

Guiding Children's Behaviour

Policy Statement

Meerilinga's goal is to assist children in developing self-control and engaging in socially acceptable behaviours. Educators will model, coach and encourage techniques of discipline that are fair, consistent and respectful of children and their needs.

Policy Purpose

Meerilinga is committed to the principles of high quality programs that are well planned, respectful of children's developmental needs, capacities and understanding. The Behaviour Guidance Policy provides guidance to all Meerilinga workers about the organisations standards and guideline in relation to guiding children to self-manage their behaviour, learn and vocalise feelings and needs in a respectful and socially acceptable manner. This is in accordance with regulation 155.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, educators, staff, management and visitors of the service.

Exclusions

Policy Review

Biennial or from time to time when the organisation may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operations and customer service.

Policy Reviewed	4 September 2022	By	Advisor Policy & Compliance
Approved By	CEO		
Previous Review	31 January 2021		

Implementation

The behaviour and guidance techniques used by Educators and staff at our Centres are designed to give children the opportunity to expand their experiences of life in a productive, safe environment that allows individuals the right to safety, tolerance, self-expression, cultural identity, dignity and the worth of the individual.

Educators understand that as children grow and develop self-regulation becomes an important aspect of social and emotional development as they begin to understand how their actions affect others.

We believe in providing boundaries as part of a loving and secure relationship with children and families to help them feel secure and self-confident. Children benefit from knowing that their environment is stable and that a competent adult is taking care of them.

There are three aspects to promoting positive behaviour:

1. A learning environment that is positive and supportive, and provides developmentally appropriate experiences and resources
2. Strategies for building skills and strengthening positive behaviour based on age-appropriate behaviour expectations
3. Strategies for decreasing undesired behaviours

Positive behaviour strategies:

Guiding children's behaviour is an important aspect of caring for and educating children. Positive strategies need to be developed to assist children to learn appropriate ways of behaving. Corporal punishment and unreasonable discipline are not permitted in children's services, not only because the child may be physically harmed, but also because it nearly always has detrimental effects on the child's self-esteem and feelings of security.

Our guidance of children's behaviour will:

- Establish positive relationships with children.
- Encourage children to express themselves and their opinions.
- Empower children to use language and other forms of non-hurtful communication to communicate their emotions.
- Allow children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.
- Maintain the dignity and the rights of each child at all times.
- Offer positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour.
- Promote positive, empathetic relationships between children assisting them to develop respectful relationship.
- Encourage and assist children to make decisions for themselves and provide opportunities for independence and self-regulation.
- Provide clear and reasonable limits so that children know what is expected of them and follow through to help them abide by the limits.
- Model appropriate behaviours.
- Provide positive feedback and focus on children's strengths and achievements and build on their abilities.
- Be understanding and supportive – acknowledge children's emotions.
- Help children develop a sense of social responsibility, so that they become aware of the impact of their actions on others.
- Promote children's initiative and agency.
- Discuss guidelines, rules, limits and what is fair with children, and use their contributions in setting limits and guidelines.
- Provide age appropriate and interesting activities, experiences and equipment for children to use and become engaged in as they challenge their development
- Providing opportunities for children to explore both in the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Set up the environment (indoor and outdoor) for children to engage in activities and experiences in accordance with their abilities and interests.

- Ensure there is sufficient materials and equipment.
- Implement a regular routine to support children's positive behaviour. Routines help to provide a sense of security so children feel settled.

Behaviour Guidance Plan:

When a child displays unacceptable and challenging behaviour, the Curriculum Leader and team will observe, monitor and record the child's behaviour. During this time of initial assessment, the Curriculum Leader will respectfully and sensitively have informal discussions and gather information from the family. It's possible there may be changes at home or in the family situation that could be impacting on the child's behaviour.

Risk assessment may need to be completed if the behaviours are posing an increased risk to the safety and wellbeing of others.

Challenging behaviour is defined as: Behaviour that:

- Disrupts others or causes disputes between children, but which is part of normal social development;
- Infringes on the rights of others;
- Causes harm or risk to the child, other children, adults or living things;
- Is destructive to the environment and/or equipment;
- Inhibits the child's learning and relationship with others;
- Is inappropriate relative to the child's developmental age and background.

If the behaviour continues, an individual support plan for the child will be developed.

Individual Support Plan:

An individual plan for the child that documents strategies to assist Educators in guiding a child with behavioural difficulties to self-manage their behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the service Co-ordinator, Educator team, parents/guardians and other professional support agencies as applicable.

The Co-ordinator may request the parent/guardian pursue a referral for an assessment of the child's development with the local Child Development Centre. If the child has a diagnosed condition, the service will apply for funding through the Inclusion Development Fund to subsidise the cost of employing an additional Educator to support the child's inclusion in the program.

Refer to Children's Programs Policy on Diversity and Inclusion

Family and Parenting Support:

Meerilinga's integrated services approach enables us to link families to specialised support services, including family support and counselling, parenting support, homelessness services, mental health, family and domestic violence services and community. At times, we may recognise vulnerable families requiring additional support, and will work closely with them to identify and source the specific support they need.

Repetitive inappropriate behaviour that poses a risk to safety

If all behaviour guidance strategies and risk control measures have been exhausted and the child continues to demonstrate challenging behaviour causing physical or emotional harm or distress to any child or staff member, the service Co-ordinator will arrange a meeting with the parent/guardian.

