

G.2 Interactions with children

G.2.1 Introduction and Overview

Policy Statement

Children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration in all decisions, actions and practices at the service. LOOSH is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe culture where every child is respected, listened to, included, supervised and supported to participate in meaningful play and leisure experiences.

This policy guides positive, respectful and safe interactions between both educators and children, and between children, including interactions that occur when using digital technologies and online environments. We value children as capable and active participants in their own experiences, promoting their agency and autonomy by encouraging them to express themselves, build independence and develop confidence. We believe this is achieved through meaningful relationships, inclusive practices and engaging experiences that support every child to feel respected, connected and empowered.

Background

This policy is guided by the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, which require approved providers to ensure policies and procedures are in place regarding interactions with children.

Positive, respectful interactions are fundamental to children's development, wellbeing and learning and are a key focus of Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children under the National Quality Standard.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that interactions with children are warm, responsive, inclusive, child-centred and compliant with the National Quality Framework. The policy supports educators to protect children from harm, promote positive behaviour, encourage children's agency and uphold each child's dignity and rights.

Guiding Principles

- Children have the right to be safe, respected, heard and protected from harm.
- Educators will build nurturing, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children.
- Children will be encouraged to express their views, make choices and contribute to decisions that affect them.
- Guidance will be positive, fair, developmentally appropriate and focused on teaching self-regulation, empathy and problem-solving.
- Corporal punishment, humiliation, intimidation, isolation, threats, coercion or any unreasonable discipline are prohibited.
- Interactions will reflect each child's age, abilities, culture, family context, strengths, interests and individual support needs.
- The service will actively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and linguistically diverse children, children with disability, neurodivergent children and children with additional needs to participate safely and meaningfully.
- Digital technologies and online environments will be used only when safe, supervised, authorised, purposeful and consistent with child safety and privacy requirements.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, management, Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, volunteers and visitors of LOOSH.

This policy applies to all activities and practices taking place in our environments both physical, online, onsite and offsite during school term and vacation care.

This policy will be considered when developing, designing, and managing other policies and programs to ensure they include relevant child safety considerations.

G.2.2 Interactions with Children Procedures

Supporting Positive Educator to Child Interactions

At LOOSH we are committed to creating a warm, respectful and supportive environment where all children feel safe, valued, heard and included. Educators will foster positive and trusting relationships with children and will engage with them in ways that promote dignity, agency and belonging. Interactions will be developmentally appropriate and characterised by active listening, respectful communication, positive language and a genuine interest in children's ideas, experiences and perspectives.

Educators recognise their role in modelling positive communication and interpersonal skills and in supporting children to develop respectful and positive relationships with both educators and their peers. Through their everyday interactions, educators will guide children to communicate effectively, express their feelings and perspectives, and navigate social interactions in ways that promote respect, empathy and inclusion.

LOOSH recognises the importance of 'connection before correction'. Educators will prioritise building positive relationships and establishing connection with children as the foundation for guiding behaviour and supporting learning and development. Educators will seek to understand the needs, emotions and circumstances underlying children's behaviour before responding, while ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of children remains the paramount consideration.

Educators will respond sensitively to children who are experiencing distress or difficulty regulating their emotions. Children will be supported to recognise and manage their emotions in ways that promote their sense of safety, security and wellbeing. Educators may provide opportunities for children to access appropriate spaces, people, resources or strategies that support self-regulation and enable them to return to participation when they are ready.

Educators recognise that children have different preferences for communication and interaction and will respect a child's choice not to engage in conversation or interaction at a particular time, where appropriate.

Educators will not single out, shame, humiliate or intentionally embarrass a child, or use language or behaviour that belittles, frightens, threatens, excludes or labels a child. Educators

will not display bias towards or against individual children, or use inappropriate, punitive or degrading behaviour management strategies. Children's concerns, complaints, disclosures, feelings and perspectives will not be dismissed, minimised or disregarded. Educators will also respect a child's choice not to participate in an interaction, conversation or activity, unless intervention is necessary to address an immediate safety or wellbeing concern.

Working Directly with Children

LOOSH maintains a Working Directly with Children Log to provide a clear record of educators who are working directly with children during each session. This log is maintained through the Kinderloop platform. Prior to each session of care, a tile is posted to the Kinderloop calendar outlining the program area, space, group of children and specific responsibilities assigned to each educator.

