Early Learning
Positive Relationships, Interactions and Behaviour Support Policy

1. Policy Statement

All decisions made by educators and Uniting Victoria & Tasmania are guided by a commitment to children's safety, rights, and best interests being of paramount importance.

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- Interacting with children in a manner that upholds the value, dignity, agency and rights of each child
- Engage in, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children
- 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
- Considering the diversity of individual children at the service, including family and cultural values, age, gender, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child
- Encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children, families and educators/staff at the service
- Model prosocial behaviours with children/staff and utilise prosocial teaching techniques at all times when guiding children's behaviour
- Engage with children in ways that uphold professional standards of practice.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following persons:

- Approved provider and persons with management or control
- Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge
- ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff
- Parents/guardians
- Contractors, volunteers, and students.

3. Executive Summary

Safe and secure relationships form the foundation for children to explore and learn. When children experience positive interactions with trusted adults, they are better able to develop relationships with peers and navigate their world.

Educators play an important role in providing a learning environment in which children can explore the complexity of social interactions, experience and regulate their emotions and increasingly respond to others in prosocial ways. These skills are vital components of early childhood development, and are acquired through practice overtime, guided by trusted adults who provide modelling, support and feedback for children.

Promoting a culture of respect, equity and fairness is of prime importance. Corporal punishment or unreasonable or excessive discipline ***will not*** be tolerated.

Positive language and guidance are the key techniques for educators. Educators are to use pedagogical decision-making and intentional teaching strategies to provide additional support when supporting children's social and emotional development. Families will be involved when developing behaviour support plans for individual children and consulted if referral to allied health services is appropriate.

4. Current Environmental Context

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, 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]

Our organisation adheres to and is guided by the Child Safe Standards in Victoria, and the Child and Youth Safe Standards in Tasmania.

Educators are responsible for:

- Appropriate behavioural expectations based upon each child's ability and capacity level,
- Providing learning environments that support children's developing social skills and
- Using teaching strategies that strengthen children's positive behaviour and decrease undesired behaviours.

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)

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.

Educators model positive, socially acceptable behaviour and language, develop rules and limits in consultation with children where appropriate, and support children to negotiate their rights in relation to the rights of others. When disagreement and or conflict occurs between children, and intervention by an educator is necessary, a respectful approach will be taken, that provides the children with the encouragement to learn about the effect of their behaviour on others and relevant conflict resolution skills.

5. Responsibilities relating to Positive Relationships, Interactions and Behaviour Support Policy

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Agency Staff, Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Develop and implement the *Positive Relationships, Interactions and Behaviour Support Policy* in consultation with all stakeholders *R168*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure educators, staff, students, volunteers and agency contractors and parents have access to this Policy and comply with its requirements *R170 & R171*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Every decision that educators and Uniting Vic Tas make must ensure that the safety, rights and best interests of children is of paramount consideration *S2A*	**R**	✓	✓		
Ensure the Responsible Person, educators, students, volunteers, staff and agency contractors are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy*) *R155 & R156*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure educators, students, volunteers, staff and agency contractors 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 circumstance *S167*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times *S165*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure, free from any hazards and promotes active participation of every child *S167*		✓	✓		✓
Ensure 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 *R156*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure the educational program contributes to the learning and development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		✓

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Ensure that the service provides education and care to children in a way that: • 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 *R73, R155 & R156*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Educators should inspire, encourage and accept each child, and encourage them to do the same with other children. They can do this by: • Helping children build a confident self-identity • Helping children try to understand how other people might be feeling • Supporting children to interact with a range of people • Nurturing critical thinking about bias • Supporting children to stand up for themselves and others in the face of bias • Responding respectfully and appropriately to children • Engaging in sustained shared thinking with children about their interests • Putting in place a predictable routine. This includes intentional learning activities and opportunities for self-selection (where children choose to take part in activities that interest them) *R73, R155 & R156*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Develop warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Demonstrate positive communication, like using calm voices, respectful listening, and acknowledging feelings *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓

