



# St. Thomas School & Pre-School

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## Interactions with Children Policy

### **Policy:**

To encourage warm nourishing relationships between children and educators that support and view children as strong, powerful, competent, complex and full of possibilities.

### **Background:**

The relationship between educators and children is perhaps the most important aspect of a service. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships are one of the basic principles of Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework that provides a vision for the children's learning at this Pre-school. Relationships between educators and children can have an impact on other relationships and can dictate the mood of the group, or the whole Pre-school environment. The value of other skills like observing, planning and organising the environment depends upon the extent to which educators are able to develop these relationships. Children who are secure in the relationship with their educator/s are confident in their learning and are able to enjoy and feel relaxed in their time at the Pre-school.

Children need positive relationships with adults that they can trust and who respond to them. This is the basic foundation that they need in order to feel good about themselves and their being in the world, and secure enough to take pleasure in actively exploring and learning about themselves, people and things around them.

Children under five are learning communication and social skills. The way in which educators relate and interact with them and to other people in the Pre-school is an important source of information about how they should communicate and interact with others. Therefore, these adults should relate to children in a positive way which responds to each child's individual needs and enables the child to develop the ability to relate in a similar positive way to others. Children also need adults who actively teach them communication skills, by relating to them in ways which build upon their existing and emerging social and interactive communication skills, and by providing them with opportunities, and activities to exercise and develop these skills.

All adults, and especially experienced Pre-school educators, are more able than young children to empathise, adapt and modify their behaviour. One of the basic principles of communicating with children is that educators need to approach the children in their care in a child-centred way. Children under five are still very much the centre of their own universe. From birth they are very sensitive to what is going on around them, and are continually trying to make sense of their environment and to discover new ways of relating to it. As they develop, their ability to understand other people, to take account of others' feelings, and to modify their behaviour, increases. However, even when they are five, they are not yet very experienced or skilled in the complexities of social and communications skills.

As educators we are able to establish trusting relationships with the children and at the same time we are able to be positive role models by communicating, interacting and socialising with the children in our care.

**At St Thomas Pre-school we strive to:**

Promote a safe, secure and nurturing environment

Be authentic and responsive

Be based in fairness, acceptance and empathy with respect for culture, rights, community and the individual

**Practices:**

The Educational Leader shall:

- Guide professional development and practice to promote interactions with children that are positive and respectful.
- Establish practice guidelines to ensure that interactions with children are given priority and those interactions are authentic, just and respect difference.

**Educators and staff will:**

- Respond to children's communication in a just and consistent manner.
- Respond sensitively to children's attempts to initiate interactions and conversations.
- Initiate one to one interactions with children during daily routines and conversations with each child.
- Support children's efforts, assisting and encouraging as appropriate.
- Support children's secure attachment through consistent and warm nurturing relationships.
- Support children's expression of their thoughts and feelings.
- Encourage children to express themselves and show an interest and participate in what the child is doing
- Encourage children to make choices and decisions.
- Acknowledge children's complex relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration and alternative perspectives and social inclusion.
- Acknowledge each child's uniqueness in positive ways
- Respect cultural differences in communication and consider alternative approaches to own.
- See further specific ideas for positive interactions with children - attached to this policy.

**Children's Rights, Family and Cultural Values**

Interactions within the setting are greatly enhanced when children's rights and family and cultural values are given due consideration and respect. Administrative procedures, initial conversations, documentation and ongoing communication with children and families are a reference point for interactions and a foundation for authentic and respectful communication.

### **Listening**

Educators and staff must use listening as a foundation for interactions. Listening is based on observation and in leaving spaces in conversations and communication, suspending judgment and in giving full attention to children as they communicate. Truly attending to children's communication promotes a strong culture of listening.

### **Children and Families**

A culture of respectful interaction is promoted when children's attempts to communicate are valued. Turn taking and regulating children's conversations promotes active engagement. Respectful communication with families generates greater confidence in interacting.

### **Reflection**

Time is dedicated to reflecting upon interactions within children. Reflections should consider how to spend extended periods engaged in interactions with children that comprise communication and listening.

### **Role Modeling**

Educators model positive interactions when they:

- Show care, empathy and respect for children, educators and staff and families;
- Learn and use effective communication strategies;
- Remember - quality interactions increase children's knowledge and understanding of themselves, each other as unique individuals and develop the skills and understandings they need to interact positively with others.