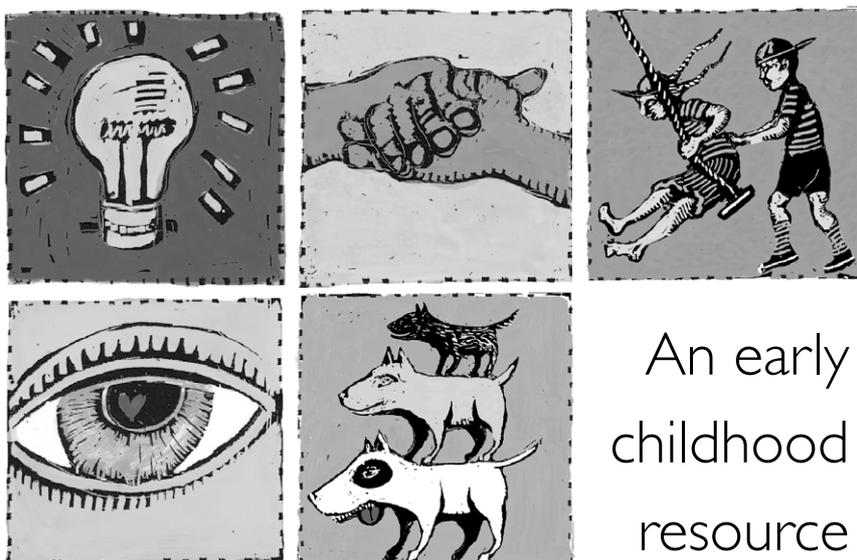


# Supporting and managing children's behaviour



# Supporting and managing children's behaviour



An early  
childhood  
resource

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# Foreword

The Department of Education and Children's Services is committed to providing high quality learning, teaching and care for children and students. The connection between children's social and emotional wellbeing and their success in learning, highlighted by international research, has informed the development of the *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services* and this resource folder, *Supporting and Managing Children's Behaviour*.

Research has also shown that education and care are key protective factors that can reduce children's risk of poor life outcomes. This policy supports educators in achieving positive behavioural and learning outcomes for all children, through the provision of safe, supportive environments and high quality, developmentally appropriate learning programs.

The *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services* applies to departmental preschools, child parent centres, play-centres, Rural Care Programs, occasional care services and Family Day Care Coordination Units. The policy is also recommended to other early childhood education and care providers who may wish to adapt it for their own use.

The policy focuses on young children prior to their entry into reception at school and should be considered in conjunction with the *School Discipline Policy* (1996) which provides a positive and continuous approach to supporting and managing children's behaviour throughout the compulsory years of schooling.

I would like to thank the early childhood educators, parent groups, associations, disability agencies and departmental staff from across South Australia who have contributed to this work.

I recommend this resource to early childhood educators.



Steve Marshall  
Chief Executive  
Department of Education  
and Children's Services

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# **Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services**



# Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services

1

Children, families and educators are entitled to policy and operational guidelines that support a consistent approach to behaviour support and management. The *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services* applies to departmental preschools, child parent centres, play-centres and occasional care services (referred to as preschools) and Family Day Care Coordination Units. Departmental employees are bound by the policy which is also recommended for adaptation by other early childhood education and care providers.

The policy describes the roles and responsibilities of departmental personnel, identifies relevant legislation and describes the department's approach to the support and management of children's behaviour. The *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services* requires that educators support children in accordance with their age and stage of development and cultural background to:

- express their wants and needs in ways that respect the rights and safety of others
- interact positively with individuals and the group
- care for themselves, others and their environment
- recognise the consequences of their behaviour
- choose positive behaviours
- develop problem solving skills.

These behaviours are described as *appropriate behaviours*.

The policy addresses the needs of children with emerging and established challenging behaviours. Challenging behaviours endanger the safety or emotional wellbeing of the child or others, impede the child's capacity to participate in learning and may lead to social isolation. Challenging

behaviours may be internalised (eg withdrawal and reluctance to participate) or externalised (eg hitting, biting or damaging property).

The *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services* and the *School Discipline Policy* (1996) support the management of children's behaviour on departmental sites from the time they enter early childhood education and care services, through the compulsory years of schooling, and include Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) services on school sites. The latter are required to comply with the *OSHC Standards* (1998), developing behaviour management strategies consistent with those of the school.

## Rationale

Research into early childhood development, education and care provides the foundation for the policy. The following statements articulate the principles and beliefs that underpin educators' approach to supporting and managing children's behaviour.

- Children's behaviour is a form of communication and is purposeful. Children's capacity to choose appropriate behaviour is influenced by their developmental ability, temperament, interactions, life experiences and environmental factors.
- Children have a right to respect and consideration as individuals, and to be supported in their learning to develop appropriate behaviours for group settings.
- Children's learning is most successful when:
  - it builds on children's prior experiences, skills and knowledge, encouraging positive dispositions towards learning and providing for individual children's learning styles

- behavioural expectations are explicit and take into consideration children’s culture, age, stage of development, life experiences and the context of the setting
  - the environment is safe, inclusive, supportive of learning and free from harassment and bullying
  - families and educators work to develop consistent expectations to support the child’s learning
  - children co-construct meaning and knowledge through purposeful, challenging and interesting activities that build on their prior knowledge and experiences.
- Early behaviour intervention is effective in preventing and minimising the development and long-term effects of ongoing challenging behaviours.

## Policy outcomes

1. Sites provide a safe, secure and supportive environment in which children are successful in learning appropriate behaviours.
2. Sites use a positive approach to behaviour management that takes into account child and contextual factors.
3. Educators work in partnership with families to address children’s learning needs.
4. Challenging behaviours are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.

## Policy statements

1. The learning environment supports children to be successful in developing appropriate behaviours

A supportive environment is evident where:

- the site is safe, well-planned and promotes a sense of belonging, trust and respect
  - there is recognition of the importance of play in children’s learning and support for them to develop the capacity to imagine, experiment, problem solve, role-play and express a range of feelings and ideas
  - the program is enriching, varied and includes developmentally appropriate behavioural expectations
  - staff are aware of their occupational health and safety responsibilities, including the identification of potential hazards, seeking advice and resolution as appropriate
  - children are effectively supervised at all times
  - interactions are positive, recognising and valuing children as individuals and are responsive to external factors that may influence children’s wellbeing (eg illness, changes in family circumstances).
2. Expectations of children’s behaviour take account of their age and stage of development

Expectations that consider children’s age and stage of development are evident where educators:

- demonstrate a broad understanding of child development and developmentally appropriate behaviours in young children
- modify their behaviour and programming to address the needs of individual children, including those with disabilities or developmental delay



- are familiar with and utilise relevant professional reports and family information.

### 3. Children's behaviour is supported using a positive approach

A positive approach to supporting children's behaviour is evident where educators:

- model verbal and non-verbal behaviours that are respectful and inclusive of all children and families
- model and encourage problem solving, negotiation and conflict resolution
- notice and acknowledge appropriate behavioural responses by children
- actively engage children in understanding and developing behavioural expectations and consequences and in goal setting
- provide opportunities for skill development throughout the program, such as resilience, social, coping and communication skills and protective behaviours
- explicitly teach appropriate behaviours and play skills, building on children's strengths and prior knowledge
- provide opportunities for children to practise appropriate behaviours
- use assessment, monitoring and reporting procedures that focus on children's progress and achievements
- work together as a team, using a consistent approach.

### 4. Approaches to behaviour support value the diversity of children's backgrounds and experiences

Valuing of diversity is evident where educators:

- demonstrate awareness that children's behaviour is influenced by their temperament, abilities, experiences, culture and family context
- encourage children to understand factors that may influence other children's behaviour and to respond using appropriate strategies
- encourage families to contribute their ideas and experiences about children's behaviour.

### 5. Children's behaviour is supported in partnership with families and local communities

Effective partnerships are evident where:

- site behaviour codes are developed, through the management committee or governing council, in partnership with families and the community and are reviewed annually
- site behaviour codes are provided to and discussed with enrolling families
- families and educators communicate effectively and work together to ensure that children's behavioural and developmental needs are met
- confidentiality is observed in discussions with families and in exchange of information with other services
- transition to another setting is carefully planned and monitored with staff from the new setting and families for children with challenging behaviours (eg preschool to school).

### 6. The response to emerging challenging behaviours is timely and appropriate

A timely and appropriate response is evident where:

- early identification of challenging behaviours occurs

- communication with families about challenging behaviours takes place at the earliest opportunity and is framed as a positive opportunity to address children’s behavioural needs within the group setting
- support from departmental support services and/or other agencies is sought
- children’s behaviours are assessed across a range of informal and formal learning activities and contexts (eg small and large groups)
- planning, implementation, monitoring and review of individual behaviour plans occurs in partnership with families and support services
- program planning considers behavioural needs as part of planning for individual children and groups.

Behavioural approaches should encourage and reinforce appropriate behaviours, ensuring the safety of the child and others.

- Children are always treated with dignity and respect and directly monitored. Physical, verbal or emotional punishments are not used (ie smacking, shaking, verbal reprimands, shouting or any punishment that frightens, humiliates or threatens the child).
- Consequences for inappropriate behaviours may include time-limited withdrawal of attention, which is non-emotional and followed by redirection (ie time out).

Strategies to manage challenging behaviours exclude corporal punishment, abolished in South Australian government schools by 1991 in response to the International Court of Human Rights ruling (1982) that corporal punishment is a violation of the basic human rights of children.

## Responsibilities

Preschools will use the *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services* to further develop site behaviour codes. Site behaviour codes describe a positive and proactive approach to supporting children’s development of appropriate behaviours and the site’s behavioural expectations and consequences. Site behaviour codes are developed in partnership with governing councils and management committees, families and relevant members of the local community. The governing council approves the site behaviour code.

Departmental directors and District Directors support the implementation of the policy across departmental sites, while preschool directors/school principals and educators are accountable for the implementation of the policy on their sites. Family Day Care Coordination Unit personnel are responsible for supporting the implementation of the adapted *Guiding Children’s Behaviour Policy* by Family Day Care care providers, whose conditions of approval require them to implement this policy.

The primary responsibility of educators is a **duty of care** to children whenever the relationship of child/educator applies. Duty of care includes:

- supervision of children in the range of education and care contexts provided by early childhood settings
- designing and implementing programs and procedures to promote safe environments
- warning children about dangerous situations or practices
- ensuring that premises and equipment are safe.

Duty of care varies according to factors



including the child's age, maturity, experience and the nature of the activity. Generally, the duty of care is greater the younger the child, the more complex the learning, the health and care needs of the child and the more hazardous the situation.

A breach of duty of care occurs where there has been a failure to exercise the level of care required in any particular situation. In order for a liability in negligence to be established, it must be proved that:

- a duty of care was owed in the circumstances
- the duty of care was breached, because of an act or omission on the part of the person owing the duty
- a loss or injury is suffered as a result of the breach
- the type of loss or injury suffered was a reasonably foreseeable consequence of the act or omission.

If such a liability is established, a parent or student may make a claim for 'damages' as financial compensation for all foreseeable loss (both economic and non-economic) arising from the negligence.

In the event that injuries result from an educator's negligence in the course of his/her employment, the Minister for Education and Children's Services is vicariously liable and is required to indemnify the educator for any liability incurred, unless the action constitutes serious or wilful misconduct.

### *Directors, State Office*

Relevant State Office directors have a responsibility to:

- ensure the provision of services for children with challenging behaviours
- ensure professional development opportunities for educators
- encourage review and innovation in behaviour support/management
- engage in interagency agreements to

improve service provision

- monitor the implementation of the policy.

### *District Directors*

District Directors have a responsibility to:

- support site managers to develop site behaviour codes and high quality programs
- implement accountability measures through performance management and other methods to ensure that sites' practice is linked with the policy outcomes and statements
- work cooperatively with departmental services and other agencies to support the provision of behavioural services for children with challenging behaviours
- assist in resolving concerns and conflicts between departmental staff and families or members of the community, as appropriate
- support the management of critical incidents.

### *Support services*

Support services have a responsibility to:

- provide high quality behavioural support that is responsive to the needs of children, families and DECS sites
- support a coordinated approach to service delivery
- evaluate and improve models of service delivery
- maintain up to date professional knowledge
- provide professional development to departmental educators.

### *Family Day Care Coordination Units*

Family Day Care field workers and team leaders have a responsibility to ensure:

- the environment and work practices of care providers are safe
- a site behaviour code is developed and reviewed regularly
- care providers demonstrate good practice in supporting and managing children's behaviours
- support to manage children's challenging behaviours is sought.

### *Governing councils/management committees*

Governing councils/management committees have a responsibility to ensure:

- opportunities for the community to contribute to the development and review of the site behaviour code are provided
- the site behaviour code considers the cultural and social diversity of the community
- policy implementation is adequately resourced.

### *Site managers*

Preschool directors and principals of child parent centres have an additional responsibility to ensure:

- implementation of the Behaviour Support Policy
- the environment and work practices of educators are safe
- a site behaviour code is developed and reviewed regularly

- educators demonstrate good practice in supporting and managing children's behaviours
- support to manage children's challenging behaviours is sought.

### *Educators*

Preschool teachers, ancillary staff, occasional care staff and preschool directors/school principals have a responsibility to:

- model, plan and implement behaviour management practices consistent with the principles and intent of this policy
- critically reflect on and articulate behaviour support and behaviour management practices
- seek information from families and advice from other professionals
- undertake professional development, as appropriate
- contribute to the development, implementation and review of the site behaviour code.

### *Expectations of families*

Families are expected to:

- support the child's regular attendance
- provide information that will assist departmental personnel to understand their child's needs and support their learning
- contribute to their child's learning and care program (eg if relevant, providing assessment reports from other agencies).



## Implementation, support and review

Departmental professional development courses will incorporate the *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services*.

Preschools will use this document as the basis for the development of site behaviour codes, in partnership with management committees/ governing councils, families and the local community.

