guidance plan.

Please note: Excluding a child from a centre should be a last resort. Such a decision should be seen as part of the collaborative management of a child's behaviour and based on the joint decision of the family, staff and any other professionals involved in the care and education of the child (refer to Inclusion and equity policy).

### **Additional support**

Children's services may have access to a range of existing support services in place that they contact, including:

- Early childhood intervention services
- Preschool field officers for children attending the funded kindergarten program
- Inclusion support facilitators
- Pediatric services
- Specialist children's services
- Other health professionals, such as psychologists, speech pathologists or occupational therapists.

Parental consent is required when a referral for intervention is requested by staff.

## **Guidelines to assist staff in implementing the Behaviour guidance policy**

- Understand the needs of individual children and those in the group, and acknowledge that most children's behaviour is influenced by their developmental stage, the environment, the time of day, actions (modelling) of staff and other children, family experiences and the family cultural background.
- Recognise that some causes of inappropriate behaviour include, anger, frustration, boredom, desire for attention, imitation, tiredness, excitement, jealousy, social clumsiness, high activity levels and too much choice or lack of choice.
- Support children to learn to think independently and be considerate. Assist them to think about the effects of their behaviour on other children and look for solutions together. This could involve speaking with the child about the effect of their behaviour on others and then asking the child, 'What do you think we could do to make sure it doesn't happen again?'
- Teach children to recognise when their behaviour is successful.
- Foster a positive self-esteem through acknowledging children's efforts.
- Give children information about the things they have achieved that you appreciate and respect and that impress you, rather than an evaluation or a judgement of them as a person or their work.
- Assist and encourage children to talk about and manage their feelings; encourage children to think about how others might feel (empathy).
- Modify the program (or room/outdoor setup) as required to limit situations that may encourage inappropriate behaviour.
- Encourage children to resolve potential conflicts for themselves, but step in with strategies and suggestions when needed.
- Acknowledge a child's good intentions (even if they were carried out inappropriately).
- Acknowledge that it is the behaviour that is inappropriate and not the child.
- Acknowledge and accept the child's feelings of anger, frustration or jealousy, even if the reaction seems out of proportion to the cause. Distinguish feelings from the response the child has to those feelings. Encourage the child to talk about their feelings. For example, make it clear that the feelings are not unacceptable, only the response (action) to those feelings.
- Use language that does not label the child, only the behaviour.
- Role model considerate and respectful behaviour in all interactions with peers, children and other adults.
- Allow appropriate choices in decision-making and be prepared to accept the child's decision.
- Give attention to all children involved in a situation.
- Comfort a child who may be hurt or upset and talk to the aggressor.
- Empower the child who has been hurt/upset to express to the other child how they feel.

- Always respond to a situation in a calm manner.
- Where appropriate use 'cool down' strategies; however, it is important to note that:
  - This strategy is to be used as an opportunity for the adult to assist the child in developing self-calming behaviours and to allow the child to gain composure and control.
  - It is viewed as a learning opportunity, not as punishment. Occasionally, there could be circumstances in which a child becomes overstimulated and out of control and may need to be removed from the situation. However, this approach should only be used when there is immediate danger of the child being hurt or hurting another child and when other strategies to guide children's behaviour have not worked.
  - A staff member will always remain with the child.