

OP49 Relationships and Interactions with Children Policy

Policy Title:	Relationships and Interactions with Children Policy	
Policy Number:	OP49	
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1 Purpose

Petit ELJ is committed to providing a learning environment that nurtures each child's identity, self-respect, self-worth, security, and sense of belonging. This is apparent through all our interactions with children.

Petit ELJ is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) that identifies secure, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with children as a key principles of quality practice. Relationships are at the core of all interactions and behaviour guidance practices. Educators understand that the way they interact and respond to children, particularly in times of emotional need, has a significant impact on a child's social and emotional wellbeing.

"A positive approach to guiding children's behaviour builds children's confidence and self-esteem and is based on the development of caring, equitable and responsive relationships between educators and children" (Guide to the National Quality Standard 2011, p.125).

Physical, corporal, and emotional punishment are never acceptable. Petit ELJ is guided by the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics and believes that children must be treated fairly and equitable, and with respect and consistency. Strong relationships and a positive, strengths-based approach to guiding children's behaviour can empower children to regulate their own behaviour and develop the skills needed to interact and negotiate complex social situations and relationships.

Educators have an ethical and professional responsibility to work in ways that are:

- Authentic
- Intentional
- Trusting
- Positive
- Collaborative
- Nurturing
- Responsive
- Culturally sensitive and respectful

Our aspiration for each child that attends Petit ELJ is that they will be provided with a warm, loving, and responsive context that ultimately supports their developing skills of self-regulation, self-confidence, communication, and empathy as they deepen their awareness of their own rights and the rights of others around them. Behaviour guidance practices and approaches will uphold the safety, dignity and rights of all children and prioritise nurturing relationships.



2 Scope

The Approved Provider, Operations Managers, Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director, Educators and employees, parents/caregivers and visitors are all responsible for ensuring children's safety, security and wellbeing are protected when guiding behaviour and interacting with them.

3 Definitions

Behaviour guidance The term 'behaviour guidance' is used to indicate positive and effective ways to help children gain understanding and learn skills that will help them to manage their own behaviour. Using appropriate discipline, or behaviour guidance, aims to support each child to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts (NQS Element 5.2.2) ("Inappropriate Discipline, ACECQA. April 2020)

Inclusion Considering all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversities (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognised and valued and that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference. (Early Years Learning Framework p24 and My Time Our Place Framework for School Age Care p22).

Attachment The bond that is formed between people because of their interactions. The nature of a child's attachment experience is shaped by how consistently and reliably a caregiver responds to the child's signals (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016).

"Unacceptable Behaviour" constitutes behaviour that is:

- a risk to the safety and well-being of other children or to the learning capabilities of other children;
- a risk to the safety and well-being of educators; and/or
- a risk to themselves from his/her behaviour (Porter, 2000)

4 Policy principles

This policy ensures that Petit ELJ complies with legislation and is designed to guide each stakeholder's interactions with children. We see positive interactions as central to ensuring quality outcomes for children's education and care.

Parents/guardians will understand they are required to follow specific procedures to ensure that Petit ELJ can provide safe, high quality care for their children.

Educators will understand that a duty of care exists while the child is in the care of Petit ELJ, and that their interactions must always be in line with this policy and all other related documents.

To assist centres with developing positive relationships and interactions with children and to provide more formal support when required, Petit ELJ has dedicated, and experienced Operations Managers and an Education & Practice Advisor to work alongside educators and educational leaders in centres and model best-practice interactions and behaviour guidance with children. Centre Support Leaders are also available to address any concerns that are raised by educators, Centre Directors or families and support the development of Behaviour Guidance Plans.



5 Policy implementation

- Educators focus on each child's strengths and see each child as a human who is learning about the world around them and that it is their job to support and positively guide each child on that journey.
- Educators provide a learning environment where young children are supported to develop their own sense of value and confidence as they learn to interact with others with empathy, care and respect.
- Educators understand that all children's behaviours communicate an unmet need. Educators understand
 that the environment, relationships, deep knowledge of the child and approach to behaviour guidance all
 have a direct impact on children's learning outcomes and as such, they take a proactive approach to
 planning.