The policy will be evaluated in conjunction with any review of the *School Discipline Policy*.

## Relevant information

The *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services* should be considered in conjunction with the following legislation, Department of Education and Children's Services policies and action plans.

### Legislation

- Children's Services Act 1985
- Education Act 1972 and Regulations under the Act
- Equal Opportunity Act (SA, 1984)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act (1986)
- Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth, 1992)

### Policies

- *School Discipline Policy* (1996)
- *Family Day Care Guiding Children's Behaviour Policy*
- *Preschool Enrolment Policy*
- *Child Protection* (1998)

- *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework* (2001)
- *Antiracism* (1996)
- *Multiculturalism in Schooling and Children's Services* (1995)
- *Assessment and Reporting for Schools and Preschools* (1995)
- *Occupational Health and Safety* (1997)
- *Students with Disabilities Policy* (1991) – under review

## Departmental guidelines

- *DECS Administrative Instructions and Guidelines*
- *Aboriginal Education Plan in Early Childhood and Schooling* (1999-2003)
- *Fair and Reasonable: Disability Discrimination Act Implementation Kit* (2000)
- *ADHD: Teaching and Managing Children and Schools* (1999)
- *Including Children with Disabilities and Developmental Delay in Preschools* (1999)
- *Health Support Planning in Schools, Preschools and Childcare Services* (2001)
- *Negotiated Education Plan* (2003)

## Related documents

- *National Family Day Care Standards*
- *National Childcare Standards*
- *Family Day Care Quality Practices Guide*

# Glossary

## Ancillary staff

Early childhood workers, school services officers, bilingual assistants, preschool support and occasional care staff

## Appropriate behaviour

Children are encouraged, in accordance with their age and stage of development, to:

- contribute to a positive personal and group identity
- respect the rights, feelings and needs of individuals and the community
- develop and enhance positive relationships
- support individuals' contributions as members of a group, promote children's autonomy and motivation to learn.

## Challenging behaviours

These behaviours may be internalised (eg withdrawal and lack of participation) or externalised (eg aggression, bullying).

They include behaviours that endanger the safety of the child or others, impede children's capacity to access or participate in the curriculum.

## Developmentally appropriate practice

The use of knowledge and understanding of child development to make thoughtful and appropriate decisions about early childhood program practices; reflect an understanding that programs for young children should be based on what is known about young children's learning, development and their family context.

## Educators

Teachers, early childhood workers, school services officers, preschool directors and principals of child parent centres

## Family Day Care Coordination Unit staff

Family Day Care field workers and team leaders

## Other agencies

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, the Crippled Children's Association, Intellectual Disability Services Council, the Autism Association of SA and Down Syndrome Society

## Preschools

Departmental preschools, child parent centres, play-centres and occasional care services

## Site manager

Preschool directors, principals of child parent centres

## Support services

Departmental support services personnel providing behavioural support include psychologists, guidance officers, special educators, social workers, behaviour support and disability consultants.

## Transition

The process of moving from one early childhood service to another (eg preschool to school).



# Site behaviour code

- 2.1 Guidelines for reviewing the site behaviour code
- 2.2 Promoting the site behaviour code

# Site behaviour code

## 2

A site behaviour code is a statement of values and expectations in relation to children's behaviour. It also describes the ways in which educators will support and manage children's behaviour.

The site behaviour code is a dynamic document that is revisited annually to ensure that educators are conversant with its content and are able to apply it in practice. The site behaviour code should reflect current theory and changes to the preschool community.

**The site behaviour code supports positive outcomes for children, families, educators and the community by:**

*Providing a framework for the support and management of children's behaviour*

*Contributing to clear communication about children's behaviour in a way that supports respectful and cooperative relationships between children, families and educators*

*Communicating values and expectations in relation to behaviour*

*Addressing safety issues*

*Stating clearly consequences for inappropriate behaviours*

*Promoting consistency in the approach by educators to behaviour support and management*

**A site behaviour code should:**

*Use positive language*

*Describe specific strategies and consequences*

*Consider children with additional needs*

*Change over time according to children's needs*

*Be tailored to accommodate the physical environment, curriculum and educators' styles*

Adapted from: Maximising Positive Behaviours and Managing Challenging Behaviours, 2002 (MPB course produced by DETE)

## 2.1 Guidelines for reviewing the site behaviour code

Consideration of the following will assist the review of the site behaviour code. The review process should be reflective and engage all educators, families and the community.

- What are your beliefs about behaviour? What are the behavioural goals for your site?
- How do your actions encourage and support appropriate behaviours?
- How do your actions encourage and discourage inappropriate or unsafe behaviours?
- What are the rules for safety and fairness?

- How will you consult and inform families?
- How will you involve children in setting behavioural expectations?
- How will you inform new and relief staff?
- How will your site review the policy and its effectiveness?

Adapted from MPB course

Please note that district support services are available to support the review of site behaviour codes.

The policy statements can be used to support review of sites' behaviour management practices. The following checklist will assist teams in identifying priorities for improvement.

1. The learning environment supports children to be successful in developing appropriate behaviours	Not at all ↔ Very well
1. The site is safe, well-planned and promotes a sense of belonging, trust and respect	
2. There is recognition of the importance of play in children's learning and support for them to develop the capacity to imagine, experiment, problem solve, role-play and express a range of feelings and ideas	
3. The program is enriching, varied and includes developmentally appropriate behavioural expectations	
4. Educators are aware of their occupational health and safety responsibilities, including the identification of potential hazards, seeking advice and resolution as appropriate	
5. Children are effectively supervised at all times	
6. Interactions are positive, recognising and valuing children as individuals and are responsive to external factors that may influence children's wellbeing (eg illness, changes in family circumstances)	



2. Expectations of children’s behaviour take into account their age and stage of development	Not at all ↔ Very well
1. Demonstrate a broad understanding of children’s development and developmentally appropriate behaviours in young children	
2. Modify their behaviour and programming to address the needs of individual children, including those with disabilities or developmental delay	
3. Are familiar with and utilise relevant professional reports and family information	

3. Children’s behaviour is supported using a positive approach	Not at all ↔ Very well
1. Educators’ verbal and non-verbal behaviours are respectful and inclusive of all children and families	
2. Model and encourage problem solving, negotiation and conflict resolution	
3. Notice and acknowledge appropriate behavioural responses by children	
4. Actively engage children in understanding and developing behavioural expectations and consequences and in goal setting	
5. Provide opportunities for skill development throughout the program, such as resilience, social, coping and communication skills and protective behaviours	
6. Explicitly teach appropriate behaviours and play skills, building on children’s strengths and prior knowledge	
7. Provide opportunities for children to practise appropriate behaviours	
8. Use assessment, monitoring and reporting procedures that focus on children’s progress and achievements	
9. Work together as a team, using a consistent approach	

4. Approaches to behaviour support value the diversity of children’s backgrounds and experiences	Not at all ↔ Very well
1. Demonstrate awareness that children’s behaviour is influenced by their temperament, abilities, experiences, culture and family context	
2. Encourage children to understand factors that may influence other children’s behaviour and to respond using appropriate strategies	
3. Encourage families to contribute their ideas and experiences about children’s behaviour	

<b>5. Children's behaviour is supported in partnership with families and local communities</b>	Not at all ← → Very well
1. Site behaviour codes are developed, through the management committee or governing council, in partnership with families and the community and are reviewed annually	
2. Site behaviour codes are provided to and discussed with enrolling families	
3. Families and educators communicate effectively and work together to ensure that children's behavioural and developmental needs are met	
4. Confidentiality is observed in discussions with families and in exchange of information with other services	
5. Transition to another setting is carefully planned and monitored with educators from the new setting and families for children with challenging behaviours (eg preschool to school)	

<b>6. The response to emerging challenging behaviours is timely and appropriate</b>	Not at all ← → Very well
1. Early identification of challenging behaviours occurs	
2. Communication with families about challenging behaviours takes place at the earliest opportunity and is framed as a positive opportunity to address children's behavioural needs within the group setting	
3. Support from DECS support services and/or other agencies is sought	
4. Children's behaviours are assessed across a range of informal and formal learning activities and contexts (eg small and large groups)	
5. Planning, implementation, and review of individual behaviour plans occurs in partnership with families and support services	
6. Program planning considers behavioural needs as part of planning for individual children and groups	
7. Children are always treated with dignity and respect and directly monitored. Physical, verbal or emotional punishments are not used, ie smacking, shaking, shouting or any punishment that frightens, humiliates or threatens the child)	
8. Consequences for inappropriate behaviours may include time-limited withdrawal of attention, which is non-emotional and followed by redirection (ie time out)	

Adapted from: *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services*, 2004



## 2.2 Promoting the site behaviour code

*Families are central to a child's early learning; and skilled early childhood professionals build on the knowledge these significant people contribute to understanding the child ... By understanding individual families' expectations and aspirations for children and finding out how they can complement their efforts, they actively promote meaningful partnerships with families and communities and support each child's learning and sense of belonging.*

(DETE, SACSA Framework, 2001, Early Years Band, p7)

Information from families at the time of enrolment can alert educators to the particular needs of individual children and family expectations about behaviour management. It is suggested that families receive a copy of the site behaviour code at the time of enrolment and whenever it is reviewed.

Displaying information about the site behaviour code will also support communication with families about this issue. Governing councils should be conversant with the site behaviour code.

A summary of information provided by a sample of families of preschool children with challenging behaviours follows. In the course of the Review of the Interim Behaviour Management Policy for Early Childhood Services (2001), a sample of families were asked what was important about the approach to behaviour management in early childhood settings.

### What families value

#### Developing a respectful and caring relationship with my child

- *By showing that they care about what interests my child and their life as part of our family*
- *Considering how other factors affect my child's behaviour (eg family circumstances, health and wellbeing)*

#### Being positive and consistent in behaviour management

- *Knowing and building on my child's strengths*
- *Describing my child's behaviour rather than labelling the child*
- *Helping my child to be successful*
- *Showing visiting therapists how my child learns best*
- *Being patient but persistent*
- *Identifying the triggers of challenging behaviours and working to prevent them*
- *Making sure that my child understands what is expected of them*
- *Encouraging my child to solve problems in a positive way*
- *Helping them to learn as part of the group*

### Being sensitive to the needs of families

- *Making us welcome in the preschool*
- *Understanding we are often anxious about our children's behaviour and may be reluctant to raise these issues*
- *Respecting our need for privacy when discussing our child and keeping information confidential*
- *Asking us what we think and have tried in relation to our child's behaviour*
- *Understanding how our family's culture impacts on our child's behaviour*
- *Telling us when we are managing our child's behaviour well and when our child has been successful*

### Supporting my child's transition to school

- *Varying the length of the transition to school according to my child needs*
- *Giving us early information about the planning process and our options*
- *Arranging information about school and support*
- *Passing information on about things that my child does well*

### Working together with families

- *Talking about challenging behaviours when they happen, face-to-face*
- *Involving us in planning strategies to help our child; showing what we can do at home*
- *Asking about what works at home*
- *Checking that we are comfortable with the approach being used*
- *Letting us know about our child's progress, needs*
- *Giving us prior information about staff changes and preschool events, how our child might react and how we can support them*
- *Giving feedback about how our child's day has been*
- *Asking whether we would like to meet formally or discuss progress through informal discussions*
- *Recommending books and videos to help us at home*
- *Referring us to other services*



# A whole site approach to behaviour management

- 3.1 Teaching and learning
- 3.2 Effective partnerships
- 3.3 Children's behaviour as a form of communication
- 3.4 Levels of intervention
- 3.5 Curriculum implications
- 3.6 Protective behaviours
- 3.7 Physical environment
- 3.8 Routines and program structure
- 3.9 Maximising children's cooperation
- 3.10 Challenging behaviours

# A whole site approach to behaviour management

## 3

The information in this section will assist the development of a whole site approach that has a preventative focus and supports effective, timely intervention for challenging behaviours.

Positive interactions between children, educators and families are supported by the physical environment, routines and program structures, shared expectations of behaviour for adults and children and respectful interactions.

*The quality of behaviour management can be significantly improved and the social learning environment of a school (or preschool) is enhanced, if a whole school (or preschool) approach is developed. (Rogers, 1995)*

A whole site approach to behaviour management includes the behaviour of both adults and children in that context. Educators provide an important model for the children in their care. While children learn a great deal from what educators say, they learn more from what they see.

The degree to which educators model collaborative, caring and supportive behaviour will directly influence the way in which children relate to each other, express emotions and understand themselves.

### 3.1 Teaching and learning

Behaviour management is about teaching and learning. The ultimate goal is to teach children to regulate their behaviour and support them in learning about the consequences of their behaviour. When children regulate their behaviour and become self-directed, their needs and interests become clearer to them and to others, providing the foundation for a child-centred curriculum.

The site's behavioural expectations must be inclusive of children's developmental

abilities and their learning styles, the needs and experiences of children (girls and boys) and children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Programs that are developmentally appropriate and support children to be successful will extend their repertoire of responses and increase their confidence. Consistency in behaviour management strategies in the home and early childhood setting will ensure that children are clear about the behaviour that is expected of them and of others.

High quality early childhood programs reflect educators' knowledge about the cognitive, language, physical, sensory, emotional and social development of each child and the group. Teaching practice should reflect an understanding of current educational and behaviour management theories and practices.

Characteristics of early childhood programs that meet individual child and group needs include those that:

- provide a safe and supportive environment for learning
- are inclusive of children's abilities, gender, life experiences, linguistic and cultural backgrounds and race
- are developmentally appropriate
- consider children's interests, experiences and additional developmental needs
- encourage children's development of language and communication skills, including support for children's use of their first language where they have limited English (to enable expression of feelings and needs)
- support children's emotional and social development and positive dispositions to learning.

Adapted from MPB course

## 3.2 Effective partnerships

The development of partnerships between educators, families and children to clarify values and determine expectations of behaviour is critical to the development of a safe, caring and supportive environment. Rules and routines that give children a sense of security and belonging support their need to feel physically and psychologically safe.

