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INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

QUALITY AREA 5 |

Version no.	Reviewed by	Authorised by	Date of issue	Amendments made
V1.0	CPELC FY2022 Committee & Management	Committee & Management	30/5/23	
V1.1	CPELC FY23 Committee and Management	CPELC FY23 Committee and Management	24/5/23	Emotional coaching for all team members to support children's emotional literacy
V1.2	CPELC FY24 Committee and Management	CPELC FY24 Committee and Management	6/6/24	Continual professional development with teaching team in emotional coaching journey.
V1.3	CPELC FY25 Committee and Management	CPELC FY25 Committee and Management	27/6/25	Embedding continuous professional learning within the teaching team's emotional coaching approach.
V1.4	CPELC FY25 Committee and Management	CPELC FY25 Committee and Management	17/09/2025	Appropriate Physical Contact - added Refers to physical interactions between an educator and a child that are respectful, nurturing, and developmentally suitable. Such contact supports the child's safety, wellbeing, learning, and emotional development. Where possible, the child consents to or initiates the contact. It includes actions such as: • comforting a distressed child, • holding a child's hand for safety, • providing assistance with personal care in a respectful and hygienic manner, • giving first aid, and • supporting children who have hurt themselves. All physical contact MUST be observable by to another staff member. It must always align with the service's policies, maintain professional boundaries, and uphold child safe standards. Examples of appropriate physical contact include: • Placing a hand on the back or shoulder to comfort or reassure them • Holding a child's hand while crossing the yard, during group transitions and crossing a road/carpark • Sitting a child on your lap if they are upset

				and seeking comfort; only when initiated by the child and in view of others, and until the child is no longer distressed • Helping a child blow their nose, clean up, or change clothes when needed, using respectful hygiene practices • Administering first aid with care and sensitivity when a child is injured • Offering a side hug or placing a supportive hand on a child's shoulder (if welcomed by the child), and reciprocating affection from the child in an appropriate and respectful manner. Encourage no patting children to sleep!
V1.5	CPELC FY26 Committee and Management	CPELC FY26 Committee and Management	28/04/2026	**Table of responsibilities** Row 23 - added 23. Taking proactive steps to ensure that online interactions, digital devices, photographs, videos and communication platforms are used in ways that are safe, respectful and protect children's privacy and dignity (Child Safe Standard 9 – 9.1, 9.2)
V1.6	CPELC FY26 Committee and Management	CPELC FY26 Committee and Management	9/11/2026	Values "Added: ensuring all adults who interact with children demonstrate child-safe behaviours, maintain professional boundaries and meet all relevant screening, suitability and registration requirements for their role" Table of responsibilities "Updated: Row 5 - Updated Avoiding inappropriate conduct (refer to Definitions) maintaining professional boundaries at all times, acting in accordance with the Code of Conduct and Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy, and holding and maintaining any required Working with Children Check Clearance or Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration before undertaking child-related work. (refer to Code of Conduct, Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy (Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.4)" "Row 23 - Updated Taking proactive steps to ensure that online interactions, digital devices, photographs, videos and communication platforms are used in ways that are safe, respectful, appropriately authorised, protect children's privacy and dignity, and comply with the service's Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct. (Child Safe Standard 9 – 9.1, 9.2)" "Row 27 - Updated

				Actively seeking, documenting and responding to children's views, ideas, feedback and preferences, and demonstrating how their contributions inform decisions about programs, environments, routines and service practices (Child Safe Standard 3.5, 3.6)." "Row 33 - Updated Ensuring persons with management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, educators, staff, volunteers and students complete mandatory Child Safety Training and Child Protection Training required for their role within the prescribed timeframes, and complete refresher training at least every two years. Records of training completion must be maintained and monitored by the service. (Child Safe Standard 8 – 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)" "Row 34 - Added Monitoring mandatory Child Safety Training and Child Protection Training completion, maintaining training records and ensuring personnel meet all ongoing training requirements before undertaking child-related duties.(Child Safe Standard 8 – 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)" Background Added: Safe and respectful interactions between adults and children are supported by robust workforce screening, professional conduct expectations and compliance with Working with Children requirements. The service will maintain systems to verify workforce suitability and comply with Working with Children Connect obligations to support child safety and ongoing workforce monitoring. Legislation and Standards "Added: ACECQA: Child Safety and Child Protection Training Requirements Child Safe Standards Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)" Definitions "Added: Working with Children (WWC) Connect: Working with Children (WWC) Connect: The Victorian Government and Social Services Regulator online system that enables organisations to connect workers undertaking child-related work, verify workforce engagement, maintain workforce records and receive notifications when a

				person's Working with Children Check Clearance status changes." "Updated: Child Safe Standards: Social Services Regulator Added: Social Services Regulator: Mandatory Child Safety Training for Working with Children Check Clearance holders Social Services Regulator: Working with Children Connect" Evaluation "Updated: regularly seek feedback from everyone, including children, affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness"

PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines to ensure:

- the development of responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children that promote their wellbeing, self-esteem, sense of security and belonging at Columbia Park Early Learning Centre
- each child at Columbia Park Early Learning Centre is supported to learn and develop in a secure and empowering environment.

POLICY STATEMENT

The safety, health, wellbeing, rights and best interests of every child are the paramount consideration and must guide all decisions, actions and practices of educators within the education and care service.

VALUES

Columbia Park Early Learning Centre is committed to:

- maintaining the dignity, agency and rights of each child at the service
- promoting fairness, respect and equity
- 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
- maintaining a duty of care *(refer to Definitions)* towards all children at Columbia Park Early Learning Centre
- 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
- building collaborative relationships with families to improve learning and development outcomes for children
- encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children, families and educators/staff at the service.
- ensuring all adults who interact with children demonstrate child-safe behaviours, maintain professional boundaries and meet all relevant screening, suitability and registration requirements for their role

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Columbia Park Early Learning Centre , including during offsite excursions and activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
1. Developing and implementing the *Interactions with Children Policy* in consultation with stakeholders, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service *(Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.3)*	**R**	√	√	√	√
2. Ensuring all stakeholders are provided with a copy of the *Interactions with Children Policy* and comply with its requirements *(Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.3)*	**R**	√	√	√	√
3. Actively supporting and facilitating the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal children, young people, and their families *(Child Safe Standard 1 – 1.1, 1.2)*	**R**	√	√		√
4. Ensuring all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and warm, trusting and reciprocal interactions when working with children and families *(refer to Code of Conduct Policy) (Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.4)*	**R**	√			
5. Avoiding inappropriate conduct *(refer to Definitions)* maintaining professional boundaries at all times, acting in accordance with the Code of Conduct and Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy, and holding and maintaining any required Working with Children Check Clearance or Victorian Institute of Teaching Registration before undertaking child-related work. *(refer to Code of Conduct, Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy (Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.4)*	**R**	R	R		R
6. Ensuring children are adequately supervised *(refer to Definitions)* and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times *(refer to Supervision of Children Policy) (Child Safe Standard 9 – 9.1)*	**R**	√	√		√
7. Ensuring the environment at the service is safe, secure, free from any hazards *(National Law: Section 167)* (*refer to Child Safe Environment Policy, Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Supervision of Children Policy)* and promotes the active participation of every child *(Child Safe Standard 9 – 9.1)*	**R**	**R**	√		√

8. Ensuring 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 *(Regulation 156(2))*. Smaller group sizes are considered optimal, to promote intentional teaching strategies and responsive engagement opportunities *(Child Safe Standard 9 – 9.1)*	**R**	√	√		√
9. Developing and implementing educational programs that are delivered in accordance with an approved learning framework *(refer to Definitions)*, are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences and strengths of each child *(refer to Inclusion and Equity Policy)* *(Child Safe Standard 1 – 1.5, 3 – 3.2, 5 – 5.3)*	**R**	**R**	√		√
10. Ensuring the educational program contributes to the development of children to have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and to be connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators *(Regulation 73)* *(refer to Curriculum Development Policy)* *(Child Safe Standard 1 – 1.5, 3 – 3.2)*	**R**	√	√		√
11. Ensuring 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 • all children to feel safe when interacting with educators and other children • 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 *(Regulation 155)* *(Child Safe Standard 1 – 1.5, 3 – 3.2, 5 – 5.3)*	**R**	√	√		√
12. Providing a range of opportunities for children to feel valued and empowered to make choices and solve problems during their time at the service *(Child Safe Standard 1 – 1.5, 3 – 3.2, 5 – 5.3)*		√	√		√
13. Listening to and respecting children's voices and non-verbal cues *(Child Safe Standard 1 – 1.5, 3 – 3.2, 5 – 5.3)*		√	√		√
14. Supporting children to raise concerns if they feel unhappy or unsafe and acting upon their concerns *(Child Safe Standard 7 – 7.1, 7.3)*		√	√		√
15. Demonstrating positive communication, like using calm voices, respectful listening, and acknowledging feelings *(Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.4)*		√	√		√
16. Acknowledging children's feelings and helping them name emotions using resources, pictures, feelings charts etc *(Child Safe Standard 3 – 3.1)*		√	√		√
17. Developing strategies to help children understand appropriate interactions with educators and know who to tell if something feels wrong or uncomfortable *(Child Safe Standard 3 – 3.1, 7 – 7.1)*		√	√		√
18. Creating, promoting and modelling a respectful, child safe culture, where children's views are always listened to, including their right to say 'no' *(Child Safe Standard 3 – 3.1)*		√	√		√

