

Intereach Children's Service

Interactions with Children Procedure



Applies to	Intereach Out of School Hours (OOSH) and Preschool Services for children aged 3-5 years				
Policy	NQS Five: Relationships with Children Policy				
Version	4.1	Date approved	27/2/2026	Next review date	17/12/2028

Objective

Intereach is committed to creating respectful, supportive relationships with children in Out of School Hours (OOSH) services and to ensure that all practices align with the principles of the National Quality Standard and the Early Years Learning Framework. This procedure outlines clear guidance for fostering these relationships through a child-safe culture, engaging experiences, and a safe, healthy environment including when using digital technologies and online platforms.

This procedure aims to ensure that:

- Intereach staff and educators' interactions with children are warm, attentive, responsive and positive, thus ensuring trusting relationships are formed
- relationships in a children's service's setting are built on respect, fairness, cooperation and empathy and that children are given the opportunity to develop these qualities themselves; and,
- group relationships are supported by consideration by the size and composition of groups, enabling children the opportunities to interact and develop positive relationships.
- educators are reminded that inappropriate conduct is strictly prohibited, including any behaviour that compromises a child's dignity, safety, or emotional wellbeing.

Key Principles

- Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child
- Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships
- Children are supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships
- Children are supported to regulate their own behaviour and communicate effectively
- Educators uphold the dignity and rights of every child.

Definitions

Secure Attachment: A strong emotional bond between a child and a caregiver that provides the child with a sense of safety and confidence to explore their environment.

Responsive Interaction: Educator responses that are timely, appropriate, and sensitive to the child's cues, emotions, and interests.

Child Agency: The capacity of children to make choices and decisions that influence their world, supported by educators through respectful listening and inclusion.

Respectful Relationships: Interactions that uphold the dignity, rights, and individuality of each child, free from discrimination or bias.

Collaborative Learning: A process where children learn from and with each other through shared experiences, supported by educators.

Self-Regulation: A child's ability to manage their emotions, behaviour, and attention, often developed through supportive relationships and consistent guidance.

Cultural Competence: The ability of educators to understand, respect, and support the diverse cultural backgrounds of children and families.

Trauma-Informed Practice: An approach that recognises the impact of trauma on children's development and behaviour and responds with empathy and support.

Positive Behaviour Guidance: Strategies used by educators to support children in understanding and managing their behaviour in a respectful and constructive manner.

Inappropriate Conduct: any behaviour within an education and care service that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate. When determining if conduct is inappropriate, consider:

- *Inappropriate physical contact* – touching a child in a sexualised or intrusive way, including tickling, wrestling, prolonged or unnecessary hugging that is not warranted in the circumstances, massaging, or physical closeness (such as encouraging a child sit on an educator's lap for an extended period) that is not age appropriate or required based on the needs or abilities of a child.
- *Grooming behaviours* – including but not limited to favouritism, offering gifts or special privileges, encouraging emotional dependency (attachment fostering), or initiating private or secret communication with a child.
- *Ill treatment that is not disciplinary in nature* – including physical or verbal abuse, threats, yelling, swearing, rough handling or other conduct likely to cause emotional, physical or psychological harm.
- *Unprofessional communication* – such as sending personal messages, capturing or sharing images of children via unauthorised devices or platforms, or engaging with children online through social media or apps unrelated to your role.

Paramount consideration: The safety, rights, and best interests of children must be the primary and overriding factor in every decision made about a child.

Responsibilities

Nominated Supervisor / Responsible person

- Ensure policies and procedures are in place and followed.
- Ensure obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met;
- Ensure all policies and procedures uphold respectful relationships and child safety, recognising that the safety, rights and best interests of children are the paramount consideration in every decision.
- Ensure staff have completed the mandatory child protection and child safety training including the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their jurisdiction.
- Ensure that no child being educated and cared for by the service is subject to inappropriate conduct including any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances.
- Promote a safe and respectful culture within the service by modelling child safe culture, practices and appropriate conduct at all times.
- Monitor and support staff in professional development and mentoring to ensure consistent, appropriate interactions with children.
- Promote secure attachments and responsive interactions across all age groups.
- Support educators in implementing trauma-informed and culturally competent practices.