The site behaviour code will support an orderly and consistent approach to behaviour management by expressing behavioural expectations in terms of individual rights and social responsibilities, and describing the consequences of inappropriate behaviours. The code needs to be negotiated and regularly refined, but most importantly, explained to children and understood by adults.

Active involvement of community and family members in the early childhood setting is encouraged, either as volunteers or as employees. For example, sites are able to employ Aboriginal community and family members as cultural instructors. Measures like these will contribute to respectful, effective partnerships that support an inclusive curriculum.

## 3.3 Children's behaviour as a form of communication

Behaviour is purposeful and the way that children tell us how they are feeling physically and emotionally. Consequently, inappropriate behaviours are not just responses to be reduced or eliminated. Instead, we need to determine what the child is attempting to communicate and teach more functional and appropriate ways that they can use to have their needs met.

Children need to be taught, rather than be told what not to do. When a child is redirected, stopped or reprimanded, an explanation needs to be given. This allows children to learn what they can and cannot do and the reasons why. Where limits and instructions are given without an explanation, children will continue to be dependent on others for information about what to do.

Understanding the factors that contribute to children's behaviour is essential. For example, children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds with limited English may find the adjustment to a totally new cultural, social and linguistic environment confusing. For these children, the need to be socially accepted is fundamentally important as they adjust to an unfamiliar environment and language. The effects of trauma, torture and isolation may influence the behaviour of some children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

*Cuong, who has high support needs, had never been out of his home environment without members of his family. Accepting preschool as a safe educational setting had proved difficult for both the family and for Cuong, who frequently cried for some time after arrival.*

*From the time that the preschool bilingual worker began to work with Cuong, his behaviour began to change. Her use of his family's language prompted Cuong to listen intently, begin to explore the room, use eye contact and show a more relaxed interest in the preschool surrounds.*

Children's physical and emotional wellbeing is supported by the Child Protection Act (1993), which requires educators as mandated notifiers, to report suspected child abuse to Family and Youth Services (refer to 3.6 Protective behaviours).



### 3.4 Levels of intervention

Assisting children's learning of behaviours that will enable them to develop social relationships and be successful learners may require differential levels of response.

While a preventative approach will work effectively for the majority of children, some children will require an individualised approach to address emerging or established challenging behaviours. Early identification and explicit teaching underpin an effective response for emerging challenging behaviours.

Conflict between children is common in the early years. Educators should respond quickly to defuse these situations, listening actively and intervening to avert a potential crisis. Once the situation is under control, the focus should be on helping children understand why the particular behaviour is inappropriate, rather than punishing them. Conflict presents problem-solving opportunities. Supporting children to develop skills in problem-solving empowers them and provides a strategy that can be used in all aspects of life.

The behaviour of some children needs to be addressed through more individualised intervention; the challenge being to find out what triggers the child's behaviour and identify strategies to support behavioural change (refer to the chart on page 24).

Observation of the child's behaviour and analysis by educators and families will identify the role that the inappropriate behaviour serves and represent the start of the process for change. Behavioural observations also provide a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of progress (refer to Section 5: Recording observations).

Targeted intervention for challenging behaviours is effective where the whole team agrees to use the same intervention strategies. These may include:

- teaching children functionally equivalent skills (eg if physical aggression means leave me alone, teach the child the equivalent skill, ie 'go away' sign)
- teaching social skills with an emphasis on recognition of feelings, play skills, problem solving and self-regulation
- using appropriate reinforcement schedules.

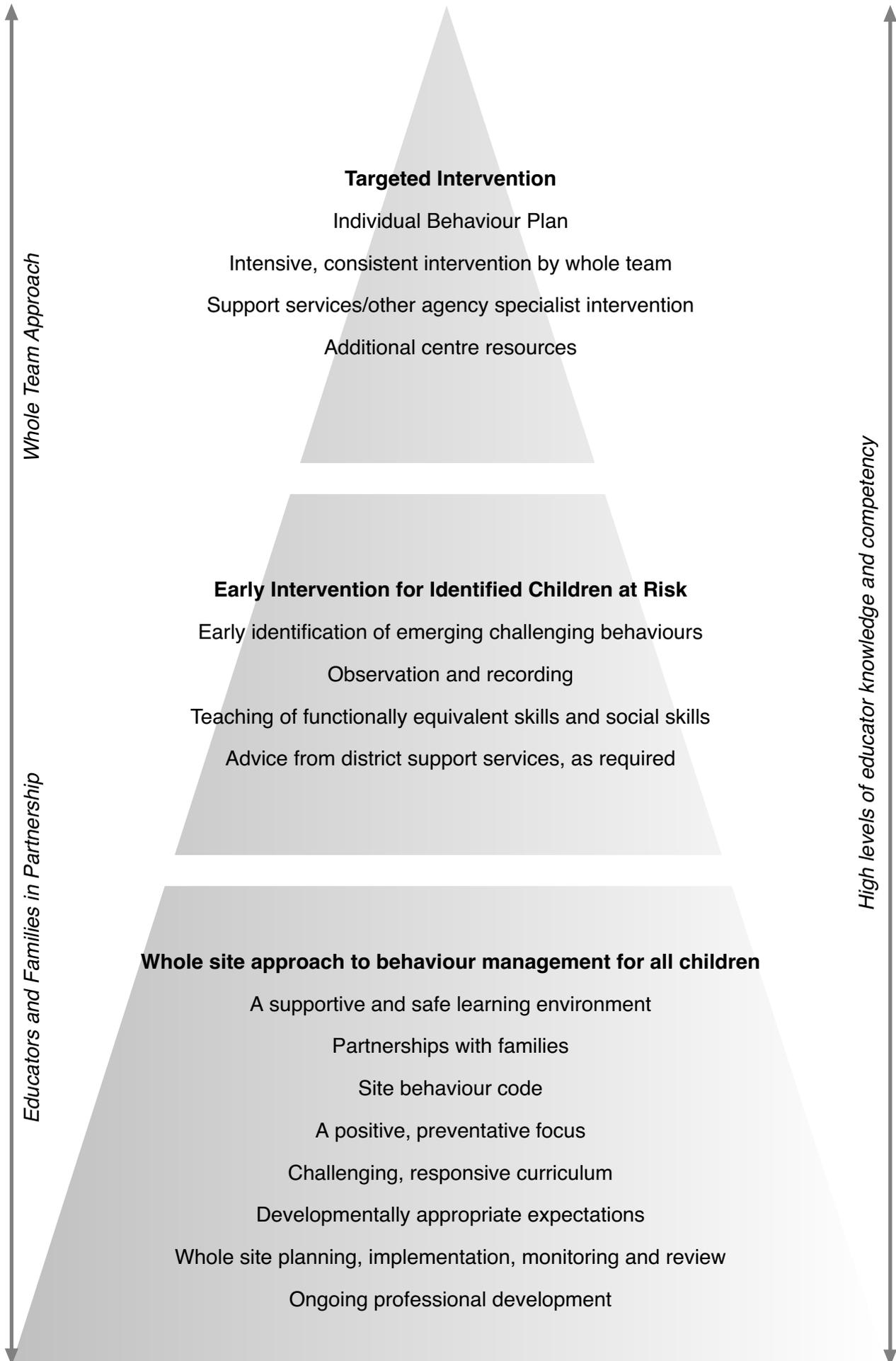
Adapted from MPB course

District support services will provide a behavioural assessment for identified children and assist the development of an individual behaviour plan, which is implemented by the site team (refer to 3.10 Challenging behaviours).

*Jack who has recently been diagnosed with autism, finds changing from one activity to another, participating in group time and sharing toys or equipment particularly challenging.*

*So now we're utilising one of his strengths, his understanding of pictures and visual symbols. We've found that by using picture symbols to plan Jack's activities for the morning with him, and reminding him ahead of time about a change in activity, Jack's cooperation has improved significantly.*

*The symbols also help him to communicate with other children and participate at group time. Jack can now give other people information as an equal player in a game.*





### 3.5 Curriculum implications

*The Essential Learning of Interdependence centres on children's development of a sense of being connected with others, their capability to contribute to the welfare of others, and their capability to act cooperatively ... The synergy created by the process of shared learning is made possible only in environments where relationships are characterised by mutual respect, trust, effective communication, compassion and responsiveness.*

(DETE, SACSA Framework, 2001, Early Years Band, p7)

**Curriculum** is the planned program of teaching and learning constructed by educators, in partnership with learners and others, to achieve agreed educational outcomes.

(DETE, SACSA Framework, 2001, General Introduction, p35)

The degree to which the planned program is meaningful and relevant to individual and groups of learners, and the depth in which it engages the learners, will have a direct influence on the behaviour of the children in the program.

Principles for implementing teaching and learning programs in the preschool setting include:

- setting the environment for all children to be successful learners
- success meaning having learned something worthwhile
- ensuring that all children encounter the opportunities necessary for their success
- making transparent the criteria by which all children will be judged to have been successful.

The Learning Environment for preschool children needs to be safe (physically and psychologically), secure and aesthetically pleasing. The environment must support children to investigate and explore their surroundings through a range of play, sensory and artistic experiences, including

music, art, dance and drama. Young children need opportunities to be imaginative and creative, use a range of thinking modes and utilise their developing literacy and numeracy to shape the world around them. They need personal space, time and resources to explore, experiment, discover and manipulate.

Families are central to a child's early learning. Educators actively promote meaningful partnerships with families that recognise and value each families unique individual contexts, and support the sharing of information about children's development, strengths and interests. This will support each child's learning and sense of belonging.

Educators will develop meaningful and active relationships with children. In their partnerships with children, educators will allow children to be co-constructors of their own learning and will model relevant and effective strategies for developing and maintaining relationships, including being an empathetic and responsible member of the preschool community. This will include supporting children to problem solve, learn and practice new skills and develop resilient behaviours. In order for children to achieve success, educators will support children to take an interest, be involved, persist with difficulty, communicate with others and take responsibility.

The Developmental Learning Outcomes (SACSA Early Years Band) are long-term accomplishments and allow for different developmental pathways. They include:

- children developing trust and confidence
- children developing a positive sense of self and a confident personal and group identity
- children developing a sense of being connected with others and their worlds
- children being intellectually inquisitive

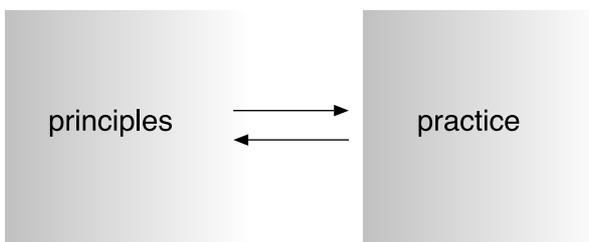
- children developing a range of thinking skills
- children being effective communicators
- children demonstrating a sense of physical wellbeing
- children developing a range of physical competencies.

The Developmental Learning Outcomes provide the long-term goals and clarity of focus for educators to construct learning opportunities for individuals and the group. The outcomes of effective learning can be seen in children's:

- cognitive achievements
- dispositions to learn
- respect for themselves and others
- wellbeing.

(Pascal & Bertram, 1997)

It is important that realistic and achievable goals are set for all learners and that educators support children in developing the relevant skills and understandings required to be successful in the achievement of discrete tasks.



A highly recommended resource for educators working with Aboriginal children is *Aboriginal perspectives on the early years of learning*, DETE 1999.

### 3.6 Protective behaviours

Protective behaviours is a preventative or anti-victim program that includes strategies such as problem solving, recognising and expressing feelings and forming supportive networks. These practical physical and psychological steps help children to create a sense of safety as well as a sense of appropriate risk taking that is an essential skill for a fulfilled life.

While the program was initially developed to empower children against abuse, it has evolved to include the empowerment of the child generally, their self-esteem and confidence. It complements other strategies and procedures that develop a safe and supportive environment and links closely with the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework.

The protective behaviours program aims to:

- provide simple, practical skills and strategies to help keep children safe
- assist children to identify and respond to situations in which they feel unsafe
- enable children to recognise their early warning signs
- encourage children to develop their communication, problem solving and relationship skills
- create an atmosphere where children can discuss sensitive issues in a non-threatening manner
- encourage children to develop a network of trusted adults
- encourage children to recognise when they feel unsafe
- assist children to increase their self-protection skills against all forms of abuse, assault and harassment and report any incidences.



The protective behaviours program is underpinned by two major themes:

*we all have the right to feel safe all the time  
nothing is so awful that we can't talk to  
someone about it*

These two themes are supported by eight strategies: theme reinforcement, network review, one step removed problem solving process, persistence expectation, protective interrupting, empowering language, risking on purpose and community involvement. It is essential to teach the two themes and eight strategies to increase the safety options for children participating in the program.

Educators have a role in supporting children to learn coping skills that will assist them to recognise and manage their feelings, use problem solving skills as well as a reliable network system in order to express themselves in a way that will not jeopardise their confidence and self-esteem. The development of these skills will support children in taking safe risks and protect themselves in dangerous situations.

*In protective behaviour training the teacher was explaining personal space by using hoops and getting the children to sit in the middle of their hoop where they felt safe. All the Nunga kids squeezed into one hoop. That was their understanding of personal space and safety. Togetherness.*

(DETE Aboriginal perspectives on the early years of learning, 1999, p11)

Due to their age and stage of development, young children may disclose information during group time. For this reason, it is advisable for two members of staff to be present in the event that this should occur, so that the child's needs be appropriately addressed by one staff member.

Children have a right to expect that the site's community members (including the governing council) will know, understand and act on their responsibilities when children report unsafe situations. They have a right to expect immediate support and follow up.

In South Australia a wide range of people, including education and care staff, are required by law to notify Family and Youth Services (FAYS) of cases where child abuse and/or neglect is suspected. Child abuse is generally categorised as physical, sexual, emotional or neglect, and rarely stops without intervention and help.