19. Teaching children body safety and respect for personal space *(Child Safe Standard 3 – 3.1, 3.3)*		√	√		√
20. Ensuring appropriate physical contact *(refer to Definition)* is maintained at all times *(Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.4)*		√	√		√
21. Facilitating children's ability to express their culture, enjoy their cultural rights and are encouraged and actively supported *(Child Safe Standard 1 – 1.1)*	**R**	√	√		√
22. Providing opportunities that promotes a culture that facilitates children's participation and is responsive to their input *(Child Safe Standard 1 – 1.1)*	**R**	√			
23. Taking proactive steps to ensure that online interactions, digital devices, photographs, videos and communication platforms are used in ways that are safe, respectful, appropriately authorised, protect children's privacy and dignity, and comply with the service's *Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct*. *(Child Safe Standard 9 – 9.1, 9.2)*	**R**	√	√		√
24. Ensuring children are informed about all of their rights, including to safety information, compliant handling process and participation *(Child Safe Standard 3 – 3.1, 7 – 7.1)*	**R**	√	√		√
25. Ensure that [Service Name] provides children with opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships with each other, and with the staff and volunteers at the service *(Regulation 156(1)) (Child Safe Standard 3 – 3.2)*	**R**	√	√		√
26. Recognising the importance of friendships and encourage support from peers, to help children and young people feel safe and be connected *(Child Safe Standard 3 – 3.2)*	√	√	√		√
27. Actively seeking, documenting and responding to children's views, ideas, feedback and preferences, and demonstrating how their contributions inform decisions about programs, environments, routines and service practices *(Child Safe Standard 3.5, 3.6).*	√	√	√		√
28. Ensuring clear documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's: • developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation • progress against the outcomes of the educational program *(Regulation 74) (refer to Curriculum Development Policy)*	**R**	√	√		√
29. Ensuring that procedures are in place for effective daily communication with parents/guardians to share information about children's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.1)*	**R**	√	√		√
30. Supporting ECT/educators/staff to access resources and gain appropriate training, knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy, including promoting social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing *(Child Safe Standard 6 – 6.4)*	√	√			
31. Ensuring that staff members at Columbia Park Early Learning Centre 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 circumstances *(National Law: Section 166) (Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.4, 8 – 8.1)*	**R**	**R**	**R**	√	√

32. Promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and program support groups (if required) (*refer to Definitions)*, to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.2, 5 – 5.1)*	√	√	√	√	√
33. Ensuring persons with management or control, nominated supervisors, persons in day-to-day charge, educators, staff, volunteers and students complete mandatory Child Safety Training and Child Protection Training required for their role within the prescribed timeframes, and complete refresher training at least every two years. Records of training completion must be maintained and monitored by the service. *(Child Safe Standard 8 – 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)*	R	R	√		√
34. Monitoring mandatory Child Safety Training and Child Protection Training completion, maintaining training records and ensuring personnel meet all ongoing training requirements before undertaking child-related duties. *(Child Safe Standard 8 – 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)*	R	R	√		√
35. Ensuring notifications of serious incidents *(refer to Definitions)* are made to the regulatory authority (DE) *(refer to Definition)* through the NQA IT System *(refer to Definitions)* as soon as is practicable but not later than 24 hours after the occurrence *(National Law: Section 174(2)(a), Regulations 176 (2)(a)) (Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.6)*	**R**	√			
36. Notifying DE within 24 hours of becoming aware of a notifiable complaint *(refer to Definitions)* or allegation regarding the safety, health and/or welfare of a child at the service *(National Law: Section 174(2)(b), Regulations 176 (2)(a)) (Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.6)*	**R**	√			
37. Ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises *(Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.6)*	**R**	**R**	√		√
38. Ensuring all staff, volunteers and contractors use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others *(Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.2)*	**R**	√	√		√
39. Developing links with and referral pathways to services and/or program support groups *(refer to Definitions)* to support children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and their families *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.2)*	√	√	√		√
40. Ensuring that there is a behaviour guidance plan *(refer to Definitions and Behaviour Support Policy)* 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 *(Child Safe Standard 5 – 5.1, 9 – 9.1)*	√	√	√	√	
41. Ensuring that parents/guardians and program support groups *(refer to Definitions)* (as appropriate) are consulted if an individual behaviour guidance plan has not resolved the challenging behaviour *(refer to Behaviour Support Policy) (Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.1)*	√	√	√	√	

