NQS5 Relationships with children Procedure
Supporting Children's Behaviour

Introduction

"Educators play an important role in supporting children to regulate their own behaviour. Positive, respectful daily interactions with children can support them to learn about interdependence and to become considerate citizens. 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 with others." (ACECQA 2018 pg. 1)

Teachers and educators who prioritise nurturing relationships and thoughtfully plan and consider the program and environment, provide children with the conditions to develop skills and understandings needed to interact positively with others. A positive behaviour support approach has a significant effect on children's learning.

At C&K, a positive behaviour support approach is implemented.

A positive behaviour support approach:

- Is culturally safe and trauma informed.
- Is positive and strengths based.
- Considers individual developmental capabilities.
- Supports children to develop socially and emotionally within a learning community.
- Supports children to care for themselves and for others including developing empathy and kindness, understanding their emotions and those of others, and learning how to cooperate and be part of a group.
- Provides children with a sense of agency and potency; a sense they can make a difference to themselves, their world and can act on their values.

C&K Behaviour Support Model

Under a positive behaviour support approach, the following behaviour support model will be implemented.

Developmentally appropriate behaviours

- Universal behaviour support strategies - supporting all children to understand what behaviour is appropriate during their time at the centre, and how to interact and engage with peers and team members in a safe and appropriate manner. This can be implemented and supported by the educational program, ongoing pedagogical practices and centre environment
- Internal support provided by regional team
- Professional development for teachers/educators

Concerning behaviours

- Scheduled meeting(s) with child's parents/guardians
- Behaviour Support Plan
- Centre Behaviour Risk Assessment
- Internal specialist support provided by ECPA
- Inclusion funding (when appropriate and eligible)

Complex and escalating behaviours

- Scheduled meeting(s) with child's parents/guardians
- Behaviour Support Plan
- Centre Behaviour Risk Assessment
- Intensive, tailored support provided by regional team and C&K Central
- Inclusion funding (when appropriate and eligible)
- WIAG Meeting (HIGH risk behaviour- Branch only)
- Possible external specialist support
- Possible coaching and mentoring

Interactions with children

Teachers and educators will:

- Understand and acknowledge all behaviour is an attempt to communicate; recognise challenging behaviour as an indication of a child's unmet need; be non-judgmental and sensitive; and seek to understand, support, and acknowledge children's emotions.

- Implement positive guidance strategies that are consistent and based on support. Refer to Appendix 1 for examples.
- Regularly acknowledge and encourage children's behaviour that demonstrates care, empathy, and respect.
- Work collaboratively with children to provide a safe and supportive environment for all.
- Demonstrate an understanding of developmentally expected behaviours, as well as an understanding of how a child's individual experiences, needs and personality traits may impact behaviour e.g. cultural, trauma.
- View and respond to children's behaviour as a natural part of growth and development. With the guidance of supportive adults, children will continuously learn to regulate their emotions and understand behavioural expectations.
- Where possible, and when developmentally appropriate, discuss and agree on reasonable expectations with children. Outline expectations in a clear, reasonable, consistent and calm manner. Whenever possible, be in proximity when communicating and providing directions and choices.
- Support children when negotiating situations and peer conflict and respond quickly when inappropriate behaviour is observed.
  - Listen and acknowledge children's accounts of a situation and keep an open mind.
  - Promote autonomy and self-regulation by providing children with time to make choices.
  - Model and encourage core values such as friendliness, acceptance, respect, empathy, kindness and tolerance.
  - Teach and reinforce conflict resolution skills by empowering children to use language and other forms of positive non-verbal communication strategies to express emotions.
  - Encourage and model safe behaviour.
  - Use positive language. For example, say *"We walk inside"* rather than "*No running".*

Always

- ✓ View children as capable and competent and approach situations from a strengths-based perspective.
- ✓ Ensure children feel secure and know that you are there to help and support them.
- ✓ Provide positive reinforcement, encouraging a strong sense of identity and pride in themselves.
- ✓ Encourage children to use a range of communication strategies to express needs, wants and feelings.
- ✓ Help children deal with conflict constructively and develop a sense of social responsibility, so they become aware of how their actions and behaviour impact others.

