



Dara School

Out of School Hours Care

**Interactions with Children
Policy**

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN OSHC POLICY

1. BACKGROUND

The implementation of the National Quality Framework sees the introduction of a learning framework, *My Time, Our Place* – for school-age children in education and care settings. This framework recognises the valuable role OSHC services play in the lives of children and families. *My Time, Our Place*, sets a vision for children’s learning through play and leisure, in contrast to the expectations in classroom settings. There is a new language to adopt and incorporate into our OSHC settings and an emphasis on the use of reflection in all practices.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, educators, management, and visitors of the Service.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The Dara OSHC Service uses *My Time, Our Place, Framework for School Age Care in Australia* to underpin the operational development of the Service and ensure that the needs of each child are addressed. Our philosophy states the Service’s purpose and direction and underpins all policies and procedures. The ethos of our Service is to value each of our OSHC educators and enable them to access professional development and training to inform them of the latest research findings that will guide and empower them to effectively support and nurture children. We recognise the importance of respectful and positive relationships that children have with each other and with educators, and we encourage a child-centred approach that promotes self-expression, self-reliance, and self-esteem, and maintains each child’s dignity and rights. We are committed to meeting our regulatory requirements concerning interactions with children.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 General

Children are encouraged to display socially acceptable behaviour and language when dealing with their peers. Educators will create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere in which children experience equitable, friendly, and genuine interactions with all educators. This will be implemented in the following ways:

- Appropriate language and behaviour will be role modelled by educators.
- Educators will support children to be aware of their feelings as well as the feelings of others.
- Children are encouraged to treat all children with respect and kindness.

- Positive communication and mutual respect that is role modelled by educators will benefit children in their development of similar skills, along with increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Children will be always spoken to positively to promote respect, tolerance, and empathy.
- Children will engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.
- Educators will respect each child's uniqueness, are attuned to, and respond sensitively and appropriately to children's efforts to communicate and will use the child's language, communication styles, and culture to enhance their interactions.
- Educators will listen to children and take them seriously. They will 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 in observations, reflection, and programming.
- Communication with children will be down on the child's level, as this shows respect to the child, allows eye contact to occur, and therefore promotes effective communication.
- Educators will encourage and be involved in spontaneous interactions.
- Educators will always use appropriate language keeping in mind that they are powerful influencers in children's lives and are highly active role models.
- Children will never be singled out or made to feel inadequate at any time.
- Educators will ensure that the dignity and rights of each child are respected at all times.
- Educators will show empathy to children.
- Educators will ensure that the values, beliefs, and cultural practices of each child and family are considered and respected.
- 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.
- Encouragement and praise is given freely regardless of success, allowing children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.
- Educators will regularly reflect on their relationships and interactions with children and how these can be improved to benefit each child.

Educators will acknowledge families as a valuable source of information about their child and as such:

- All families will be treated equitably without bias or judgment, recognising that each family is unique.
- Educators will greet parents as well as children upon arrival.
- Educators are to encourage two-way communication through leading by example and asking questions.
- Educators are to use common terminology when talking to parents regarding their child's development.
- Educators are to maintain confidentiality by not discussing another child or family's information with another parent or visitor.
- Educators are to be sensitive to cultural differences amongst families and are to encourage families to share cultural aspects with the children and educators.

- Educators will always endeavour to seek advice and opinions from experts with family permission to help with regard to a child with additional needs, or to support a family through resources available from support agencies.
- Educators will endeavour to recognise and implement several different ways to communicate with families in their preferred way.
- Verbal and any other means of communication such as email will always be open, respectful, and honest.
- Service information updates and notices will be made available to all families through newsletters and displays at the Service.
- Educators will regularly reflect on parent input into the program and make changes where necessary that will best benefit the Service and children.

4.2 Behaviour Guidance

The Dara OSHC Service is committed to meeting the needs of the children in care in a way that fosters a positive and nurturing environment. The safety of all staff and children are a priority. Children and staff are to be treated respectfully. Within the Service environment, staff and children work collaboratively to define consequences for the actions of children who do not respect or consider the safety of others. The Service has clear steps for unacceptable behaviour, which are compatible with school policies and procedures.

We believe that to effectively guide children's behaviour we need to:

- Ensure children are continually guided positively and encouraged towards acceptable and inclusive behaviour in order to maintain their self-esteem, dignity, and personal integrity.
- Guide children to recognise personal responsibility and self-discipline.
- Acknowledge that children can learn from their mistakes.
- Be fair and consistent.
- When guiding children's behaviour, place focus on the behaviour and not the child.
- Recognise that a child's behaviour is affected by a multitude of factors, including age, physical environment, time of day, staff and other children's actions, family experiences, and cultural backgrounds.
- Work together with families and teachers to build positive relationships.
- Provide a wide and varied program to reduce boredom and discontent.
- Seek input from families and children when reviewing behaviour management policies, to encourage ownership and acceptance.

The behavioural expectations are as follows:

1. We respect and care for ourselves, other people, and property.
2. We work and play safely and cooperatively.
3. We follow the directions of teachers/staff members.
4. We stay inside the supervised boundaries.

The following steps are introduced when the rules are not being followed:

- The child is reminded of the rule of expectation.

- A brief time away from the area of play for reflection, or a logical consequence, such as removal from, for example, the sandpit is imposed.
- Additional time from play is imposed, with associated consequences such as a loss of some privilege or a written apology.
- Repeated inappropriate behaviour will result in consultation with families. At this time, the child, parent/guardian, and Director may negotiate and formulate a behavioural plan.
- If parental consultation and a behavioural plan does not improve behaviour, the issue will be directed to the school's Principal and may result in Internal Suspension.
- If all the above steps prove unsuccessful, the child may be asked to leave the Service.