The Responsible Person for the session must ensure that the log is maintained accurately and that educators understand and follow their allocated supervision responsibilities. Educators are expected to communicate any changes to their allocated responsibilities or supervision arrangements to the Responsible Person, to ensure that all updates are accurately recorded.

The Working Directly with Children Log is a service record and will be maintained, stored and made available for inspection in accordance with applicable legislation, regulations and LOOSH record-keeping requirements.

Promoting Children's Agency and Voice

LOOSH recognises that promoting children's agency and voice involves more than simply seeking children's opinions. We are committed to providing children with genuine opportunities to influence decisions and practices that affect their wellbeing, learning and care.

Educators will actively seek, listen to and respond to children's views, ideas, interests, preferences and feedback in ways that are respectful, inclusive and appropriate to each child's age, development, abilities and communication style. Educators will also ensure that any concerns or complaints raised by children are taken seriously and managed in accordance with the service's Management of Complaints Policy and Procedures.

When children make suggestions, express preferences or contribute ideas, educators will genuinely consider whether and how these can be implemented. Where appropriate, children's contributions will be incorporated into the program, environment, routines and service practices. Children's views will be considered alongside educators' responsibilities for ensuring safety, wellbeing, inclusion, supervision, and compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

Where a child's suggestion cannot be implemented, educators will provide an age-appropriate explanation and, where possible, work collaboratively with the child to identify an alternative solution. This approach helps children understand that their contributions are valued and thoughtfully considered, even when their preferred outcome cannot be achieved.

Educators will provide opportunities for children to see the impact of their participation by communicating the actions, changes or decisions that have been made in response to their ideas, feedback and contributions.

The LOOSH program, routines and environments are intentionally designed to support children's agency, autonomy and decision-making. Children are encouraged to make choices about where, how and with whom they play and learn as they move freely between indoor and outdoor learning spaces. Educators support children to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, wellbeing and daily experiences by providing meaningful opportunities for choice, problem-solving, risk assessment and independence.

Behaviour Guidance and Maintaining Dignity and Rights

LOOSH is committed to ensuring that all approaches to behaviour guidance uphold the rights, dignity, safety and wellbeing of every child. Behaviour guidance practices are guided by the LOOSH Philosophy, Code of Conduct and the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics, and are implemented in accordance with the LOOSH Behaviour Guidance and Expectations for Communication policies and procedures.

LOOSH maintains a zero-tolerance approach to any interaction, practice or form of communication that may cause a child distress, fear, humiliation, harm or discomfort. This applies to all educators, staff, volunteers, students, contractors and any other person engaged by or associated with the service. Any behaviour that compromises a child's safety, wellbeing, dignity or rights will not be tolerated.

Behaviour guidance practices will be proactive, supportive and educational, focusing on helping children develop emotional regulation, social competence and problem-solving skills. Educators will build respectful and trusting relationships with children, establish predictable routines and consistent expectations, provide reasonable adjustments where required, and create environments that encourage positive behaviour and support participation.

When responding to behaviour, educators will consider each child's individual circumstances, including their age, stage of development, communication needs, abilities, disability, cultural background, family values, trauma experiences, strengths and current circumstances. Responses will be tailored to support the child's learning, wellbeing and inclusion while maintaining the safety and rights of others.

Any consequences used to guide behaviour must be reasonable, proportionate, related to the behaviour and focused on restoring relationships, promoting responsibility and supporting learning. Consequences must never be punitive, degrading, shaming, humiliating, threatening, coercive or isolating. Children will be supported to understand the impact of their actions, repair harm where appropriate and develop strategies for future success.

Physical restraint must only be used as a last resort where there is an immediate risk of serious harm to the child or others and no less restrictive alternative is available. Any use of physical restraint must be reasonable, proportionate, limited to the minimum time required to ensure safety, and managed in accordance with legislative requirements and service procedures.

Any serious behavioural incident, allegation of harm, inappropriate discipline, prohibited practice or inappropriate conduct towards a child must be documented, reported and escalated in line with the service's Child Safe Environment, Incident Management, Managing Complaints and Mandatory Reporting policies and procedures.

Supporting Positive Child to Child Interactions

The educational program will provide opportunities for children to build friendships, collaborate with others, demonstrate leadership, share ideas and participate in group decision-making.