As mandated notifiers, educators are obliged to notify FAYS when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. Reasonable grounds for the notification of suspected abuse or neglect may include the following:

- when a child / young person tells you he or she has been abused
- when your own observation of a particular child / young person's behaviour and / or injuries, or your knowledge of children / young people generally leads you to suspect that abuse is occurring
- a child / young person tells you he or she knows someone who has been abused (a child / young person could possibly be referring to himself or herself)
- when someone else tells you (perhaps a relative, friend, neighbour or sibling of the child / young person) who is in a position to provide reliable information.

If you are unsure whether you have a suspicion on reasonable grounds to notify, it is appropriate to consult with a social worker by calling the Child Abuse Report Line, telephone: 13 14 78.

Adapted from: DETE, *Protective Behaviours*, Resource Folder, 1999 and DETE, *Family Day Care Children's Sexuality Training Package*, 2001

## 3.7 Physical environment

*Look at the environment through the child's eyes and improve the invitation to play.*

(Gordon et al, 1995)

Aspects of the physical environment including furniture, equipment, the availability and type of play areas and noise level will impact on children's behaviour and their learning. Consider the following in relation to your site.

### *Furniture and equipment*

- More playground equipment is associated with less frequent inappropriate behaviours (eg hitting), more exercise and more play with materials (Larson et al, 1990).
- Toys such as cars, gross motor equipment and socio-dramatic materials promotes peer interactions, while clay, painting, puzzles or small manipulative toys are likely to promote parallel or solitary play (Odom et al, 1992). Toys should reflect the community's diversity.
- Play materials and equipment should allow access and use by children with differing abilities and interests, be large enough for two or more children or require more than one child to be fun and encourage children to play close enough to see, hear and touch each other (Gordon et al, 1995).
- Rearrangement and addition of furniture, alteration of colour and general attractiveness of the environment can successfully increase the flow of children in areas previously avoided (Weinstein, 1977).

*How does your site's arrangement and type of furniture and equipment influence children's play and behaviour? How can the quality of children's play and interactions be improved?*

### *Play areas*

- The number of play areas should provide children with choice and a suitable range of alternatives (Hildenrand, 1990).
- Diversity in groups (eg gender, social ability, race) supports improved social interactions by children with lower levels of ability (Odom & Strain, 1986).
- Smaller play areas facilitate more peer interaction than large play areas (Brown et al, 1987). Large open spaces are associated with increased aggression, movement, running around and a tendency to watch rather than do (Weinstein & David, 1987).
- Reduce the amount of teacher direction during activities to encourage peer interaction. However, the importance of appropriate, targeted teacher interactions with children should not be understated.

*Does the arrangement of play space provide sufficient choice in activities and support quality play and positive peer interactions?*

*How can the number, size/kind of play areas and the composition of peer groups be improved?*

### *Noise levels*

- Noise, confusion and overcrowding have a negative effect on measures of cognitive-intellectual development (5 months to 5 years of age) (Lowry, 1993).
- Children have been found to give up more often on challenging puzzles than those attending quieter schools and have lowered language development, information processing and creativity (Wohllwill & Heft, 1987) in noisy environments.



- Strategies for noise control include:
  - provide alternate quiet and active programs
  - guide children to control their voices indoors (and educators!)
  - alternate the staff supervising the playground
  - locate staff work breaks in an area that is physically separate from the children
  - control the volume of music
  - sensitise children to noise by using quiet games and stories
  - organise the space to separate noisy activities from quiet areas
  - acoustically design the interior using carpets, rugs or wall hangings
  - use orange-red-yellow (warm tones) to stimulate and increase noise and blue-green-purple (cool tones) for a calming effect (Eastman, 1996).

- Other suggestions:
  - Try putting coasters on chair and table legs, use cushioned table coverings, arrange the indoor area in an 'L' or 'T' geometric shape and reduce crowding effects with no more than 10 children in each area.
  - Use natural light where possible and use lower levels of lighting for less active activities. A dimmer control may help to calm children.
  - Regulate the temperature – a higher temperature contributes to fatigue and irritability.
  - Textures provide noise cues – soft environment (eg rugs, pillows) for low activity, quiet areas and hard environments (eg wood) in active, noisy areas.

*Are noise levels adversely affecting children's learning on your site?*

*How can noise levels be reduced?*

### *Special places*

- Special places are created in childhood across numerous cultures and their meaning is carried throughout adult lives (Sobel, 1990).

Special places are found or constructed by children on their own, secret (not found or seen when inside) and owned by their creators. They are safe places (calming, quiet and reflective); worlds created and organised by the children and are empowering for their builders (significant, personal and special).
- Children need places to read books, trade treasures with best friends, concentrate on some difficult task, retreat when feeling tired or unhappy (Greenman, 1988). The need may relate to both physical and psychological aloneness.
- With special places providing places for children to role-play who they are, equipment and materials available should be inclusive of community cultures, abilities and family backgrounds. Private spaces provide an opportunity to develop a sense of self (as separate from others) and are critical to the development of self-concept and personal identity.
- Small spaces facilitate children entering into complex play more quickly and for longer, with an increased attention span, and could be created by making a shelter, creating a temporary tent, using big boxes, creating nooks and crannies or using the corners of the playground or screening (Tegano et al, 1996).

- According to Greenman (1988), children develop competency and skills when the environment:
  - offers opportunities for active involvement and feelings of accomplishment and independence
  - provides private spaces to retreat to, where they can read, talk to a friend or participate in imaginary play
  - follows a routine and a physical order, reflecting what is familiar, predictable and safe
  - is comprehensible and functional, with clearly developed goals and values, which encourage independence and clarity
  - gives children the freedom to invent and construct the spaces they need to play and learn in
  - motivates physical exploration and free expression of movement
  - allows children the autonomy to make decisions, select activities and choose friends, independently and confidently.
- Further suggestions:
  - ensure that each routine and learning experience offered is accessible to all
  - give clues to guide the appropriate behaviour and expectations for spaces
  - keep arrangements stable so that children can establish habits and associations
  - arrange materials and equipment to encourage independence (children can reach them, using them safely and with minimal help)
  - arrange seats to suggest the appropriate number of children.

Adapted from MPB course

### 3.8 Routines and program structure

Children's behaviour and learning are also influenced by daily routines, transitions and length of time for play. Consider the following research findings in relation to your site.

#### *Complexity and type of play*

Many studies support an association between complex play and periods of free play.

- The highest percentage of time in play and the greatest amount of participation were elicited by playdough and block activities from 25 activities presented to children.
- There were qualitative differences in children's play behaviour if they stayed for longer periods of time. Significantly, more constructive play was found at the end of children's play sessions (ie the last half of a 30 minute session).
 

Periods of extended play appeared to enable children to move beyond the initial phase of exploration and manipulation (functional play) and into more constructive and dramatic play, thus enhancing opportunities for problem finding and solving (Tegano and Burdette, 1991).
- Greater individual and group constructive play and dramatic play were found in the last half of a 30 minute play period (Peckover, 1988).
- 30-50 minute blocks of time for free play to allow children to persist and expand upon a play theme was recommended by Ward (1996).



### *Transition between activities*

- Children in early childhood settings were found to spend 20-35% of their total time in transitions, hence, careful planning is needed to ensure that these times are minimised and smooth.
- Program planning for young children should ensure that:
  - most of the daily activities are child initiated
  - children are encouraged to choose activities they would like to participate in
  - children are allowed to move between activities at their own pace
  - free play periods are planned for exploration without having to hurry
  - active and quiet periods are balanced
  - children are prepared in advance for changes in the program.

(Eastman, 1996)

- Refer to the article by Jalongo (1986) for an evaluation of full day daily, full day alternating days and half day preschool sessions.

*Does your site provide opportunities for children to 'wallow' in play, explore a theme in play over a period of days and engage in complex play for a length of uninterrupted time?*

*Discuss the strategies that you use to:*

- *link, extend, facilitate and enrich play*
- *use play to address inappropriate behaviours*
- *encourage girls and boys to take on and be respectful of non-stereotyped roles in play*
- *encourage an understanding of multiculturalism.*

Further suggestions for consideration ...

- If learning is especially too easy or too difficult, children may misbehave. Group and individual needs require careful exploration.
- A routine followed regularly gives children security, knowledge of what to expect and clues about how to behave.
- Where children have limited or no English, learn and use key words in the child's home language to signal a change of activity and visual cues.
- Allow children who especially need vigorous activity to be outdoors upon arrival (at the beginning of the session).
- Consider open-ended activities to allow for individual differences and abilities.
- Consider using a forced choice approach for children who have difficulty settling in activities during free time, eg 'Will you play with the truck or the bus?'
- If you find yourself using more control than teaching strategies, change the activity plan.

*A group of girls talked to their teacher about William playing in the home corner. 'He always wants to play in there and we don't like it,' they said. When the teacher questioned why they didn't like it they answered, 'He's a boy and boys can't be mummies.'*

*The teacher pointed out that girls and boys can both look after children and be kind and caring. The teacher then asked the children about the home corner during mat time. He asked, 'Who likes to play in the home corner?' When he saw that boys and girls put up their hands he talked with the children about the importance of all sorts of play for girls and boys. He used picture books to show men and women caring for children and brought his own baby into the centre. During play time the teacher went into the home corner with the children to model appropriate play and encourage girls and boys to play together.*

Adapted from MPB course

### 3.9 Maximising children's cooperation

Educators' behaviour and interaction with children provide a model and foundation for cooperative and successful programs. The following strategies can be used to encourage children to comply with requests.

#### *Behavioural expectations*

- Be clear about your expectations and remind children of them as they move from one activity to another.
  - Keep rules very simple (1 or 2 rules per area or activity). Use visual cues (eg gesture, facial expression and pictures) as well as verbal (ie instructions). Remind children about the rules and any consequences if they are not followed.
- Rules need to be fair, easy to follow, enforceable and positively stated.
  - In setting behavioural expectations, consider the developmental level of the child, their life experience, cultural and linguistic background. Ensure that expectations are realistic and achievable.
  - If certain times of the day or particular activities are more difficult for a child, analyse the task, break it down into manageable parts, reduce the number of parts and prioritise your expectations. Ensure that the child can experience some success; be quick to recognise it and give positive reinforcement. Your expectations can then be gradually increased.

#### *Communicating with children*

The way you make requests is crucial in maximising children's compliance. Requests that are angry, defeatist, vague, shouted, hurried or given from a distance are less likely to be successful. Suggestions for maximising compliance include the following:

- Get close to the child to ensure they are able to hear you and see your face; get down to their level.
- Establish eye contact to fully engage the child's attention.
- Wait where possible, for a natural break in events.
- Use clear, specific language when making requests and, if necessary, show them what you want them to do.
- Remember tone and volume of voice when making requests (eg firm but friendly tone if the request is non-negotiable).
- Remember to maintain a normal volume and tone of voice when speaking with children who have limited English. Also be aware that although body language assists communication, keep gestures to a level



that preserves the dignity of the child, particularly in large groups.

- Be clear about how negotiable the request is before you make it. If there is a choice then give it, but phrase choices carefully. For example, choices can be open, 'Do you want to pack up the toys?' to which the child can answer 'no', or restricted, 'You can pack up the toys or help get the cushions ready'. Do not accept a 'no' response for the latter. Repeat the child's choices and ask if they would like to do it by themselves or with your help.
- If the child does not have a choice then do not invite a 'no' response by asking a question. Instead, use a statement such as, 'when you have packed up the blocks, we can have snack time.'

Including words like 'now' gives a time frame, and 'so we can' an explanation of what will happen next.

Such requests are likely to increase compliance as they are short, direct, specific and provide information about the next activity.

Further suggestions:

- If a child refuses to comply with a request or resists direction and instruction, make it clear that they will do as you have asked before doing something they want to do.
- Give the child the choice of doing it feeling grumpy or not grumpy – it is up to them, but they will do it. It is important that the child learns that some things are non-negotiable and must be done when asked.
- If a child repeatedly refuses to comply with requests or follow directions or instructions that are very important or non-negotiable, it may be time to consider other strategies. Talking to the child's family may reveal strategies that work at home or information about what has been tried before. Phone the district psychologist, special educator or behaviour interagency consultant for advice.

- Timely discussion of your approach with the child's family may support the use of a similar approach at home.

Adapted from MPB course

*A group of girls and boys were running outside in an unsafe manner. The teacher instructed them to 'stop' using a raised hand. This was followed by a short explanation and question about why they were running. One child replied, 'We are chasing a dragon.' The teacher asked what their plan was and suggested that the group work together to make a dragon from boxes, painting it, making signs, food, etc.*

### 3.10 Challenging behaviours

When a child exhibits challenging behaviours, there can be significant impacts for both children and adults that may contribute to educators feeling overwhelmed. It may be helpful to consider the following impacts when considering how to address challenging behaviours.

#### *Impacts on children and adults*

The child with challenging behaviours often experiences:

- disrupted learning, in that they may not attend at group time or stay at activities long enough to complete them
- difficulty forming peer relationships
- difficulty taking on new challenges.

If the behaviour involves potentially dangerous things like climbing fences, there are duty of care and safety issues to be considered.

Impacts on other children include being physically hurt, frightened or intimidated by the child. Persistent disturbance interferes with the child's learning and educators' ability to teach.

The family of the child with challenging behaviours may:

- be angry or distressed about the behaviour
- be embarrassed and reluctant to talk with staff or other families
- seek additional services from other agencies
- look for advice and support from educators.

Families of other children may:

- be angry or distressed by the behaviour
- respond negatively and threaten to withdraw their child or demand that other children be asked to leave
- ask for educators to act immediately and 'fix' the problem
- argue with or blame another child's family
- request a whole centre strategy
- seek recourse through the site behaviour policy.

The staff team may:

- have differing views about the significance of the behaviour and not react consistently to the behaviour
- become stressed, angry or feel helpless
- have different ways of dealing with the behaviour.

The pressure on educators is often to 'fix' the problem quickly. Often an initial reaction is to apply new consequences to the problem behaviour. However, this can result in an escalation of the problem behaviour and/or new behaviours.

