

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN POLICY

WHY?

Thrive Group Tasmania is committed to building children's self-confidence.

Thrive recognises that children's confidence is shaped in large part, by the relationships they have with those who care for them.

Staff/Educators in Thrive Services play a pivotal role in developing and nurturing positive relationships with and between children. Supportive interactions are a key component of such relationships, as these lay the foundation for children's sense of self; their willingness to explore and learn; to connect and engage with peers; and to self-regulate their behaviour.

Thrive believes it is critical to identify the characteristics which make for supportive interactions and the strategies which bring them to life.

WHO?

This policy applies to families, staff and Educators enrolled with, or working in the following Thrive Children's Services:

- Early Learning Services
- Outside School Hours Care Services
- Family Day Care Services

WHAT?

Characteristics of Supportive Interactions in Thrive Services:

- Treating children with kindness and compassion
- Treating each child as a unique individual
- Listening to children
- Showing fairness and being inclusive
- Encouraging and valuing children's options, thoughts and ideas
- Using positive body language and focusing on children's strengths
- Being attuned to children's needs
- Promoting children's independence and self-help skills
- Role modelling positive behaviours and language
- Open, respectful communication with families.

Thrive's approach does not mean:

- Answering for or talking at children
- Controlling conversations with children
- Responding to children in an insincere manner
- Focusing on the negatives and making discouraging comments
- Rushing children.

HOW?

Please refer to the Interactions with Children Procedure (following this Policy).

WHEN?

Staff/Educators will:

- Develop and maintain respectful and equitable relationships with children on an ongoing basis
- Support children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with each other on an ongoing basis

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- Continually support children to manage their own behaviour and resolve conflict in positive ways
- Maintain the dignity and rights of children at all times.

Thrive will provide families, staff and Educators with a copy of this policy to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations.

Thrive retains the sole discretion to reasonably vary, terminate or replace this policy from time to time. Thrive will consult before any amendments are made and will notify and train those to whom the amendments apply.

All persons covered under the paragraph 'Who' who breach this policy may be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure or removal from the workplace or termination of services (workers, other than employees and other persons in the workplace).

POLICY VERSION & REVISION INFORMATION:

Policy Authorised by: General Manager
Review Date/s:
Review Date: As required by the GM or as legislation changes

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NOTE: The digital version of this document is the most current version. Printed versions cannot be relied upon for accuracy and are always superseded by a digital copy.

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN PROCEDURE**HOW?*****Staff/Educator Interactions with Children***

- Greet children personally as they arrive each day.
- Use children's names and get down to their eye level when communicating with them.
- Be welcoming – using positive words, engaging and comforting tones and the body language to match.
- Show physical warmth.
- Be present 'in the moment' – tune into the child and take a genuine interest in him/her.
- Be emotionally available and empathetic – step into the child's shoes and try to understand and acknowledge a child's feelings.
- Be attuned to children's non-verbal cues.
- Listen attentively, avoid interrupting and give children time to think about things before they respond.
- Acknowledging children's efforts to communicate.
- Use non-verbal communication as a way of acknowledging and affirming children.
- Take time to have meaningful, one-on-one conversations with children during the day – use these times to offer encouragement and support; to ask open ended questions as a way of building on children's comments; and extending/challenging their thinking.
- Be equitable and fair to ensure everyone has a change to express their ideas, feelings and make choices.
- Encourage and celebrate children's initiatives and resourcefulness.
- Create a climate of openness where children feel they can ask for support.
- Actively respond to children who are upset and distressed, and help them to feel safe, secure and understood.
- Have settling in processes which help to bridge the gap between home and care.
- Use a variety of techniques and tools to support and interact with additional needs.

Promoting Supportive Interactions between Children

Create many opportunities for children to interact with each other by having play experiences and equipment which:

- Encourages small group participation and conversations/social engagement
- Involves negotiating roles and relationships
- Involves practicing cooperation, sharing, helping and problem solving.

Have small group discussions about working together; respecting each other's feelings and emotions; strengths and talents; listening to others; sharing and taking turns.

Involve children (where possible and appropriate) in establishing guidelines around behaviour which respects their own and other's rights. Talk about these guidelines in positive terms and reinforce them visually through signs, pictures and symbols, and involve the children in the making of these. This helps in catering to children's different learning styles and supports children in taking ownership and developing self-responsibility and independence.

Set up the environment to:

- Allow sufficient space for small group interactions and solitary play
- Allow children to initiate own experiences, using equipment and resources they can access independently
- Create a happy, fun, relaxed atmosphere.

Group children in ways which will:

- Support independent learning and developing of trusting relationships
- Minimise the risk of overcrowding and becoming lost in the group.

Limit transition times as much as possible across the day to avoid disrupting children's group play and to maximise connecting and learning opportunities.

Give children peer mentoring responsibilities – encourage children to help and teach each other.

Model language and behaviour that reflects a sense of fairness; inclusion; empathy and cooperation with others.

Supporting Children to Manage their own Behaviour

The strategies mentioned above all support children's understanding of self and their connection to others and developing supportive relationships. Having a positive environment and a rich program encourages children to learn skills in self-control, which is the foundation of self-regulation and management behaviour.