The Co-ordinator may determine that the risk is too great and cease the enrolment, allowing the family to seek alternative arrangements that may better suit the needs of the child.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading and complying with the services Guiding Children's Behaviour Policy.
- Engaging in open communication with educators about their child.
- Informing educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling).
- Informing educators/staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour.
- Working collaboratively with educators/staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate.

Co-ordinator /Nominated Supervisor / Curriculum Leader will ensure:

- Information is gathered from families about their children's social skills and relationship preferences, which will be recorded in the child's individual file. Our educators will use this information to engage children in experiences that support children to develop and practice their social and shared decision making skills.
- A partnership is developed with local schools and other professionals or support agencies that work with children who have diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties to develop plans for the inclusion of these specific children. This information will be kept confidential and in the individual child's file.
- Children are given the opportunity to make choices and experience the consequences of these choices when there is no risk of physical or emotional harm to the child or anyone else.
- Children are being acknowledged when they make positive choices in managing their behaviour.
- Positive strategies are being implemented to enable Educators to encourage positive behaviour in children in order to minimise adverse behaviour. In addition, we will implement strategies educating children about developing behaviour limits and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.
- Exchange information with families about behaviour guidance which is encouraged both on an informal and more formal basis, such as parent interviews and through newsletters.
- Excessive behaviour is managed and communicated with families.
- Support educators enhance their skills and knowledge in guiding children's behaviour.

- If necessary, a Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP) is developed with local support agencies. *Refer to Children's Programs Policy on Diversity and Inclusion*
- The SIP is reviewed on a periodic basis reflecting changes that have been applied through the implementation of the plan.

Educators will:

- Encourage and support each child's social and emotional development, striving to develop children's self esteem, self-regulation and an understanding of the feelings of others.
- Adapt a positive approach, excluding cruel, harsh, humiliating or demeaning actions.
- Use positive language, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them.
- Remain calm, tender and tolerant as they encourage children who are strongly expressing distress, frustration or anger. Talk calmly with them about the consequence of their actions, and the reason for rules.
- Listen empathetically to children when they communicate their emotions, provide encouragement as they reassure the child it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions.
- Take into consideration the child's past experiences as their behaviour could be a result from past trauma such as changes in routine, changes or losses within the family, placement in care, or more serious circumstances involving abuse, neglect, or family violence.
- Be responsive to these former experiences, designing and implementing behaviour plans with the individual child that include strategies which will assist alternative and positive behaviour.
- Use positive guidance through redirection. In the instance of adverse behaviour being persistently observed, Educators will evaluate their program, room set up, supervision etc. to reflect on inappropriate behaviour, triggers and sources.
- Re-direct a child who may be causing or about to cause harm to himself or herself, another child or adult. Incidents may include a child who is kicking, spitting, biting, throwing furniture or toys, punching or hitting, or being disruptive. Redirection may also include an incident where a child places itself in a dangerous situation, for example, climbing a fence or hiding under furniture. Safety is a priority and this may mean using physical re-direction in which an Educator will actually remove the child from the harmful situation.
- Actively work with children to promote and role-model positive ways to interact with others. Use appropriate behaviour and language, encouraging children to socialise with other children, including children of different cultural backgrounds as well as from different age groups and different genders.
- Guide children's behaviour, teaching them how to be considerate of others – to think about the effects of their actions on others. It is important that children understand what acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is and how to manage their emotions.
- Actively work with all children to support them in constructing and conveying ways of expressing needs, resolving conflict, and responding to the behaviour of others.

- Guide children to remove themselves from situations where they are experiencing frustration, anger or fear.
- Ensure all strategies being implemented are appropriate to the child's age and developmental capacity.
- Provide children with the language and vocabulary needed to express their emotions and feelings and verbalise their concerns.
- Encourage children to listen to other people's ideas, consider pro-social and altruistic behaviour and collaborate and negotiate in problem solving situations.
- Support children to negotiate their rights and rights of others and mediate perceptively when children experience complexity in resolving dissimilarity.
- Learn about children's relationships with others and their relationship preferences they have and use this knowledge to encourage children to manage their own behaviour and expand on their empathy skills.
- Support children to explore different identities and points of view and to communicate effectively when resolving disagreements with others.
- Participate in planned and spontaneous conversations with children about emotions, feelings and issues of inclusion and fairness, bias and prejudice and the consequences of their actions and the reasons for this as well as the appropriate rules.
- Complete a 'Child Incident Report' with each incident that occurs. Families are to be notified where they will be required to read and sign in an instance where a child or children's safety has been jeopardised.
- Continue observing the child, where similar incidences consistently occur the child's parents and Educators will meet to discuss the behaviour of concern. Together they will develop an Individual Support Plan with strategies to support the child's inclusion in the care environment.
- Be sufficiently informed, trained and supervised to implement the Individual Support Plan created, ensuring that information is composed and recorded for reflection on its effectiveness for the individual child.
- Work with individual families and other professional agencies, including therapists to ensure that a consistent approach is used to support children with diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties.
- Consult with industry professionals to support the child within the Service and implement techniques within the program to benefit all.
- Commit to professional development and keep up to date with industry information regarding behaviour management.