

Relationships and Interactions with Children, Families and Staff Policy

POLICY

High-quality child care and education requires high quality relationships: connecting with children, encouraging and supporting their connections with other children, and developing strong partnerships with families and the broader community. The quality of the relationships we make with children and the partnerships we develop with families are crucial.

There is strong evidence and research that supports that secure attachments and relationships with primary caregivers lay the foundation for learning. It is now recognized that children develop through the medium of relationships, and the nature and quality of those relationships have profound developmental consequences.

Rachel's Place is passionate about ensuring an environment where children feel secure and warmly attached to the adults that they spend time with and that children are given quality opportunities to understand themselves and their community. While children and their families are our focus this policy applies to all relationships.

PURPOSE

We aim to build healthy relationships with everyone through collaboration and interactions, which is reflected in our service philosophy and the Early Years Learning Framework. We encourage positive relationships between everyone at the service, ensuring people feel safe and supported.

SCOPE

The following policy is for everyone at Rachel's Place. We explore, develop and model positive and equitable relationships with everyone who plays, works or visits, including the children, staff, management, volunteers, parents and visitors.

IMPLEMENTATION

We recognise that building warm and respectful relationships that encourage growth and understanding of diversity, is a lifelong commitment. It begins in childhood and continues into our adulthood.

We know that everyone benefits from positive relationships. Research supports that children's lifelong ability to deal with stress and change is developed through their relationships with their primary caregivers, early in their life (Schore, 2001a). As such we promote relationships that are warm, sensitive, responsive, respectful, attentive, consistent and

available. By listening to each other and being responsive and respectful, we are promoting everyone's well being, self-esteem, sense of security and belonging.

We recognise that healthy relationships are those where we:

- Encourage everyone to express themselves and their opinions
- Listen to each other
- Develop a culture of open communication, discussion, understanding and learning
- Undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self esteem
- Maintain the dignity and rights of each person, whether child or adult
- Develop, explore, model and encourage ways of being together in a group
- Uphold the value of inclusion. We provide an environment which encourages a sense of community through inclusion, equity and the celebration of diversity where everyone is encouraged to have regard for each child's age, gender, family and cultural values, language, and physical and intellectual development and abilities.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) identifies secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children as one of the principles that underpin practice.

Relationships and Interactions with Children

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

Educators will:

- Provide regular opportunities and education so children develop healthy relationships with other children, families and staff members. The children are encouraged to explore a variety of play spaces and interact in mixed age groups.
- Consider group sizes and the composition of the group to ensure beneficial outcomes from the experience.
- Gather information 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.
- Model behaviour that promotes healthy relationship building and offer experiences and guidance to children to develop effective self-management and appropriate responses to others, for example being patient, gentle, calm and reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration or anger.
- Build and maintain relationships with inclusion support professionals and, where necessary, meet with them to facilitate the best possible learning and development outcomes for any child they are working with. Where appropriate, individual inclusion plans are developed in consultation with the family and the inclusion support professionals
- Celebrate successes. Appreciation and acknowledgment are given when children, families and staff make personal progress in learning new skills and achieving their goals.
- Create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly and genuine interactions with all educators
- Meet educator to child ratio and qualification requirements
- Provide children with the opportunity to explore their dispositions for learning by expressing themselves and their opinions
- Ensure children are aware of how to raise concerns or provide feedback
- Respond or report to children about how their feedback has been acted upon

- Guide children's behaviour positively
- Respect the rights, dignity and agency of children
- Provide appropriate supervision so children feel safe in their interactions with other children
- Speak to children in a positive manner at all times, promoting respect, tolerance and empathy, including the use of non-verbal cues and communication
- Engage in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning of children
- Respect each child's uniqueness, be attuned to, and respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and use the child's own language, communication styles, and culture to enhance interactions
- Listen to children and take them seriously; support and encourage children to use appropriate language in their interactions with adults and peers. Educators will extend upon children's interests and ideas through questions and discussions, supported and made visible in observations, reflections, and programming.
- Understand their reporting requirements and respond to any incident, disclosure or suspicion of child abuse or harm
- Communicate with children by getting down to their level, using eye contact, and showing respect to the child whilst engaging in and promoting effective communication
- Show empathy to children
- Ensure that the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of the child and family are considered and respected
- Ensure that no child is ever isolated for any reason other than illness, accident or pre-arranged appointment with parental consent. During this time, they will be under adult supervision.
- Regularly reflect on their relationships and interactions with children and how these can be improved to benefit each child
- Facilitate children's individual development extending upon their strengths, interests and abilities

Management/Nominated Supervisor/Certified Supervisor will ensure:

- There is provision of regular opportunities and education so children develop healthy relationships with other children, families and staff members.
- Partnerships are developed with local schools, other professionals, support agencies and organisations that work with children and families to assist in providing information and support to families and staff at Rachel's Place.
- Educators are supported to enhance their skills and knowledge in understanding relationships and avenues for supporting others to develop healthy relationships skills.
- Sound staff support structures are implemented to enable reflection and skill development around relationships, communication and children's development. Including staff development plans, supervision and training.

Interactions with Families

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

Families will:

- Collaborate with educators and professional agencies as much as possible in order to develop a broader understanding of the child's developmental level, the child's family, the parent's approach, and any recent events, which may be affecting the child.
- Be open and willing to work with educators and Rachel's Place as a team.

