

Behaviour support policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this policy must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

Overview

This policy outlines how staff support safe and positive behaviour for children and young people in education settings and early childhood education and care services.

Scope

This policy applies to all behaviour strategies and responses used by staff in all education settings and early childhood education and care services including those:

- administered or delivered by or on behalf of the department
- delivered on a departmental site by a third-party provider.

The following services are out of scope:

- family day care (FDC)
- Guardianship family day care
- respite care program (RCP).

FDC and RCP staff must refer to FDC and RCP operational policies and guides for educators.

For the purpose of this document, 'education and care services' refers to all education settings and early childhood education and care services.



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Detail

The purpose of the behaviour support policy is to:

- ensure effective, consistent, and fair behaviour support for all children and young people
- help children and young people to be safely included and participate in a positive way that respects other children and young people and staff
- develop the personal and social capability of children and young people to understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities so they can fully contribute in their setting, and to their wider community.

Children and young people's behaviours span a continuum including:

- positive, inclusive, and respectful behaviours
- low-level, developmentally appropriate transgressions that test the boundaries of established rules, standards, and norms. These behaviours are usually simple to redirect and minimise through universal behaviour support strategies for all children and young people
- challenging behaviours that raise greater concern due to their severity, frequency, or duration, and require more persistent guidance and support to minimise. Behaviour responses include targeted interventions for the individual children and young people involved in addition to universal strategies
- complex and unsafe behaviours that are severe, of high frequency or extended duration, or are unsafe for a child or young person or those around them. Behaviours at this end of the continuum require intensive and individualised interventions in addition to targeted and universal strategies.

Supporting children and young people

Challenging, complex, and unsafe behaviours (behaviours of concern) are an indicator that children and young people need support to be included in education and care services.

Research indicates that most children are able to behave in safe, respectful and inclusive ways, while a small number engage in challenging behaviours. Complex and unsafe behaviours involve a very small proportion of children and young people. It is important to note that children and young people's engagement in behaviours of concern can change over time.

The relationship between a child or young person and a caring adult is the fundamental basis of all behaviour support. Children and young people are most likely to behave in a positive, inclusive, and respectful manner when they are supported by a caring adult who models this behaviour, and who teaches, guides, and supports the child or young person to do the same.

Inclusion in education and care services is a protective factor for children and young people. Transitions into and between education and care services are a crucial time for children and young people and require support to ensure continuity and consistency, especially for priority groups.

Early, targeted, and individualised interventions can support children and young people who face barriers to learning and wellbeing. The department is committed to supporting equity and inclusion for all children and young people, and in particular for priority groups, including:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children and young people in care
- children and young people with disability
- gender and sexually diverse children and young people
- children and young people experiencing mental health challenges
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Policy principles and legal obligations

The department endorses a positive behaviour support approach to behaviour. All behaviours of concern by children and young people will receive a response. The nature of the response will be equitable and reflect the child or young person's needs and what is required to support safe and positive behaviour in future. Exclusionary responses are used as a strategy of last resort in response to unsafe behaviour, where safety cannot be reasonably achieved using a different response. On these limited occasions, exclusionary responses must comply with related departmental policies and procedures (for example, the [suspension, exclusion, and expulsion of students procedure \(PDF 1 MB\)](#) and [protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people: guidelines for staff working or volunteering in education or care settings guidelines \(PDF 3 MB\)](#)).

Strategies and interventions to support children and young people's positive behaviour development reflect the department's goal of safe inclusion for all children and young people. They also reflect the following principles:

- All behaviour has a purpose. Behaviour interventions will build on a child or young person's strengths to support them to meet that purpose in a safe and positive way.
- Behaviour arises within the context of a child or young person's development, their environment, their family experiences, and social settings. Behaviour interventions will recognise and seek to influence the social, family, and environmental factors around the child or young person.
- Behaviour is learnt over time. Children and young people will be supported to learn and practice new positive behaviours over time.
- Parents, caregivers, family members, community members, peers, and professionals influence children and young people's behaviour development. They are key partners in supporting positive behaviour change.