42. Working collaboratively with educators/staff and program support groups *(refer to Definitions)* to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.2)*	√	√	√	√	√
43. Setting clear timelines for review and evaluation of the behaviour guidance plan *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.1, 4.2)*	√	√	√		
44. Providing information, ideas and practical strategies to families, educators and staff on a regular basis to promote and support health and wellbeing in the service and at home *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.2)*	√	√	√		
45. Consulting with, and seeking advice from, DE if a suitable and mutually agreeable behaviour guidance plan cannot be developed *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.2)*	R	√	√		
46. Investigating the availability of extra assistance, such as Kindergarten Inclusion Support *(refer to Definitions)* or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer *(refer to Definitions)*, specialist children's services officers from DE or other agencies working with the child *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.2)* Funded Kindergarten specific	R	√	√		
47. Investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support such as Inclusion Support Program *(refer to Definitions)* or training, by contacting their regional Inclusion Agency *(refer to Sources)* *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.2)* Long day care specific	**R**	√	√		
48. Ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan	**R**	√			
49. Ensuring that educators/staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and their responses to a child/children with challenging behaviour *(refer to Behaviour Support Policy)* *(Child Safe Standard 8 – 8.4)*	√	√			
50. Informing educators/staff of concerns, events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, a new sibling) *(Child Safe Standard 4 – 4.1)*				√	
51. Maintaining confidentiality *(refer to Privacy and Confidentiality Policy)* *(Child Safe Standard 2 – 2.6)*	**R**	√	√	√	√



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

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]

'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 – refer to Sources)*

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.

Safe and respectful interactions between adults and children are supported by robust workforce screening, professional conduct expectations and compliance with Working with Children requirements. The service will maintain systems to verify workforce suitability and comply with Working with Children Connect obligations to support child safety and ongoing workforce monitoring.

In developing an *Interactions with Children Policy*, early childhood education and care services must review and reflect on the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service, particularly with regard to the relationships with children. The development of this policy should also be informed by the service's *Code of Conduct Policy*.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- ACECQA: Child Safety and Child Protection Training Requirements
- Child Safe Standards
- 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)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
- Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Adequate supervision: entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Behaviour guidance: a means of assisting children in a positive and effective ways to help children gain understanding and learn skills that will help them learn to manage their own behaviour.

Behaviour guidance plan: A plan that documents strategies to assist an educator in guiding a child with diagnosed behavioural difficulties or challenging behaviours to self-manage their behaviour. The plan is developed in consultation with the nominated supervisor, early childhood teachers, educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professional support agencies as applicable.

Challenging behaviour: behaviour that can be described as:

- infringes on the rights of others
- disrupts others or causes disputes between children
- 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
- a child presenting as shy, withdrawn or excessively passive in a way which is inhibiting their learning and/or development
- is inappropriate relative to the child's developmental age and background.

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.

Inclusion Support Program (ISP): is a key component of the Government's Child Care Safety Net. The program provides support for eligible mainstream Early Childhood Education and Care services to build their capacity and capability to include children with additional needs, alongside their typically developing peers, so all children have genuine opportunities to access, participate and achieve positive learning outcomes. For more information visit: www.dese.gov.au

Inappropriate conduct: Conduct that a reasonable person would consider inappropriate in an education and care service, taking into account any of the following circumstances:

- Whether the conduct aligns with generally accepted education and care practice
- The child's age and developmental stage

- Whether the conduct is likely to cause or result in harm (including emotional, psychological or physical harm) or injury to a child or children
- Whether the conduct is sexual, aggressive or violent.

