

INTERACTION WITH CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND STAFF POLICY

OVERVIEW:

Education and Care Services National Regulations require SUNBEAMS to take reasonable steps to ensure that it provides education and care to children in a way that encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions, provides opportunities for children to develop self-reliance and self-esteem, maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child, gives each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour and has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.

My Time, Our Place (MTO) identifies secure, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with children as one of the principles that underpin practice. Within the SUNBEAMS community many different relationships are negotiated with between children, educators, and families. The way in which these relationships are established and maintained, and the way in which they remain visible impacts on how our community functions as a whole. Relationships directly affect how children form their own identity, whether or not they feel safe and supported, and ultimately, their sense of belonging.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	OTHER SERVICE POLICIES/DOCUMENTATION	OTHER
r73, 84, 115, 118, 126, 145, 155, 156, 157, 166, 168, 170.	5.1, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2, 5.2.1, 6.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrival and Departure Policy - Positive Guidance Policy - Child Protection Policy - Code of Conduct - Confidentiality Policy - Child Safe Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My Time, Our Place. - ACECQA

OUTLINE:

This policy outlines the expectations of staff in relation to interactions with children in their care, reflecting the principles of Sunbeams of nurturing positivity, understanding and respect

WHO THE POLICY AFFECTS?

Management
Staff
Students/Volunteers
Parents



POLICY STATEMENT:

SUNBEAMS will provide an environment that reflects the principles in “My Time, Our Place” where the development of secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children are fostered and encouraged and genuine respect for diversity and a commitment to equity is reflected in all our interactions with children.

We will endeavor through our interactions with children to nurture their optimism, happiness and sense of fun and we will aim to recognise and respond to barriers which may impact on children achieving a positive sense of self identify.

Educators will utilize opportunities in their interactions with children to develop an understanding of each other's expectations leading to a deeper understanding of each other and the negotiation of clear boundaries regarding safety, respect for others and procedures for creating a caring environment.

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for interactions with children (regulation 168) and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed.

To build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families, and educators **SUNBEAMS** will adhere to our statement of philosophy and the ECA Code of Ethics. We aim to provide a child safe culture where our values and practices that guide the attitudes and behaviour of all staff are guided by the implementation of the Child Safe Standards and related National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

PROCEDURES:

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN:

Children need positive relationships with educators that are trusting and responsive to their individual needs. Through these experiences and interactions children will develop a positive understanding of themselves and feel a sense of belonging. We promote a respectful, child safe culture where children concerns are always responded to, and children feel empowered to participate in decisions and provide feedback to educators and staff.



(A) THE EDUCATORS WILL:

- Maintain a positive attitude in all interactions with children.
- Listen carefully to children's experiences and perspectives and show interest in their ideas and perspectives.
- Respect children as individuals and encourage each child to voice their opinions, concerns and ideas in a supportive forum that is free from stigmatism.
- Support children in feeling confident in the environment by never using strategies such as shouting, threats of corporal punishment or the refusal of food or other basic needs. Educators will always treat children with respect, courtesy and understanding.
- Treat children equally regardless of race, cultural background, religion, sex or ability and ensure interactions between children and educators exhibit this (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- Sensitively manage children who are having difficulty conveying their message or managing their emotions and support them to self regulate.
- Ensure children understand what is being communicated to them during interactions and allow them time to question or respond.
- Speak to children at their level and use voice intonations, facial expressions and body language to assist in conveying messages.
- Engage in one-on-one conversations with all children and develop an understanding of their likes, dislikes and interests.
- Collaborate with children regarding the daily routines and practices within the service including programming of experiences in order to meet their individual needs, interests and abilities.
- Organise environments and spaces that promote small and large group interactions and meaningful play and leisure.
- Collaborate with children to develop a set of rules or boundaries to guide their behaviour in the service and discuss clear expectations and consequences of inappropriate behaviours.
- Keep rules simple and only have a small number of concise rules that children understand, focusing on appreciating and caring for each other and the environment. All staff, families and children will be made aware of the rules and the expected consequences. The rules will be clearly displayed.
- Ensure that all educators enforce the rules and consequences consistently at all times. Consequences will be relevant to the situation and never demeaning the child.
- Follow up all issues that arise by discussing the situation with the child and strategising for better solutions in future issues.
- Collaborate with family members and the school where appropriate regarding appropriate behaviour management practices to ensure there is a consistent approach.
- Access professional development and resources related to positive behaviour management and include this in professional development planning.