Management and educators will ensure:

- All families are treated equitably without bias or judgement, recognising that each family is unique
- Families are provided with information and resources in their first language
- Families are asked to identify a preferred method of regular communication with the Service (this may include utilising a translator service)
- Families and children are greeted upon arrival in a respectful manner
- They learn the names of family members and use these names when they greet them
- Two-way communication is established through leading by example and asking questions and a willingness to offer information about ourselves
- Privacy and confidentiality are respected at all times
- Information about another child or family information is never discussed with a parent or visitor
- They remain sensitive to cultural differences amongst families and encourage families to share cultural aspects with the children and educators at the service
- The advice and opinion from other professional experts are requested, with parental permission, to assist educators develop and implement strategies to support the inclusion of children with additional needs
- They seek additional resources and professional support for families through a range of organisations such as KU Inclusion Support, Area Health and other specific health professional networks
- Verbal communication is always open, respectful and honest
- Families are provided with up-to-date service information and notices through Daily Reports, newsletters, communal notice boards and emails
- They regularly reflect on parent input into the program and make changes where necessary that will best benefit the service and children
- Connections between families is promoted and enhanced through inviting families to participate in routines and events at the service
- Families are aware of our complaint handling process- (*Dealing with Complaints Policy- Family*)

Multitage or Family grouping

At Rachel's Place we encourage children to learn and play in mixed age groupings. Throughout the day children may be grouped in age or developmental groupings as well as multi age groupings, with correct ratios in mind, depending on the needs of the children and the program.

Interactions with Staff and educators

Rachel's Place recognises that the way educators interact with each other has an effect on the interactions they have with children and families. Educators working within our Service are required to demonstrate mutual respect towards each other and value the contributions made by each educator. This enables our Service to maintain positive relationships and model the type of communication they want children to develop.

To maintain professionalism at all times, educators will:

- Engage in professional communication in order to create an effective work environment and to build a positive relationship with educators, children and families. Communication amongst colleagues creates a positive atmosphere and a professional image for families. Communication between staff and families ensures that important information is being passed on consistently.
- Champion a child safe culture through their attitudes, behaviours and actions
- Collaborate together as a team sharing roles and responsibilities through the use of a roster where necessary
- Be respectful when listening to each other's point of view and ideas

- Maintain effective communication to ensure that teamwork occurs
- Use staff meetings to communicate their professional reflections and ideas for continuous improvement as a team
- Attend in-service training to update and refresh and add to individual skills and knowledge
- Keep up to date with current legislation to child protection including mandatory reporting requirements – (*Child Protection*)
- Refer to the *Dealing with Complaints Policy (Staff) /Procedure* if they feel a situation with another educator is not being handled with professionalism, respect, and fairness
- Recognise each other's strengths and value the contribution each person makes to different work roles
- Work collaboratively to reach decisions which will enhance the quality of the education and care offered at the Service
- Welcome diverse views and perspectives
- Work together as a team and engage in open and honest communication at all times
- Respect each other's positions and opinions
- Develop and share networks and links with other agencies
- Resolve differences promptly and positively and use the experience to develop more effective methods of working together.

To enhance communication and teamwork, Management will:

- Provide new educators with relevant information about the Service and program through a Staff Handbook, induction program, and daily communication
- Treat educators with respect
- Be sensitive to the feelings and needs of educators
- Provide constructive feedback to educators as part of their professional learning plan support
- Value the role and contribution of each educator
- Demonstrate commitment to ongoing collaboration and engagement to support staff wellness
- Provide opportunities for all educators to have input into the program development and evaluation
- Appreciate and utilise educator skills and interests
- Provide support, assistance and mentoring to educators
- Hold regular educator meetings to encourage and support professional growth and reflective practice
- Use appropriate conflict resolution techniques to solve problems
- Ensure policies and procedures are up to date regarding communication, expected behaviour and grievances
- Provide opportunities for professional development.

National Quality Standards (NQS)

Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements

4.2	Educators, coordinators and educators are respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
4.2.2	Educators, coordinators and educators work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills, to improve practice and relationships.
4.2.3	Interactions convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills.

Quality Area 5 : Relationships with children

5.1.1	Interactions with each child are warm, responsive and build trusting relationships.
5.1.2	Each child is able to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.
5.1.3	Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included.
5.2.1	Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.
5.2.2	Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
5.2.3	The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained at all times.

Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnership with families and communities

6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions
6.1.3	Current information about the service is available to families
6.2.1	The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law NSW	
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups

Source

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
- <http://raisingchildren.net.au>
- www.napcan.org.au
- www.cyh.com

- www.acwa.asn.au
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2011
(<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/ACTS/2011/11AC038.pdf>)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
(<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/view/inforce/subordleg+653+2011+cd+0+N>)
- Guide to the National Quality Framework
(<http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF01-Guide-to-the-NQF-130902.pdf>)
- Guide to the National Quality Standard
(<http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF03-Guide-to-NQF-130902.pdf>)
- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009)
(<https://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>)
- Early Childhood Australia – Code of Ethics
(<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics>)
- The Effects of a Secure Attachment Relationship on Right Brain Development, Affect Regulation, & Infant Mental Health Allan Schore 2001 <http://www.trauma-pages.com/a/schore-2001a.php>
- Child Care Desktop

Review

Policy Review Date	Modifications	Next Review Date
May 2019		
November 2022	- Updated title of Policy to include 'interactions with children, families and staff' - Included 'interactions' info throughout policy - Added points to each section - Added 'interactions with family' section - Added 'interactions with staff and educators' section	November 2027