

POSITIVE GUIDANCE & PROCEDURES

Aim:

1. To ensure that children attending the centre are treated with respect and dignity at all times.
2. To give every child at the centre positive guidance to promote confidence, social competence and self-esteem.
3. To meet each child's individual needs.
4. To promote fluent communication with parents/caregivers/whānau and to enhance consistency between home and Centre.

Rationale

This policy and the guidelines within it are an interpretation of the legal requirements for practices, both appropriate and inappropriate, which adults in our Centre should follow in their interactions with children.

Positive guidance strategies include: management and organisation of the environment for learning; and modelling and implementing practices which meet the regulations for child behaviour practices and are in line with early childhood curriculum goals. This guidance must be by means of praise and encouragement, rather than blame, harsh language, belittling or degrading responses.

The regulations state that no child is to be subjected to any form of physical ill-treatment, solitary confinement, immobilisation, or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter or protection; any form of physical ill-treatment, corporal punishment, solitary confinement, verbal abuse, immobilisation, or deprivation of food.

The legislative requirements state that no force shall be used, by way of correction or punishment, towards any child enrolled at or attending the centre unless that person is a guardian of the child.

Definitions

Every child should be given “guidance and control”. The dictionary definition of ‘guidance’ is ‘to show the way’ and implies a goal to be reached.

Guidance is sometimes known, in the context of social behaviour, as ‘discipline’ which is derived from a word meaning ‘to teach’. This contrasts with the concept of ‘control’ which relates solely to the behaviour itself and does not include a learning goal.

Control may be used in specific and urgent situations, e.g. to stop a young child running onto the road or to prevent a child hurting her or himself or another child. It may also refer to management systems used to ensure that limits and boundaries set for children are met, e.g. control of access beyond the early childhood education setting or organisation of the environment to control the flow of traffic.

Praise and encouragement are identified as key behaviours for adults working with children in the early childhood setting. **Praise** relates to something that has been done, or has already happened, i.e. a finished work or a completed action.

Encouragement, on the other hand is related to something that could or should happen in the future. It may be given where a child is reluctant to begin an activity or carry out an action, or to help a child persist in an endeavour.

The regulations link these concepts with ‘**positive guidance to promote appropriate behaviour**’. Both praise and encouragement are to be used for the purpose of promoting behaviours in the child which are recognised as appropriate for the stage of development.

Approach

Adults working with children at the Centre will:

- foster harmonious working relationships with other adults, including parents/caregivers and staff;
- model appropriate behaviour and relationships with other adults as well as with children;
- affirm the positive in their approach to child guidance;

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- be consistent and reliable in their behaviour with children;
- demonstrate empathy with children's feelings;
- help children to recognise their feelings and to express them in appropriate ways;
- have realistic expectations of what children at different stages can be expected to do or cope with;
- establish a few clear, constant rules about what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour;
- encourage children to care for equipment, the environment, and other people;
- use the management of behaviour as a positive opportunity for learning appropriate social skills, and for thinking about concepts such as justice;
- use clear, simple, and friendly direction;
- value mistakes as learning opportunities;
- be objective when assessing children's behaviour;
- consider the child's behaviour within the context of the environment.

STAFF MUST NEVER smack, hit, grab, push, handle roughly, bite, pinch, tease, insult, humiliate, frighten, ridicule, neglect, shout at, threaten or forcefully confine any child. They must not laugh at children's behaviour or discuss it among themselves in the presence of children. These methods are illegal under the Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations. Children learn acceptable behaviour from positive example and love, not from violence or anger.

Corporal punishment is not permitted (Education Act, 1989, Section 139A). This regulation is strengthened and extended by the Education (Early Childhood Centre), which state that children must not be subjected to any form of physical ill treatment.

Other practices not permitted in any early childhood education setting are the solitary confinement of a child, or deprivation of food, drink, warmth, shelter or protection appropriate to the child's stage of development.

