CatholicCare
DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

# Children's Services

# Interactions with Children

## Policy

Version: 9.0
Approved: 30 July 2026
Review due: July 2029
Document ID: 12011-034

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# What do we believe?

At CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay, we are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and hold this at the centre of our decision making and practice. We believe in the principle of paramountcy of the safety of children. This means that the safety, wellbeing, and best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all decisions, actions, and practices. Where there is a conflict between the interests of a child and those of adults or the organisation, the child's safety and wellbeing will always come first.

We believe that every child has the right to be treated with dignity, respect and genuine care. Positive, responsive and respectful interactions are the foundation of children's wellbeing, learning, development and sense of belonging. We are committed to creating environments where children feel safe, valued, heard and included, where their voices, identities, cultures and individual strengths are recognised and respected. Through warm, trusting and professional relationships, we uphold the rights of every child and ensure that the best interests of the child remain paramount in all interactions and decision making.

# What are we going to do?

We will create safe, secure and nurturing environments where every child is treated with dignity, respect and empathy, and where their rights, agency and best interests remain paramount. Educators will respect family values, cultures, languages and identities, be authentic and responsive in their interactions, recognise and build upon each child's strengths, interests and abilities, and encourage children to express their ideas, opinions and preferences.

We will provide opportunities for children to develop confidence, self-reliance, self-esteem and independence while promoting positive, strength-based behaviour support and guidance. Educators will model fairness, acceptance and inclusion, ensuring all children have equitable opportunities to participate, develop respectful relationships with peers and adults, and experience a sense of belonging. Through reflective practice, ongoing professional learning and child safe practices, we will ensure interactions strengthen children's wellbeing, learning and development while considering the size and composition of groups to support meaningful engagement and positive relationships.

# How will it be done?

## Guiding Principles

CatholicCare Values should guide and underpin our interactions with children.

**FAITH -** Our work at CatholicCare is inspired by the mission and values of the Catholic Church. We serve those in need with compassion, respect and dignity.

**COURAGE -** We are inspired by the courage demonstrated by our clients. We stand up for what is right and are willing to face difficult and uncomfortable situations in order to make a positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

**COMPASSION -** We are conscious of the challenges our client's face, and we are dedicated to delivering solutions in an empathetic, inclusive and responsive manner.

**EXCELLENCE -** We strive for excellence in all we do. We act ethically and with integrity, we exceed expectations and act on evidence of what works. We provide high quality services that meet the evolving needs of our community.

**RESPECT -** We respect the dignity and worth of all people and embrace difference. Our door is open to all regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or religious beliefs.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE -** We strive for equity and opportunity for all. We give a voice to those in need and hold the poor and vulnerable in our hearts. We are committed to empowering marginalised groups to achieve their full potential.

# Children's rights, interests, family and cultural values

Interactions within the service are greatly enhanced when children's rights, interests and family and cultural values are given due consideration and respect. Administrative procedures, initial conversations, documentation and ongoing communication with children and families are a reference point for interactions and a foundation for authentic and respectful communication. We will ensure that Service Coordinators / Directors have open conversations with families when they start and throughout their enrolment on how we can best embed their cultural values when possible.

# Relationships & role modelling

The way in which Educators interact with children will affect the types of relationships they develop. These relationships will be a key factor in assisting children to feel safe and supported within the environment, particularly in times of distress, conflict and insecurity. Staff modelling positive, respectful and appropriate ways of interacting is an important way of supporting positive relationships and children's development of social skills.

To support positive relationships and model respectful interactions, Educators will:

- Greet children warmly and positively throughout the day.
- Welcome and greet children by using their names.
- Show genuine interest in what children have to say.
- Engage with children as valued conversation partners.
- Respect the child's home language and endeavour to explore and learn about it.
- Listen to all the ways in which children communicate including their spoken words, stories, non verbal communication and visual expressions (e.g. drawings, constructions).
- Encourage a connection between home, the family and the childcare environment.
- Comfort children when they are distressed.
- Encourage children's positive conversations with each other.
- Interact with each other and with children in a respectful and positive way.
- Speak quietly with children when they are inside. For example, walk over to talk with children instead of calling out across the room.
- Model ways of valuing and appreciating everyone's talents and strengths.
- Make eye contact when talking and engaging with children and get down to their level.
- Show care, empathy and respect for children, educators, staff and families.

- Learn and use effective communication strategies.

## Active listening

Educators and staff must use active listening as a foundation for interactions. Active listening enables children to feel valued and respected. This encourages children to contribute to the discussion with confidence and promotes language development. Listening is based on observation, and in leaving spaces in conversations and communication. Staff will suspend judgement and give full attention to children as they communicate. Truly attending to children's communication promotes a strong culture of listening.

## Learning

Educators recognise that much learning occurs during interactions and in social situations. Therefore, they aim to:

- Talk to children during routine times and mealtimes and greet them enthusiastically at arrival times.
- Allow children to participate in decision making in ways that are appropriate to their ages (including about the program and routine times).
- Engage in genuine conversations with children about their strengths, interests, and relationships.
- Have eye contact with children and use appropriate body language to maintain conversations.
- Engage enthusiastically and responsively in games and experiences with children.
- Encourage children to be independent in their interactions and relationships but provide support when needed.
- Respect individual styles of communicating. In doing so Educators will not pressure children to be outgoing when they wish to have time alone.
- Acknowledge positive interactions and acts of kindness.