- Act as a positive role model for appropriate and expected behaviours in the service being mindful of respectful language and tone.
- Encourage and reward acceptable behaviour by giving praise and positive feedback to children as often as possible.
- Focus on the behaviours being displayed and not the child displaying them.
- Assist children in developing self-discipline skills and regulating their own behaviours by using simple conflict resolution skills, building self-reliance and self-esteem, role modelling and positive direction.
- Provide children with opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other, educators and visitors to the service.
- Ensure that appropriate physical contact is maintained in regard to comforting children, application of first aid, safety provisions such as holding hands and maintaining respectful bodily space.
- Identify when interactions with a child are not appropriate and refer to the services 'Providing a Child Safe Environment' policy to address these concerns.
- Maintain defined boundaries for appropriate behaviour with children and engagement with their families.
- During times of Government declared pandemic, ensure students are aware that Government mandates for social distancing are for health and safety reasons and not a reflection of educator's personal feelings towards them as individuals. Protocols for social distancing will be communicated daily to students and followed according to the COVID 19 Service Policy.
- Speak with children about the coronavirus in ways that do not alarm them or cause unnecessary fear or distress, for example, discuss with children their feelings in relation to the virus, remind children that the risk of catching the illness is very low, review hygiene measures they can take to reduce the risk of infection and discuss some of the good things happening in the world.

(B) THE CHILDREN WILL:

- Be treated with respect, courtesy and understanding regardless of race, cultural background, religion, sex or ability.
- Be encouraged to listen to others respect, courtesy and understanding regardless of race, cultural background, religion, sex or ability.
- Be encouraged to share humour and express themselves in a variety of ways.
- Practice strategies for problem solving, debating, negotiating and interacting with others in an appropriate way with the guidance of educators.
- Have opportunities to use and share their home language with other children and educators
- Collaborate with staff in developing service routines and procedures including rules and boundaries and the consequences they should expect if these are not followed.
- Encourage their peers to adhere to the rules and expectations.

- Participate in experiences that will build relationships and promote interactions between each other, educators and visitors to the service.
- Assist educators in developing programs and routines for the service that reflect their individual needs, interests and abilities.
- Have their need for solitude or quiet time supported and respected by educators and children
- Develop an understanding of the choices they make and the responsibility they have to manage their own behaviours in conjunction with educators.

INTERACTIONS WITH FAMILIES:

Effective communication is the key to developing and maintaining positive interactions and relationships with others and helps to build trusting and respectful partnerships with families. Educators use positive and open communication with families and siblings in order to create a responsive and inclusive environment for children, staff and families. Interactions with families help to inform educators' knowledge of each child's distinctive interests, skills cultures and abilities. This helps to build a positive experience and a safe learning environment that encourages children to expand their knowledge and understandings.

Management and educators will ensure:

- all families are treated equitably without bias or judgement, recognising that each family is unique
- families are provided with information and resources in their first language
- families are asked to identify a preferred method of regular communication with the Service (this may include utilising a translator service)
- families and children are greeted upon arrival in a respectful manner
- they learn the names of family members and use these names when they greet them
- two-way communication is established through leading by example and asking questions and a willingness to offer information about ourselves
- common terminology (not jargon) is used when talking to parents regarding their child's development
- privacy and confidentiality are respected at all times
- information about another child or family information is never discussed with a parent or visitor and confidentiality is always maintained.