4.3 Inclusion

Dara OSHC is committed to providing an environment with activities and experiences that encourage all children to learn, extend their skills, and have fun. The Service will offer care for children from diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds and for children with varying developmental, physical, and intellectual abilities. The program will be developed to accommodate the needs of all children in care. The Service will actively promote the positive aspects of diversity and encourage acceptance and appreciation of individual differences. Staff will respect individual differences and treat everyone without bias, prejudice, or reference to stereotyping, and will encourage the children to do so too, by the following:

- Ensuring the individuality of staff and children is respected
- Inclusive programming for individual needs, celebrating diversity.
- Actively seeking input from cultural identities within the local community.
- Including staff and children with disabilities and additional needs once appropriate levels of support for facilitation are implemented.
- Forming positive relationships with children with additional needs to learn more about the child, their requirements, and the expectations of the family.
- Staff will help children to show understanding, acceptance, and respect for individual differences by modelling appropriate behaviour and using opportunities such as informal discussions during play to address issues of fairness and justice.
- Staff will encourage children to communicate with each other respectfully and to be fair to one another.
- Staff will interact with children without bias, prejudice, or reference to any stereotype and will avoid making comparisons between children.
- Implement strategies for staff to reduce bias and prejudice in the service, to be included in the handbook.
- A statement of inclusion will be provided to all educators, staff, and families.
- The service will offer opportunities for activities to be done individually or in groups and provide the choice for children to participate.
- Identifying and encouraging children's differing special qualities and ensuring that programming enables each child to succeed.
- Ensuring resources are monitored to prevent stereotyping, bias and discrimination.

- To ensure that all children receive optimal care within the service, staff will participate in professional development and training and have ready access to reference materials within the service.

5. MANAGING CONFLICT THROUGH MEDIATION

The Dara OSHC Service recognises that the Service will run most effectively when there is minimal conflict, and when conflicts are resolved quickly. We recognise that mediation is an effective tool in achieving this and actively promote it within the Service for all participants to use.

Mediators promote constructive communication, help the disputant take responsibility for their own actions, clarify their needs and feelings and focus on mutual needs and interests.

Mediators HELP people in a conflict, work together to resolve the dispute. This principle acknowledges that children in conflicts (the disputant) have the wisdom within themselves to resolve their own disputes. The mediator GUIDES and HELPS this to happen.

Staff are expected to use the mediation process with children's disputes.

What is Mediation?

- Mediation is a fair way to resolve conflict. A mediator does not take sides but serves as an impartial listener and facilitator to help people in conflict come to an agreement.
- Mediation focuses on problem solving rather than on blaming, punishment or revenge.
- Mediation enables the child to own and accept their behaviour and the consequences because the child has been involved in resolving conflict through the mediation process.

For mediation to effectively resolve conflict, the mediator needs to be an active listener, which involves:

1. Putting yourself in the other person's place to understand what the person is saying and how they feel.
2. Showing understanding and interest by tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, eye contact and body language.
3. Not interrupting, offering advice, or giving suggestions.
4. Reflect and paraphrase what the person has said to ensure that the understanding of the situation is accurate.
5. Asking questions to clarify what is being said.
6. Repeat in their own words what the mediator thinks the person means.

Rules for mediation to occur

If the problem is to be solved, the mediator and disputants must agree on the following points:

1. One person speaks at a time, no interrupting.
2. Everyone listens to each other.
3. Everyone is honest.

4. No 'put downs' should be expressed.

The mediator will be fair and not take sides.

Mediation steps:

Decide who will talk first, then ask:

1. What is the problem?
2. How do you feel?
3. What do you want to happen?
4. What is the plan/solution?
 - a. Work with suggestions until disputants develop a plan/solution they are both happy with.
 - b. There may be more than one problem and solution.
 - c. Make sure all problems are solved.
 - d. Check that both disputants are happy with the plan.
5. How can you avoid the problem happening again?

In closing tell the disputants that the problem is solved.

Strategies for resolving conflicts

1. Take turns.
2. Share.
3. Compromise.
4. Apologise.
5. Get help.
6. Avoid.
7. Humour.
8. Allow chances.

Handling difficult situations

What are the likely problems?

- a. Are they telling the truth?
- b. Is there a lack of willingness to solve the problem?
- c. Is there an inability to explain the situation due to low self-esteem, powerlessness or unequal power?

Strategies to counter difficulties:

- a. Review rules and agreements (ie: the importance of honesty).
- b. Separate disputants and talk to them individually, and then try to solve the problem all together.
- c. Allow disputants a cool-off period until they are willing to participate.

What if one person won't agree to mediate?

Staff members are to ask what will happen/are the consequences if the problem is not sorted out? Then ask if that is what the disputant wants to happen?

NO – “Then it will help to mediate.”

YES – “Then I can't help you now. If you change your mind I will help you.” (this disputant then experiences the consequences.)

The person who did want help needs to carry on until such time that the other disputant is willing to enter mediation.

6. RELATIONSHIP TO REGULATIONS

National Quality Standards (NQS)

Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Regulation 168 Education and care service must have policies and procedures

Regulation 155 Interactions with children

Regulation 156 Relationships in groups

7. REFERENCES

My time, Our Place: framework for School Age Care in Australia, www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/approved-learning-frameworks

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www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-08/InteractionsWithChildrenGuidelines.pdf

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Kidsmatter (2006). *Resolving Conflict*, accessed on 19 January 2022 from www.kidsmatter.edu.au/mental-health-matters/social-and-emotional-learning...

Beyond Blue webpage www.beyou.edu.au/resources/disability-inclusion-guide

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