## Reflection and consideration

It is important that time is dedicated to reflecting upon interactions with children, and how children's rights and interests come first. Reflections should consider how to spend extended periods engaged in interactions with children that comprise communication and listening. Child safety is a standard standing agenda item in all staff meetings throughout children services. These reflections also should influence programming to ensure it is reflective of and responsive to the interests, needs and aspirations of the children attending the service.

## Principles for guiding children's children behaviour

Staff will respect individual children's needs, family contexts as well as differences in age, ability, and experience regarding issues surrounding behaviour. Staff will be open and willing to discuss individual family expectations with parents and caregivers. There may be times when staff will need to negotiate strategies with parents to meet the needs of individual children.

- Wherever possible, children and staff will negotiate and determine boundaries and form agreements in relation to expectations of how everyone treats each other and the service.
- Agreements will be reasonable considering the age, development and individual characteristics, background, rights and needs of children.

- Agreements will be consistently followed and reflected on to evolve, along with children's developing skills and self-regulation competence.
- Children will be encouraged to contribute to and understand the boundaries, agreements and expectations around interactions with others. The service will support children to build their skills to interact with one another in alignment with these boundaries, agreements and expectations.
- Staff are mindful in the way they respond to behaviours, ensuring that no child is shamed. Instead, staff ensure that the skill in relation to their behaviour is either praised or addressed.
- Staff acknowledge that they are there to support and teach skills that build children's self-control and regulation and always present a good example through positive role modelling, compassion and understanding.
- Children's rights, interests, safety and wellbeing will be prioritised, always.

# Inclusion

Educators will consider the way in which their interactions with children help to promote a program that is inclusive and accessible. They aim to:

- Show respect for the dignity of children in all interactions. In doing so, Educators are not to engage in conversation about a child in front of them or in front of other children and parents. Refer to the *Confidentiality and Privacy Policy*.
- Give all children equal opportunities to participate in experiences that interest them. For example, don't assume that some experiences are for boys and others are for girls.
- Model inclusive language.
- Help children to be critical about what is fair and unfair in relationships and what is considered considerate and inconsiderate in their interactions with others.
- Provide support for children with English as a second language and for children with communication challenges.
- Where necessary, access support services to assist Educators in their ability to interact and engage with any children with additional needs. This may include Inclusion Support Services, Early Intervention support, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Psychologists.

# The role of staff

In response to children with challenging behaviours, staff:

- Will build secure, safe authentic relationships with each child.
- Will recognise when a child requires additional support and use this situation as an opportunity to help the child develop skills, including their language and communication, attention and working memory, emotion and self-regulation, cognitive flexibility and social thinking skills.
- Recognise and understand certain reactions as typical behavioural responses, a reflection of communication and social development.
- Acknowledge the child's intent with that behaviour.
- Clarify the preferred skills to be used and teach, role model and support the child to practice how to use them.
- Redirect the child, support a safe environment, or remove the child from the situation if necessary.
- Advise children of the consequences of continuing with the behaviour.
- Explain to children how their behaviour made others feel.
- Actively listen to children's feelings and discuss the skills to use in future.

- Help children to return to play.
- Will prioritise children's rights, interests, safety and wellbeing, always.

# Who is responsible?

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|---|---|
| **Approved Provider** | • Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development.<br>• Ensure children's rights, interests, safety and wellbeing are paramount.<br>• Ensure the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators (Regulation 73).<br>• Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor and all staff members at the service 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 and financial penalties apply (National Law: Section 166).<br>• Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Section 174, Regulation 176).<br>• Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing, within 24 hours of any incident or allegation of sexual or physical abuse of child when in attendance at the service. (Regulation 175 (2) (d)(e). 176 (2) (bb)(bc)). |
| **Practice Manager** | • Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development.<br>• Ensure children's rights, interests, safety and wellbeing are paramount.<br>• Ensure the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators (Regulation 73).<br>• Ensure that the Nominated Supervisor and all staff members at the service 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 and financial penalties apply (National Law: Section 166).<br>• Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the service (Section 174, Regulation 176).<br>• Inform the Regulatory Authority in writing, within 24 hours of any incident or allegation of sexual or physical abuse of child when in attendance at the service. (Regulation 175 (2) (d)(e). 176 (2) (bb)(bc)). |
| **Nominated Supervisor** | • Guide professional development and practice to promote interactions with children that are positive and respectful.<br>• Establish practice guidelines that ensure interactions with children<br>• are given priority and those interactions are authentic, just and<br>• respect difference.<br>• Ensure children's rights, interests, safety and wellbeing are paramount.<br>• Ensure all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families.<br>• Consider the size and composition of groups to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service.<br>• Develop and implement educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, which are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child.<br>• Ensure that staff provide education and care to children in a way that encourages children to express themselves and their opinions and allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.<br>• Ensure all staff at the service 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 and financial penalties apply (National Law: Section 166). |
| **Educators** | • Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.<br>• Ensure children's rights, interests, safety and wellbeing are paramount. |