- Facilitate professional development in behaviour guidance, and collaborative learning.
- Ensure environments support self-regulation and emotional wellbeing.
- Identify and respond promptly to inappropriate conduct (bullying, harassment, discriminatory behaviour).
- Report cases of inappropriate conduct to the Regulatory Authority, where necessary report to Police, Child Protection agencies and child safe organisations

Staff and Educators

- Model respectful behaviour and support children's emotional development.
- Use inclusive practices and respect diversity.
- Build secure attachments through warm, responsive interactions.
- Respect and promote each child's individuality.
- Use positive behaviour guidance strategies.
- Support children's self-regulation and conflict resolution.
- Foster collaborative learning and peer relationships.
- Apply trauma-informed and culturally competent practices.
- Maintain respectful relationships that uphold each child's dignity and rights.
- Create safe, inclusive environments aligned with Child Safe Standards.
- Allow children to 'be' and respect the child for being their own, individual self;
 - Create a sense of belonging for each child;
 - promote a safe, secure and nurturing environment;
 - recognise, support and provide opportunities to ensure the:
 - right of all children to maintain their language and culture;
 - need to acknowledge different religious and cultural practices;
 - right of all children to benefit from quality programs that consider the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the community; and,
 - provision of relevant and appropriate programs and experiences that will ensure each child's cultural heritage is respected.
- Be authentic and responsive;
- Participate in professional development to enhance knowledge and skills which support quality interactions with children;
- Use effective communication strategies and model positive interactions with everyone showing care, empathy and respect; and,
- Demonstrate inclusive practices.
- Notify the Nominated Supervisor if you observe, suspect or receive an allegation that someone is engaging or has engaged in inappropriate conduct
- Ensure that the safe use of digital technologies and online environments procedures is considered when interactions with children include digital technologies and online environments.

Parents/Guardians

- Support the service's philosophy and participate in decision-making.

- Collaborate with educators to share insights about their child's interests, cultural background, and needs. This helps educators tailor interactions that are meaningful and respectful.
- model and reinforce positive interactions at home and in the service environment, supporting children to develop social competence and emotional regulation.
- Notify the Nominated Supervisor if you observe, suspect or receive an allegation that someone is engaging or has engaged in inappropriate conduct.

Procedure

When children experience nurturing, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with educators, they develop confidence in themselves as capable, competent, and valued individuals. Consistent emotional support helps children build a strong sense of wellbeing and belonging.

Interactions with Children

- Children are warmly welcomed upon arrival.
- Engaged in active listening and meaningful conversations.
- Observe and respond to children's cues and interests.
- Encourage peer interactions and collaborative play.
- Provide consistent routines and emotional support.
- Address behavioural concerns with empathy and guidance.
- Reflect on practices and seek feedback from children and families.
- Encourage children to express themselves and their opinions. Meaningful open interactions are built to support development of life and learning skills.
- Develop an environment that supports collaborations between children / educators and families.
- Provide children with environments that offer quiet and solitary spaces.
- Create opportunities to allow children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.
- Support children through periods of change, e.g. transitions to pre-school, school, death in the family and birth of a sibling.
- Children are given positive guidance and encouragement when dealing with behaviours.
- information is shared with families regularly and in a constructive manner about children's interactions;
- Time is dedicated to reflecting on their interactions with children;
- Boundaries and rules are determined and negotiated with children, where possible.
- Children's complex relationships are acknowledged and sensitively intervened in ways that promote consideration and alternative perspectives and social inclusion.
- Input from children is genuinely sought, their ideas are respected, and their suggestions are taken on board.
- The routines and experiences available to children in care are appropriate, flexible and reflect children's family and their diverse needs are considered, age, physical and intellectual development.
- Children's requests are responded to in a fair and consistent manner.
- Size of groups will be maintained to allow for inclusive, positive and respectful peer and educator relationships to develop.