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Support children's consent by respecting their right to give, withhold or withdraw consent, verbally or non-verbally (for example, by using body language) *R73, R155 & R156*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Acknowledge children's feelings and helping them name emotions using resources, pictures, feelings charts and other visual aids *R73, R155 & R156*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Encourage children to ask for help when taking on new challenges (promoting children's independence and confidence) *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Support children to raise concerns if they feel unhappy or unsafe and take appropriate action in response to their concerns *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Develop strategies to help children understand appropriate interactions with educators and know who to tell if something feels wrong or uncomfortable *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Create, promote and model a respectful, child safe culture, where children's views are always listened to, including their right to say 'no' *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Teach children body safety and respect for personal space *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure appropriate physical contact is maintained at all times *S166*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Apply a trauma informed lens when supporting children to self-regulate and manage behaviours		✓	✓		✓
Model respectful behaviour and provide supportive language to enable children to vocalise their concerns *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Talk with children about the consequences of their actions to support their understanding and learning *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Plan and implement strategies to support individual children's behaviour *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Pre-empt potential conflicts or challenging behaviours by monitoring children's play and supporting interactions *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓

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Develop individual behaviour plans for children, including evidence of consultation with their families and if appropriate, input and suggestions from other professionals and support agencies *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop links with and referral pathways to services and to support children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and their families *R73 & R155*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communicate and work collaboratively with children, families and educators in relation to children's interactions, behaviour and relationships		✓	✓	✓	✓
Inform the Regulatory Authority via RiskMan, within 24 hours of a serious incident or notifiable complaint/incident at the service *S173*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Understand and implement the Child Safe Standards *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 & S16C*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Maintain confidentiality at all times *Privacy Act 1988*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inform educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on your child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, changes to household circumstances, a new sibling)				✓	
Inform educators/staff of any concerns regarding your child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour				✓	

6. Related Documents

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

Uniting Child Safety Policy – Uniting adopts the Uniting Church Australia National Child Safety Policy Framework, 2019 and the principles of this Policy Framework

- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Educational Program and Practice Policy*
- *Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Policy*
- *Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
- *Privacy Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- Children's Services amendment Act 2019
- *Children's Services Regulations 2020*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children
- Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care Class 4 (October 2014)
- *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)
- *Early Years Learning Framework 2022 V2.0*
- *Child Safe Standards Victoria*
- *Child and Youth Safe Standards Tasmania*
- Department of Education and Training (DE) *Behaviour Guidance Practice Note 6* Reviewed June 2015
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics (2016)
- UNICEF - Convention on the Rights of the Child
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*

Forms

UF-EL-072-Early Learning Behaviour Support Plan.docx
UF-EL-073-Early Learning Behaviour Information Gathering.docx
UD-EL-002-Behaviour Support Plan Example.docx

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by: March 2029

Developing and Implementing Behaviour Guidance Plans

Positive behaviour support focuses on:

- Children's strengths
- Knowledge of the child's learning and development
- Mutually respectful relationships between adults and children
- Understanding and addressing the underlying causes of challenging behaviours
- Teaching new skills through intentional teaching and strengths-based goals
- Using a variety of communication strategies, including verbal and non-verbal cues
- Modifying spaces for different learning and development needs
- Reinforcing appropriate behaviour
- Long-term improvements benefiting children, educators and families
- Working with other staff to ensure strategies are used consistently.

Note that children must only ever be physically restrained in emergency situations, such as when a child is:

In a clearly unsafe situation (e.g. Attempting to climb over a fence or run onto a road)

- Risking the safety, health or wellbeing of themselves, other children or staff.
- Staff must not use corporal (physical) punishment or unreasonable discipline. This is a serious breach of the national law and regulations and the *child wellbeing and safety act 2005*.

