

Interactions with Children, Families & Staff Policy



RATIONALE

The relationship between educators and children is perhaps the most important aspect of a service. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships are one of the basic principles of the Montessori philosophy and The Early Years Learning Framework that provides a vision for the children's learning at this preschool. Relationships between educators and children can have an impact on other relationships and can dictate the mood of the group, or the whole preschool environment. The value of other skills like observing, planning and organising the environment depends upon the extent to which educators are able to develop these relationships. Children who are secure in the relationship with their educator/s are confident in their learning and are able to enjoy and feel relaxed in their time at the preschool.

Children need positive relationships with adults that they can trust and who respond to them. This is the basic foundation that they need in order to feel good about themselves and their being in the world, and secure enough to take pleasure in actively exploring and learning about themselves, people and things around them.

Children under five are learning communication and social skills. The way in which educators relate and interact with them and to other people in the preschool is an important source of information about how they should communicate and interact with others. Therefore, these adults should relate to children in a positive way which responds to each child's individual needs and enables the child to develop the ability to relate in a similar positive way to others. Children also need adults who actively teach them communication skills, by relating to them in ways which build upon their existing and emerging social and interactive communication skills, and by providing them with opportunities, and activities to exercise and develop these skills.

All adults, and especially experienced preschool educators, are more able than young children to empathise, adapt and modify their behaviour. One of the basic principles of communicating with children is that educators need to approach the children in their care in a child-centred way. Children under five are still very much the centre of their own universe. From birth they are very sensitive to what is going on around them, and are continually trying to make sense of their environment and to discover new ways of relating to it. As they develop, their ability to understand other people, to take account of others' feelings, and to modify their behaviour, increases. However, even when they are five, they are not yet very experienced or skilled in the complexities of social and communications skills.

As educators we are able to establish trusting relationships with the children and at the same time we are able to be positive role models by communicating, interacting and socialising with the children in our care.

Good interaction between adults and children is at the heart of a Montessori Children's House. The art of being a Montessori educator is that of being a child advocate in the deepest sense, one who respects the child's total being. The educator is a firm believer in the powers of the individual child and his desire to act autonomously. A Montessori educator aims never to unnecessarily interfere or correct.

AIMS

To provide

- a place where children feel safe and secure
- an environment based on respect of rights, culture and each individual.

IMPLEMENTATION

Interactions with Children, Families & Staff Policy - Farmhouse Montessori School/ QA Policies/
Quality Area 5

The following are some ways by which educators act as child advocates:

- Interacting frequently with children, expressing affection by smiling, and speaking to children at their eye level throughout the day.
- Being available and responsive to the children, encouraging them to share experiences, ideas and feelings and listen to them with attention and respect.
- Encouraging children to be involved in developmentally appropriate problem solving.
- Speaking to children in a friendly and positive manner.
- Displaying tolerance and patience in dealing with each child's individual needs.
- Treating all children regardless of race, religion, culture and gender with respect and consideration.
- Understanding the importance of encouraging each child to speak their home language as well as English.
- Encouraging developmentally appropriate independence or self-help skills in the children.
- Modelling positive behaviour patterns in language, manners and interaction at all times.
- Assisting children to be comfortable, relaxed, "at home" and involved in the daily routine.
- Having expectations of the children that are developmentally appropriate.
- Encouraging children to verbalise feelings and ideas.
- Monitoring child: staff ratios both indoor and outdoor.
- Being aware of changing surroundings to ensure effective supervision.
- Respecting the child's dignity and rights.

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

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 spoken to in a positive manner at all times to promote respect, tolerance and empathy; this includes children using non-verbal cues
- Babies are supported to build trusting attachments with Educators in order to develop a secure base for their exploration and learning
- 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 own 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, reflections and programming
- Communication with children will be down on the child's level as this shows respect to the child, allows for 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 influences in children's lives and are very 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 the child and family are considered and respected
- Educators will ensure that children are not forced to eat or sleep against their wishes or needs
- 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 the 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 on their child:

- All families will be treated equitably without bias or judgement; recognising that each family is unique
- Educators are to 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 never to discuss another child or family information with a 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 at the Centre
- Educators will always endeavour and seek the advice and opinion from experts with family permission, to help with regards to a child with additional needs or support a family through resources available from such support agencies as KU Inclusion Support Agency, Area Health or the private sector
- Staff will endeavour to recognise and implement a number of different ways to communicate with families in their preferred chosen way
- Verbal communication will always be open, respectful and honest
- Service information, updates and notices will be made available via the school Newsletter, communal signs etc Noticeboards and front of school sign, emails and letters in parent pigeon holes.
- Educators will regularly reflect on parent input into the program and make changes where necessary that will best benefit the service and children

Educators will communicate with each other always exercising professionalism, respect and equality:

- The service recognises that the way Educators interact with each other has an effect on the interactions they have with children and families
- Professional communication is very important to create an effective work environment and to build a positive relationship with families. Communication amongst colleagues creates a positive atmosphere and a professional service for families. Communication between staff and families ensures that important information is being passed on and that consistency occurs
- All duties within the room are to be shared and Educators are responsible for ensuring this occurs through the use of a roster where necessary
- Educators are to be respectful when listening to each other's point of view and ideas
- Effective communication is required to ensure that the teamwork occurs
- Educators will use staff meetings to communicate their professional reflections and ideas for continuous improvement as a team
- In-service training on communication will be encouraged to update and refresh knowledge
- Educators will refer to the Staff Grievance Policy/Procedure if they feel a situation with another Educator is not being handled with professionalism, respect and quality

Educators will convey mutual respect and recognition of each other's strengths and skills through;

- Recognising each other's strengths and valuing the different work each does
- Working collaboratively to reach decisions which will enhance the quality of the Education and care offered at the service
- Welcoming diverse views and perspectives
- Working together as a team and engaging in open and honest communication at all times
- Respecting each other's feelings
- Developing and sharing networks and links with other agencies
- Resolving differences promptly and positively and using the experience to learn more effective methods of working together

This policy was made with consideration to the National Quality Standard and Education and Care Services National Regulations

Source

- Education and Care Services National Regulation 2015,
- Early Childhood Australia
- DEEWR (2009). Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. www.deewr.gov.au

Policy Review Date**November 2016
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