Never

- × Use foods, rewards, stickers, or stamps as a behaviour guidance strategy.
- × Implement physical (corporal) punishment i.e. use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain or discomfort to correct or punish a child's behaviour.
- × Implement physical contact/intervention as behaviour guidance strategy. Never hold or restrict a child against their will to force compliance UNLESS there is an immediate real high-risk threat to a person's safety. Any physical intervention response must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary with minimal force applied for the shortest time needed to maintain safety.
- × Discuss child's behaviour/incident in the presence of children and family members of other children.
- × Remove a child from the learning environment and take them to an office or separate room as a strategy support and/or regulate behaviour.
- × Implement inappropriate discipline such as:
  - × hitting, pushing, slapping, pinching, pulling or biting a child
  - × force-feeding a child
  - × yelling at or belittling a child
  - × humiliating a child e.g. condescending statements about a child
  - × physically dragging a child
  - × locking a child away
  - × depriving a child of food or drink
  - × excluding children from events
  - × verbally or physically threatening a child.
- × Interact or behave in the following manner:
- × negative labelling of a child or family
- × criticising a child's actions or behaviours
- × blaming or shaming a child
- × making fun of, or laughing at or about a child
- × using sarcastic or cruel humour with or to a child
- × excessive use of negative language to a child, such as, "no" "stop that!" "don't…"

Interactions with families

Teachers and educators will:

- Work collaboratively and establish and maintain open channels of communication with families. Regularly discuss and share information with parents/guardians regarding their child's strengths, needs and progress.
- When required, email inclusion@candk.asn.au for access code to arrange a TIS interpreter (131450/tis@homeaffairs.gov). Free service for kindergarten programs.
- Recognise and acknowledge family diversity by respecting social, cultural, lifestyle, and parenting choices.
- Build trusting relationships with families to collaboratively identify possible challenges that might be affecting a child's ability to engage with the education program.
- When appropriate, share relevant details of support agencies, training, specialists, counselling and/or funding to promote children's access, participation and learning. For example:
  - Family and Child Connect (13 32 64)
  - Child Health Nurse (13 HEALTH | 13 43 25 84)
  - Complex Care
  - Autism Queensland (3540 8610 | css@autismqld.com.au)
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Hub (3240 8900)
  - BUSHkids
  - Family Child Health Hubs

Professional practice

Teachers and educators will:

- Lead, advocate and act in the best interests of children, families, themselves and others.
- Undertake regular professional development to build an understanding of how best to support and guide children's behaviour.
- Promote wellness and share behaviour support responsibilities with colleagues.
- Refer to the *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics* to support ethical decision making.
- Acknowledge and understand you may not have all the answers to support a child's behaviour. When needed, seek Early Childhood Pedagogy Advisor (ECPA) advice and support.

Physical environment

Teachers and educators will:

- Provide responsive learning environments, equipment and materials reflective of children's ideas, emerging abilities and interests.
- Arrange and maintain clutter free and organised learning environments with consideration to children's sensory needs and safety.
- Provide opportunities for large motor movement and play. Understand that children who are active are less likely to display challenging behaviours.
- Demonstrate an understanding that for some children, an opportunity to choose between outdoors or indoors will support their active participation, wellbeing and engagement.
- Minimise frustrations by providing sufficient equipment and learning materials.
- Balance children's need for familiarity and variety, by making considered changes to the environment and availability of learning materials.
- Model and encourage care and respect of equipment and learning materials.
- Carefully consider the arrangement of furniture, equipment and learning materials to maximise supervision and provide children with quiet spaces to withdraw or play independently, and spaces that encourage small or large group learning.
- Implement effective supervision strategies (as per centre *Supervision Plan*) to promptly respond to children's needs and behaviour.

Routines and rituals

Teachers and educators will:

- Recognise the rhythm of the day in relation to routines, rituals, relationships and expectations impact social learning and participation. Acknowledge that the majority of children respond well to the predictable structure of routines that help them understand what happens in each part of the day, creating a sense of safety.
- Implement relaxed and unhurried routines and transitions. For example:
  - Allow flexibility to respond to children's individual needs e.g. opportunities for children to eat when hungry.
  - Maximise choice e.g. quiet activities for children who prefer not to sleep.
  - Provide large blocks of time for child-initiated play.
  - Avoid large group activities that involve children sitting for long periods of time.

Child displays concerning behaviours

Centre Director/Responsible Person in Charge, teachers and educators will:

- Ensure the behaviour and incident is documented as soon as possible
- Promptly share and discuss concerns with centre Director AND ECPA.
- When required, in collaboration with centre team, review and implement *Concerning/Complex Behaviour Risk Assessment*. Read final/reviewed version(s) of risk assessment and complete acknowledgement table.
- As soon as possible, schedule a formal/confidential meeting with child's parent/guardian as per to the *Communicating with Families to Support Children's Wellbeing and Inclusion Procedure*. During the meeting, begin to develop with the child's parent/guardian *a Behaviour Support Plan and* consider/reflect upon the following:
  - *What are the possible causes of the behaviour?*
  - *Is the behaviour age/developmentally appropriate or related to learning a new skill?*
  - *Are my expectations reasonable and are my interactions contributing to the behaviour? Be aware of the extent to which your mood and energy levels affect children's behaviour.*
  - *Are my responses consistent and support children to understand expectations and identify boundaries?*
  - *Are there identifiable triggers? Are there times or situations when the behaviour is more likely to occur?*
  - *How is the child likely to be feeling? Behaviours do not always mean the same thing to a child as an adult. Putting yourself in their situation can offer solutions to the best way to respond to a child's behaviour.*