- Interactions with each child are warm and responsive to build trusting relationships.
- Every child can engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.
- Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included.
- Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help other through collaborative learning opportunities.
- Every child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

Inappropriate Conduct

No child being educated and cared for by the education and care service is subject to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or inappropriate. Any incident under Regulation 166A or complaint under Part 5AA is considered a serious incident.

Examples of inappropriate discipline

The following are some examples of inappropriate discipline which may constitute a serious breach of the National Law and/or National Regulations and could potentially be considered criminal matters:

- hitting, pushing, slapping, pinching or biting a child
- force-feeding a child
- yelling at or belittling a child
- humiliating a child
- physically dragging a child
- locking children away (or isolating them)
- depriving a child of food or drink
- unreasonable restraining of a child (this may include
 - restraint in a highchair)
 - excluding children from events
 - consistently moving children to the office or other space
 - away from the play areas
 - moving children to another room as punishment
 - verbally or physically threatening a child
 - Inappropriate conduct is defined as conduct a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service.

Other examples of inappropriate practice are:

- • negative labelling of child or family
- • criticising a child's actions or behaviours
- • discouraging a child from taking part in activities
- • blaming or shaming a child
- • making fun of or laughing at or about a child
- • using sarcastic or cruel humour with or to a child
- • excessive use of negative language to a child, such as, "no"
- "Stop that!" "don't..." "you never..."

- it is an offence for approved providers, nominated supervisors, educators' other staff, and volunteers to subject a child to inappropriate conduct.
- Use positive behaviour guidance strategies first; escalate if safety is compromised.
- Inform families of incidents and actions taken.
- Ensure documentation of all incidents and interventions in the child's record.
- If conduct poses risk of harm or breaches Child Safe Standards, follow serious incident reporting process.

Out of School Hours (OOSH) Practices

For school-aged children attending OOSH, educators must:

- Foster independence and decision-making through structured and unstructured activities.
- Provide opportunities for social engagement and peer collaboration.
- Support transitions between school and OSHC environments.
- Ensure safety and supervision during indoor and outdoor play.
- Encourage respectful communication and conflict resolution skills.

Preschool Practices (Children aged 3–5 years)

For preschool-aged children, educators must:

- Create nurturing environments that support emotional security and attachment.
- Use play-based learning to foster social, emotional, and cognitive development.
- Support language development through storytelling, singing, and conversation.
- Encourage exploration and curiosity through age-appropriate activities.
- Collaborate with families to support developmental milestones and transitions to school.

National Quality Standards

Element	Concept	Description
5.1.1	Relationships between educators and children	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
5.2.1	Relationships between children	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
1.1.2	Child Centred	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.

1.2.3	Child directed learning	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
7.1.	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service that is child safe.
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service that is child safe.

Compliance and Reference

Legislation	<p>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 – Section 166, 166A, Part 5AA, 162A, 167 and 174</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2017 – Reg 12, 84, 147, 155, 156, 168, and 175</p>
Standards or other external requirements	<p>Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2017), <i>National Quality Standards</i></p> <p>Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2017), <i>Guide to the National Quality Framework</i></p> <p>Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2012), <i>Educators My Time, Our Place: Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care in Australia</i></p> <p>Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) - NSW</p> <p>Child Safe Standards Victoria (2022)</p> <p>Child Safe Standards NSW (Updated August 2022)</p> <p><u>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</u> – Accessed October 2025</p>
Internal Documentation	<p>Interactions with Children Policy</p> <p>Enrolment form</p> <p>Educator's program, observations and evaluations</p>

Document Control

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Next review date
1.0	2/12/2019	R. Phillips - Acting Senior Manager, Children and Family Services	2/12/2022
2.0	25/8/2022	M. Tai, General Manager, Operations	25/8/2025
3.0	31/10/2025	The Children's Services procedure separated to be a standalone procedure for OOSH and updated to include requirements for Preschool Children aged 3-5 years. Approved by: N. Brown – Manager, Compliance, Safety & Risk	30/10/2028
4.0	17/12/2025	Process updated to incorporate legislation changes – Approved by: T. Mercer Quality Advisor	17/12/2028
4.1	27/2/2026	Updated to incorporate legislation changes – Approved by: K. Hyde – General Manager, Operations	17/12/2028