*When intervening with any difficult or challenging behaviours, consideration must be given to the function of the behaviour (ie what is the child communicating?). Any intervention should therefore be part of a plan that firstly identifies the function of the behaviour, and then develops strategies to teach a more appropriate way to communicate the child's intent.*

## Addressing challenging behaviours

### 1. Talk with the family

- Gather information about the child at home, including the influence of the family's cultural background on behaviour, the child's likes/dislikes and interests that can be incorporated into the program.
- Describe your concerns about the child's behaviour at preschool.
- Check whether similar behaviours occur at home.
- What strategies are effective at home?
- Are there any medical issues?
- Are any other agencies/services involved?
- Refer the child, with parental consent, to district support services (Interagency Student Behaviour Management or Early Childhood Services) and include:
  - specific information that describes the child's behaviours, eg frequency, triggers, duration, patterns, strategies that have already been tried
  - a request for the specific early childhood support services
  - details of other agencies/services involved.



Directors and principals are also advised to telephone district support services (Early Childhood or Interagency Student Behaviour Management Services).

Where families do not give consent for support services' intervention, educators have a responsibility to:

- develop a behaviour program for the child which is informed by their observations
- record the child's behaviour
- consider the reason for the child's behaviour
- take into account the child's chronological age and stage of development.

In this situation, support services personnel are able to work on the site and observe the program, with a view to providing advice in relation to program modification.

## 2. Review the program

- Note triggers, behaviour patterns, 'danger' times and periods when the challenging behaviour does not happen.
- Look at the environment, routines, structures and group composition. Are there possible modifications that would encourage appropriate behaviours?
- Consider support strategies, eg early intervention funding, bilingual support or telephone advice from support services.
- Assess the impact of the child's behaviour on others and address as required.

## 3. Plan, implement and review intervention strategies

- Where challenging behaviours are emerging, advice for a whole site approach can be provided by support services.

- If challenging behaviours are placing the child or others at risk of injury, an Individual Behaviour Plan should be developed with relevant specialised services and the family. The plan will support teaching children functionally appropriate ways to communicate and aim to decrease the frequency and severity of challenging behaviours.
- This plan will require consistent implementation by all educators. Families are also encouraged to use a consistent approach at home.
- Monitoring and review are essential components of intervention.
- Educators are encouraged to seek advice from support services where strategies such as time out or physical holding to prevent the child from injuring him/herself or others are being considered.

## 4. Ongoing communication with the child's family

- Maintain a high level of communication about the child's progress, needs and involvement in the program.
- Encourage consistency in approach at preschool and home.
- Refer to Section 2.2: Promoting the site behaviour code.

## 5. Communication with staff

- Make time to regularly discuss and monitor intervention strategies and emerging issues.
- Staff consistency in the approach to behaviour management is critical.

## 6. Involvement of District Directors

Contact the District Director if there are occupational health and safety concerns in relation to staff.

Points to remember when managing a child with very challenging behaviours:

- A child who is over-stimulated, and whose behaviour is out of control, may need to move away from the environment temporarily. Withdrawal from the group is used when alternative methods for managing inappropriate behaviour have not proven effective (eg ignoring, non-verbal disapproval, reprimand, redirecting to another task). Removal of the child from the immediate area interrupts the child's pattern of escalating behaviour by changing the circumstances that normally encourage and maintain inappropriate behaviour, such as educator and peer attention.
- When removal is used in an education setting, the child is immediately placed in an area where he/she cannot continue that behaviour, nor receive attention for a short period of time. This may mean sitting on a cushion or mat, at a quiet table or in a quiet area or screened corner of the room.
- Removal does not mean that the child needs to go to another room. The child is removed from the activity only briefly - for between thirty seconds and two minutes depending on their age. The child must always be within the educators' field of vision. Following time out, the child should be given positive feedback for completing the time well and redirected to the original task.
- Time out (an abbreviation for 'time out from reinforcement') should be used cautiously. Over use renders the strategy ineffective. It should only ever be used as a component of an individualised, comprehensive, predominantly positive behaviour change program.
- When considering the use of physical restraint, educators need to consider a range of factors including the safety of the child and others, the child's age and developmental level, and the occupational

health and safety of staff. Where the safety of others is of concern, other children should be moved away to reduce the risk of injury. Advice from district support services is strongly recommended.

- Duty of care is paramount in the management of challenging behaviours (refer to the *Behaviour Support Policy for Early Childhood Services*). The requirement for duty of care will vary according to factors including the child's age, maturity, experience and the nature of the activity. Generally, the duty of care is greater the younger the child, the more complex the learning, health and care needs of the child, hence the more hazardous the situation.
- A breach of duty of care occurs where there has been a failure to exercise the level of care required in any particular situation. In the event that injuries result from an educator's negligence in the course of his/her employment, the Minister for Education and Children's Services is vicariously liable and is required to indemnify the educator for any liability incurred, unless the action constitutes serious or wilful misconduct.



# The context of children's behaviour

- 4.1 Overview
- 4.2 Resilience
- 4.3 Temperament
- 4.4 Social competence and social skills
- 4.5 Self-regulation
- 4.6 Gender implications

# The context of children's behaviour

## 4

### 4.1 Overview

The information in this section describes contextual factors that influence children's behaviour and provides information about the role of educators in supporting children's development of resilience, behavioural style or temperament, social competence and social skills, protective behaviours, and self-regulation. Educators should also be aware of the integral role that the child's culture and gender play in shaping their behaviour.

*Children enter early childhood settings as active, experienced learners ... Social constructivist approaches to learning ... recognise that the child's construction of meaning and understanding is mediated and modified by social interactions within their families, communities and environments.*

(DETE, SACSA Framework, 2001, Early Years Band, p6)

#### *The child's developmental level, learning style and wellbeing*

Our knowledge of children's development enables us to compare children's behaviour and social skills with what is expected of a child of the same chronological age. We also need to have an understanding of the individual child's developmental and behavioural competencies, in particular, whether there are any discrepancies between their level of development (ie what they can and can't do) and their behaviour.

For example, children who have a developmental delay are likely to display behaviours more consistent with a child of the same developmental level, as opposed to the same chronological age. Children who are advanced in their development may display behaviour and social skills consistent with those expected of an older child.

However, the behaviour and social skills of some children with advanced cognitive development are more akin to their chronological age. Sometimes these children have difficulties behaviourally and socially as they can think and reason at more advanced levels than most of their peer group, but still have difficulties coping when things do not go their way.

Learning styles reflect children's cultural background. For example, Aboriginal children may prefer to learn through active outdoor play, learning through observation and non-verbal communication and making independent decisions about their activities. The social cost of making a mistake may mean that they are reluctant to 'have a go' and more likely to say that they 'don't know'. While they respond to encouragement, educators may need to provide further opportunities for observation and independent learning (DETE, *Aboriginal perspectives on the early years of learning*, 1999, p14).

Children's behaviour also reflects their physical health and emotional wellbeing. For example, children who are experiencing abuse or neglect may display aggressive or sexualised behaviour towards objects or people, or withdraw from interaction. Children who are acutely or chronically ill will fatigue easily or may withdraw from activities and interactions. Chronic ear infections are very common amongst Aboriginal children in particular and will affect their capacity to participate in listening activities.

Children who have experienced torture or trauma directly or through their family may appear not to be interested, unable to focus on, or able to complete tasks. They may avoid adults or appear very upset in the presence of adults, feel uncomfortable in dark places, appear reluctant to talk and participate in group activities or have toileting issues.

Some children require lots of visual cues such as demonstrations, pictures or symbols or real objects in order to understand language. Other children may have excellent verbal skills and cope very well with verbal information such as instructions and questions. Not only do children differ with regard to their style of learning, but there are also differences in their optimal learning environment, as well as their rate of learning.

### *Our expectations of behaviour*

We need to be aware that the yardstick we use to determine what is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour reflects our own life experiences, knowledge and culture. How can we be objective in assessing children's behaviour?

We cannot do so on the basis of one or two behaviours. The emphasis must be on patterns of behaviour rather than specific symptoms. We need to consider the frequency, the intensity and the constellation of behaviours, as well as other contextual factors such as those we have just discussed.

### *The role of culture*

The broad definition of culture includes urban/rural, language, family configuration, race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and religion. How does the culture impact on the way we view the child's behaviour and the way families view their child's behaviour?

Differences have been found in the temperaments of children from different cultural backgrounds due to differences in expectations and attitudes towards temperament and behaviour. Studies show that children whose temperament matches the cultural ideal receive higher acceptance and positive feedback. Child rearing in some cultures encourages individualism (eg UK,

USA, Aust), while others foster cooperation and conformity (eg Japan).

Differences are also found in the development of particular concepts and skills. For example: Aboriginal children are *likely to come to an early childhood setting with an experience base which values certain skill development, language, communication patterns and approaches to learning which are generally not recognised and valued in Western-style education.*

(DETE, *Aboriginal perspectives on the early years of learning*, 1999, p10).

In addition, the Aboriginal concept of sharing does not emphasise ownership, and may result in some conflict between students who do not share the same concept.

Our ideas about what is normal also extends to ideas about girls and boys and our expectations of the kind of play and activities they will engage in (refer to 4.6 Gender implications).

### *The child's temperament*

Knowledge of the uniqueness of each child, in essence their individual temperamental makeup, is crucial to understanding a child's behaviour and is explored in 4.3 Temperament.

### *Family and social environment*

Family dynamics, values and compositions, as well as the child's social environment also play a significant role in children's behaviour. The cultural place of the child in the family and their responsibilities will significantly influence their behaviour and attendance. For example, Southern European families are likely to have different expectations of girls and boys; and Aboriginal children may not attend preschool for significant periods due to family obligations such as funerals or visiting other family members.



Research has also shown increasing evidence that the formation of a strong emotional attachment between an infant and a parent has a life long impact on behaviour. Successful attachment forms the template for the child's development of future trusting relationships with others.

The absence of such a secure emotional relationship can lead to insecure or disorganised attachment. This means that the child has no consistent strategies of organising responses to the need for comfort and security when under stress (ie when distressed they do not seek reassurance or comfort from adults). Such behaviours vary from child to child but include: apprehension, helplessness and avoidance of the attachment figure. Attachment problems are precursors to future behaviour difficulties.

Changes to family circumstances frequently affect children's behaviour. Examples of significant change to family circumstances include children recently arrived from another country, refugees, changes associated with unemployment of a family member or relationship breakdown.

### *Principles of behavioural intervention*

The principles of any behavioural intervention should therefore include:

- a clear framework for thinking about the behaviour and a systematic, objective approach
- viewing the child's behaviour within its context, not in isolation
- viewing behaviour as a form of communication by the child
- maintaining a positive approach
- allowing for time (change does not usually occur overnight).

Adapted from MPB course

## 4.2 Resilience

### *Development of resilience*

Some children live through experiences of deprivation, adversity and stress more easily than others. Although several children from one family may be raised in the same situation and conditions, some may cope better with adversity and be seen to be more successful than the others. Some children become competent and successful adults, even when raised in extremely challenging environments. Many children face some stressful events in their life, however children (even from the same family) have different ways of coping with the same stresses.

Children who do well in difficult life circumstances are described as 'resilient'. Masten, Best and Garmezy (1991) described childhood resilience as

*the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.*

Put simply, resiliency is the capacity to survive, to progress through difficulty, to bounce back, to move on positively again and again.

However, resilience is not a fixed attribute and seems to vary in different situations. Children may demonstrate resilience where they have shown the ability for significant adaptation where the cultural expectations of home and centre environments are very different (eg children recently arrived through migration or as refugees, Aboriginal children). A child's resilience may vary, depending on the adversities faced, their stage of life and general circumstances surrounding them. A child can be resilient in relation to one outcome more than another.

Resilient children generally seek out novel experiences, lack fear, are self-reliant, able to draw people to them, have a low level of excitability and distress, a strong social orientation and have creative interests.

Resilient children have at least one skill that gives them a sense of pride and acceptance among their peer group, whether it be dancing, making, singing, riding a bike or drawing.

These children expect to do well, have high self-esteem and a belief in what they are capable of doing and consider they will achieve success. No matter how small their contribution may be to, for example, a preschool program, home or community activity, they perceive themselves as being effective and responsible.

A sense of being in control of their surroundings is important, and many children demonstrate an ability to have an internal locus of control as well.

Adapted from MPB course

### *Implications for early childhood programs*

Family, preschool, childcare, the community and other children provide support for resiliency in children, by providing:

- strong relationships with caring and supportive adults, the most potent protective factor
- opportunities for mastery and success in at least one area, eg dancing, constructing, drawing or dramatic play
- support from and connections to external resources, such as family, friends, preschool, childcare, school and community

- high expectations about behaviour, achievement and success from the family, education or care setting and local community
- opportunities for participation and contribution in the family, preschool, childcare, school and local community.

*These buffers make a more profound impact on the life course of children who grow up under adverse conditions than do specific risk factors or stressful life events. They appear to transcend ethnic, social class, geographical and historical boundaries ... (Werner and Smith, 1992)*

Werner (1987) observed that children's ability and opportunity to actively recruit people who can help, is a critical aspect of resilience. She found that, 'without exception, all the children who thrived had at least one person that provided them with consistent emotional support – a grandmother, an older sister, a teacher, a neighbour'. Werner went on to report in 1996 that the children who reached out as toddlers, also did so in middle childhood and adolescence. This and other research emphasises that significant adults such as early childhood educators, can make a difference to a child's emotional and social development

Adapted from MPB course

Educators and community can create environments that offer a balance of the following:

- **Caring and support**

All children need to have caring adults in their lives. Significant relationships may be with immediate and extended families, friends, neighbours, teachers, etc. *Caring relationships convey compassion, understanding, respect and interest, are grounded in listening, and establish safety and basic trust.*



- **High expectations**

Children thrive in environments that have high expectations for their success and give them the support necessary to achieve success and a sense of mastery.