Interactions and Relationships

- Educators support each child to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with their
 peers and educators through interactions that are warm, respectful, authentic, intentional, positive and
 responsive.
- Educators acknowledge the rights of children to be included in decisions that affect them and listen to their opinions (United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12).
- Educators ensure that children's agency is supported by allowing them to make meaningful choices and
 experience the consequences of these choices when there is no risk of physical or emotional harm to the
 child or anyone else.
- Educators ensure that children are being acknowledged when they make positive choices in managing their own behaviour.
- Educators accept children's behavioural "mistakes" as a natural part of acquiring social skills and view any mistake as a teaching/learning opportunity.
- Educators use positive language, gestures, facial expressions, and low tone and volume of voice when
 redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them. They also remain calm, gentle, patient and
 reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration, or anger.
- Educators guide all children's behaviour in ways that are focused on preserving and promoting children's self-esteem as well as supporting children to develop skills to self-regulate their behaviour.
- Educators consistently model positive social skills in their everyday interactions with other adults and children.
- Educators utilise strategies that do not diminish the child in the eyes of others and, at the same time, do
 not negatively affect onlooking children. Strategies include redirection, reminders of the rules (without
 censure), suggesting alternatives, offering choices, and encouraging children to think about how others
 might feel (empathy).
- Educators take the time to listen to children's ideas, interests, dislikes/likes and needs.
- Educators respond with empathy, honesty and sensitivity to children's cues and requests for closeness.
- Educators model consent including asking a child before checking their nappy, sharing their work, or taking their photo.
- Educators consistently model positive social skills such as compassion, caring, kindness and cooperation in everyday interactions with adults and children.
- Educators adopt a problem-solving approach which involves the children in deciding what to do in the situation.
- Educators celebrate and acknowledge children's efforts with substance and respect. Empty-praise sentences such as 'good job' and 'great painting' are to be avoided.
- Educators devote time to infants, spend time one-on-one, and are responsive to them.



Unacceptable Practices

Petit ELJ does not condone use of inappropriate behaviour 'management' strategies. These approaches do not respect the dignity and rights of a child and could potentially be considered criminal matters.

- Educators must never:
 - o hit, kick, push, slap, pinch or bite a child
 - o force-feed a child, or deprive a child of food or drink
 - o yell at, belittle or humiliate a child
 - o physically drag a child
 - o lock children away or isolate them
 - o unreasonably restrain a child (this may include restraint in a highchair)
 - exclude children from events
 - o consistently move children to the office or other space away from the play areas as punishment
 - o move children to another room as punishment it is important that educator's words and actions do not convey it is a punishment of any kind
 - o verbally or physically threaten a child
 - o negatively label a child or family
 - o criticise a child's actions or behaviours
 - discourage a child from taking part in activities
 - blame or shame a child this includes positively acknowledging some children to publicly shame others
 - o make fun of or laugh at or about a child
 - o use sarcastic or cruel humour with or to a child
 - excessively use negative language to communicate with child, such as, "no" "stop that!" "don't..."
 "you never..."
 - o force children to say sorry or to care for others when they have hurt them
 - o use 'someone is watching you' strategies such as 'Santa's Cam'.

Routines and Learning Programs

- Educators take a positive approach to guiding children's behaviour. They accept children's behavioural mistakes as a natural part of acquiring social skills and view any mistake as a teaching/learning opportunity. Refer to the *Educational Program Policy*.
- Educators offer consistent, predictable, joyous, unhurried, and reliable routines and their interactions promote strong attachments.
- Educators place intentional focus on the "rhythms" of the day that support different individual and small
 groups of children to feel safe and secure as they follow consistent rituals throughout their day (i.e.
 Children being supported to access their own sheets and make their own bed prior to laying down to
 rest).
- Educators ensure their routines are flexible to provide for different children's needs and support children to learn to "self-regulate" as they listen to their bodies regarding eating, sleeping/resting and playing (i.e supporting some children to rest/sleep in a quiet space while others are able to play outdoors).
- Educators ensure transitions and periods of the day where large groups of children are required to all be
 doing "the same thing at the same time" are minimised, to prevent children experiencing high levels of
 anxiety/stress.