Even if staff believe in some of these methods and/or use them at home **THEY MUST NOT DO SO IN THE CENTRE, THEY ARE CONSIDERED TO BE "SERIOUS MISCONDUCT" and ANY STAFF MEMBER WHO DOES SO CAN FACE DISMISSAL.**

Dealing with your own stress

Childcare can be stressful work. If staff ever feel that they are not coping they must ask for help and remove themselves from the situation. Behavioural expectations vary greatly among different cultures, social groupings and child rearing practices. Adult's feelings about positive guidance are affected by their own background, culture and what they experienced as a child. This centre's philosophy of accepting and enhancing people's cultural differences and similarities is reflected in the development of a sensitive positive guidance policy.

Positive guidance is a clear set of rules defining conduct and behaviour that is explained to the children and understood by the staff. The staff model and teach children what is good to do, what is not good, what is safe, what angers or hurts, what pleases and what positive ways can be used to release anger and frustration.

The ultimate goal of positive guidance is to teach children self-discipline and an understanding of the consequences (both positive and negative) of their behaviour. When children are self-disciplined and self-directed, their needs and interests become clearer to them and to others and from this, a child centred curriculum readily follows. It is essential that positive guidance is consistent as this minimises confusion and ensures that children are clear about what behaviour is expected from them and from each other. To do this the centre aims to provide a warm, safe, happy and secure environment as the springboard from which learning can occur. To promote positive disciplinary procedures for children, the staff will use positive techniques of guidance, redirection and reinforcement rather than promote comparison, competition or criticism. When positive guidance is positive it does not damage self-esteem, but allows children to feel capable, competent and to experience pleasure from being around others. It takes into account the children's developmental understandings and abilities, recognising that needs and behaviours change as children grow and mature. Positive guidance praises and acknowledges caring, co-operative and desirable behaviours.

Staff use positive language to direct children, for example, "walk inside" not "don't run inside". Language used does not label the child but labels the behaviour, for example, "the way you behaved was not kind" not "you are an unkind boy/girl". Positive language can teach, give simple explanations and/or offer alternatives so that a child can make

judgements and choices and thus, in time, wise decisions. It is based on self-control not coercion. It leads to self-discipline, recognising that this is often a long, slow process. While the need for positive guidance is inevitable, it can be minimised by addressing possible causes of inappropriate behaviour through sensitive and individual programming. Some causes of inappropriate behaviour include; anger and frustration, boredom, desire for attention, imitation, tiredness, excitement, jealousy, social clumsiness, high activity levels and too much choice or a lack of choice. The techniques we use for behaviour modification depend upon the personality of the individual child, their developmental level and the probable cause of the behaviour.

Staff aim to provide children with an understanding of the limits of acceptable behaviour, the reasons for these limits, consistency in the management of our behaviour, and to provide good role models for acceptable behaviour. If children exhibit socially unacceptable behaviour the staff encourage alternative ways that allows all children to feel safe and secure in their environment.

Setting limits and boundaries

‘Setting limits and boundaries’ provides an alternative definition of the concept of ‘control’ in the early childhood context. This takes into account the need for children to be given guidance as to what behaviour is acceptable and what is not.

In early childhood, children often communicate their needs non-verbally through behaviour. The way in which they do this is an expression both of their developmental level and of their individual needs and abilities. An inappropriate method of non-verbal or verbal communication used by a child can result in behaviour which is seen as unacceptable in terms of the limits and boundaries set by the early childhood service.

Knowing the limits and boundaries enables children to develop self-control and self-discipline. The goal for educators is to guide and support children through the early learning process and to ensure their safety and well-being, not to achieve conformity at the expense of understanding.

Encouraging positive behaviours

An early childhood education environment which creates a positive climate for children's learning and development will encourage children to develop self-discipline and minimise the need for direct methods of intervention.

Plan the environment to ensure that:

- it is both safe and challenging and does not unduly or unreasonably inhibit or control children's behaviour;
- it includes a sufficient range and quantity of equipment and materials to meet the individual and developmental needs and preferences of every child;
- there are opportunities and places for children to watch activities or to be 'out-of-the group', on their own;
- it is designed to enhance children's well-being and sense of belonging. For example: music and rhythms are used to provide a climate of enjoyment and relaxation; there are calm, pleasant and predictable routines for meal and rest times; fun, laughter and humour are encouraged.