The policy principles uphold the rights of children and young people to access safe, inclusive, and effective education and care, as outlined in:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth).

Policy requirements

Behaviour support strategies must be purposeful and directed at achieving the following 7 core functions of behaviour support. In supporting children and young people's behaviour, staff will:

- promote, model, and support safe and positive behaviour
- explicitly teach positive behaviour and expectations about behaviour
- intervene by using the least exclusionary methods to prevent, reduce, or redirect behaviours of concern
- work with children and young people, their families, professionals, and other key adults to understand the environmental, social, and family context of a child or young person's behaviours of concern, and to use the capacity of these parties to support positive behaviour change provide visible, fair, and equitable behaviour responses that foster confidence and trust
- repair and restore relationships that have been harmed by behaviours of concern, when it has been assessed that it is emotionally and physically safe and in the best interests of everyone involved
- establish safety and wellbeing for people involved in behaviour incidents, and others.

See [supporting information](#) and [related policies](#) for the resources and procedures that support these policy functions.

All schools are required to develop a local behaviour support policy (or behaviour code) consistent with this behaviour support policy. The local behaviour support policy should detail the school's values, behaviour expectations, strategies, and responses to support safe and positive behaviour and must be available on the school's website. See [developing a school behaviour support policy](#) (staff login required).

All schools are required to develop a [local bullying prevention policy](#), which must be available on the school website. Staff are expected to apply their local bullying prevention policy and the directions within this behaviour support policy when responding to bullying.

Preschools are not required to have a local bullying prevention policy. However, early childhood education and care services are required under the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority to have a site behaviour support, interactions, and guidance policy (code). This policy should outline how to support positive interactions and provide consistent responses and guidance to ensure the safe inclusion of all children. A site [behaviour support, interactions and guidance policy \(code\)](#) exemplar has been developed to assist early childhood education and care services.

Supporting positive behaviour

The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework identifies the importance of staff, students and families cultivating a shared understanding of positive behaviour and how this supports effective teaching and learning.

We each have a role to play in making sure our education and care services are safe, positive, and inclusive environments. This involves addressing behaviours of concern when they occur and supporting those involved and affected by these behaviours.

In addition to the responsibilities mandated by this policy, it is important to recognise that supporting positive behaviour requires a partnership between staff, parents and families, and children and young people.

Staff

Staff have a key role in creating and maintaining safe and supportive education and care environments. Staff must:

- model and promote behaviour that values diversity, demonstrates respect for and inclusion of all children and young people, and promotes a positive culture and climate
- explicitly teach children and young people about safe and inclusive behaviours, and the core values of the education or care setting
- support the participation of all children and young people, taking special measures to support the inclusion of those who are at higher risk of exclusionary responses to their behaviours (including Aboriginal children, children in care, and children with disabilities)
- consult with children and young people with disability, or their parents and guardians, to determine and implement reasonable adjustments, and monitor their effectiveness
- take steps to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment for all children and young people, and in particular, for those who are at higher risk of experiencing bullying and harassment (including Aboriginal children, children in care, children with disabilities, gender and sexually diverse children, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds)
- participate in professional learning to build skills, knowledge and confidence in developing positive education and care environments, and recognising, and responding to behaviour incidents
- work with parents, caregivers, families, service providers, and the community to support children and young people affected by behaviours of concern. This may include recovery from harm, restorative practices (when it has been assessed as safe and in the best interest of everyone involved to do so), and supporting children and young people to develop positive social relationships
- report behaviours of a criminal nature to the South Australia Police in accordance with relevant departmental policies and procedures

- provide timely intervention in response to behaviours of concern, including incidents that have occurred online, out-of-hours, or off-premises when there is a reasonable connection between the child or young person's behaviour and the education or care setting
- provide visible, consistent, and planned responses to behaviours of concern to foster trust and confidence
- support children and young people to be physically and psychologically safe.

