**DEVELOPING SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN CHILDREN POLICY**

**Rationale:** Children and their families will experience an environment where children’s social competence is nurtured and valued.

**Purpose:**

* To provide a positive, nurturing physical and emotional environment, where each child’s holistic development is nurtured.
* To ensure consistent strategies are in place for encouraging children to develop an understanding of positive behaviours for learning.
* To ensure children develop strategies and confidence in conflict resolution.

**PROCEDURES**

* The foundation for children’s social competence is strong, positive and supportive relationships with all adults and specifically their parents/whānau and teachers.
* The environment will provide a wide range of age-appropriate resources for children that enable them to enjoy positive learning experiences with and alongside others.
* The curriculum will reflect the culture, background and interests of the children attending.

**Positive Guidance Strategies**

* At all times children will be treated with respect and dignity.
* Teachers will take time to know children and their families/whānau.
* Teachers will notice and praise positive behaviour.
* Teachers will guide behaviour by giving children positive strategies to follow.
* Teachers will use positive reinforcement and role modelling to encourage positive behaviour.
* Teachers will support children to develop and maintain appropriate behaviours by giving clear, consistent and fair guidelines.
* Children will be encouraged to work together cooperatively and to be caring and accepting of others.
* Children will be encouraged to communicate about problems and conflicts as they arise, and will be supported by teachers in handling conflict.
* To ensure the safety of all in the centre, teachers will give children clear and consistent guidelines relating to respecting others and the environment.
* Children will be given opportunities to move away from stressful situations, and be supported in developing positive strategies for managing their own behaviour.
* Age-appropriate resources and guidance will be provided for children to assist them to develop strategies to deal with conflict.
* Self-esteem, resilience and confidence will be supported and nurtured in the learning programme.
* Parents will be consulted and included in the development and implementation of individual behaviour plans.
* When required, support will be sought from Ministry of Education Special Education Service (MoESES) or other appropriate support agencies. Parents will be consulted before an individual child is discussed with another agency.
* The Centre will promote and support daily routines that are flexible and responsive to the needs of individuals and groups of children.
* Behaviour management practices will respect and value the cultural backgrounds of children.
* Staff meetings will have time allocated for teachers to raise and discuss any concerns related to children’s behaviour.
* Opportunities will be provided for parents to share the Centre programme and to guide parents in supporting the development of children’s social competence.

**Dealing with Challenging Behaviours**

* Teachers will focus on defining the child's behaviour rather than labeling the child.
* A clear message will be delivered by an adult explaining why the behaviour is unacceptable i.e. when a child could hurt themselves, other children, adults, or property.
* The child's name will be used to gain their attention.
* If required, children will be redirected to another area of play. When they have calmed down and are in charge of their emotions, a teacher will discuss their behaviour with them.
* Some behaviour may be ignored in the short term or the adult's attention may be given to the victim of the child's undesirable actions after a short, firm message is given to the perpetrator.
* Should a child's behaviour begin to cause concern, the teachers will:
  + Observe the child's behaviour and record events leading up to it.
  + Discuss the child's behaviour with a senior teacher.
  + Be able to participate in discussions at staff meetings where teaching strategies for supporting children will be identified.
* Teachers in a stressful situation will be encouraged to move away and request another teacher to take over.
* No force will be used by way of correction or punishment towards any child enrolled at or attending the Centre.
* No child will be put in solitary confinement, immobilized or deprived of food or drink. No child will be spoken to harshly, belittled or degraded.

**Biting**

Our programme recognizes that biting is, unfortunately, not unexpected when crawlers and toddlers are in group care. We are always upset when children are bitten in our programme, and we recognize how upsetting it is for parents.

While we feel that biting is never the right thing for children to do, we also recognize that they bite for a variety of reasons. Most of these reasons are not related to behavior problems. Our programme, then, does not focus on punishment for biting, but on effective techniques that address the specific reason for biting. When biting occurs, we have three responses:

* Care for and help the child who was bitten.
* Help the child who bit learn the appropriate behavior.
* Work with the child who bit and examine our programme to stop the biting.

Our teachers express strong disapproval of biting. They work to keep children safe and to help the child who bit to learn different, more appropriate behaviour. When children bite, their parents are informed personally and privately the same day. When children are bitten, their parents are informed personally that day and offered a copy of our incident form. We give immediate attention if necessary, first aid to the children who are bitten. If the skin is broken, we recommend that both children be seen by their health care provider.

When we experience ongoing biting, the Team Leader and/or management will work with the parents to develop a written plan with specific techniques and timelines to work on the problem. We do not and will not use any response that harms a child or is known to be ineffective.

Biting is always documented on our standard incident report form. We keep the name of the child who bit confidential. This is to avoid labeling and to give our teachers the opportunity to use their time and energy to work on stopping the biting.

In addition, we have current resources on biting available for staff and parents. We encourage parents to bring their concerns and frustrations directly to teachers.

**Why do Young Children Bite?**

Young Children bite for many reasons, which fall into 3 broad categories:

1) Developmental issues, e.g.: teething, sensory, exploration, needing more attention, learning cause and effect

2) Expression of feelings, e.g.: frustration, anger, tension, excitement or love.

3) An environment or programme that is not working for the child, e.g.: too stimulating, not stimulating enough, too crowded, does not allow appropriate privacy, inappropriate expectations, rigid schedule.

Despite even the best efforts or caregivers to prevent it, biting still does happen. When it does occur, teachers are prepared to respond appropriately and effectively.

**What to do When a Young Child Bites:**

Because young children bite for a variety of reasons and in a variety of circumstances, there is no ‘one size fits all’ response to biting. To determine the best response in a given situation, teachers have to observe closely to find out why they are biting. In saying that – the immediate response is always the same:

* You need to act quickly and directly
* Use your words and attitudes to convey a strong message: biting is not OK.
  + - * *“ Child’s name* Stop! Biting hurts”
* Help the child who is bitten feel better
* Help the child who bit to learn different, more appropriate behaviour.

Sometimes you will want to separate the children, other times you might want the children to be near each other as you deal with the biting.

***When implementing this policy, teachers are required to familiarise themselves with:***

* Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008.
* Providing Positive Guidance - Guidelines for Early Childhood Education Services, Ministry of Education, 1998.
* Positive Foundations for Learning: Confident and Competent Children in Early Childhood Education Services, Education Review Office, October 2011.

## Supporting Legislation

* Education Act 1989 Section 139A
* Licensing Criteria C10.

**Reviewed: November 2018**

**Next review date: April 2019**