

# NQS5 Relationships with children Procedure Interactions with Children

## Background

At C&K, quality interactions, and positive relationships between educators and children are at the heart of everything we do. Children thrive when they form secure, trusting relationships with caring and responsive teachers and educators. As a signatory to the [Queensland Department of Education Statement of Shared Commitment](#), C&K recognises that every interaction counts in creating learning and care environments where children feel safe, secure and self-confident.

At C&K, everyone commits to:

- Creating a culture that promotes wellbeing and self-regulation.
- Putting children, their voice, rights, and dignity, at the centre of everything we do.
- Supporting inclusive, culturally safe, and nurturing environments, rich with quality relationships and interactions.
- Embracing a safeguarding culture through the way we speak and act, at every level of our organisation.
- Having zero tolerance of any form of inappropriate interaction with children or use of inappropriate discipline.



C&K's commitment to child protection and safeguarding aligns with the [Queensland Child Safe Standards](#), and the [Universal Principle for Cultural Safety](#). This procedure aligns with Standard 2: Voice of Children.

## Daily interactions with children

### Employees will:

- Act in the best interests of children and adhere to the [C&K Code of Conduct](#) (branch centres only). Embed appropriate conduct with respectful, safe and professional interactions with children.
- Show and model empathy by acknowledging and responding to children's needs, questions, and requests.
- Actively listen and respond appropriately to the knowledge, perspectives, interests, and emotions of children.
- Engage in meaningful, unhurried conversations with children, with an awareness of your tone and language.
- Encourage children to express themselves safely through language and other modes including movement, drawing, painting or other creative means, recognising the importance of verbal and non-verbal expression.
- Foster safe and secure attachments with children through consistent, responsive, warm, and predictable interactions.
- Take a strengths-based approach by recognising and supporting children's capabilities, focusing on what they can do now and what they can achieve with support.
- Celebrate children's efforts and persistence in overcoming challenges.
- Engage in back-and-forth interactions with children by repeating and expanding on their words, sounds, and gestures.
- View children's behaviour as communication, responding calmly and respectfully.
- Engage in professional development opportunities to review and strengthen practice.
- View personal care routines/rituals, such as mealtimes, dressing, sleep, rest, toileting, nappy changing, as rich opportunities to strengthen relationships with children.
- Empower children with choice for their personal care routines by using the 'Invite', 'Suggest' and 'Engage' approach. For example, changing a child's nappy:



## Interactions with children to support social and emotional learning

### Employees will:

- Support children's relationships, independence, and collaboration, encouraging a growing awareness of responsibility towards others.
- Support peer relationships, incorporating fostering friendship, empathy, and social connection.
- Model respect, compassion, and kindness, and reinforce positive social behaviours for example, sharing, turn-taking, cooperation, and empathy.

- Support children in expressing their needs and resolving conflicts constructively.
- Promote independence and active participation by involving children in age-appropriate decision-making.
- Be emotionally attuned to non-verbal cues, expressions, body language, and behaviours.
- Help children develop self-regulation. Be mindful of and support children who express visible distress or dysregulation or experience challenges to engage with others.
- Use positive behaviour guidance strategies as outlined in the [Supporting Children's Behaviour Procedure](#).
- Engage in professional development on child social-emotional growth, self-awareness, and regulation.

## Interactions with children to create culturally safe and inclusive learning spaces

### Employees will:

- Show respect for all children and families, valuing diverse background, ethnicity, language, religion, family structure, and gender. Value and respect each child's story and lived experience.
- Actively engage in cultural responsiveness by reflecting on how diversity influences practice and daily interactions. Take action to understand and address personal and professional bias.
- Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledge, and histories into the curriculum.
- Work collaboratively with culturally and linguistically diverse families to ensure children's identities, languages and strengths are acknowledged and celebrated. Recognise and affirm children's home languages, cultural practices and identities in everyday interactions and learning experiences.
- Understand and support children with diverse needs, including children with disabilities, developmental delays or impairments, medical conditions or children who are or have experienced trauma or vulnerability.

## Interactions with children and safeguarding

Teachers and educators hold a position of trust, care, authority, and influence, creating an inherent power imbalance with children. A breach of professional boundaries occurs when this power is misused in a way that compromises a child's sense of safety and wellbeing. In addition, teachers and educators must be mindful that their interactions with children can be observed and interpreted by others, including children, colleagues, families, and the wider community. Even well-intended actions can be misperceived, making it essential to always maintain professionalism, transparency, and adherence to safeguarding practices.

