



Endorsed: July 2012, Aug 2013
Reviewed: July 2014, 2016 Nov 2018, Dec 19, Oct 20, Sept 21, July 22, April 23, 24

Child Safe Environment

Policy Statement

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCR) outline that children and young people have a right to be safe and cared for, no matter where they are or who they are with. Children have the right to be protected from violence, abuse or neglect. When working with children and young people, it is important to understand children’s rights and needs.

We are advocates for children and have a strong commitment to child safety and establishing and maintaining a child safe environment. Children’s safety and wellbeing are paramount at our service. We embed the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and promote a culture of safety and wellbeing to minimise the risk of child abuse or harm to children whilst promoting children’s sense of security and belonging. [NQF October 2023]

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS AND NATIONAL LAW	
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment
84	Awareness of child protection law
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities

115	Facilities designed to facilitate supervision
155	Interactions with children
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168 (h)	Providing a child safe environment
S162 (A)	Persons in day to day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training

Purpose

Our service has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe and friendly environment where all children are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Children's safety is paramount, and we aim to take all practical steps to protect children from harm, ensuring a healthy and safe environment. Our service provides children and staff with an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

Implementation

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations the approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for providing a child safe environment and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed. (Regulation 168, Regulation 170). The National Law requires management to ensure all children being educated and cared for are adequately supervised and every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury. Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in our Service policies and procedures and understood and practiced by all educators, staff, children and young people, volunteers and students.

'Child safety is everyone's responsibility.' (A guide to the Child Safe Standards. p.26. 2020)

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Our service is committed to being a child safe organisation and endorses the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission provide guidance for our service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount.

Our commitment to child safety

Our service is committed to being a child safe organisation and embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority

of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount and that we continue to improve our child safe culture and practices.

Our service has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people. We ensure all staff, educators, volunteers and students have undertaken current child protection training and understand their obligations as mandatory reporters. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children and young people participate in decisions affecting them and listen and respect their suggestions and ideas. We respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm by reporting to the relevant authorities.

We are committed to diversity and welcome all children and young people regardless of their abilities, sex, gender or social economic or cultural background.

Recruitment

Our service maintains a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure the best staff possible based on skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the position available. All staff participate in interviews and have 3 reference checks completed to ensure the applicant's suitability to the role, previous experiences and their commitment to child safe values and practices. All staff are provided with a comprehensive induction process which outlines our Code of Conduct, identifying and responding to child abuse, grievance processes, and work health and safety.

New employees (including the nominated supervisor and staff members), students and volunteers are to familiarise themselves with the Child Protection Policy to understand the Child Protection Law and their obligations and mandatory reporting duties to ensure the safety and well-being of children at the service.

Working with Children Check- Police Clearance

Working in conjunction with the Child Protection Act and National Regulations, the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount within our service and community. A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a requirement for people who work in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

The result of a Working with Children Check is either a clearance to work with children and is valid for five years, or a bar against working with children. Staff are also required to provide a National Police Check Certificate. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

The Centre Manager is responsible for the periodic review and maintenance of up to date records of employees' Working with Children Check, including the Working with Children Check number and the date on which each clearance expires. A staff record checking system will be in place to ensure this. Once an employee provides their WWCC transcript, management will verify the clearance to ensure that it is valid and current. A potential employee will not commence employment until the clearance is validated. The WWCC will be placed in the individual's file and continue to be updated as required.

Management will verify all student and volunteer WWCCs prior to placement. Any visitor who has direct contact with children will be required to provide a WWCC for verification prior to coming into contact with children.

The approved provider will keep a record for each day a student or volunteer participates in the service including date and hours of participation.

A copy of all staff's Working with Children Check who are employed at the service will be issued to school management to comply with the licence agreement.

Child Protection

Children and young people always have a right to be safe and protected. To comply with legislation and ensure a child safe environment, all educators, staff, volunteers and students are advised of current child protection law and understand any obligations under the law. Supervision is effective to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*.