*High expectation messages communicate not only firm guidance, structure and challenge, but convey a belief in children's innate resilience.*

- **Opportunities for participation**

Children are more resilient when they are recognised as resources valued for the contributions they make to their family, preschool, child care, school, local community and society at large.

*Opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution include having opportunities for valued responsibilities, for making decisions, giving voice and being heard and for contributing one's talents to the community.*

- **Reduce risk**

Reduce stresses that children don't need to face by ensuring that your site's structures, expectations, policies and procedures do not add to the risks already faced by children.

Minneapolis Public Schools, *Comprehensive Teaming to Assure Resiliency in Students Project*, 1996

## 4.3 Temperament

Temperament refers to the characteristic and predictable behavioural style of a child or adult and has powerful effects on the way that people interact with the world. There is no agreement about the degree to which biology and experience contribute to temperament; however, it is clearly influenced by the ongoing interaction between genetics and the environment.

Temperament is often referred to as 'personality'. However, the concept of personality includes a broader range of characteristics such as intellectual level,

motivation, social values, learning and life experiences (Prior et al, 2000).

Temperament plays a very important role in children's development, particularly in relation to emotional and social development. A child's temperament directly affects the way other people shape and modify their relationships and reactions to the child. The subsequent social patterns that develop can have long term effects on the child's adjustment to family life, preschool/ school and the community (Prior et al, 2000).

### *Dimensions of temperament*

Nine dimensions of temperament, identified by Thomas and Chess (1977), can be placed on a continuum from a mild to a strong reaction (or low to high), giving rise to many subtleties in children's temperament make-up. They are:

- activity level
- regularity of biological rhythms (eg sleeping)
- tendency to approach or withdraw as the first response to new situations
- adaptability to change
- intensity of response
- sensitivity to sensory stimulation (sensory awareness) and emotional sensitivity
- predominant mood (positive or negative)
- distractibility
- persistence in pursuing a goal.

These characteristics can be clustered together, into three distinct temperament types:

Children with an 'easy temperament' are flexible, consistently in a good mood, receptive to new situations, able to adapt rapidly to changes, and are mild to

moderately intense in their emotional reactions. They sleep and eat at regular and predictable times. Families can plan their activities around the child's meal times or naps because these occur at about the same time every day. The child can be taken shopping and on outings because they are reliably in a good mood, show interest in new situations and adapt quickly if at first things are not particularly to their liking. Their parents tend to feel successful as caregivers, as they are rewarded with a positive response to almost everything they do.

In contrast to this group, 'slow to warm' children tend to withdraw when faced with a new experience and take a long time to adapt. These children are not particularly active and they tend to express their emotions rather mildly, escalating into an intense response only if pushed beyond their endurance in new situations.

*Meet Eliza, who is low-key in new settings, observing new objects and people for a long time before engaging with them. She cries if pressured to approach before she is ready. In physical activities, Eliza has slow and measured movements, preferring sedentary activities such as reading books and solving puzzles. She tires easily from active games although she enjoys them for short periods of time and asks to be carried after walking just a short while in spite of her ability to walk, run, and jump very well for her age.*

Children like Eliza need time to observe before they are ready to join in and are often considered shy or timid. Sometimes these children are labelled as 'anxious' or 'insecure', although there is no evidence that slowness to warm and insecurity go together. A child may be quite confident, but prefer to first observe and later join in.

Finally, the term 'spirited' children was suggested by Sheedy-Kurcinka (1991) to describe children whose temperaments are simply more 'intense, persistent, perceptive, active and sensitive'. These children often sleep, eat and toilet irregularly, withdraw from new situations, have difficulty adapting to change, are hard to please, lapse into a bad mood easily, and have intense emotional reactions. They are difficult to predict and find it difficult to regulate their behaviour.

*Fiona is often on the verge of a bad mood and her moods swing, even with people she loves. She gets upset very easily, waking up crying in the morning, and taking a long time to be ready to play. Fiona has a hard time adapting to change and dislikes new experiences. Her parents must hold her for a long time before she is ready to explore.*

The secure base that all children need is even more important for spirited children, because their moodiness and readiness to withdraw work against them in many situations. At times, however, these children are also the most interesting to be with, because their intense emotions and sensitivity help them to notice things other children are not even aware of.

### *Implications for early childhood programs*

- Educators can support children's development by responding differentially to individual children's temperaments. For example, a supportive environment will allow an Aboriginal child who learns through observation, time to watch/observe others' interactions and feel comfortable in the environment before being expected to participate in group activities.



- A child who rates consistently high or low in any aspect of temperament is not predestined to react that way. Experiences and interactions contribute to shaping children's temperament. A difficult temperament is seen as a risk factor for ongoing difficulties in the family and wider environment for the child.
- Adults find it easier to work with children's behaviour when their temperament styles are complementary. A poor fit occurs when there is a mismatch between the adults' expectations and the child's ability to fulfil them. Where this occurs, educators should be mindful to modify their approach to support successful learning and mutually acceptable solutions.

Adapted from MPB course

## 4.4 Social competence and social skills

*The importance of positive social relationships is fundamental to children's sense of self ... As children are involved in learning experiences where they plan, choose, negotiate and share their learning, they develop a sense of self-worth and enjoyment that contributes to the dispositions that will lead to lifelong learning.*

(DETE, SACSA Framework, 2001, p51)

### *Development of social competence and social skills*

Social competence refers to children's ability to initiate and maintain satisfying relationships with others and to interact appropriately with their peers should they desire (Hill, 1989). It can be viewed across a range of social contexts including within the immediate and extended family, child care and preschool.

*The ability to initiate and maintain positive social interaction with others is considered by many to be an essential developmental achievement. Social interactions provide opportunities for children to learn and perform social skills that may critically influence their later social, emotional, and academic adjustment.*

(Hops cited in Michelson, Sugai, Wood & Kazdin, 1983)

The term 'social skills' refers to a range of verbal and non-verbal behaviours that assist individuals to establish and maintain relationships with others. Social behaviours can be grouped as follows:

- cooperation – helping others, sharing, complying with rules
- assertion – initiating behaviours such as asking for information, or responding to the action of others (eg responding to peer pressure)
- responsibility – ability to communicate with adults about concerns
- empathy – showing concern for the feelings of others
- self-control – responding appropriately in conflict situations.

(Gresham & Elliot, 1990)

There is wide variation in children's learning of social skills. Children may learn some skills, but not others, depending on their developmental abilities, cultural background and life experiences. Often it is assumed that children should know what to do and how to handle a range of social situations. However, most social skills need to be explicitly taught, with many opportunities provided for children to practise them and to be appropriately reinforced by adults and other children.

*Aboriginal children are often in the difficult position of learning to meet two very different sets of expectations – one at home and the other in the early childhood and school environment.*

(DETE, *Aboriginal perspectives on the early years of learning*, 1999, p10)

There is an abundance of evidence supporting the relationship between social and behavioural competence in childhood and later life adjustment (Kazdin, 1987; Loeber, 1982; Mize & Ladd, 1990; Parker & Asher, 1987; Yoshikawa, 1995). In adulthood, research shows that between 2% and 5% of the general population have some degree of social skill difficulty such as being isolated, rejected or withdrawn (Hops cited in Azar, Ferguson & Twentyman, 1992).

Child research has shown that:

- poor social skills and interpersonal relationships have often been found to be associated with behaviour difficulties (Sanders & Markie-Dadds, 1996)
- approximately 5-10% of school-aged children are estimated to have difficulties in establishing and maintaining friendships (Asher & Renshaw, 1981).

### *Implications for early childhood programs*

When we consider that programs aimed at enhancing social competence are most effective when started as early as possible, the role of early childhood services in supporting children's development of social competence cannot be understated (Schneider & Byrne, 1995).

Discussion with families about their expectations will enhance understanding of the experiences and learning that children

bring to the program. Where particular social skills are being encouraged, discussion about how they will assist the child's learning will support a collaborative approach and the child's learning.

Educators can foster children's development of social skills in ways that include:

- explicit teaching in structured social situations through modelling and role-plays
- creating activities that include those experienced by children in different social settings, particularly from different cultural backgrounds
- social coaching and feedback in natural play-based settings
- small group cooperative games with good role models to provide opportunities to practise social skills
- involving families, helps in the generalisation and maintenance of skills learnt at preschool
- using children's literature as a basis for discussion and reinforcement of social skills that are being encouraged.

*Teaching social skills in early childhood; Let's talk about it* (DETE, 1998) provides many practical ideas.

## 4.5 Self-regulation

### *Development of self-regulation*

Self-regulation includes our reactions to basic needs, such as drinking when thirsty, getting out of the rain if we are cold and wet and our reactions to conflict. While infants and young children depend on caring adults' external regulation (or action) to have their needs met, they increasingly learn to control and direct their own behaviour and gradually become more independent.



Self-regulation or control of behaviour therefore varies with children's age and stage of development, life experiences and cultural expectations. Discussion with families about their expectations is important in gaining an understanding of the learnings that children bring to the early childhood setting.

Inappropriate behaviour may reflect adult expectations that are too high or too low for the child's particular developmental stage. Children who develop control of their behaviour are likely to become independent learners with effective social skills, while those who do not develop control of their own behaviour will be at risk of problems such as severe separation anxiety, impulsivity, persistent tantrums and aggressive behaviours.

### *Implications for early childhood programs*

Children learn best through repetitive exposure to controllable challenges. They need opportunities to develop new ways of responding to the way they feel and to their environment, and to practise increasing self-regulatory control.

Moderate, predictable challenges in a safe and secure environment will help build resilience. Alternatively, unpredictable or severe stress associated with high risk for children will not assist development and may restrict the child's ability to learn new information. Educators need to talk with families to ensure that they are aware of situations that create unpredictable or severe stress in children from backgrounds that may differ significantly from the early childhood environment.

The following strategies will assist educators to support children's development of social and emotional behaviour, their motivation for self-regulation and pro-social behaviour.

- Design the environment so that responsibilities, opportunities (choices), expectations and consequences are clear and appropriate for children's interests and developmental stage. Environments can encourage independent action and initiative.
- Materials need to be accessible to children without intervention from adults. Play spaces for different types of activities should be designed, eg designated areas and procedures for the use of messy materials such as paint, clay and sand can protect children's efforts.
- Rules for joint use of materials so that children understand and do not need adults to mediate disputes.
- Prepare the environment to include a variety of activities children can safely and productively complete.
- Establish a small number of ground rules that minimise the need for adult intervention and focus on what children are permitted to do.
- Respect children's ideas for activities, even when problematic, using problem solving to find alternative ways of carrying them out.
- Involve children in discussing the reasons for developing rules and formulating them. Help them understand the relationship between their own goals and the behavioural strategies they are using to reach them. Finally, help children to understand the relationship between their own rights or welfare and that of another child or the group (reciprocity).
- Set children up for success. Children are more highly motivated to self-regulate their behaviour when they see themselves as competent and able to exercise control. Adult assistance strategies may include:
  - asking questions to help children discover their own solutions

- ensuring that expectations and standards do not exceed individual children’s level of ability, making them feel incompetent even if they perform at an age appropriate level
  - giving feedback that focuses on specific aspects of what the child has done to provide information to the child about their competence.
- Connect children’s behaviour with its effects and help the child understand what others may be feeling. Give reasons for social rules and make the effects of inappropriate behaviours on others clear. Positive behaviours that redress accidental or intended injuries to others can be suggested.
  - Encourage cooperative interactions among children by helping them learn strategies that support independent cooperation, such as suggesting sharing or taking turns when there are arguments over materials, as well as ways of negotiating trade-offs that benefit both parties.
  - Encourage children to take responsibility for tasks that benefit the preschool community to help them develop responsible attitudes. Attributing pro-social motives to children will help them to associate these motives to themselves and then expect to behave in similar ways in the future.
  - Children learn from what they see and are more or less likely to share and help, depending on the behaviour of peers and adults. Aggression is learned in this way, especially when it brings rewards or is ignored by adults. Educators should monitor and intervene to provide appropriate guidance and active support for cooperative and caring behaviours.



## Anger Management: Temper Monster Metaphor

One way of teaching children to control or manage their anger is by using the metaphor of a "Temper Monster". The child learns how to be the boss of their temper. This should be their challenge each day. Make sure you approach this in a fun and relaxed way.

### 1. Talk with the child about their "tempers".

For example:

- everyone has a temper
- "tempers" usually stay under control and are not a problem – we are the boss of our "tempers"
- sometimes "tempers" get out of control and cause lots of problems – the "temper" becomes the boss of us
- it can be hard for some people to keep their "temper" under control. Many people need some help to do this

### 2. Tell the child that you know a great way to help them to be the boss of their "temper". Be enthusiastic and encouraging. Start by drawing or making a model of your "temper". Describe what it looks like (eg lots of sharp spikes, long arms and legs for throwing and kicking, fire breathing) and the colour of your "temper" (eg red hot, black, all different colours).

### 3. Talk about the things that make your "temper" get very big and become the boss of you. For instance, when people take your things or ignore you. Discuss the physiological changes that you notice when these things happen, such as feeling hot; your heart beating fast, throwing something or shouting. Tell the child that although these things feel "uncomfortable", they can be helpful too, as they are signs that your "temper" is getting bigger and becoming the boss.

### 4. On a large piece of paper, draw your "temper" when it is really big and the boss of you. Describe again the things that

make your body feel uncomfortable and make the temper get bigger and bigger inside you. This can help make the concept of the "temper monster" more concrete and understandable.