Educators will actively monitor group dynamics and intervene promptly where exclusion, bullying, unsafe play, discrimination, coercion, or other harmful behaviours are observed or reported.

Children will be supported to identify and establish appropriate personal boundaries during interactions with peers and to ensure that these boundaries are respected and maintained. Where a boundary has been crossed, educators will guide children to take responsibility for their choices, words, and actions, communicate openly and honestly, and learn from the experience in a constructive way. Educators will also support children to communicate and collaborate with both peers and educators in ways that demonstrate respect, kindness, and consideration for the perspectives, feelings, and needs of others.

Inclusive Practices

LOOSH is committed to ensuring that all children are welcomed, respected, included, and supported to participate meaningfully in all aspects of the service. Educators are responsible for implementing inclusive, strengths-based, and child-centred practices that recognise and respond to each child's individual strengths, interests, culture, communication style, family circumstances, identity, and support needs.

Inclusive practice is embedded throughout everyday interactions, routines, environments, behaviour guidance, and educational program planning. Educators are required to proactively identify, reduce, and remove barriers to participation to promote every child's sense of belonging, agency, safety, wellbeing, and inclusion.

Where a child requires additional social, emotional, behavioural, developmental, communication, or learning support, educators will work collaboratively with the child, their family and, where appropriate, relevant schools, professionals and support services. This may include developing and implementing consistent strategies, reasonable adjustments and individualised approaches that support the child to participate successfully and experience a genuine sense of belonging.

Promoting Inclusion and Participation

To promote inclusion and meaningful participation, LOOSH educators will:

- Build respectful, responsive, and positive relationships with all children.
- Provide a welcoming environment where every child feels safe, valued, respected and able to participate.

- Provide reasonable adjustments and appropriate supports to enable children to access and participate in the program wherever practicable.
- Support children to develop positive relationships, friendships and social connections with their peers.
- Provide opportunities for children to exercise agency, make choices and contribute to decisions about their experiences and environment.
- Respond promptly and appropriately to discriminatory, bullying, exclusionary or harmful behaviour and support children to understand and respect difference.
- Collaborate with families, schools, allied health professionals and other relevant stakeholders to promote consistency.
- Regularly reflect upon environments, resources, routines, policies and educator practices to ensure accessibility, equity and inclusion for all children.
- Respect children's and families' privacy and maintain confidentiality regarding individual circumstances, support needs and personal information.

Educators are prohibited from:

- Excluding a child from participating on the basis of their disability, behaviour, culture, language, identity or additional support needs.
- Shame, label, blame or single out a child for requiring support or adjustments.
- Use a “one size fits all” approach to interactions, behaviour guidance or participation.
- Discuss a child’s diagnosis, behaviour, family circumstances or support needs in front of other children or families.
- Allow discriminatory, bullying, racist, ableist, sexist or exclusionary comments or behaviour to go unaddressed.
- Require children to participate in ways that are distressing, unsafe or developmentally inappropriate.
- Withdraw access to play, friendships or belonging as a punishment.

Supervision and Safety in Interactions

LOOSH is committed to ensuring that all interactions with and between children occur in safe, appropriately supervised environments. Active supervision is an essential strategy for protecting children from harm, supporting positive relationships, guiding behaviour and responding promptly to risks, conflict or distress.

Supervision involves more than simply observing children. Educators are expected to remain actively engaged, position themselves effectively, maintain awareness of group dynamics and respond to children’s individual needs, cues and interactions. Educators must be able to intervene promptly when interactions become unsafe, exclusionary, inappropriate or harmful.

Supervision practices will be implemented in accordance with the service's Supervision Policy and Procedures to support safe and respectful interactions between educators and children, as well as between children.

Digital technologies, online environments and images of children

LOOSH recognises that digital technologies, online environments and images of children can support communication, learning, documentation and connection with families, but must be used in ways that protect children's safety, privacy, dignity and wellbeing. Educators are responsible for ensuring that digital devices, online platforms and images are used appropriately, professionally and in accordance with children's rights and service expectations.

The use of digital technologies, online environments, photography, video and images of children must comply with the LOOSH Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy and procedures.