- Educators ensure that their learning program has extended periods of uninterrupted play which
 accommodate child-initiated, educator-initiated, and co-constructed activities. This blend provides
 children the opportunities to make choices, contribute their own ideas, thoughts, and feelings and to
 develop social competence.
- Educators ensure their educational program is based on deep knowledge of the dispositions, knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities, and interests of each child as communicated to educators by their parents, observed by educators and contributed to by the children. Refer to the Petit ELJ *Interactions with Families Policy*.
- Educators collaborate with children to construct simple rules (expressed in a positive way) and discuss with them how these rules help everyone feel safe and secure.
- Educators ensure their learning program and intentional teaching encourage children to:
 - Express their feelings confidently and constructively, including challenging the behaviour of other children when it is disrespectful or unfair.
 - Explore different identities and points of view and to communicate effectively when resolving disagreements with others.
 - O Discuss emotions, feelings and issues of inclusion and fairness, bias and prejudice and the consequences of their actions and the reasons for this as well as the appropriate rules.
 - Listen to other children's ideas, consider alternate behaviour, and cooperate in problem solving situations.
 - Negotiate their rights and rights of others and intervene sensitively when children experience difficulty in resolving a disagreement.
 - Play, complete projects together and resolve social conflicts that arise from time to time.

Rostering

- Nominated Supervisors ensure centre rosters offer continuity of care so that the children are with educators who know them well and are interested in what they think, feel, and do.
- Particularly in nursery studios, the roster must prioritise the establishment and/or continuity of secure, trusting relationships between educators, children, and parents.
- To support best practice interactions, safety and wellbeing for all infants and educators in the nursery, Petit ELJ aims to ensure that more than one educator is always present in nursery studios.

Environment

- Educators intentionally design their physical environment to limit over-stimulation including consideration of lighting, decorations/displays, music, and noise levels.
- Educators provide a mix of active physical activities and spaces and opportunities for calm and quiet play, as well as for children to be alone when they choose to.
- Educators provide a wide variety of resources, materials and equipment to meet the needs (i.e. age, development, culture) and interests of the children, and support children's learning and harmonious play.
- Educators ensure adequate space and a balance of experiences that encourage children to explore their ideas, apply and test their theories as well as lead their own learning.
- Educators maximise supervision through the intentional arrangement of furniture, equipment and learning materials.
- Educators provide opportunities for children to have input into the design and layout based on their emerging ideas and abilities.
- Educators reflect on and regularly assess the learning environment to minimise or remove any barriers to inclusion for all children to participate meaningfully with their peers.



• Educators consider sensory stimulation when planning learning environments, including whether there is too much stimuli or whether they need to offer additional sensory resources to meet the needs of all children.

Working with families and support networks

- Educators build relationships with children's families and celebrate their diversity and abilities, including cultural, religious and lifestyle choices.
- Educators learn about children's relationships with others and the relationship preferences they have and use this knowledge to support children to manage their own behaviour.
- Educators work in partnerships with parents to best meet the education and care needs of their children. Refer to the Petit ELJ *Interactions with Families Policy*. The communication between home and the centre is especially important when children experience difficultly relating to others and ensures that each party is aware of what is occurring in the child's day.
- Educators gather information from families about their children's social skills and relationship
 preferences and record this information sensitively. This information is used to engage children in
 experiences that support the development of their social skills and shared decision-making skills.
- Reflect as a team on ways to meet all children's needs and on ways to modify the environment or program to meet changing or developing needs of individual children when required.

When required:

- Nominated Supervisors and Educators
 - Discuss with the parents any concerns about their child's behaviour and document any discussions.
 - Collaborate with them in constructing a <u>Behaviour Guidance Plan</u> to help the child acquire the social skills necessary to play and learn happily with others. When practicable, have the child contribute to the plan.
 - Maintain open and ongoing communication with families to discuss strategies for responding to and guiding children's continued challenging behaviour.
 - Continue to collaborate with families to make any necessary additions or modifications to the original <u>Behaviour Guidance Plan</u>.
 - Collaborate with schools and other professionals or support agencies that work with children who have diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties to develop plans for the inclusion of these children. This includes the Inclusion Professionals to provide practical and tailored advice and support to services on effective inclusive practice, including techniques for improvement and solutions to address particular barriers.
 - Work with each child's family and, where applicable, other agencies supporting their program, to
 ensure that a consistent approach is used to support children with diagnosed behavioural or
 social difficulties and to assist in transition, maximising support for the child's family.
 - Offer support and information regarding inclusion and inclusive practices to any family whose child has been negatively affected by the behaviour of another child. This process will take place without bias and have respect each individual's needs for confidentiality.

