



Interactions with Children Policy

Policy Statement:

Pennant Hills Before and After School Care Service is committed to fostering warm, respectful and child-centred interactions that uphold children's rights, dignity and sense of belonging. Our educators build genuine relationships grounded in trust, inclusion and community connection, recognising each child as capable, competent and deserving of meaningful voice in their daily experiences. We prioritise safe, supportive and empowering interactions that nurture wellbeing, independence and positive social development, while maintaining professional boundaries and ensuring children feel valued, understood and respected at all times.

Definitions:

Child-Led Practice: An approach where children's ideas, interests and preferences guide experiences, routines and interactions. Educators follow children's cues and support them to take an active role in shaping their time at the service.

Agency: The right and ability to make choices, express views and influence decisions that affect oneself.

Personal Care: Any assistance provided to support a child's physical needs, such as toileting, changing or hygiene tasks. Personal care must uphold children's privacy, dignity and agency, and be carried out by two educators whenever support is required.

Considerations:

- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Child Safe Standards (NSW)
- My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care (MTOP)
- National Quality Standard
 - 1.1.2: Child-centred practice.
 - 1.2.1: Educators are deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in interactions.
 - 1.2.3: Child-directed learning.
 - 2.2.1: Supervision is effective for safety and wellbeing.
 - 5.1.1: Positive educator-child relationships.

- 5.1.2: Children's agency is promoted.
- 5.2.1: Collaborative learning and respectful peer interactions.
- 7.1.2: Systems support consistent practice.
- 7.2.1: Continuous improvement through reflection.
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
 - Regulation 155 – Interactions with children must be positive, respectful and supportive.
 - Regulation 156 – Relationships in groups must promote inclusion, respect and positive social interactions.
 - Regulation 168(2)(j) – Services must have policies on interactions with children.
- Education and Care Services National Law
 - Section 3(2) – Principles underpinning the Law, including the rights and best interests of the child.
 - Section 165 – Offence to inadequately supervise children.
 - Section 166 – Offence to use inappropriate discipline.
 - Section 167 – Protection of children from harm and hazards.

Policy:

Guiding Principles for Interactions:

At our service, our interactions with children are grounded in a warm, playful and deeply child-led approach. We view children as capable, competent learners who thrive when trusted, supported and given the space to explore their own ideas. This belief shapes every moment of connection; from the way we greet children to the way we respond to their emerging interests. We recognise that meaningful learning happens when children feel safe, valued and empowered, and our interactions are intentionally designed to nurture these conditions.

Our practice is guided by the My Time, Our Place Framework and our service philosophy, which emphasises belonging, community connection, nature play and the importance of relationships. We strive to say “yes” whenever possible, supporting children’s autonomy and encouraging them to take ownership of their experiences. Educators approach each interaction with curiosity and respect, acknowledging the individuality of every child and celebrating the diversity they bring to our community.

Equity, inclusion and respect for diversity underpin all interactions at PHBASC. We are committed to creating an environment where every child feels understood, supported and free to express themselves. Our strong community roots—shaped by educators who live locally, attended the school themselves, or share deep ties with families—enhance the authenticity of our relationships. This sense

of community enriches our interactions and strengthens the culture of belonging that defines our service.

Respectful Communication with Children:

Educators actively encourage children to express their ideas, preferences and emerging interests, recognising that children's voices are central to shaping their experiences. Daily conversations, interest-based planning and structured opportunities for input ensure that children have meaningful influence over the program. Educators listen with genuine curiosity, responding in ways that empower children to take ownership of their choices and contribute confidently to the life of the centre.

Communication is calm, respectful and attuned to each child's developmental stage. Educators avoid labels and instead use encouragement that helps children see themselves positively and recognise their strengths. When challenges arise, restorative chats are used to unpack situations only after children have had the opportunity to regulate, ensuring interactions remain grounded in mutual respect. Calming activities—such as running, quiet spaces or sensory play—are offered to support emotional regulation before problem-solving conversations occur, helping children feel safe, understood and ready to engage constructively.

Building & Maintaining Relationships:

Educators are deeply attuned to children's cues, emotions and needs, responding in ways that promote wellbeing, confidence and social competence. Through interest-based conversations, shared experiences and genuine curiosity, educators build meaningful connections with each child. They intentionally expand on previous play experiences to create continuity, deepen engagement and show children that their ideas and interests are valued.