  Begin to develop with the child's parent/guardian *a* Education Support Plan.
- If a child requires additional support to participate in the program:
  - Kindergarten- Complete an online *C&K KISS Inclusion Form.* Refer to *KISS Guidelines*.
  - Childcare and Extended Kindergarten- Apply for Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) support managed in QLD by KU. Develop a *Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP)*: identify barriers, possible strategies and actions. Continue to communicate with ECPA, ECEM and KU Inclusion Professional (if child IDF eligible).
- Document behaviours via a Behaviours of Concern Record
- Finalise and maintain *a* Education Support Plan. Ensure all relevant centre teachers and educators have read and understand the child's *Behaviour Support Plan.*
- When required, and with child parent/guardian prior written consent (via *Permission to Access Services to Support Inclusion Form),* seek support and information from external professionals.
- In consultation with Early Childhood Education Manager (ECEM)/Committee, consider possible structural changes e.g. lowering the educator to child ratio, an alternative room/group.
- Acknowledge that supporting children with concerning behaviours is challenging. Take care of yourself and seek the support of colleagues, ECPA and ECEM/committee. If needed, access the *Employee Assistance Program* (1800 808 374).

Child's behaviour is complex and escalating

When a child's behaviour is escalating and the safety of children and teachers/educators or others is at risk, teachers and educators will:

- Allow time and space for the child to calm down. This may require moving the remainder of the children inside whilst the child demonstrating complex behaviour is outside, but within teacher/educator sight and supervision.
- When developed, implement strategies outlined in centre's *Concerning/Complex Behaviour Risk Assessment*.
- Never use physical restraint/intervention as a behaviour support strategy. Physical intervention is a response when there is an immediate real high-risk threat to a person's safety. Any physical intervention must be reasonable, proportionate and necessary and done with minimal force for the shortest time needed to maintain safety. If a physical intervention response is required, complete a *Child, Centre Incident Record*. Inform child's parents/guardians as soon as practical after the incident (no more than 24hrs of the incident occurring).
- As soon as practical, document behaviours via a Behaviours of Concern Record and inform child's parents/guardians as soon as practical after the incident (no more than 24hrs of the incident occurring).

As soon as practical after the incident, Centre Director/Responsible Person in Charge, teachers and educators will:

- Immediately notify ECEM/Committee and seek support from ECPA.
- In collaboration with centre team, develop, review and implement *Concerning/Complex Behaviour Risk Assessment*. Read final/reviewed version(s) of risk assessment and complete acknowledgement table.
- As soon as possible, schedule a formal/confidential meeting with child's parent/guardian. At this meeting Develop/Review child's Education Support Plan and consider/reflect upon the following:
  - *What are the possible causes of the behaviour?*
  - *Is the behaviour age/developmentally appropriate or related to learning a new skill?*
  - *Are my expectations reasonable and are my interactions contributing to the behaviour? Be aware of the extent to which your mood and energy levels affect children's behaviour.*
  - *Are my responses consistent and support children to understand expectations and identify boundaries?*

  - *Are there identifiable triggers? Are there times or situations when the behaviour is more likely to occur?*
  - *How is the child likely to be feeling? Behaviours do not always mean the same thing to a child as an adult. Putting yourself in their situation can offer solutions to the best way to respond to a child's behaviour.*
- Finalise revised Education Support Plan. Ensure all relevant centre teachers and educators have read and understand the revised *Behaviour Support Plan.*
- Acknowledge that supporting children with complex behaviours is challenging. Take care of yourself and seek the support of colleagues, ECPA and ECEM/committee. If needed, access the *Employee Assistance Program* (1800 808 374).

Wellbeing and Inclusion Advisory Group (Branch centres only)

- If a child's behaviour needs are rated HIGH as per the *C&K Risk Matrix*, a Wellbeing and Inclusion Advisory Group (WIAG) meeting will be initiated by the centre's ECPA.
- WIAG membership includes:
  - Wellbeing and Inclusion Manager (Chair)
  - Quality and Regulation Manager
  - Workplace Health and Safety Manager
  - Legal, Risk and Governance team member
  - Relevant Regional Manager and/or ECEM, ECPA, Centre Director and teacher/educator.
- WIAG meetings occur prior to the child's enrolment, immediately after diagnosis (of an enrolled child) or immediately after a child is displaying a pattern of complex and escalating behaviour.
- If a centre is unable to meet a child's education and care needs AND there is an ongoing high risk to the safety of the child, other children, teachers/educators or others, the matter may be escalated to the Chief Operations Officer (COO).