Develop and implement:

- clear, consistent expectations for behaviour by adults and by children and procedures for ensuring that these are known to all children, staff or caregivers and parents;
- an unhurried pace to the day where each child has space and time to learn at an individual pace;
- a range of activities designed to meet the developmental, individual and current preferences, needs and abilities of every child;
- regular events and routines that are flexible for each child;
- on-going training and professional development opportunities for staff;
- opportunities for staff to explore and debate personal beliefs and practices;
- opportunities for regular observation, discussion and evaluation on the way in which the environment is meeting children's needs;
- space and time to talk and consult with parents.

Ensure that adults working with children:

- limit the use of negative commands, e.g. 'no', to circumstances such as dangerous behaviour which requires urgent intervention;
- accept that staff will have different ideas and are encouraged to explore ways of working effectively together as a team;
- show respect for and trust in children's ability to learn;
- allow children to identify and express their feelings honestly and express their own feelings honestly, as a model for children. (The child should be able to choose whether to share feelings with others in any situation.);
- take part in activities and play with children;
- listen to and answer children as equal partners in the interaction;
- provide opportunities and support for children to practise decision-making, negotiating and resolving conflicts;
- meet infants' needs immediately, positively and consistently;
- nurture children through affirmative body language and expressions, warm physical contact such as stroking, hugging or cuddling a child on a lap, by showing empathy and by 'being there' for children when they need reassurance or support.

Note: Physical contact between adults and children

(Principle: children learn from reciprocal and responsive relationships with people.)

Warm physical contacts between adults and children are an important aspect of responsive and reciprocal relationships. Sensory perceptions are an essential aspect of learning and development for very young children and for children who have a limited understanding of language or who are emotionally upset.

Physical contact between children and adults is 'normal, natural and desirable' and should be used by adults to 'show affection, to comfort, to reassure them and to give praise as well as taking care of some of their physical needs.' (Prevent Child Abuse, Guidelines for Early Childhood Services, 1993, Ministry of Education.)

Early childhood services should develop policies that minimise the risk of child abuse by defining physical contact between adults and children in the early childhood setting. Touching should never be initiated to gratify the adult's needs. (Prevent Child Abuse, Guidelines for Early Childhood Services, 1993, Ministry of Education.)

It is not appropriate to persist with physical demonstrations of warmth or affection if the child shows that these are not wanted.

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- do not label or judge children (either positively or negatively) based on aspects of their behaviour; acknowledge and focus on the feelings behind a child's behaviour;
- do not engage in power struggles with children;
- put the focus on the behaviour rather than the child and respect the child's need to communicate, even if it is inappropriately expressed;
- can demonstrate an understanding of each child and can express an appreciation of their individuality;
- have an understanding of each child's place in relationship to the group of children;
- adhere at all times to the regulations and rules regarding unacceptable management practices for child behaviour;
- provide and model appropriate behaviour for children in both adult/adult and adult/child interactions;
- understand and acknowledge that some behaviour goals apply to the early childhood setting and may differ from those of the child's home environment;
- acknowledge that it may be more productive for a different adult to interact with a particular child;
- implement routines and regular events, such as nappy changing, snacks and nap times, flexibly to allow for individual needs.

Strategies for Positive guidance

Where a child is in danger of harming him or herself, the environment or other people, it may be necessary to take control of the situation initially. This may be verbal control or, for younger children and where a child is experiencing a strong emotion such as anger or frustration, involve physically holding or removing the child.

Firm calm action should be combined with clear, concise directions which indicate what is the preferred behaviour. This positive focus is important. The use of the word 'no' should be kept to a minimum. A tone of voice that conveys a sense of urgency provides a more effective focus and avoids setting up a negative cycle.

When children are developing language, actions and words are closely linked. They will understand and react most strongly to those words that give a clear sense of action and which provide direction as to what should be done.

Young Children

Where the adult is requiring a young child not to do something in a crisis situation, the child's impulse is for action. Intervening by physically stopping the child frustrates but does not negate this impulse. Offering a positive action to follow is more likely to de-escalate the situation than insisting on non-action.

