

Policy on respecting young children: HS 01

This policy statement includes the approved procedures to follow when suspecting child abuse

Date of issue: November 2013

Date for review: November 2015

Policy number: HS01

Policy prepared by: EH Policy Reference Group

Background to the policy statement:

“Children are sensitive to the environment in which they live and grow. Children’s learning is affected by the degree of emotional and physical security offered to them by significant others in the environment” (Kay, 2003). Children who are provided with appropriate nutrition and shelter, whose emotional health and physical safety are supported, who experience positive encouragement and emotional security are being well supported in achieving optimal development. Adults must therefore work to support children’s positive growth and development through the creation of caring communities which are both physically and psychologically safe.

EtonHouse educators must employ and advocate for proactive measures which protect children both physically and emotionally. We must empower each child by supporting children’s self esteem and awareness of how best to protect themselves.

Aims/purpose of the policy statement:

To promote optimum learning, EtonHouse believes that all children should experience the security of a safe, respectful and non-threatening environment, where all individuals are supported to grow and to learn.

- 1.1 The development of positive self esteem is critical to the development of emotional well being and learning across all domains. We can strengthen children’s self esteem by acknowledging children’s effort and ensuring that each child experiences success in their learning through individually appropriate learning experiences;
- 1.2 Educators must acknowledge that children live and grow within the context of the family. Educators therefore have a responsibility to support and strengthen families in their parenting role;
- 1.3 Adults must be able to recognise indicators of abuse and understand their roles/responsibilities in relation to reporting suspected child abuse;
- 1.4 Adults must advocate for children and address situations which may constitute a threat to children (verbal; physical, sexual, emotional abuse and or neglect);

- 1.5 Adults must demonstrate through their daily interactions with children, behaviours and attitudes which support children in feeling safe and respected.

Policy statement:

School/preschool staff (contact and non-contact) will employ practices which support the establishment and maintenance of a safe and respectful environment where each child and their family is valued and respected as a unique individual.

Staff will serve as positive role models for parents and other adults in the child's life demonstrating respect for young children through sensitive interactions and well considered choice of words/ tone when communicating with children.

As adults we have a responsibility to promote children's positive attitudes towards self and others through our own behaviours and expectations of the children in our care. Children are learning to respect themselves and others through the actions and attitudes that they observe amongst the adults in their context. **Staff must support children to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings in positive and socially acceptable ways. Bullying is to be viewed as inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour which must be addressed as a whole of campus issue.**

Staff will work to support the family unit as the prime source of support to the young child.

Implementation practices and procedures:

1. Interactions with children:

- 1.1 Adults must interact with all children in ways that demonstrate respect for and valuing of children regardless of age; gender; culture or ethnic background. For example, puzzles, posters and books must reflect a diverse range of cultures, gender and ability to foster principles of social justice and equity. Appreciation of diversity is critical to respect for all;
- 1.2 Consideration of children's rights must be evident within a teacher's decision making/curriculum planning. For example children have a right to play; a right to be listened to; a right to be consulted around matters that impact on them;
- 1.3 Pedagogical documentation of children's images and or 'voices' must demonstrate respect for the young child as a masterful thinker and communicator. Written and visual observations (recorded, filmed or digital) must be recorded only for the purpose of curriculum development/pedagogical documentation/sharing with the child's parents (supporting children's capacity to re-visit experiences and to construct newsletters, portfolios and wall documentation);

Staff must explain to parents the purpose of pedagogical documentation as a research vehicle to support parental understanding in relation to requests for staff to take photographs of children at work/play. **Photographs must not be taken in any**

situation when parents have not given written authorisation for the staff member to do so. No staff member is permitted to take photographs/video children for personal reasons;

Photography of children by visitors to the centre (other than EH colleagues) will not be permitted. Staff must ensure that any photographs/videos taken in the classroom/learning environments do not contain photographs of children as background images;

- 1.4 In our current age of digital media usage, particularly social media, it is important that staff interact professionally and responsibly with this form of communication. To respect children's (and their families) rights to privacy, staff must work with parents to support their understandings that photographs/videos taken within EtonHouse settings (preschools and schools) of children and teachers **must not** be uploaded onto **YouTube**, or any other **social networking site** (websites, blogs etc) which serve to provide a platform to share video content;

Whilst we respect the rights of parents to photograph/video significant events in their own child's life e.g. a birthday celebrations, we must remind families that other children are also captured in video segments and there may be no written permission given by parents for these children to be filmed/photographed. We therefore believe that we must act ethically and request that parents/family members do not upload any images onto shared sites. Proposed video footage must be discussed with the class teacher responsible for the group and must be used for that **private viewing** only;

- 1.5 Staff must employ teaching practices which support the development of each child's confidence and positive self esteem, such as fostering children's sense of belonging and acknowledging each child's strengths and efforts. Regular dialogue about the ***image of child*** held by individual staff members and the construction of setting specific/shared ***image of child*** must be undertaken to serve as a measure to support best practice in relation to respecting individual children;
- 1.6 Staff must engage in ongoing reflection (personal and collegial) to ensure that expectations of children's behaviour are individually appropriate and reflect understanding of how young children learn;
- 1.7 Staff must acknowledge and respect individual children's preferences for interactions which aim to offer emotional support e.g. not all children like close physical contact. Staff must also be sensitive to cultural sensitivities around physical contact e.g. Some families may not wish their child to be greeted/farewelled by kissing;
- 1.8 At EtonHouse, we respect crying as a natural form of expression for young children and acknowledge that this is one of the many ways that young children communicate their thoughts, feelings and fears;
- 1.9 Based on their child knowledge of young children's learning and development, staff must establish consistent boundaries and realistic expectations of children's behaviour. For example, staff will employ positive guidance strategies when managing challenging behaviours, so that children understand the cause and consequences of their behaviour;

1.10 **No child must experience verbal or physical threat in EtonHouse schools/preschools.** (See EH Policy statement CUR 07 Policy and procedures for guiding children's behaviour);

1.11 Self regulation of behaviour is to be promoted amongst children, fostering the development of an internal locus of control (whereby children regulate or manage their own behaviour with an understanding of consequence, rather than rely on external reward systems) which further empowers children in their emotional development. For example, staff should employ conflict resolution strategies which provide children with opportunities to reflect on and to consider alternative behaviours;

2. Interactions with families:

2.1 Staff will empower the child's family in their ability to raise emotionally secure children, by acknowledging the strengths of each family. For example, staff will attempt to offer support to families by developing trusting relationships with parents/families, so that families understand they can approach the educator to discuss issues of parenting in a non judgemental manner;

2.2 Explicit teacher modelling of appropriate adult: child interactions also strengthens the family's ability to interact positively with their children;

2.3 Written communication to parents (hard copy and electric) about the child's learning and development must also demonstrate respect for the child (see EH Policy statement COM 03 Policy on written communication);

3. Interactions with the broader community:

3.1 Staff must be familiar with local services and resources that exist to support families e.g. child guidance and family support centres;

3.2 Staff will be mindful of and work towards the aims and objectives of the *United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child* and any other legislation at National level which aims to ensure the safety and well being of the young child, for example, reporting to the appropriate authority if child abuse, or suspected child abuse has taken place.

Evaluation:

A review of this policy and implementation procedures will be conducted every two years. This review will be undertaken in collaboration between the Preschool Directors, Principals and staff of the EtonHouse Education Centre (the policy reference group).

Reference list:

Kay, J. (2003). *Protecting children*. (2nd Ed.). London: Continuum.

Clare, C. & Roe, D. (1990). *Keeping our children safe*. Canberra; Australia: Australian Early Childhood Association.