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|---|---|
| | • Acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways which promote consideration, alternative perspectives and social inclusion.<br>• Respect children's agency and encourage them to express themselves and their opinions.<br>• Always maintain the dignity and the rights of each child.<br>• Have regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for.<br>• Offer positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour.<br>• Ensure that routines such as toileting, nappy change and rest times are used for positive one to one interaction with children and a time that they can get to know more about the child.<br>• Genuinely seek children's input, respect their ideas and take their suggestions on board.<br>• Support babies to build trusting attachments with one or two educators in order to develop a secure base for their exploration and learning.<br>• Form warm relationships with each child. |
| **Parents / Guardians** | • Reading and complying with this policy.<br>• Engage in open communication with staff about their child.<br>• Inform staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, a new sibling).<br>• Inform staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour.<br>• Work collaboratively with staff and other to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate. |

# National Quality Standards (NQS)

| Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5.1 | Relationships between educators and children | Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child. |
| 5.1.1 | Positive educator to child interactions | 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 | Relationships between children | Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships. |
| 5.2.1 | Collaborative learning | Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other. |
| **Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families & Communities** | | |
| 6.1 | Supportive relationships with families | Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role. |
| 6.1.1 | Engagement with the service | Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions. |
| 6.1.2 | Parents views are respected | The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing. |
| 6.1.3 | Families are supported | Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing. |

| Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations | |
|---|---|
| S. 2A | Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children |
| S. 3A | Paramount consideration |
| S. 5AA | Meaning of 'inappropriate conduct' in relation to a child |
| S. 162A | Child protection training<br>Offence relating to child protection training |
| S. 162B | Child safety training |
| S.165 | Offence to inadequately supervise children |
| S. 166 | Offence to use inappropriate discipline |
| S. 166A | Offence to subject child to inappropriate conduct<br>Offences relating to inappropriate conduct |
| S.168 | Offence related to required programs |
| S.169 | Offence relating to staffing arrangements |
| Part 6A | Devices in education and care services |
| 73 | Educational program |
| 84 | Awareness of child protection law |
| 115 | Premises designed to facilitate supervision |
| 117A | Placing a person in day-to-day charge |
| 118 | Educational leader |
| 123 | Educator to child ratios-centre-based services |
| 126 | Centre-based services- general educator qualifications |
| 145 | Staff record |
| 155 | Interactions with children |
| 156 | Relationships in groups |
| 157 | Access for parents |
| 168 | Education and care services must have policies and procedures |
| 170 | Policies and procedures to be followed |
| 171 | Policies and procedures to be kept available |
| 172 | Notification of change to policies and procedures |

# Related documents

## CatholicCare policy

- *CatholicCare Mission, Vision and Values*
- *Child Safe Policy*

## Children's Services policies

- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Confidentiality and Privacy Policy*
- *Guiding Children's Behaviour Policy*

# Resources

## External

- *ACECQA Interactions with Children: Policy Guidelines*
- *ACECQA Information Sheet: Inappropriate Discipline*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *The Supporting young children's rights: Statement of intent (2015-2018)*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission*

# Glossary

**ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authorities**

The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.

**Best Interests of the Child**

A principle that requires all decisions and actions to prioritise the child's safety, wellbeing, development and rights above all other considerations.

**Child Paramountcy**

Child paramountcy refers to the obligation to ensure that the best interests, safety, and wellbeing of children are paramount above all other considerations. All decisions, practices, and actions must prioritise the protection and wellbeing of children, particularly where competing interests exist.

**Dignity**

Treating every child with respect, valuing their individuality, rights and worth.

**ELC**

All centre-based services for children aged 0-5 years including Long Day Care and Preschool services.

**Inclusion**

Creating environments where every child has equitable access to participate, learn and belong, regardless of their abilities, background, culture, gender, language or circumstances.

**OSHC**

Out of School Hours Care

**Paramountcy**

The principle that a child's safety, wellbeing and best interests are the highest priority and take precedence over all other considerations.

**Practice Manager**

A practice manager oversees and supports a cluster of services within a local area. They work with the Nominated supervisor to ensure services operate safely, meet legal and quality requirements, and follow organisational policies. They do not work directly with children day to day.

**Risk Assessment**

A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.

**Wellbeing**

A child's physical, emotional, social, cultural and psychological health, contributing to their overall development and sense of belonging.

# Sign off and review

This document remains valid until it is either superseded by a new version or officially revoked.

CatholicCare values your input and welcomes feedback on this policy. Your suggestions help us improve and better support your work. Please send any feedback to policy.updates@catholiccaredbb.org.au.

| Version | Authorised by | Approved date | Review cycle | Review due |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9.0 | General Manager Children's Services | 30 July 2026 | 3 years | July 2029 |

# Revision history

| Version | Description | Author | Amendment date |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9.0 | Policy | General Manager Children's Services | 30 July 2026 |