Responding to Concerning Behaviour

- From time-to-time children may exhibit unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour. This constitutes behaviour that is:
 - o a risk to the safety and well-being of other children or to the learning capabilities of other children;
 - o a risk to the safety and well-being of educators; and/or
 - o a risk to themselves from his/her behaviour



- When a child exhibits behaviour that is determined unacceptable, educators will:
 - Remember to label the behaviour rather than labelling the child. It is the behaviour that is unacceptable, not the child.
 - o While the child is experiencing high emotions/challenging behaviours:
 - Anticipate children's tension or conflict; staying close to potential problem areas and redirecting any children promptly;
 - Consider the child's motives for inappropriate behaviour;
 - Always distinguishing the behaviour from the child; and
 - Show empathy, treat children with respect and dignity;
 - Where necessary, re-directing children to a different area or activity may be a necessary strategy for guiding inappropriate behaviour, particularly when the behaviour may injure themselves and/or other children, educators, or damage property, assisting the child to calm down. If moving a child to a different area or activity, it is never done as punishment, and therefore it is important that educator's words and actions do not convey it is a punishment of any kind. If a child has been moved, an educator needs to be nearby and communicate to the child they are there if the child needs them, or (if the child is seeking this) the educator is to be engaged in communication or a play experience with the aim to support the child's emotional regulation.
 - o <u>After</u> the child has experienced high emotions and is calm and self-regulated:
 - Discuss the child's behaviour with them using age-appropriate language in simple terms. "Lecturing" the child about their behaviour is to be avoided as it is ineffective for young children.
 - Listen to and help the child explore alternatives to unacceptable behaviour, model and teach new problem-solving skills such as negotiation, conflict resolution and social skills, and talk with the child about the consequences of their behaviour and to think about how others might feel.
 - Reinforce the expected behaviour in positive terms.

Responding to Extreme or Escalating Physical Behaviours

- Educators have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and adults.
- If extreme physical behaviours are exhibited, educators will ensure that the child is in no physical danger, by removing hazards. If educators are unable to calm the child, educators will remove the other children from the immediate environment. An educator will stay with the child who is upset. If the child cannot be calmed, the family will be contacted to collect their child. Educators and parents will then arrange a meeting to develop or review appropriate strategies for supporting the child's emotional regulation and ensuring all children are kept safe.
- Physical intervention is only appropriate where there is an immediate and high risk to a child's or adult's safety and all non-physical interventions have been exhausted. In all instances, the physical intervention must be reasonable, proportionate, necessary and for the duration of the emergency only. An example of an appropriate amount of restraint is sitting behind the child on the ground and providing a bear hug embrace. Physically dragging a child is inappropriate.
- Educators who feel they are unable to manage a situation appropriately are encouraged to seek assistance from educators directly in the area.
- Educators must be aware of their own personal levels of tolerance and stress and take regular breaks
 when required. The Centre Director is available to relieve educators so they can have some time away
 from escalating situations.
- Educators maintain confidentiality at all times. Educators will not notify parents of who hurt their child or who their child hurt.



6 Responsibilities

Approved Provider:

It is the responsibility of the Approved Provider to:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure that Nominated Supervisors and staff members of, and volunteers at, the service follow policies and procedures.
- Ensure copies of all policies and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, educators, staff, and volunteers, and available for inspection.
- Make sure any notification in relation to serious incidents is within the regulated timeframes as per the Managing Reporting Requirements & Notifications Policy.

Operations Managers:

It is the responsibility of the Operations Managers to:

- Keep the Approved Provider abreast of any legislative requirements that are not being met or that have changed.
- Monitor compliance at a centre and site level and ensuring staff and volunteers have completed the training on the policy and procedure.

Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director

It is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor to:

- Ensure copies of all policies and procedures are readily accessible to educators, staff, and volunteers, and available for inspection.
- Offer and attend regular professional development opportunities relating to behaviour guidance and inclusive practices.
- Lead, advocate, and act in the best interests of children.
- Refer to Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics to support ethical decision making.
- Work collaboratively with the child, the family, and the educators, including organising and attending formal and informal meetings as required.
- When required, recommend families seek advice from a medical professional and/or therapist
- Support families by sharing relevant information regarding support agencies, training, specialists, counselling and / or funding to promote children's access, participation, and learning.
- Support educators by working alongside them, modelling, and sharing behaviour guidance responsibilities to meet the learning needs of individual children.
- Support educators in developing and reviewing <u>Behaviour Guidance Plans</u> as required.
- Seek advice from appropriate agencies or <u>Inclusion Support Professionals</u> if available.
- Collaborate with their Operations Manager and the Education and Practice Advisor when escalating behaviours have become regular.
- Exhaust all strategies listed in this policy and <u>Supporting Children with Ongoing Complex or Challenging</u>
 <u>Behaviour Procedure</u> before discussing reduction of days or termination of enrolment with a family.
- Only terminate a child's enrolment when required to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and educators, with prior consultation and approval from their Operations Manager and Education and Practice Advisor.
- Understand that a duty of care exists while the child is in the care of Petit ELJ, and that they are
 mandatory reporters under the law who must make a report if they form a reasonable suspicion that a



child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse. Refer to *Child Protection Policy*.