Some additional strategies include:

- Being consistent in expectations to avoid children receiving mixed or confusing messages
- Observing children to identify both their strengths and challenges, and triggers for potential stress and anxiety
- Acting as an interpreter for children who are unable to express themselves verbally
- Empowering children to use language and peaceful means of communicating their emotions
- Being vigilant to changes in children's health, demeanour and engagement level
- Providing social rewards for pleasing behaviour i.e. smile; praise; high 5; gestures; in preference to tangible rewards such as stickers and stamps (where possible)
- Using social stories to help children understand specific situations and how to deal with them
- Being confident in reading children's play and pre-empting issues and taking steps to de-escalate possible conflict.

Supporting Children to Resolve Conflicts

In conflict situations, Thrive encourages staff/Educators to:

- Be patient, respectful and non-judgemental
- Sit down with the children involved
- Ask children to describe the issue/s at hand
- Listen carefully to conflicting viewpoints
- Interpret for children who may experience difficulty in voicing their concerns
- Elicit information and further detail
- Help children generate their own solutions and alternative ways of dealing with the problem. This approach may be adapted for working with very young children.

Where conflict is of a higher-level intensity, allow a cooling off period so the child/children can calm down before discussing what happened and before working out resolutions.

Important Considerations

Maintain the dignity and rights of children at all times:

- No child is to receive any form of physical punishment
- No child is to be subjected to demeaning, humiliating or frightening punishment e.g. name calling, shouting, sarcasm, and/or restraint as a form of punishment
- No child is to be isolated, other than in the event of illness or an accident, for any period of time.

Explore reasons for the conflict or factors that may be influencing a child's behaviour, i.e. service environment; group dynamics; external stress/trauma; stage of development.

Assess whether additional support is required and/or aspects of the program or environment need modifying.

If a child's behaviour is persistently challenging, e.g. threats to his/her safety or that of others, staff/Educators will work with the child and his/her family (Thrive Person with Management and Control, in the case of Family Day Care Services) to develop an action plan which identifies:

- The reasons for the plan
- Actions that have been taken to date
- The agreed strategies to be implemented
- Timeframes to review.

This plan will be signed by the Educator/parent and a copy forwarded to Thrive Person with Management and Control. If strategies documented in the Action Plan do not result in change/improvement, the Person with Management and Control or the Educator will discuss alternative care options with the parent and advise of the decision to discontinue care.

Working with Families

Families will be made aware of Thrive's approach to relationship building at the time of enrolment.

Staff/Educators will encourage families to share information about their child/children to enhance interactions and support children's wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Parent confidentiality will be respected and all families treated equitably and fairly.

If behavioural issues arise, the staff member/Educator will be honest in providing feedback and seeking the parent's views and assistance in working jointly to support the child.

Children in Vehicles

Transporting children in vehicles comes with some unique challenges that need to be managed. There are four broad categories for categorising behaviours during transport. These each need to be dealt with in different ways in order to ensure the safety of all persons on the bus.

1. Acceptable behaviour
2. Unacceptable behaviour
3. Dangerous or Destructive behaviour, which may cause harm to property and/or others
4. Immediately life-threatening or illegal behaviour

Behaviours

Acceptable Behaviour: This is how we would like children to behave on the bus (sitting down, seatbelt on, talking quietly with friends)

Unacceptable Behaviour: This includes behaviour that is offensive, a nuisance or distracting but not otherwise dangerous. For example, yelling, screaming, and antagonising other children or the driver.

Dangerous or Destructive behaviour, which may cause harm to property and/or others: This includes all behaviours that could lead to injuries but are not immediately dangerous. For example, refusing to wear a seatbelt, standing up on the bus or moving around, damaging or vandalising the bus, and throwing things inside the bus or out windows.

Immediately life-threatening or illegal behaviour: Any behaviour that poses an immediate risk to any person on the bus. For example, assaulting others, placing any body parts out the window, attempting to open doors, interfering with the driver, or the controls

Consequence Table

Category	Incident	Consequence
Acceptable	N/A	No Consequence
Unacceptable	First offence	Educator to follow supporting children strategies listed above. Parent informed of behaviour on pick up and warned of subsequent consequences.
	Second Offence	Educator to follow supporting children strategies listed above. Educator sits with child on bus for the next 2 weeks or until an improvement has been seen, whichever occurs last. Educator completes an incident form. Parent informed of behaviour on pick up and warned of subsequent

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		consequences.
	3 or more offences	Educator to follow supporting children strategies listed above. Educator sits with child on bus for the next 4 weeks or until an improvement has been seen, whichever occurs last. Educator completes an incident form. Parent informed of behaviour on arrival to service.
Dangerous	First Offence	Bus pulls over and educator moves to sit next to child. Parent informed of behaviour on pick up and warned of subsequent consequences
	2 or more offences	Bus pulls over and educator moves to sit next to child. Family called upon arrival to service and child sent home. Behaviour incident form to be completed
Life Threatening	First Offence	Child restrained for safety, family called upon arrival to service and child sent home. Behaviour incident form to be completed
	Second Offence	Bus pick up will no longer be offered to family

Consistency across the Service

Staff/Educators will ensure all casual/relief staff or Educators, plus students and volunteers, are made aware of the services approach to relationship building and guiding behaviours.

These Procedures relate to legislation as described in the Interactions with Children Policy.

BREACH OF THE PROCEDURE

Any breach of this procedure may result in disciplinary action including, but not limited to, termination of employment.

Thrive retains the sole discretion to reasonably vary, terminate or replace this procedure from time to time. Thrive will consult before any amendments are made and will notify and train those to whom the amendments apply.