A strong sense of belonging is fostered from the moment children arrive. Every child is greeted warmly, helping them feel seen, welcomed and appreciated as part of the community. Our long-standing ties to the school and local area, with many educators being former students or residents, enhance the authenticity of these relationships. Mealtimes, outdoor play and shared rituals further strengthen this sense of community, creating a warm, familiar environment where children feel safe to be themselves.

The diversity within our educator team enriches the culture of the centre and enhances the quality of interactions. Each educator brings unique experiences, perspectives and personal strengths, allowing a wide range of meaningful connections to occur. This diversity broadens children's world views, strengthens relationships and deepens the sense of belonging for all.

Across all interactions, educators demonstrate warmth, humour, fairness, integrity and authenticity. They actively involve children in play, conversations and decision-making, ensuring that relationships

are collaborative rather than directive. Professional boundaries are upheld at all times, allowing educators to remain supportive, approachable and trustworthy while maintaining the safety and wellbeing of every child.

Supporting Children's Agency & Independence:

Children are encouraged to take an active role in shaping their own experiences at our service. Throughout each session, they are offered meaningful choices such as selecting activities, contributing to routines, or taking on leadership opportunities. Independence is nurtured through optional involvement in tasks such as food service, setting up activities or assisting peers, allowing children to participate in the running of the centre in ways that feel authentic and empowering. Older children, particularly those in Year 6, are provided additional autonomy through responsibilities like independent "walk-down" in the afternoons and access to a dedicated Year 6 space, recognising their growing maturity and need for independence.

Educators take a strength-based approach to interactions, recognising and celebrating each child's unique abilities, interests and achievements. Encouragement is used intentionally to build confidence and resilience, avoiding comparative praise and instead helping children recognise their own progress. Children are supported to solve problems independently, with educators stepping in only when necessary to scaffold learning or ensure safety. This approach fosters a sense of capability, ownership and pride, reinforcing our belief that children thrive when trusted and supported to lead their own learning.

Appropriate Physical Contact:

Educators maintain safe, respectful and professional boundaries in all physical interactions with children. Physical contact is kept to what is genuinely needed for safety, comfort or care, and is always appropriate to the child's age and cues. Practices such as lap-sitting, piggy-backs and unnecessary lifting are avoided, and educators use alternatives like high-fives, gentle proximity or reassuring words when children seek connection. Further guidance on these expectations can be found in our Child Protection Policy.

Privacy & Personal Care:

Children's privacy and dignity are respected at all times, especially during toileting, changing or any form of personal care. Educators step in only when support is genuinely needed—such as with very young children, children with additional needs or in urgent situations—and always in a way that protects the child's comfort and sense of agency. To ensure transparency and safety, two educators are present whenever personal care assistance is required. Independence is encouraged wherever possible, with educators offering verbal guidance before providing any physical help. All personal

care interactions are calm, respectful and focused on maintaining the child’s wellbeing and confidence.

Collaborative Learning & Shared Experiences:

Educators and children learn alongside one another, engaging together in play, exploration and conversation. By modelling curiosity, collaboration and a willingness to try new things, educators help create an environment where learning feels shared and meaningful. The program evolves in response to children’s emerging interests, with educators adapting experiences based on ongoing observations, feedback and the natural flow of each session.

Positive group dynamics are nurtured through intentional practices that value connection and community. Inter-age play is actively encouraged, creating rich opportunities for peer learning, leadership and social confidence. Older children often take on natural mentoring roles, helping younger children feel comfortable, included and supported. Educators promote fairness, cooperation and respect, guiding children to navigate social challenges constructively and ensuring that every child feels part of a safe, inclusive and connected group.

Reflective Practice & Continuous Improvement:

Interactions with children are recognised as one of the most important aspects of our service, and we are committed to continually refining and improving them through thoughtful reflection. Educators use a range of reflective tools including the Daily Diary, activity and area reflections, and the “TLC” communication board, to share insights about children’s needs, interests and wellbeing. These reflections are brought to team briefings, where they inform collective understanding and feed directly into program planning. This ongoing reflective cycle ensures that our interactions remain responsive, meaningful and closely attuned to the children in our care. It also aligns with our Programming Policy, reinforcing our commitment to continuous improvement and high-quality, child-centred practice.

Version	Action	Date
V.1	Original endorsement	23 rd September 2020
V.2	Expanded on principles based on centre philosophy. Added sections on: - Appropriate physical contact - Privacy/personal care	2 nd February 2026

	- Ongoing reflection	
V.2	Approved by PMC	18 th February 2026