Educators:

It is the responsibility of Educators to:

- Build positive relationships with all children and interact with them in accordance with this policy and their professional responsibilities as outlined in Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy.
- Attend professional development opportunities relating to behaviour guidance and inclusive practices.
- Lead, advocate and act in the best interests of children.
- Refer to <u>Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics</u> to support ethical decision making.
- Provide a wide variety of resources, materials and equipment to meet the needs (i.e. age, development, culture, etc.) and interests of the children
- Base the educational program on the dispositions, knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests of
 each child as communicated to educators by their parents, observed by educators and contributed to by
 the children.
- Work in partnerships with parents to best meet the education and care needs of their children.
- Collaborate with children to construct simple rules (expressed in a positive way) and discuss with them how these rules help everyone feel safe and secure.
- Develop and review <u>Behaviour Guidance Plans</u> as required.
- Understand that a duty of care exists while the child is in the care of Petit ELJ, and that they are
 mandatory reporters under the law who must make a report if they form a reasonable suspicion that a
 child has suffered, is suffering or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm caused by
 physical or sexual abuse. Refer to Child Protection Policy.
- Work in partnership with their Nominated Supervisor, Inclusion Support Professionals, the Operations Manager and the Education and Practice Advisor to achieve best outcomes for children.

Families:

It is the responsibility of parents to:

- Work in collaboration with Nominated Supervisor, educators (and where necessary Inclusion Support
 Professionals, the Operations Manager and the Education and Practice Advisor) to ensure successful
 behaviour outcomes for children, including attending meetings and supporting development of <u>Behaviour</u>
 <u>Guidance Plans</u> when requested.
- Maintain open and honest communication with educators and Nominated Supervisors, including sharing any information with educators that will help them support their child's individual needs.
- Seek / external support when recommended by educators or Nominated Supervisor, within requested time frames.

7 Reporting and Compliance

Links to NQS and legislation:

• Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010)

Section165	Offence to inadequately supervise children	
Section 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline	
Section 168	Offence related to required programs	



Section 169	Offence relating to staffing arrangements
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Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

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	
168	Education and care service 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	

Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010)

Section165	Offence to inadequately supervise children	
Section 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline	
Section 168	Offence related to required programs	
Section 169	Offence relating to staffing arrangements	

Nation	nal Quality	Standard 2018
QA1	1.1.2	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities, and interests are the foundation of the program.
	1.1.3	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
	1.2	Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.
	1.2.1	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions
	1.3.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection
	1.3.3	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress
QA2	2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
	2.2.3	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
QA4	4.1.1	The organisation of educators across the service supports children's learning and development.
	4.1.2	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service
QA5	5.1	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
	5.1.1	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
	5.1.2	The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained
	5.2	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.



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	5.2.1	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
5.2.2		Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the
		behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
QA6 6.1 Respectful relationships with families are developed supported in their parenting role.		Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
	6.1.2	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in
		decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
QA7	7.1.1	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.
	7.1.2	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service
	7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.

Links to related procedures and forms

- OP49-PR001 Supporting Children with Ongoing Complex or Challenging Behaviour Procedure
- OP49-F001 Behaviour Guidance Plan
- OP49-R001 Behaviour Guidance Key Principles
- Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics
- HR05 Educator Professionalism and Ethics Policy
- HR12 Staffing Policy
- OP20 Educational Program Policy
- OP21 Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- <u>Dr. Louise Porter— Not in praise of praise, 2011</u>). Learn more about the difference between praise and encouragement from ACEQA <u>here</u> and from <u>Louise Porter here</u>.

8 Approval and review details

APPROVAL AND REVIEW	DETAILS
Approval Authority	coo
Administrator	Operations Managers
Next Review Date	12 months from date of acceptance