5. Encourage the child to **talk about things that make their "temper" become the boss**. Give examples of incidents on your site and ask if this made them feel like shouting, etc. Encourage the child to draw a picture/ make a model of what their "temper" looks like when it becomes the boss of them.
6. **Discuss different ways of containing their "temper"** to stop it from getting too big and becoming the boss. This could include putting it in a box, jar or bag which is tied or locked up. Decide with the child where to keep the "temper box/jar/bag", somewhere out of the way but easily accessed by the child when necessary.
7. A box, jar or bag can help stop the "temper" from becoming too big, but **the child must make sure their "temper" is under control every day**. Ask the child how they can do this when they start to feel like shouting, etc; as this is a sign that the temper is getting out of control, becoming the boss and escaping!
8. After the child has tried one strategy for controlling their "temper" they will then need to **check the "temper" box, jar or bag** to make sure it hasn't escaped! Go with the child to make sure the "temper" box/jar/bag is still where it should be, and still locked or tied. This is an important step as it can serve as a distraction from the incident and be a reinforcement for the child that they have control.
9. Remember to reward any attempts the child makes to control their "temper". Discuss what they did, how it worked, how they felt, what they would do next time and so on. Remind the child again of the procedure for keeping their "temper" under control and praise their increasing skill at "temper" control.

## 4.6 Gender implications

Children as young as two or three years begin to recognise gender differences. MacNaughton (1999) states, 'By four years of age, they know their gender and what they and those around them normally expect of a person of their gender.' Children's thinking, feelings and behaviour are influenced by their awareness of gender.

While the role of 'nature versus nurture' continues to be debated, there is evidence to show us that behavioural differences between boys and girls are shaped by their different social experiences. Girls and boys bring attitudes and beliefs to the learning situation that has been developed through interactions with family and community members and the media (known as social construction).

Children's gender is viewed by researchers, including MacNaughton, to influence all aspects of children's development, 'from their development, values, beliefs, language, emotion, imagination, cognition and style of communication, to their involvement in physical activities, use of space and social relationships' (MacNaughton, 1999).

### *Implications for early childhood programs*

Children's awareness of gender is one of many factors that can influence their behaviour. Other factors that should also be considered include children's life experiences, cultural and family background, temperament, age and stage of development, social skills and physical and emotional wellbeing. The theory of gender as a social construction adds to our understanding of children's behaviour and enables us to see that children's behaviour patterns can be influenced by interactions in the early childhood setting.

When addressing children's behaviour the following should also be considered:

- gathering information about the gender dynamics between children
- evaluating the significance of gender in children's development of behaviour (eg aggressive, physical, compliant or non-assertive behaviours)
- planning experiences that promote gender equity and appropriate behaviour
- teaching children to recognise stereotyped behaviour that impacts on their capacity to interact and learn, to think critically about what they see and take action for change
- encourage children to talk about their play experiences to clarify their feelings about what is happening
- create opportunities to explore feelings about gender through informal discussions, art, song, movement and stories
- promote gender equity by finding and discussing female heroines and male heroes in non-traditional gender roles
- talk with children about the ways we feel different sometimes, the fun of trying out to be different people and the importance of respecting others' rights to pretend play non-traditional roles.

Adapted from: MacNaughton, 1999

The use of critical questions during group and story times provide opportunities to question accepted beliefs about gender, eg with books: Who is in the picture? Who is missing? What are the boys/girls doing? What else could the girls/boys do? Other strategies include explicit teaching of group skills, respectful ways of speaking to each other and negotiating and resolving disagreements.



*Jemma stood up and proudly told the group, 'When I grow up I want to ride a motor bike.' Some children laughed at her. The teacher noted Jemma's discomfort and recognised this as a teachable moment. He asked why they were laughing.*

*'Girls don't ride motor bikes,' said Nathan. The teacher asked, 'Is that true?' The children began to discuss this and several said that they knew women who rode motor bikes or had seen them on television. 'My auntie rides a motor bike,' said Jemma, 'that's why I want to ride one too.' The teacher suggested that Jemma's auntie could visit the centre one day to show the group her motor bike.*



# Recording observations

- 5.1 Locus of control signals in young children
- 5.2 Social skills checklist
- 5.3 Situational analysis: ABC recording

# Recording observations

## 5

In planning to address challenging behaviours, information should be gathered from families, educators, and where relevant, other professionals, in order to develop a comprehensive view of children's social learning across a variety of contexts.

Recording observations of children's behaviour may occur in a variety of ways. Checklists and other observation sheets are useful to support the information gathering process. However, information gained using these tools should always be considered within the context of children's abilities, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and life experiences.

Documentation of observations using the following proformas will contribute to the broad picture of a child's development and provide baseline data for the planning of individual behaviour plans.

## 5.1 Locus of control signals in young children Individual Observation Scale

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Confidence	
2	1    0    -1    -2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readily expresses ideas and needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rarely expresses ideas and needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approaches new situations/ activities with ease</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctant to approach new situations/activities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knows routines and organises self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disorganised in managing self</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readily initiates interactions to achieve goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rarely initiates interactions to achieve goals</li> </ul>

Eagerness	
2	1    0    -1    -2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoys exploring/trying new experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not spontaneously explore situations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoys demonstrating own ideas, skills, knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reluctant to share ideas, skills, knowledge</li> </ul>

Resourcefulness	
2	1    0    -1    -2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tries a range of options to achieve purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not explore options</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks alternatives when one option is not useful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaves activity if chosen option is problematic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finds information, material and people to achieve purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not seek information, materials or people to achieve own purpose</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoys experimenting, investigating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uninterested in experimenting, investigating</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfers learning and understanding from one situation to another, makes connections between previous experience and new situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not transfer learning from one situation to another</li> </ul>

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## Locus of control signals in young children Individual Observation Scale

Purposefulness/persistence	
	2    1    0    -1    -2
• Attends to the activity	----- ----- ----- -----
• Shows determination	----- ----- ----- -----
• Not easily distracted	----- ----- ----- -----
• Invests energy towards goals	----- ----- ----- -----
• Reluctant to engage	----- ----- ----- -----
• Loses interest easily	----- ----- ----- -----
• Is distracted easily	----- ----- ----- -----
• Disorganised use of energy	----- ----- ----- -----

Selectivity	
	2    1    0    -1    -2
• Recognises the range of options available	----- ----- ----- -----
• Makes choices about which option will be used	----- ----- ----- -----
• Makes use of available opportunities on own initiative	----- ----- ----- -----
• Listens and acts on other's suggestions and comments	----- ----- ----- -----
• Takes responsibility for choices, actions, self and belongings	----- ----- ----- -----
• Makes links between cause and effect	----- ----- ----- -----
• Operates within the realities of the environment	----- ----- ----- -----
• Demonstrates realistic expectations of self and others	----- ----- ----- -----
• Unaware of range of options	----- ----- ----- -----
• Reluctant to make choices	----- ----- ----- -----
• Reluctant to use opportunities spontaneously	----- ----- ----- -----
• Rejects, refuses to believe others' constructive suggestions	----- ----- ----- -----
• Expects that others are responsible for belongings, actions, and choices	----- ----- ----- -----
• Does not make connection between cause and effect	----- ----- ----- -----
• Does not recognise the limits of the environment	----- ----- ----- -----
• Has unrealistic expectations of self and others	----- ----- ----- -----

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## 5.2 Social skills checklist

Information from families about children's social skills in other contexts will provide a more comprehensive view of children's social learning. The following should be considered within the context of children's abilities, cultural background and life experiences.

Place a tick along the continuum to indicate the child's stage of social skill development: YES (the child has this skill and uses it); NO (the child does not use/has not learned this skill); or EMERGING (the child is beginning to use this skill).

Basic interaction skills	No - Emerging - Yes
Using language (the ability to speak in a way others understand – consider home language)	
Using non-verbal communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• smiling</li> <li>• using eye contact</li> <li>• using appropriate voice</li> </ul>	
Starting (finding someone to interact with)	
Greeting skill	
Listening (looks and pays attention)	
Reciprocating interaction (saying something to/ looking at someone when they talk to you)	
Making sense (talking is on the topic)	
Taking turns talking	
Asking questions	
Using situationally appropriate behaviour	
<b>Inappropriate behaviours</b>	
Hitting, poking	
Taking others' possessions	
Destroying others' creations or work	
Acknowledging another child's interaction	

Coping skills	No - Emerging - Yes
Independence	
Managing conflict: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expressing rights and feelings clearly</li> <li>• sensitive to the rights of others</li> <li>• compromising</li> <li>• being assertive</li> </ul>	
Coping with harassment, peer pressure (especially for minority groups)	
Being a leader	
Being a follower	
Seeking help	
<b>Getting along skills</b>	
Sharing	
Turn taking	
Making rules and following them	
Assisting others	
Touching in appropriate ways	
Co-operating with others	
Being polite – please, thank you	



<b>Making friends</b>	No - Emerging - Yes
Being approving and supportive of peers	
Exercising sensitivity and tact (not being too strong)	
Showing affection	
Willing to follow requests	
Including and accepting others	
Using sustaining skills	
Sharing a common game, joke, conversation	
Grooming appropriate (wash hands, clean face)	

<b>Entry skills</b>	No - Emerging - Yes
Observing group before entry	
Thinking about possible courses of action	
Selecting most appropriate	
Waiting for natural break	
Beginning to behave in same way	
Referring to affiliation	

*Teaching social skills in early childhood: Lets talk about it, 1998, Department of Education, Training and Employment*

## 5.3 Situational analysis: ABC recording

Looking at the context of behaviour is a useful way of identifying the causes of behaviour and finding a pattern. It involves looking at the *behaviour (B)*, *what preceded it (A)* and *what followed it (C)* – the ABC approach. This is also referred to as event sampling.

### 1. *Antecedents (what preceded the behaviour)*

Behaviours tend to vary with their social setting or internal conditions, so it is important to look at the typical conditions before, and at the same time as, the behaviour occurs.

What are the events or demands on the child that typically precede or trigger the behaviour? eg day and time of day, who is present and the physical environment (location, activity)

### 2. *Behaviour*

What is the behaviour?  
How is the behaviour described?

Establish the behaviours you want to change and describe them in terms of what you observe.

Describe the new or desired behaviour (eg asking for a turn) that will remove the anticipated problem behaviour (eg biting, hitting).

### 3. *Consequences*

The events or consequences following the behaviour.

What happens following the behaviour – who does what to whom, when and where?

For example, the responses from others (eg attention, angry comments), a material payoff (eg child acquires something) or someone stops making a particular demand of the child (eg pack up your toys).

Adapted from MPB course



**ABC behaviour diary**

Name:

<b>Time and Date</b>	<b>A</b> ntecedents (What happened before)	<b>B</b> ehaviour	<b>C</b> onsequences (What happened after)

Adapted from MPB course



# Specialised services

- 6.1 Department of Education and Children's Services
- 6.2 Other agencies

## 6.1 Department of Education and Children's Services

Children with challenging behaviours and who are enrolled in government and affiliate preschools and child care, can be referred to district support services with the consent of families. Early referral is encouraged to support timely intervention and positive outcomes for children and educators. Support Services personnel can be contacted by telephone to provide advice where this is urgently required.

Support Services for children and students with challenging behaviours are provided by psychology, interagency student behaviour management, special education and social work personnel. Services include:

- assessment
- support with program planning
- individual behaviour plans
- information and advice to staff and families
- staff professional development
- short-term counselling for families
- liaison with relevant agencies.

Intervention will consider the whole centre context, routines and interactions and require a whole team approach for success.

Information gathering is supported by a detailed description of the following:

- the nature and frequency of the child's behaviours
- when the challenging behaviours commenced, and in what context/s
- information that may be related (eg changes in family circumstances)
- whether challenging behaviours are context-specific or occur across home, preschool and other settings

- triggers for challenging behaviours
- effective strategies in managing challenging behaviours.

Additional supports may be available to sites to support the implementation of individual behaviour plans, such as preschool bilingual or preschool support workers.

Please refer to the DECS *Sites and Services*, 2003 for district office contact details.

## 6.2 Other agencies

### *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)*

- Employs a multi-disciplinary approach to services for children and young people with mental health issues, aged 0-18 years of age and their families. Services are provided by child and family specialists including psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, nurses, occupational therapists and speech pathologists.
- Services include individual, group and family therapies and mental health promotion activities and liaison with other service agencies and preschools/schools.
- Referral is usually made by families/guardians phoning the service closest to them. Information regarding a child or adolescent may be accepted from a referring person or agency, however, contact from the family/guardian is also required. A central telephone number for information about local services is 8161 7198.
- Services are available throughout country areas on a permanent or visiting basis. Information about regional services is available by telephoning 8632 5304.

## *Child and Youth Health*

Child and Youth Health works to improve the health of children and young people, focusing on the promotion of health and the prevention of ill-health, and to support parents who are the primary carers of children and young people. Services include:

- Parent Helpline: a 24 hour, 7 day a week telephone service providing information and support to parents living in South Australia on any concern about child or youth health, parenting, development or behaviour. Phone 1300 364 100.
- Parent Easy Guides and Parenting/Child Health database include information about children's behaviour <http://www.cyh.sa.gov.au>.
- Universal screening of preschool children aged 4 years on preschool sites.
- Child and family health centres: Children aged 0-12 years. These centres provide health checks, parenting information and support, first time parent groups, behaviour management information, referral to other agencies and hearing/vision screening.

In addition, the following services are available from selected Child and Family Health Centres (the larger One Stop Shops): a parent and health resource area; parenting groups for issues relating to new babies, toddlers and school aged children; extended hours – late Thursday and Saturday mornings; and drop-in service.

Please telephone 8303 1500 for information about Child and Youth Health services.

## *Community Health Services*

The availability of psychology services for children through community health varies across metropolitan and country areas and

depends on service priorities. Psychology services for children are generally provided by CAMHS, however, community health counselling services may be available to families. Service providers should contact their local community health service to determine whether psychology services are available, and if so, the eligibility criteria for accessing the service.

## *Family and Youth Services*

Family and Youth Services provides support and assistance to the community, especially those experiencing disadvantage or who are in need of care and protection. Services assist young people who offend or are at risk of harm, families and children at risk, those at risk of poverty, Aboriginal people and vulnerable adults in the community. For mandatory notifications, telephone the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78.

## *Migrant Health Service*

A health care agency for people of non-English speaking backgrounds:

- provides immigrants with culturally appropriate health education and information
- ensures that refugees have access to the health care system as soon as possible after arriving in South Australia.