Parents and families

Parents and families are their child's or young person's first and ongoing teachers. Parents and families shape and support their child's or young person's positive behaviours when they:

- model and promote safe, respectful, and inclusive relationships with their own child or young person, other children and young people, other parents and caregivers, and staff
- support their child or young person to develop safe behaviours at home including monitoring and supervising their social interactions (including online)
- talk to their child or young person about behaviour including unsafe behaviour to help them to understand what it is, why it is harmful, and how to respond
- work collaboratively with the education or care service to resolve concerns about behaviour when incidents occur, including discussing issues as soon as possible (in accordance with the education or care service's procedures)
- consider recommendations and engage in specialist support through Student Support Services and external organisations
- support their child or young person's best interests to continue to attend the education or care service while a behaviour issue is being resolved.

Children and young people

All children and young people can safely participate in their education or care service when they:

- treat others in a way that demonstrates respect and inclusiveness
- ensure their verbal, physical, and online interactions are safe, respectful, and inclusive
- take a stand when they see behaviours of concern in person or online, by safely intervening or seeking help from adults to intervene
- support their friends to behave in safe, respectful, and inclusive ways if their friends are engaging in behaviours of concern, including by seeking help from trusted adults.

Roles and responsibilities

Chief Executive

Ensure the establishment, maintenance, and promotion of effective behaviour support for children and young people.

Engagement and Wellbeing directorate

Establish, maintain, and promote an effective behaviour support policy, and supporting resources, that reflect evidence informed practice.

Support leaders to plan, implement, and evaluate behaviour support approaches.

Ensure information about the behaviour support policy and bullying prevention requirements are accessible across the department and to the public.

Student Support Services

Provide specialist advice and services to support the promotion of positive behaviour for children and young people.

Provide specialist advice and services to support targeted and intensive behaviour interventions for children and young people who require support to be safely included in education and care services.

Model and coach behaviour interventions and strategies and provide practical support to staff.

Learning and Behaviour unit

Provide specialist advice and services to support the promotion of positive behaviour for children and young people.

Provide targeted and intensive behaviour interventions for children and young people who require support to be safely included.

Education directors

Ensure each school and preschool in their portfolio is effectively applying this behaviour support policy to provide a positive learning environment for children and young people and those working with them.

Oversee reports and analysis of behaviour data for their schools.

School and early childhood leaders (principals in schools and early childhood services directors)

Ensure this behaviour support policy is effectively applied and implemented at their education or care service to provide a positive environment for children and young people and those working with them by:

- Schools: Develop and effectively apply a local school behaviour support policy and a bullying prevention policy, ensuring both are available on the school website
- Preschools or early childhood education or care services: Develop and effectively apply a local behaviour support, interactions, and guidance policy (code), ensuring it is available on the site website.

Ensure appropriate documentation and record keeping regarding behaviour support, including responses to bullying.

Ensure regular reporting and analysis of behaviour and bullying data to inform site behaviour support and bullying prevention practices.

Develop the capacity of educators to plan and implement curriculum and pedagogy that supports the positive behaviour of children and young people and maximises their wellbeing, engagement, intellectual challenge and achievement.

Lead the creation and maintenance of a safe, inclusive and positive environment for all children and young people, parents, families, and the wider education or care service community.

Provide professional development for all staff about creating positive, safe and inclusive environments, and effective practices to respond to behaviour.

Ensure regular, ethical and valid data collection and reporting on issues related to children and young people's safety and wellbeing, and use the data to inform interventions, strategies, and actions.

Ensure information about effective interventions used for a child or young person's challenging, complex, or unsafe behaviour is shared with the new education or care service when a child or young person transfers to a new site.

Staff

Ensure behaviour responses to children and young people at their site or service are consistent with relevant policies, procedures, and guidelines.

Ensure appropriate documentation and record keeping regarding behaviour support.

Use the relevant curriculum (Early Years Learning Framework, My Time Our Place Framework, Australian Curriculum, SACE, Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum) to design and teach learning programs that support the positive behaviour of children and young people and maximises their wellbeing, engagement, intellectual challenge, and achievement.