- they remain sensitive to cultural differences amongst families and encourage families to share cultural aspects with the children and educators at the service
- the advice and opinion from other professional experts is requested, with parental permission, to assist educators develop and implement strategies to support the inclusion of children with additional needs
- they seek additional resources and professional support for families through a range of organisations such as KU Inclusion Support, Area Health and other specific health professional networks
- verbal communication is always open, respectful and honest
- families are provided with up-to-date service information and notices through Daily Reports, newsletters, communal notice boards, emails and sign-in sheets.
- they regularly reflect on parent input into the program and make changes where necessary that will best benefit the service and children
- connections between families is promoted and enhanced through inviting families to participate in routines and events at SUNBEAMS
- families are aware of our complaint handling process
- any gift (including cash money) received by a family valued over \$50 is to be declared to management.
- Any bribe or gift received by a family that may influence or appear to influence a decision or action to be declined and reported to management.

INTERACTIONS WITH STAFF AND EDUCATORS:

The OSHC Service recognises that the way educators interact with each other and can have an impact on the interactions they have with children and families. Educators working within SUNBEAMS are required to demonstrate mutual respect towards each other and value the contributions made by each educator. This enables SUNBEAMS to maintain positive relations and model the type of communication they want children to develop.

To always maintain professionalism, educators will:

- engage in professional communication to create an effective work environment and to build a positive relationship with educators, children and families. Communication amongst colleagues creates a positive atmosphere and a professional image for families. Communication between staff and families ensures that important information is being passed on consistently.
- collaborate together as a team sharing room roles and responsibilities through the use of a roster where necessary



- be respectful when listening to each other's point of view and ideas
- maintain effective communication to ensure that teamwork occurs
- use staff meetings to communicate their professional reflections and ideas for continuous improvement as a team
- attend in-service training to update and refresh and add to individual skills and knowledge
- keep up to date with current legislation to child protection including mandatory reporting requirements – (*Child Protection, Reportable Conduct Scheme*)
- refer to the *Dealing with Complaints Policy Procedure* if they feel a situation with another educator is not being handled with professionalism, respect, and fairness
- recognise each other's strengths and value the contribution each person makes to different work roles
- work collaboratively to reach decisions which will enhance the quality of the education and care offered at SUNBEAMS
- welcome diverse views and perspectives
- work together as a team and engage in open and honest communication at all times
- respect each other's positions and opinions
- develop and share networks and links with other agencies
- resolve differences promptly and positively and use the experience to develop more effective methods of working together.

To always maintain professionalism, Management will:

- provide new educators with relevant information about SUNBEAMS and program through a staff handbook, induction, and daily communication
- treat educators with respect
- be sensitive to the feelings and needs of educators
- provide constructive feedback to educators as part of their professional learning plan support
- value the role and contribution of each educator
- demonstrate commitment to ongoing collaboration and engagement to support staff wellness
- provide opportunities for all educators to have input into the program development and evaluation
- appreciate and utilise educator skills and interests
- provide support, assistance and mentoring to educators
- hold regular educator meetings to encourage and support professional growth and reflective practice
- use appropriate conflict resolution techniques to solve problems



- ensure policies and procedures are up to date regarding communication, expected behaviour and grievances
- provide opportunities for professional development.

To enhance communication and teamwork, educators will:

- maintain privacy and confidentiality
- be respectful, caring and inclusive of all colleagues
- be sensitive to the feelings and needs of other team members
- support colleagues during difficult situations
- provide constructive feedback to each other
- trust each other
- value the role and contribution of colleagues
- appreciate and utilise colleague skills, strengths and interests regardless of qualification and experience
- provide support and assistance to each other
- share responsibilities
- have a flexible attitude towards team roles and responsibilities
- greet each other by name
- show genuine interest in the other person by using active and reflective listening
- communicate ideas and opinions clearly and professionally
- use a communication book or daily diary to pass on messages and record relevant information
- use appropriate conflict resolution techniques to solve problems
- engage in opportunities for professional development.

ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:

The policy will be reviewed as required. The review will be conducted by Management, Staff, Educators, Children, Families and the wider community.

Last reviewed: February 2025

Date of next review: August 2026

APPROVAL DATE: _____

DATE FOR REVIEW: _____