All the services offered are free and confidential. All staff are bilingual/multilingual and bicultural interpreters are available.

Migrant Health Services are statewide and include health assessment and screening, bilingual GP services, immunisation, counselling for individuals and families, a clinical psychology service and referral to family doctors, community health centres and hospitals.



Services are available to non-English speaking background communities and health agencies located in rural areas.

21 Market Street, Adelaide (opposite the Central Market), telephone 8200 3900.

### *Paediatric hospitals*

General paediatric services are available from major public hospitals. While these services assess the needs of children with more than one area of developmental delay or disability, they do not provide intervention services for children with behavioural difficulties who are referred to community services, eg CAMHS, DECS.

Multidisciplinary assessment services can be accessed via:

- The Child Development Unit based at the Women's and Children's Hospital (phone 8161 7000), which has outreach services in Mount Gambier, Port Lincoln and Whyalla.
- The Child Assessment Team at Flinders Medical Centre (phone 8207 5511).
- The Child Development Unit, Flinders and Far North Community Health Service (phone 8648 5800).

### *Parenting SA*

Parenting SA is an initiative of the Government of South Australia designed to promote the value of parents and to improve the quality of parenting. It promotes parenting groups, courses, information and resources on its website <http://www.parenting.sa.gov.au> and produces the Parenting Easy Guides available through many government agencies and other services. Please telephone 8303 1660 for further information.

### *Private practitioners*

The range of services provided by private psychologists and psychiatrists include assessment, counselling, behaviour programming and family therapy. Private practitioners listings can be found in the yellow pages.



# Transition planning

- 7.1 Flow chart
- 7.2 Preschool to school checklist

# Transition planning

## 7

Smooth transition between children's services and from preschool to school is important for all children, and is particularly relevant for children with additional needs including challenging behaviours.

Good practice in transition includes:

- families, educators, support services and other agency staff having a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the process
- setting specific time frames, tasks and outcomes
- support for family involvement in the planning and decision making for their child
- focusing on the child's needs and being flexible in the implementation of guidelines
- sharing information between families, preschool, school, support services and other agency staff. This information will enable staff in the new setting to build on the knowledge, skills and experiences of the child
- streamlining planning to make the process as efficient as possible, ie forms, assessments and participants in planning meetings
- providing early information to enable preparation for the child's entry.

The following have been successful in supporting children's transition to school:

- *sharing of successful strategies*
- *supported transition visits through the Preschool Support Program*
- *an extended period of transition to school (discuss with district support services)*
- *observation visit by the reception teacher to the preschool*
- *an additional school visit by the preschool group*
- *short-term part-time attendance at both preschool and school*
- *additional transition visits.*

Adapted from <http://www.nexus.edu.au/divisions/programs/northdistricts>

## 7.1 Flow chart

### Transition planning

#### **Review meeting for child with challenging behaviours (2 terms prior to expected school entry)**

- **Preschool director arranges meeting with family and support services staff, as required**
- Plan steps prior to school attendance



#### **Planning for school attendance by support services**

- **Interagency Student Behaviour Management/other school support services**
- Link with involved support services staff to gather information, assess support needs and plan for additional resources where required



#### **Planning meeting for school attendance (term prior to school attendance)**

- **Preschool director arranges meeting with family, school support services and other professionals, as required**
- Coordinate meeting with families and school principal to plan child's transition

### Outcomes

- Child referred by preschool director &/or school principal to Interagency Student Behaviour Management Services
- Timeline for future meetings attached to referral
- Family encouraged to enrol child at school



- Information about curriculum and support needs in school collated and interpreted
- Additional resources and solutions to be documented for discussion at planning for school meeting



- Child's progress discussed
- ILP/NEP planning is reviewed and documented
- Chosen school option discussed
- Transition program established
- Curriculum and support needs determined
- Monitoring process established

Adapted from <http://www.nexus.edu.au/divisions/programs/northdistricts>



## 7.2 Preschool to school checklist

The preschool director and school principal share responsibility for ensuring that an appropriate process occurs.

<b>Preschool Directors</b>	✓
• link families with support services staff for information about schooling options	
• contact the school principal about a child’s transition needs	
• invite families, school staff and other relevant people to the transition planning meeting or NEP	
• share information (including children’s records) with the school to assist planning of behaviour management strategies, curriculum, and other supports for successful transition	
<b>School Principals</b>	
• manage planning for schooling and involving relevant preschool staff	
<b>Early Childhood Services</b>	
• work with preschool staff and families in identifying children who will require ongoing support as they move from preschool to school	
• provide information to preschool staff and families regarding transition processes, referral processes	
• provide advice to relevant support services and school staff to assist with planning for school entry	
• contribute to the planning and review of the ILP/NCP	
• transfer information (including relevant assessments) to school staff and school support services staff	
<b>Interagency Student Behaviour Management Services</b>	
• support school support personnel to develop/implement Student Development Plans to ensure a continuous and integrated educational plan	
• liaise with Early Childhood Support Services and/or preschool staff	
• meet with families to share relevant information and encourage their active involvement in the transition process	
• alert relevant support services to ensure that appropriate supports are in place	

Adapted from <http://www.nexus.edu.au/divisions/programs/northdistricts>



# Professional development and resources

8.1 Training and development

8.2 Self-evaluation checklists

# Professional development and resources

## 8

### 8.1 Training and development

Professional development activities can be accessed via the Training and Development Unit web site <http://www.learnsa.net/tandd/>

Requests for professional development courses can be directed to:

- The Training and Development Unit  
Telephone 8463 5801 / Fax 8463 5810  
email: DETETandDUnit@saugov.sa.gov.au
- The Gowrie Training Centre  
Telephone 8234 5219 / Fax 8234 5850  
<http://www.gowrie-adelaide.com.au>
- Support Services personnel at your district office
- Aboriginal Education Unit  
Telephone 8343 6500 / Fax 8343 6515
- Preschool Bilingual Program  
Telephone 8226 2546 / Fax 8226 3572

Relevant courses and workshops currently available include:

- *Aboriginal perspectives in SACSA*
- *Aboriginal perspectives on the early years*
- *Aboriginal English workshops*
- *Anti-bias training package (contact the Early Years Team, Aboriginal Education)*
- *Constructivism, Essential Learnings and Aboriginal Learners*
- *Contextual Teaching and Learning in Aboriginal Education*
- *Developing a Site Behaviour Code (contact District Support Services)*
- *Encouraging Social Skills and Building Self-Esteem*
- *ESL in the Mainstream*
- *Cultural Inclusion in the SACSA Framework – Early Years*
- *Guiding Children's Behaviour (The Gowrie Training Centre)*
- *Language and Behaviour*
- *Maximising Positive Behaviour and Managing Challenging Behaviour*
- *Quirky Kids: Recognising and Responding to Their Needs*
- *Understanding Language and Culture*

## 8.2 Self-evaluation checklists

The following checklists have been adapted from the *Classroom Management Workbook* (DETE, undated) to assist site teams to evaluate their early childhood program and behaviour management practices.

When you have completed one or more self-evaluation checklist/s:

---

1. Prioritise changes that you would like to make to the site, the program or your teaching methodology.

---

2. How will you monitor the impact of these changes on children's behaviour?

---

3. Plan a date for review

---

4. Consider the extent to which the changes made a difference to behaviour on your site.  
If not, what will the next step be?



*Physical environment*

<b>Does the way I have arranged the physical environment ...</b>	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. invite children to play?	
2. allow for quiet and active activities?	
3. present stimulating choices?	
4. provide sufficient areas that are large enough for two or more children?	
5. support successful quiet and active activities?	
6. allow children to have a 'special' place that is private, safe, familiar and where they can be in control?	
7. remain constant long enough to support children in developing habits and associations?	
8. change frequently enough to provide new experiences and stimulation?	

<b>Does my choice and arrangement of play materials and equipment ...</b>	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. provide sufficient play equipment to maintain interest in activities?	
2. promote peer interaction?	
3. allow easy access and use by children of differing abilities and interests?	
4. encourage more than one child to play collaboratively?	
5. encourage children to use all play spaces?	

<b>In planning the environment do I consider ...</b>	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. colours that influence noise transmission?	
2. separating noisy from quiet activities?	
3. providing alternate quiet/noisy activities?	
4. lower lighting levels for less active activities that require concentration?	
5. providing soft textures (eg cushions, rugs) for low activity, quiet areas?	
6. limiting the number of children per play area to no more than ten?	

<b>Do I arrange floor space to allow ...</b>	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. easy access to storage areas?	
2. sufficient room for group time?	
3. clear traffic routes between tables and play areas?	
4. special areas? (eg home corner, a quiet area)	

<b>Is the way that I arrange the physical environment ...</b>	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. necessary and meaningful for children?	
2. too visually stimulating or not enough?	
3. providing particular displays for short enough periods of time to maintain interest and relevance?	
4. reflective of children's involvement, or only the ideas of the staff?	
5. bright and cheery? Do we include living things (eg fish, reptiles, plants)?	



Do I display ...	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. mainly the work of children, or my own?	
2. all children's creative efforts or only the best?	

*Routines*

How appropriate is children's behaviour during daily routines?	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. Movement between inside and outside areas	
2. Movement within the room	
3. Movement in the outside area	
4. Packing up	
5. Gaining the attention of other children	
6. Gaining the attention of staff	
7. Completion of tasks/activities	
8. Use of special areas (eg home corner/quiet area)	
9. Moving into groups	

## Site rules

In developing and implementing site rules, do I ...	
	Needs improvement ←→ A strength
1. actively involve girls and boys in the development of centre rules?	
2. ensure that all children understand each rule and how it links with their rights and responsibilities?	
3. define rights clearly?	
4. ensure that rules inform girls and boys about how they are expected to behave?	
5. enforce the consequences for breaking rules?	
6. discuss rules with children's families?	
7. have the centre's rules on display?	
8. have as few rules as possible?	
9. provide feedback about cooperation?	
10. remind children about rules when necessary?	



*Learning program*

Does my program planning and implementation ...	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. consider each child's strengths and areas that require strengthening?	
2. provide activities for all levels of ability and interest?	
3. reflect an understanding of how children's family, culture, race and linguistic background influence their learning and interactions?	
4. build on child-initiated activities and interests?	
5. ensure that most of the daily activities are child-initiated?	
6. provide long enough play periods to allow the development of complex play?	
7. balance active and quite periods?	
8. prepare children for changes in activity?	
9. minimise the number of transitions between activities?	
10. provide a regular routine to give children security, knowledge of what to expect and clues as to how to behave?	
11. allow children who like vigorous activity to be outdoors upon arrival?	
12. provide open-ended activities to allow for individual differences and abilities?	

<b>Does my teaching methodology ...</b>	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. meet the needs of children with different learning styles and abilities?	
2. provide socially skilled peers for children with developmental delay or challenging behaviours?	
3. often mean that children must listen for long periods of time?	
4. mean that children must have prerequisite social skills (eg group skills, independent learning skills) that some children do not have?	
5. keep children active and busy in learning?	
6. allow children to make choices (appropriate to their learning and development)?	
7. make expectations clear and check that children have understood?	
8. actively seek children's questions and ideas?	

<b>In my interactions with children and adults, do I ...</b>	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. act as a positive model?	
2. express instructions positively?	
3. consider using a forced-choice approach for children who have difficulty settling in activities during play time? (eg you can play in the sandpit or on the play equipment)	
4. explain the purpose of my tasks & activities?	
5. vary learning activities?	
6. provide specific feedback about children's performance?	
7. provide frequent feedback?	
8. highlight what the child has learned?	
9. clarify what the child needs to achieve next?	
10. observe children's behaviour in a variety of contexts?	
11. celebrate children's learning? If so, how?	
12. relate children's learning to their families?	



*Programming for diversity*

Does my programming support children to ...	
	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. understand and appreciate each children’s abilities and strengths?	
2. understand and appreciate diverse family structures?	
3. research different aspects and influences of social, cultural and environmental diversity?	
4. become aware of connections, similarities and differences between peoples?	
5. explore the linguistic diversity of their wider community?	
6. explore, research and discuss contextual aspects of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures?	
7. develop an awareness of the history, languages and dialects of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of their area?	
8. participate in processes of Reconciliation in their local community?	
9. observe and discuss the different ways that physical environments can include or exclude people?	
10. learn about and reflect on the different ways in which children and adults are invited to participate, or excluded from participating?	
11. consider and articulate how resources can be used in inclusive or exclusive ways?	
12. explore and begin to analyse the way texts, pictures, advertisements, commercial products and media construct gender, ability, culture and race?	
13. discuss and analyse issues relating to bias and stereotyping, including the impact on individuals and groups?	
14. recognise unfairness in personal and general relationships and interactions?	
15. develop strategies for challenging stereotyping and unfairness?	
16. begin to think critically about a range of perspectives and revisit their understandings?	

## *Encouragement*

Before completing this checklist, you may wish to record some of a session or gather feedback from your peers, and analyse what you hear.

	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. I encourage children	
2. I encourage children three times more often than I verbally reprimand them	
3. I make feedback specific	
4. I vary the words that I use when I encourage	
5. I try to 'catch children being good'	
6. I praise all children, even those who are a) quiet and shy, b) very able, c) tend to misbehave, d) are average	
7. I encourage both boys and girls equally	
8. I emphasise appropriate behaviour through social reinforcement rather than through rewards	
9. I praise improvement rather than perfection	

## *Consequences for inappropriate behaviour*

	Needs improvement ↔ A strength
1. I apply consequences for inappropriate behaviour consistently	
2. I apply consequences immediately	
3. My consequences are effective with all children	
4. I remain calm when I respond to inappropriate behaviour	
5. I focus on the child's behaviour rather than his/her personality when I respond to inappropriate behaviour	
6. I make a special effort to note a child 'being good', who had previously been displaying inappropriate behaviour	
7. The consequences for inappropriate behaviour are part of a whole site approach	



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