INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

[Guiding Children’s Behaviour]

1. POLICY STATEMENT

St Maria Goretti’s Catholic School staff will endeavour through their interactions with the students to nurture their development, well-being and independence. The school staff will use the opportunities that arise in their interactions with the children to understand each child and help them develop appropriate boundaries regarding safety and respect for others. They will use positive interactions to help guide children’s behaviour and provide an environment that reflects the principles found in “My Time, Our Place” where secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children are fostered and encouraged.

1. RATIONALE

Children need to feel cared for by their educators and ideally, such relationships will develop the openness and dialogue that help educators guide children’s behaviour in a positive way. Educators need to model and speak of Christian values, attitudes and behaviour, especially in the everyday informal interactions that can arise. (p. 22 Mandate 2009 - 2015)

NQS Quality Area 5 (Relationships with Children) and National Regulation 115 places emphasis on the importance of these positive interactions for children’s learning, guiding positive behaviour and supporting the children’s sense of belonging within the class.

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Interactions with children should:

1. Encourage children to express themselves and their opinions.
2. Allow children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem.
3. Maintain the dignity and rights of each child.
4. Give positive guidance and encouragement to each child.
5. Consider the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.
6. **PROCEDURES**
7. Through our school program and environment, educators will:
   1. Provide an environment that encourages positive social interactions.
   2. Offer spaces that give children opportunities to spend time alone as the need arises.
   3. Provide a learning environment which allows smooth transitions between activities and minimises interruptions for children involved in play or other activities.
   4. Offer opportunities for children to participate in a variety of large group, small group and individual activities.
   5. Endeavour to provide enough resources to reduce conflict, but still provide opportunities for children to share those resources.
   6. Offer experiences and activities to promote children’s cooperation, sharing and helping skills.
   7. Encourage children’s sense of agency, assisting them where necessary to make choices and decisions that take into account the child’s own needs and the needs of others.
   8. Consistently engage in one-to-one conversations with all children and develop an understanding of their likes, dislikes and interests.
8. To encourage positive behaviour, educators will:
   1. Role-model appropriate behaviours within the class.
   2. Maintain a positive attitude during all interactions with children.
   3. Respect children as individuals and encourage each child to voice his or her opinions, concerns and ideas.
   4. Treat children equally regardless of their sex, race, cultural background or ability.
   5. Encourage and reward positive behaviour by giving praise and positive feedback to children as often as possible.
   6. Encourage children to resolve conflict independently by not intervening too quickly, while also being prepared to intervene directly if necessary.
   7. Listen carefully to children’s concerns and discuss diverse perspectives on issues of inclusion and exclusion, and fair and unfair behaviour.
   8. Ensure that appropriate physical contact is maintained at all times.
   9. Access professional development and resources related to positive behaviour management, when needed.
   10. Not, under any circumstances, subject any child to any form of corporal punishment, punishment by solitary confinement, punishment by physical restraint or punishment by denial of food.
9. When setting class norms and behavioural boundaries the following strategies will be applied:
   1. Educators and children are involved in establishing simple rules and boundaries and both understand what the consequences will be when agreed limits are not adhered to.
   2. Limits and consequences may vary depending upon the age and ability of the children involved.
   3. Limits to behaviour will be communicated to children in a positive and developmentally appropriate way. Rules will also be displayed in the classroom.
   4. The Principal will support educators to consistently apply the rules and their consequences. All consequences will be relevant to the situation and are never to be demeaning.
   5. Collaboration is to occur between family members and the school regarding appropriate behaviour management practices. This is to ensure that there is a consistent approach.
   6. Families will be made aware of behaviours expected by the School and the class teachers, initially at the enrolment interview and then on an ongoing basis through the normal School communication channels.
10. Cooling Down

When a child is having difficulty self-regulating their behaviour, some “cooling off” time may be offered to assist the child to calm down before what has taken place is discussed. This is not a “time out” where children are specifically isolated from others as a form of punishment, though children may choose to spend some time alone at this point.

Application of this strategy will vary between children but may include the child:

* 1. Sitting quietly with an educator of their choice.
  2. Listening to quiet music.
  3. Doing something physical, such as kicking a ball.
  4. Talking with a friend.
  5. Reading a book.
  6. Being exposed to other strategies deemed to be his or her best interest.

1. Dealing with consistently inappropriate behaviours
   1. Where a child demonstrates inappropriate behaviour consistently, educators will:
      1. Ensure that the child is aware of the set limits of what is appropriate behaviour.
      2. Ensure that the expectations held of the child are appropriate for the child’s level of development and understanding.
      3. Look for and assess possible causes for such behaviour, including environmental factors.
      4. Discuss the issue with the child and family members.
      5. Record all incidents of inappropriate behaviours, making note of the events leading up to the incident, the date and time, who was involved and how the incident was managed. Such records will be stored in accordance with the published Confidential Policy.
      6. Develop an Action Plan for the management of the specific behaviours of the child. The plan will include regular discussions between all educators, the child’s family, and school professionals as required, to review the Action Plan’s effectiveness and progress.
   2. Where a child demonstrates behaviours that are physically harmful, educators will:
      1. Redirect the child from such behaviours as quickly as possible.
      2. Establish if any children or educators involved in the situation have been physically hurt and apply first aid if required.
      3. Record the details of the incident including date, time, people involved, people injured and the action taken to manage the incident.
      4. Ensure that the family members of all children involved in the incident are notified in a confidential and respectful manner.
   3. Exclusion for unacceptable behaviours
      1. Should unacceptable behaviours continue and the above strategies have not worked effectively, the educators will engage the Principal in addressing the issue.
      2. Where, in the interest of the child and other children at the school, exclusion is seen as a necessary step, this decision will be taken by the Principal. It will only be considered after:
         1. Suitable strategies have been in place for a reasonable time as determined by the Principal.
         2. Family members have been notified and given the opportunity to discuss the child’s behaviour and strategies for creating change.
         3. Referrals to other agencies have been made and pursued where necessary.
         4. Educators and the Principal have given careful consideration to the matter.
      3. Prior to accepting the child back into the service a clear management plan must be established and implemented.
2. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

After observing a child’s behaviour, discussing the situation with parents (and the child where appropriate) and trying a range of strategies, the School may wish to consider consulting with and/or engaging other support professionals. Parental permission is required in this instance.

Some early intervention professionals who will be of assistance are:

1. Allied Health professionals in Western Australia. For more information go to:
   1. <http://www.health.wa.gov.au>
2. Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISF) – there are a number of Inclusion Support Agencies throughout Western Australia. To find the ISA governing a specific local area go to:
   1. Communicare Inc (South Metro Perth)  
      – [www.communicare.org.au](http://www.communicare.org.au/)
   2. Child Australia Inc   
      – [www.childaustralia.org.au](http://www.childaustralia.org.au/)
   3. The Shire of Mundaring (East Metro Perth/Midlands ISA)   
      – [www.mundaring.wa.gov.au](http://www.mundaring.wa.gov.au)
   4. **Indigenous Professional Support Unit** Yorganop Child Care Aboriginal Corporation – [www.ipsuwa.org.au](http://www.ipsuwa.org.au/)

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