Examples of unreasonable discipline include but are not limited to:

- Hitting, slapping or pinching a child
- Force-feeding a child
- Isolating a child
- Yelling at a child
- Humiliating or belittling a child
- Dragging a child
- Depriving a child of food or drink
- Using negative consequences (e.g. putting a child in 'time out').

When a child may be in immediate danger of being hurt or hurting others, an educator may then need to take the child to another space and support them to calm down and/or self-regulate. This strategy/action must be part of an agreed individual support plan.

In these situations, the educator must:

- Stay with the child
- Offer reassurance, comfort and support
- Give the child space and time to calm themselves, while keeping them within sight or hearing.

Procedures recommended for the development of a behaviour guidance plan

These procedures recommend steps that services can follow to develop a behaviour guidance plan for a child exhibiting challenging behaviour. These procedures should be adapted to suit individual services.

A caring relationship with an adult, who can provide the learning and emotional support required, is pivotal to supporting children's behaviour. Challenging behaviour is best managed through a collaborative strategy developed between service staff and families.

Excluding a child from the service should only be a last resort. This decision should be made as part of the collaborative plan to respond to a child's behaviour and based on a joint decision by the parents and family, and the Approved Provider, Responsible Person, and other professionals involved in the education and care of the child (refer to *Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Policy*).

Roles and responsibilities

The following are the roles and responsibilities of the various individuals working with the child at the service.

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Ensuring that there is a behaviour guidance plan developed for a child if educators are concerned that the child's behaviour may put the child themselves, other children, educators/staff and/or others at risk.
- Ensuring that parents and other professionals (as appropriate) are consulted if an individual behaviour guidance plan has not resolved the challenging behaviour.
- Consulting with and seeking advice from the Regulatory Authority if a suitable and mutually agreeable behaviour guidance plan cannot be developed.
- Ensuring that they are notified if a complaint is received about a child's interactions or behaviour e.g. when the safety of other children is in question.
- Ensuring that, if a complaint is received, every attempt is made to resolve the issue by consultation and investigation as soon as possible.
- Ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan.
- Ensuring that educators/staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and responses of a child/children with challenging behaviour.

The Responsible Person is responsible for:

- Developing the behaviour guidance plan in consultation with the educators, the parents/guardians of the child, the child as appropriate and other professionals and services as appropriate.
- Consulting the *Complaints and Grievances Policy* to ensure compliance with service procedures, and Regulatory and legislative requirements.
- Consulting educators for their professional evaluation of the situation and drawing on their expertise in relation to developing strategies and identifying resources required.
- Meeting with the parents of the child concerned to develop and implement a behaviour guidance plan.
- Supporting educators by assessing skills and identifying additional training needs in the area of behaviour guidance.
- Advise on possible strategies, in consultation with families and educators.
- Investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support, or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer (refer to *Glossary*), specialist children's services officers from the Regulatory Authority or other agencies working with the child.
- Setting clear timelines for review and evaluation of the behaviour guidance plan.

Educators/staff are responsible for:

- Developing the behaviour guidance plan in consultation with the Responsible Person, educators, parents of the child, the child as appropriate and other professionals and services as appropriate.
- Observing children's challenging behaviour and identifying the need to develop a behaviour guidance plan to support a child in self-managing their own behaviour.
- Assisting the Responsible Person to develop a behaviour guidance plan in consultation with parents and other professionals as appropriate.
- Communicating behaviour guidance plan with co-educators, volunteers and relief staff.
- Implementing a behaviour guidance plan and incorporating identified strategies and resources into the service program.
- Undertaking relevant training that will enable them to guide children who exhibit challenging behaviour.
- Maintaining ongoing communication and consultation with families.
- Providing regular progress reports to the Responsible Person on the implementation and effectiveness of the agreed strategies contained in an individual behaviour guidance plan.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of information provided by families unless written consent is provided to disclose information to relevant parties.
- Providing their observations, documentation and expertise in reviewing individual behaviour guidance plans.
- Providing other information, as relevant, to the Approved Provider and Responsible Person to assist with the resolution of any issues.