### Employees will:

- Empower children to speak up when they feel unsafe, disrespected, or unhappy. Treat children's concerns seriously and respond in a sensitive and timely manner.
- Recognise children as active citizens with the right to express their views, participate meaningfully in decisions, and have their voices genuinely heard and valued.
- Teach and model consent in age-appropriate ways, helping children understand bodily autonomy, boundaries, and respectful interactions.
- Ensure visibility by interacting with children in environments where they can be observed by others.
- Use positive, non-threatening body and verbal communication. Never act in a manner that could be misinterpreted as punitive, coercive, inappropriate, or excessive.
- Respect children's autonomy, maintaining appropriate tone, body language, and physical proximity, while being appropriate and necessary to their care and education.
- Unless there is an immediate threat to a child or another person's safety, never make physical contact that holds or restricts a child against their will to force compliance for example, restraining, pulling, pushing, dragging, or grabbing.
- Offer and provide support to colleagues when they display signs they are stressed, overwhelmed, or challenged by a child's behaviour. Where practical, suggest they take a short break for self-regulation, while maintaining active supervision and regulatory educator to child ratios.
- Seek colleague support when facing challenges or feeling overwhelmed. Where practical, take a short break while maintaining active supervision and regulatory educator to child ratios.
- Ensure communication between educators, particularly while within ratio, is respectful, intentional, purposeful and child centred.
- Promptly intervene, report, and escalate incidents, complaints, or allegations of inappropriate interaction, conduct or discipline to centre Director/Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person in Charge (RPIC) or Early Childhood Education Manager (ECEM)/Committee as per relevant procedure(s).
- Regularly reflect on practice and contribute to a strong safeguarding culture. Seek clarification from centre Director/Nominated Supervisor or RPIC or ECEM/Committee if unsure about appropriate conduct in specific situations.

## Inappropriate interactions, discipline, and conduct

### Inappropriate discipline

Under section 166 of the National Law, a child must not be subjected to:

- any form of corporal punishment
- any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances.

### Inappropriate conduct

Under section 166A of the National Law, a child must not be subjected to conduct that a reasonable person would consider inappropriate at an education and care service.

Refer to [appendix one](#) for further information.

## Employees are **NOT** permitted to (not limited to):

### Inappropriate interactions

- ✗ negatively label a child or family
- ✗ criticise a child's actions or behaviours
- ✗ blame, shame, humiliate or threaten a child
- ✗ make fun of, laugh at, or use sarcastic or cruel humour with a child
- ✗ deliberately ignore a child's needs, emotional distress and attempts to communicate or seek comfort
- ✗ excessively use negative language such as, "no" "stop that!" "don't..." "you never..."
- ✗ act in ways that place a child at risk

### Inappropriate conduct

- ✗ physically, emotionally, sexually (including grooming) harm or neglect a child. Refer to [Child Safety and Protection Definitions and Indicators Guideline](#).
- ✗ make physical threats towards a child, or towards an adult in the presence of a child
- ✗ use disrespectful, threatening, or intimidating language and behaviours towards an adult in the presence of children
- ✗ talk about children in a derogatory manner in the presence of a child
- ✗ talk disrespectfully about a child's family, culture, or home environment
- ✗ talk about or initiate experiences that are inappropriate for children's age and development and may negatively shape their thoughts and behaviour
- ✗ engage in sexualised or racially charged conversations
- ✗ grant special privileges, gifts or excessive attention to a child that others do not receive
- ✗ single out a child for one-on-one time beyond what is appropriate for their care and education
- ✗ be alone with a child in an isolated space without a reasonable care related purpose and without notifying a colleague
- ✗ frequently carry a child when not necessary for their comfort, wellbeing, or safety
- ✗ touch a child in a sexualised or intrusive manner
- ✗ discuss or disclose sexual or inappropriate personal topics with a child
- ✗ express romantic feelings towards a child
- ✗ initiate, request, or encourage a child to kiss
- ✗ force physical affection when a child resists or expresses discomfort
- ✗ engage in tickling or rough-and-tumble play with a child beyond what is developmentally appropriate and suitable for an education and care setting
- ✗ encourage children to keep secrets
- ✗ use retaliatory, insulting, or humiliating remarks towards a child
- ✗ force-feed a child
- ✗ capture, store, or transmit an image of child on a personal electronic device
- ✗ capture an image of a child in a state of undress or during toileting and hygiene care routines
- ✗ engage in direct online or digital communication with a child e.g. follow child's online account, tag a child's social media post, including online 'friend requests' and personal messaging (noting social media age restrictions)