Working with Families

At LOOSH we foster open, respectful and collaborative relationships built on trust, recognising families as children's first and most influential educators. We will use information provided by families to enhance their interactions with children, building their sense of belonging. We will encourage families to share important information about their child through:

- Initiating regular, ongoing communication with families through conversations at drop-off and pick-up. By working in partnership with families, schools and relevant professionals, we promote continuity of care. We value open communication and actively seek opportunities to listen to, consult with and involve families in decisions that contribute to their child's wellbeing and development.
- Encouraging families to share their thoughts, ideas, questions and concerns, and promoting supportive partnerships between families, educators and the Service.
- Treating all families equitably without bias or judgment.
- Recognising that each family is unique and valuing this uniqueness.

Responding to Concerns

LOOSH is committed to responding promptly, respectfully and fairly to any concern, complaint, disclosure, allegation or incident relating to interactions with children. Concerns may be raised by children, families, educators, staff, volunteers, visitors or other stakeholders and will be taken seriously, documented appropriately and managed in a way that prioritises children's safety, wellbeing, dignity and rights.

Concerns about interactions with children may include, but are not limited to:

- inappropriate language, tone or behaviour used by an educator, staff member, volunteer, visitor or child
- a child feeling unsafe, excluded, intimidated, humiliated or unfairly treated
- bullying, discrimination, harassment, aggression or harmful behaviour between children
- concerns about behaviour guidance, discipline, physical contact, supervision or professional boundaries

- concerns about educator conduct, child safety, privacy, images of children or digital technology use
- disclosures or allegations of abuse, neglect, grooming, harm or risk of harm
- family concerns about how their child's individual needs, culture, identity, disability, behaviour or wellbeing are being supported.

All concerns will be managed in accordance with LOOSH's Management of Complaints Policy, Child Safe Environment Policy, Code of Conduct, Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy, Behaviour Guidance Policy, Supervision Policy, and mandatory reporting obligations.

G.2.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Approved provider

- ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met
- ensure that the service's Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy and procedures and the requirements for digital device use under the National Law and National Regulations is considered when planning how, how often and when to capture, store or transmit images and videos of a child during interactions, including ensuring appropriate authorisations are in place
- in centre-based services, ensure that nominated supervisors, staff and volunteers (including students) do not use personal digital devices while working directly with children, unless there is an exemption or written authorisation in place
- ensure that nominated supervisors, staff and volunteers (including students) do not use personal devices to capture, store or transmit images of children
- ensure that the service provides education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages the children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows the children to undertake experiences that 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
 - has regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child (regulation 155).
- ensure that the service provides children with opportunities to interact and develop respectful relationships with each other and with educators, staff and volunteers, having regard to the size and the composition of the groups in which children are being educated and cared for (regulation 156)
- ensure the service meets minimum educator and staff requirements, such as qualifications and educator to child ratios
- ensure all educators and staff, volunteers and students, are aware of current child protection legislation, including mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their state/ territory. Please note this is a requirement under regulation 84 and is separate to child protection and child safety training requirements set out below
- ensure that nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, staff and volunteers have completed child protection training, as required by section 162A of the National Law

- ensure that persons with management and control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, staff and volunteers have completed child safety training, as required by section 162B of the National Law
- ensure that no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or inappropriate in the circumstances
- ensure that no child is subjected to inappropriate conduct and must not subject children to inappropriate conduct
- take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators, staff and volunteers follow the Interactions with children policy and procedures
- ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators, staff, volunteers and families, and available for inspection
- notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will:
 - affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or
 - significantly impact the service's education and care of children or
 - significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service.

Nominated supervisor

- implement the *Interactions with children policy and procedures*
- devise methods to lead the development and implementation of quality practices across the service that ensure that the requirements of regulations 155 and 156 are met
- support educators to promote quality practice approaches to interactions with children
- ensure minimum educator and staff requirements are met, such as qualifications and educator to child ratios
- must complete child protection training and also ensure that all educators and staff, including volunteers and students, have undertaken required child protection training, as required by section 162A of the National Law
- must complete Foundation and Advanced child safety training and ensure that all educators and staff, including volunteers and students, have undertaken child safety training, as required by section 162B of the National Law
- in centre-based services, ensure that staff and volunteers (including students) do not use personal digital devices while working directly with children, unless there is an exemption or written authorisation in place.
- ensure that staff and volunteers (including students) do not use personal devices to capture, store or transmit images of children.
- ensure that no child is subjected to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances
- ensure that no child is subjected to inappropriate conduct and must not subject children to inappropriate conduct.