Create and maintain a safe, inclusive, and positive environment for all children and young people.

Non-department staff

Non-department staff working with children and young people and providing a service on behalf of the department or delivering a service on a departmental site must comply with this policy.

Definitions

behaviours of concern

Challenging, complex, or unsafe behaviours that are of greater severity, frequency, or duration, and require more persistent or intensive intervention to address.

Does not include low level, developmentally appropriate transgressions that test the boundaries of established rules, standards and norms but are relatively simple to redirect and minimise through universal behaviour support strategies.

bullying

An ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical, or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social, or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over 1 or more people who feel unable to stop it from happening.

child or young person

A person under the age of 18.

Where a school provides a service to students aged 18 years and older, the term 'child and young person' in this policy also applies to these students.

consistent

Done in the same way over time. Consistent responses to behaviours of concern does not mean that all children and young people receive the same response. Behaviour responses are tailored to the specific needs of the child or young person.

continuum

A series on a scale where the 2 opposite ends are distinctly different from each other.

exclusionary response

Responses that exclude children and young people from participation in the school setting or school activities, for example suspension, take-home or being excluded from camps or other activities. Part-time programs are considered exclusionary when applied to children or young people who are able to be safely

included in the school setting full-time and where full-time attendance is in the best interests of the child or young person.

equitable or fair

Treating children and young people without favouritism or discrimination in a way that reflects their learning and behaviour needs. Equity and fairness are not about treating all children and young people the same.

positive behaviour support (PBS)

An approach to behaviour that is built on the principles that positive behaviour can be learnt and that environments can be changed to support effective teaching and learning for every child. PBS involves a range of systems and practice elements at universal, targeted and intensive levels.

protective

Factors that strengthen an individual's capacity to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

reasonable adjustments

Actions or measures that enable a child or young person with disability to access and participate in learning on the same basis as their peers. Adjustments may include modifications to the learning environment, methods of communication, pedagogy (that is, teaching methods and practices), curriculum, and behaviour support. Reasonable adjustments balance the interests and impact, including safety, of all parties, such as the child or young person with disability, staff members, and other children and young people, while considering the costs and benefits of making these adjustments.

safe inclusion

The inclusion of all children and young people, including those who engage in behaviours of concern, in the setting to the fullest extent possible, while maintaining the physical and psychological safety of children, young people, staff and the broader school community.

Supporting information

[Behaviour support in schools including suspension and exclusion](#)

[Behaviour support and interactions with children in preschools](#) (staff login required)

[Behaviour support plans for students](#) (staff login required)

[Behaviour Support toolkit](#) (staff login required)

[Bullying prevention and response tools and resources](#)

[Bullying prevention requirements](#) (staff login required)

[Developing a school behaviour support policy](#) (staff login required)

[Personalised learning](#) (staff login required)

[Violence prevention and response in schools](#)

Related legislation

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)

[Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cth\)](#)

[Education and Children's Services Act 2019 \(SA\)](#)

[Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020 \(SA\)](#)

[Education and Early Childhood Services \(Registration and Standards\) Act 2011](#)

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

[Equal Opportunity Act 1984 \(SA\)](#)

[Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability](#)

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

Related policies

[Assault, weapons, sexual, drug and other offences reported on site: site responsibilities procedure \(PDF 669 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Children and students with disability policy \(PDF 195 KB\)](#)

[Duty of care to children and young people policy \(PDF 182 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Gender diverse and intersex children and young people support procedure \(PDF 246 KB\)](#)

[Protective practices for staff in their interactions with children and young people: guidelines for staff working or volunteering in education or care settings guidelines \(PDF 3 MB\)](#)

[Reporting critical incidents, injuries, hazards and near misses procedure \(PDF 234 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Responding to online safety incidents in South Australian schools guidelines \(PDF 456 KB\)](#)

[Sexual behaviour in children and young people procedure and guideline \(PDF 2 MB\)](#)

[Suspension, exclusion, and expulsion of students procedure \(PDF 1 MB\)](#)

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