C&K Management and Advisory Support

Early Childhood Education Managers and Early Childhood Pedagogy Advisors will:

- During centre visits, observe children's behaviour and provide teachers/educators with contemporary and appropriate direction and guidance in line with this procedure.
- When required, work alongside teachers/educators and model behaviour support strategies.
- Sight, review and provide input and feedback on *Behaviour Support Plans.*
- When required and appropriate, attend and contribute to meetings with teachers/educators, parents/guardians and external professionals.
- Develop, facilitate and source appropriate training for teachers and educators e.g., Team Teach physical contact strategies
- When required, seek advice and guidance from the C&K Education Wellbeing and Inclusion team.
- When appropriate, apply for and seek coaching and mentoring for teachers and educators. Team members can request support by emailing the inclusion inbox at inclusion@candk.asn.au or contact you centre ECEM, ECEC or ECPA and make a request for support
- When a child's behaviour is beyond the expertise of teachers/educators, promptly advise Regional Manager. When appropriate and approved, source appropriate external support.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Maintain open and regular channels of communication with teachers/educators.
- Share relevant information about your child's social and emotional development, additional needs and/or behaviour upon and throughout enrolment.
- When requested, meet with teachers/educators and relevant support professionals, to develop and review child's *Behaviour Support Plan*.
- Work collaboratively with C&K and your child's teachers/educators.
- When required, seek external professional advice to support your child's behaviour, and social and emotional wellbeing.

Acknowledgements and references

- ACECQA Information Sheet (2018) *Supporting children to regulate their own behaviour*
- ACECQA Information Sheet (2023) *Inappropriate Discipline*
- Australian Government (2022) *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2*
- Australian Government (2023) *My Time Our Place V2*
- Porter (2010). *A Guidance Approach to Discipline: Practitioner Workbook.*
- Govt of South Australia (2019) *Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people: guidelines for staff working or volunteering in education and care settings*

Appendix 1 - Positive support strategies

When responding to a child's behaviour it is important to do so in a way that maintains their rights and dignity. Where possible, take the time to reflect on the best way to respond, rather than to simply react. However, in some situations, educators may need to respond quickly if safety is an issue.

Positive Strategy	Example
Focus on building strengths and positive aspects of behaviour	Help children to feel good about themselves and to appreciate, care for and respect others. *"Thanks for putting the hammers/ nails back in their stand. Thank you for helping to keep others safe."*
Redirect	Offer materials, equipment and experiences that engage their interests. *"I understand that you feel frustrated waiting, but Sam is still playing with it. Shall we look for something else to do while you wait?"* Offer choices and let children make decisions. *"Jack looks like he is feeling sad in this game. Do you think you can play a friendly game, or would you prefer to do a quiet activity by yourself for a while?"*
Provide explanations and encouragement	Help children to understand what is acceptable and what is not. *"It is OK to throw the ball outside but when inside we just roll it. That way, we won't hurt others or spoil their games. Could you help xxxx to fix their building? S/he is feeling sad."*
Be firm when you need to be	Children need adults to set reasonable boundaries and help them organise their feelings and responses. *"Stop! It's not OK to hit xxxx with the spade. Please put it back in the basket and go get a drink of water. When you come back, we can talk about why you are feeling angry and how you could manage those feelings another time, so that others don't get hurt."*
Provide support and help through modeling	Help children feel secure, communicate what they want and express their feelings appropriately. *"I know this is hard for you, but I will help you."* *"Sally are you trying to play a game with Tom? Can you see that he looks sad? I don't think he likes being splashed! Perhaps you could hold the container while Tom fills it up with water? Tom would it be O.K. if Sally helped?*
Avoid encouraging 'hollow' gestures	We want children to develop empathy and care for others, but it is of no value to insist on "I'm sorry!" without genuine feeling. Rather, challenge them to think about how their actions have made the other child feel. *"I understand that you are angry because you didn't win the game, but it is not O.K to throw all the pieces on the floor! Isla and Jess were still playing and now they are feeling upset! I wonder what you could do to help, so that they can finish their game."*
Avoid power struggles	In situations where there are strong feelings and direct conflict, work to make some concessions for the child. *"We did agree that your time would be up in 5 minutes, but I can see how frustrated you are feeling. Caitlin has been waiting for her turn, but perhaps she will let you finish that little bit first. Would that be O.K. Caitlin? Caitlin is very patient to wait, but when the timer goes off, it will be her turn, and we can find a new game for you to play. O.K?"*