In deciding if the conduct is inappropriate, it does not matter if:

- the child consented (agreed to the conduct, either by directly expressing their consent or implying consent through their actions)
- the person subjecting the child to the conduct believes the child has consented
- the person subjecting the child to the conduct is related to the child.

Subjecting a child to inappropriate conduct can occur in a number of ways including, but not limited to:

- in-person via words or behaviour, including both adult to child or between adults in the presence of a child/ren
- filming and capturing images or recordings
- as a single occasion or as part of a pattern over time
- either directly or indirectly (for example, exposure to inappropriate language or conversations, or leaving inappropriate material accessible to children)
- online
- as an omission (for example, deliberately excluding a child).

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Program (KIS): Supports funded kindergartens to plan and implement a program that is responsive to the individual abilities, interests and needs of children with a disability, developmental delay or complex medical needs. Long Day Care services can apply for the KIS program for their Victorian Government-funded kindergarten programs.

Mental health: In early childhood, a child's mental health is understood as a child's ability to 'experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – all in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children. Infant mental health is synonymous with healthy social and emotional development. https://beyou.edu.au/

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.

Program Support Groups (PSG): A program support group brings together key people to support the inclusion of children with disability or developmental delay, or complex medical needs, from the time of enrolment at kindergarten until they move to school. The group may include:

- the early childhood teacher
- the child's parent/carer(s)
- early childhood intervention professionals
- a preschool field officer
- medical practitioners, therapists or other allied health professionals
- a support person – if the child's parent/carer(s) chooses to use one.

Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Program: The role of the PSFO Program to support the access and participation of children with additional needs in their kindergarten program. For more information visit: www.education.vic.gov.au

Appropriate Physical Contact: Refers to physical interactions between an educator and a child that are respectful, nurturing, and developmentally suitable. Such contact supports the child's safety, wellbeing, learning, and emotional development. Where possible, the child consents to or initiates the contact.

It includes actions such as:

- comforting a distressed child,
- holding a child's hand for safety,
- providing assistance with personal care in a respectful and hygienic manner,
- giving first aid, and
- supporting children who have hurt themselves.

All physical contact MUST be observable by to another staff member. It must always align with the service's policies, maintain professional boundaries, and uphold child safe standards.

Examples of appropriate physical contact include:

- Placing a hand or gently patting a child on the back or shoulder to comfort or reassure them
- Holding a child's hand while crossing the yard, during group transitions and crossing a road/carpark
- Sitting a child on your lap if they are upset and seeking comfort; only when initiated by the child and in view of others, and until the child is no longer distressed
- Helping a child blow their nose, clean up, or change clothes when needed, using respectful hygiene practices
- Administering first aid with care and sensitivity when a child is injured
- Offering a side hug or placing a supportive hand on a child's shoulder (if welcomed by the child), and reciprocating affection from the child in an appropriate and respectful manner.

Relationships between children: When educators create supportive environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and 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.

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.

Working with Children (WWC) Connect: Working with Children (WWC) Connect: The Victorian Government and Social Services Regulator online system that enables organisations to connect workers undertaking child-related work, verify workforce engagement, maintain workforce records and receive notifications when a person's Working with Children Check Clearance status changes.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Child Safe Standards: Social Services Regulator
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
- Guide to the National Quality Framework, ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Inclusion Support Program: www.dese.gov.au
- Kids Matter, an Australian mental health and well-being initiative set in primary schools and early childhood education and care services: https://beyou.edu.au
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (DE): www.education.vic.gov.au
- Social Services Regulator: Mandatory Child Safety Training for Working with Children Check Clearance holders
- Social Services Regulator: Working with Children Connect
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: www.unicef.org

- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: www.acecqa.gov.au
- Victorian Inclusion Agency (VIA): ww.viac.com.au

RELATED POLICIES

- Behaviour Support
- Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing
- Code of Conduct
- Compliments and Complaints
- Educational Program
- Inclusion and Equity
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Supervision of Children

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone, including children, affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notifying all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2))*.

ATTACHMENTS

- Nil

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Columbia Park Early Learning Centre on 9/11/2026.

REVIEW DATE: 9/11/2026