Educator Responsibilities

- contribute to the development of, and implement, quality practices that ensure that the requirements of regulations 155 and 156 are met
- promote quality practice approaches to interactions with children
- must complete required child protection training, including understanding mandatory reporting requirements and obligations

- must complete Foundation and Advanced child safety training
- monitor and maintain staff to child ratios to ensure adequate supervision of children, including when using digital technologies and online environments
- support children in line with the strategies in the ACECQA Relationships with children information sheet
- ensure that the *Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy and procedures* is followed when interactions with children include digital technologies and online environments, including that relevant authorisations are in place when taking images of children
- in centre-based services, must not use personal digital devices while working directly with children, unless there is an exemption or written authorisation in place
- must not use a personal device to capture, store or transmit images of children
- must not subject children to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable
- must not subject children to inappropriate conduct.

G.2.4 Legislation and Related Service Documentation

Legislative requirements:

- Education and Care Services National Law – Section 2A, 162A, 162B, 165, 166, 166A, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 175A-175J
- Education and Care Services National Regulations – Regulation 73, 84, 115, 117A, 118, 123, 126, 145, 155, 156, 179A, 179B
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Related Service Documentation and Policies:

- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Behaviour Guidance Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy
- Staffing, Recruitment and Employment Policy
- Volunteers, students and visitors policy
- Governance and Management Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Management of complaints policy'
- Expectations for communication policy

G.2.5 Key Terminology

Term	Meaning	Source
Capturing, storing and transmitting images of children	Capturing an image includes filming, recording a video or taking a photo/image of a child. Storing means keeping the photo/image or video saved on a device, including a storage device. Transmitting includes sharing a photo	Guide to the NQF (Glossary)

	or video by text message, email, uploading to any social media or information sharing platform or any other form of distributing an image or recording.	
Dignity and rights of the child	Element 5.1.2 of the National Quality Standard ('Dignity and rights of the child') aims to achieve the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability. Article 19 of the Convention states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically, or mentally.	Guide to the NQF (Element 5.1.2)
Personal Device	A personal device is a device that is owned by a person (NOT owned/supplied by an approved provider for education and care purposes) and is capable of capturing, storing or transmitting an image, for example phones, cameras, tablet computers, and hard drives.	Guide to the NQF (Glossary)
Positive Interactions between educators and children	Involves educators viewing each child as capable and competent, with a right to a voice, and able to contribute to decisions that affect them. This enables educators to focus their practices on children's strengths and inclusion in the group environment. Educators who are responsive to children's thoughts and feelings are supporting them to develop a strong sense of wellbeing. By interacting positively and meaningfully with children, educators help each child to feel accepted and to develop a sense of attachment and trust. Children who are supported to understand themselves experience a sense of belonging that fosters self-esteem which contributes to the development of identity and is critical to children's capacity to understand their own strengths, abilities, and interests. When children feel safe, secure and supported, they develop confidence to explore and learn.	Guide to the NQF (Element 5.1.1) Early Years Learning Framework, p 20 Framework for School Age Care, p 19
Relationships between children	When educators create supportive environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and	Guide to the NQF (Standard 5.2) Early Years Learning Framework, p 25

	respectful relationships, children respond accordingly. Positive relationships provide children with the confidence and agency to explore and learn about their world. As their relationships become more complex and far-reaching over time, children's interactions with others also help them to extend their knowledge, thinking and ability to apply what they already know in new and unfamiliar contexts. Developing effective relationships with others is a key part of children's social development and these relationships also provide a base for children's learning.	Framework for School Age Care, p 24
Relationships between educators and children	When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable and respected. Consistent emotional support contributes to children developing a strong sense of wellbeing and belonging. 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.	Guide to the NQF (Standard 5.1) Early Years Learning Framework, p 20 Framework for School Age Care, p 19
Service-supplied device	A service-supplied device is a device that is owned or supplied by an approved provider to be exclusively used for providing education and care, including to capture, store or transmit images of children. This may include devices such as phones, cameras, tablet computers, and hard drives. A service-supplied device must <i>not</i> be used for personal purposes.	Guide to the NQF (Glossary)

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