- Intervene quickly.
- State a preferred action clearly, avoiding a focus on the undesirable behaviour.
- Provide praise and encouragement to the child for not carrying out the action (even if this is because the adult has taken control).
- When the child is calm, briefly say why you took control.
- Look for solutions together.

Time-Out

'Time-out' is an intervention strategy that is sometimes used to deal with excess anger or a lack of impulse control. It consists of removing and isolating the child from the action. The aim is to provide a brief space for the child to calm down and regain control.

Although it may act as a control mechanism, "time-out" is **not an acceptable strategy** in the early childhood education context. It does not encourage reflection or give children an understanding of the effects of their action on others, nor does it demonstrate a right way to behave.

Moreover, a child who will quietly sit apart in 'time-out' is being compliant and therefore, by definition, does not need to regain control.

Solitary confinement is deemed an unacceptable practice in early childhood education under regulations. (Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, 30 (1) b ii).

Inclusionary time-out

A similar strategy that has a learning outcome for the child involves seating the child apart from the group, beside an adult. The key to this strategy is the helpful interaction between the adult and child.

This strategy involves taking time out to watch how others do it. It could be described as “taking the child out of the action to help the child be part of the action”. It involves two steps:

- Explaining the child’s disruptive behaviour to the child in terms of the effect it had on the activity.
- Supporting the child back into play by pointing out examples of the sort of behaviour that would be more helpful.

Guiding and redirecting

Guiding or directing a child to an alternative activity respects the feelings of the child and their right to express their impulse or need but offers a more acceptable way of doing this.

Examples of this are:

- offering a child who is throwing equipment a game of catch with a soft ball, or newspaper to tear and throw;
- redirecting a child who is over-boisterous or play fighting with other children to a jumping game or an energetic outside activity;
- saying firmly to a toddler who is leaning forward to bite another child, ‘bite the shape’ as you substitute a wooden shape or teething ring;
- asking a child who is trying to ‘push in’ to be first at an activity to carry out a well-liked responsible task. This might be: setting the morning tea table; pouring drinks for other children; caring for a smaller child; here a child is agitated or hyperactive firmly redirecting or removing the child to an alternate, less stimulating activity such as helping, or being with, a supportive adult, on a one-to-one basis.

Cool-down time

Where a child is not able to exercise self-control and refuses redirection we recommend the use of ‘cool-down time’ as a settling down period. ‘Cool-down time’ should be a ‘quiet, relaxed, neutral break; a cooling-down period for the child to regain self-control’ (Greenman J. & Stonehouse A. Prime Times, 1996). A child should not be made to take ‘cool-down time’.

This strategy should not be used if a child has violated a rule without losing control.

End Note

Staff ensure that positive experiences are provided to support child/ren's self-esteem through use of language. We acknowledge and accept the child's feelings of anger, frustration or jealousy, even if the reaction seems out of proportion to the cause. The feelings are distinguished from what the child actually does about the feelings. The child is encouraged to talk about their feelings. For example, it is made clear that bad feelings are not bad, only the response (action) to those feelings is unacceptable.

Staff offer alternatives to unacceptable behaviour and give attention and praise to appropriate behaviour.

We provide a balance of quiet activities and vigorous active ones.

Give attention to both parties involved in a dispute. We comfort that child that has been hurt and talk to the aggressor. We try to empower the child that has been hurt to tell the aggressor how they feel.

Attempt to distract or diffuse the situation. We keep the disruptive child occupied.

Respond in a calm but firm manner, indicating to the child what is expected and what choices the child has.

Help the child to realise the consequences of his or her actions.

When a child is physically hurt, normal accident procedures apply.

If a child's behaviour is an ongoing concern to us the parents of the child will be consulted to determine if there are other factors affecting the child's behaviour. Strategies can then be developed together which are consistent with the family's child rearing practices.

External professionals with behavioural management expertise will be consulted to assist with a situation that causes serious concern to staff and parents of children concerned will be notified of such action.

Resources

The Ministry of Education offers extensive guidance on Positive Guidance at:

<http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/ManagementInformation/GoverningAndManaging/ProvidingPositiveGuidance.aspx>

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Videos

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