

Bullying can occur among children of any ages, sex or background. In most instances, children need adult assistance to deal with bullying. This includes adults taking responsibility to develop strategies for the prevention of bullying, and for dealing fairly and effectively with allegations of bullying.

Being, belonging and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia identifies secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with children as one of the principles that underpin practice. Within the early childhood community many different relationships are negotiated with and between children, educators and families. The way in which these relationships are established and maintained, and the way in which they remain visible impacts on how the community functions as a whole. Relationships directly affect how children form their own identity, whether or not they feel safe and supported, and ultimately, their sense of belonging.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.

QUALITY AREA 6: PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS

155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups

PURPOSE

To create a safe and healthy environment for children where bullying behaviours are not tolerated. As reflected in our Service philosophy and Early Years Learning Framework, Educators will encourage positive relationships between children and their peers.

SCOPE

This policy applies to educators, staff, and management of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our service does not tolerate bullying of any kind.

The priority of our service is to ensure the safety of the child being bullied.

Although there may be underlying reasons causing a child to bully others, it is essential that the child being bullied receives the adult attention and support in the first instance. It is important that the needs of the child who bullies does not overshadow the needs of the child being bullied.

Signs of bullying

In many cases, bullying occurs without adults being aware of it. Bullying can include physical violence (hitting, shoving), teasing or name-calling, social exclusion, or intimidation. It often occurs over a period of time. Possible signs a child is being bullied might include:

- Unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches.
- Changes in behaviour, such as becoming moody, teary, depressed.
- Complaints of physical ailments such as headaches or stomach-aches.
- Having few friends, or a breakdown in a previous friendship (if age appropriate).
- Does not want to attend care.
- Does not want to attend parties, visit other children.

Children may also disclose to a trusted adult that they are being bullied.

Effects of bullying

Children who are bullied are more likely to be depressed, lonely, and anxious and have low self-esteem. They may frequently feel sick and avoid interactions with others.

Preventative strategies

Bullying thrives where there is not enough supervision. If required, and where possible, services should improve on the staff: child ratios set out in the National Regulations. The program of activities should be designed to meet the needs and interests of all children in attendance to prevent periods of boredom. Educators are to model appropriate behaviours towards other staff and children, including

refraining from teasing, humiliating, or talking 'behind another's back'. This should also include using appropriate language when dealing with behaviour management issues and assisting children to use the same. Children should be encouraged to verbalise their emotions and to develop empathy and compassion.

Procedure when a child discloses alleged bullying

- Listen when a child attempts to tell you about behaviours that might indicate bullying;
- Learn as much as possible about the children involved and the tactics used;
- Empathise with the child and reassure them that it is not their fault;
- Ask the child what they think could be done to help, what will make them feel safe;
- Tell the child what action you are planning to take, including that you will need to talk to the alleged bully;
- Notify all parents involved of the allegation of bullying;
- Notify the Nominated Supervisor of the allegation;
- Try to talk with the alleged bully and any witnesses without allowing them the opportunity to discuss what they may say (bullies often do not act alone, and the responses of the bully and friends may therefore differ from the victim);

Remember that bullies can be 'nice' children from 'good' families;

Once the investigation is complete, advise the children, parents and Management of the outcome.

Procedure when staff suspect possible bullying

- Pay closer attention to the suspected victim and their interactions with other children;
- Tell the child that you are concerned about them and consider asking some questions such as "Do you have any special friends here?", "Are there any kids here who you really don't like?";
- Consider talking with the parents of the child to determine if they have similar concerns.

Strategies for dealing with bullying

- Make it clear to the bully that this type of behaviour is not acceptable;
- Don't force a meeting between the bully and the victim. Forced apologies are not constructive;
- Encourage the child who is being bullied to report any further occurrences to the staff;
- Encourage and support the child who is being bullied to develop other friendships;

- Ask the child who is bullying for possible reasons for the bullying. Address any issues raised as appropriate.
- Discuss with the child who is bullying and their parents what the possible sanctions may be if the bullying continues.

Sanctions

Possible sanctions will be dependent on each individual case, but may include:

- A warning.
- Temporary exclusion from the Service.
- Permanent exclusion from the Service.

SOURCE:

Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early years learning Framework for Australia. (2009).

Department of Community Services, Bullying Fact Sheet.

Early Childhood Australia. Bullying No Way: www.bullyingnoway.com.au

NSW Centre for Parenting & Research: Aggression in children and young people [fact sheet]: www.raisingchildren.net.au

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	DECEMBER 2019	NEXT REVIEW DATE	DECEMBER 2020
MODIFICATIONS	NEW policy drafted		