### Inappropriate discipline

- ✗ use any form of physical or corporal punishment e.g. hitting, smacking, slapping, kicking, biting, squeezing, spitting, pinching, or throwing objects at or towards a child
- ✗ use physical force, such as pulling, grabbing, or dragging, to control a child's behaviour unless there is an immediate, real threat to a child's health, safety, or wellbeing
- ✗ verbally or physically threaten a child
- ✗ unreasonably restrain a child (this may include restraint in a highchair or swing)
- ✗ yell at, belittle, or use inappropriate language to punish or control a child's behaviour
- ✗ isolate a child or deprive them of basic needs e.g. food and drink, as a way to control their behaviour
- ✗ lock a child away or remove a child from the learning environment and take them to an office or separate room as a strategy support and/or regulate behaviour.
- ✗ exclude a child from events or activities as punishment

## Leadership and Management

### Centre Directors/Nominated Supervisors (and Management Committees) or Responsible Persons in Charge will:

- Outline the responsibilities of this procedure when inducting new teachers/educators. Provide constructive and targeted support to strengthen and develop professional practice and ensure completion of the Learning@C&K “Positive Interactions and Behaviour Support” module during their induction.
- Recognise and celebrate responsive, respectful, quality interactions with children. Identify areas for improvement, provide targeted feedback, model best practice, and facilitate regular professional discussion to strengthen and review educator practice.
- Immediately report, escalate, and respond to any incident, complaint, or allegation of inappropriate interaction, conduct or discipline as per relevant procedure(s):
  - [Child Centre Incident Reporting Procedure \(Branch centres only\)](#)
  - [Child Centre Incident Reporting Procedure \(Affiliate centres only\)](#)
  - [Complaint Management Procedure \(Branch centres only\)](#)
  - [Reporting an Allegation of Harm Procedure \(Branch centres only\)](#)
  - [Reporting an Allegation of Harm Procedure \(Affiliated centres only\)](#)
  - [Managing Underperformance Procedure \(Branch centres only\)](#)

### C&K Early Childhood Managers and Pedagogy Advisors will:

- Outline the responsibilities of this procedure when inducting new Centre Directors/Nominated Supervisors. Provide constructive and targeted support to strengthen and develop professional practice and ensure completion of the Learning@C&K “Positive Interactions and Behaviour Support” module during their induction.
- Prioritise the observation of teacher/educator interactions with children during centre visits. Recognise and celebrate responsive, respectful, quality interactions, and identify areas for improvement, providing targeted feedback and professional development. When necessary, work alongside teachers/educators/Educational Leaders to model best practice.
- Immediately report, escalate, and respond to any incident, complaint, or allegation of inappropriate interaction, conduct or discipline as per relevant procedure(s) as listed above.

## Acknowledgements, references, and resources

- [ACECQA Information Sheet – Inappropriate Discipline](#)
- [ACECQA Information Sheet – Inappropriate Conduct](#)
- [ACECQA Information Sheet - Quality Area 5 Relationships with children.](#)
- Australian Government Department of Education (2022) [The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0](#)
- Department of Education, Early Childhood Regulatory Authority [accessed 2025] [Statement of Shared Commitment – Every Interaction Counts](#)
- Queensland College of Teachers (2019) [Professional Boundaries: A Guideline for Queensland Teachers](#)

## Appendix One - Inappropriate Conduct

Under National Law (section 166A), Approved Providers, Nominated Supervisors, staff members and volunteers must not subject a child to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service.

Approved Providers and Nominated Supervisors also must ensure that no child is subjected to conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service.

Inappropriate conduct is conduct that a reasonable person would consider inappropriate in an education and care service, taking into account any of the following circumstances:

- Whether the conduct aligns with generally accepted education and care practice.
- The child's age and developmental stage.
- Whether the conduct is likely to cause or result in harm (including emotional, psychological, or physical harm) or injury to a child or children.
- Whether the conduct is sexual, aggressive, or violent.

In deciding if the conduct is inappropriate, it does not matter if:

- the child consented (agreed to the conduct, either by directly expressing their consent or implying consent through their actions)
- the person subjecting the child to the conduct believes the child has consented
- the person subjecting the child to the conduct is related to the child.

Subjecting a child to inappropriate conduct can occur in a number of ways including, but not limited to:

- in-person via words or behaviour, including both adult to child and between adults in the presence of a child/ren
- filming, transmitting, and capturing images or recordings
- as a single occasion or as part of a pattern over time
- either directly or indirectly (for example, exposure to inappropriate language or conversations, or leaving inappropriate material accessible to children)
- online
- as an omission (for example, deliberately excluding a child).