All management (with direct contact of children or young person), educators and staff are mandatory reporters and have a legal obligation to make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of significant harm. Neglecting these obligations could potentially be deemed a criminal offence. All staff are provided with up-to-date training about child protection law and their obligations under this law and to ensure they are confident in following the reporting guidelines within NSW and adhere to our *Child Protection Policy*. (Reg 84). Management will ensure training and development are provided for all educators, staff, and volunteers in child protection on an annual basis.

Through continual education and training, educators and staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe. Training gives educators and staff confidence to identify, respond and report child abuse.

Coordinators or responsible persons in day-to-day charge must complete a course in child protection approved by the Regulatory Authority on an annual basis. All staff must refresh their knowledge about mandatory reporting each year.

To protect children and young people and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, management is responsive to report allegations or convictions of harm or risk of harm to a child or young person and child related misconduct by any staff member, educator, volunteer or contractor to the relevant organisation or Department for Child Protection.

Our service is committed to providing support to children, young people, families, educators or staff who have made a report regarding child protection, with a focus on upholding strict confidentiality throughout the process. Our primary concern is the well-being and safety of the child or young person, and we will work closely with relevant authorities, professionals, and support networks to ensure that the child or young person's best interests are met throughout the process. Our dedicated support system will assist educators and staff in navigating this challenging process while safeguarding their privacy and professional well-being.

Child protection- Allegations Against Employees

To protect children and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, management is responsive to report allegations or convictions of child abuse and child related misconduct by any staff member or volunteer or contractor to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) (NSW) as part of the *Reportable Conduct Scheme* NSW. Our service will ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality of information relating to the reportable allegations as per the Children's Guardian Act 2019 NSW. We take our legislative responsibilities as part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme seriously and will respond to any reportable allegation or conviction against employees or volunteers that may arise.

Reporting and Responding to General Complaints

Feedback from children, families, educators, staff and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving service working towards the highest standard of care and education. We ensure educators, staff, volunteers and students are well

informed about the different ways children may express concerns, distress and disclose harm as well as the process for responding to disclosures from children- including a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child. (ACECQA 2023)

We aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness. Our service believes in procedural fairness and natural justice that govern the strategies and practices, which include:

- The right to be heard fairly
- The right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision maker
- The right to have the decision based on relevant evidence.

Arrival and Departure Authorisation

Our service prioritises children's safety at all times. Staff and educators will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form. The service will request families provide current court orders, and parenting plans to ensure our records are up to date.

National Regulations require our service to keep a record of children and visitor's arrival and departures, with the signatures of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child or young person. Educators will work in collaboration with our Access, Arrival and Departure Policy, Safe Arrival of Children Policy and Student, Absent and Missing Children Policy, Participation of students and Volunteer policy to ensure children and young people remain safe.

Arrival of children

Families are informed on orientation and through regular reminders as to the use of the school car park. Adhering to the time and speed restrictions, car park etiquette and the [directions from the](#) principal of the school.

- ◆ Educators are to complete an initial safety check of the car park and service security on arrival and during the morning session.
- Electronic sign in iPads are available for morning and afternoon care for educators and parents/guardians to sign the child/ren in and out.
- Educators are to greet each child and parent/guardian and monitor the signing in
- Educators are to check the electronic sign in during the morning period to ensure that all children have been signed in.
- If a child has arrived and not been signed in educators are to enter the children in via the electronic sign in /iPad ~~adjust the time.~~
- Educators are to ensure that parents/guardians verify the sign in and absences when the child is next in attendance via the electronic sign in.
- ◆ Children are not allowed to complete the electronic sign in, they must be signed in by a parent/guardian or nominated
- -person this will be indicated by signage.

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Departure of children

- Educators are to ensure that only nominated persons/authorised persons collect a child who is enrolled at the service.
- The Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person for each session will be displayed in the sign in/out area.
- At the end of the day prior to lock up all areas of the service must be physically checked by two primary staff members. This includes toilet, balcony, storeroom, kitchen, office and year 5/6 room. Children are to be encouraged not to hide from their parents/guardians at the end of the day.
- Two educators will also check the electronic sign in/out roll to ensure that all children have been signed out and collected by an authorised person.
- A lock up procedure checklist will be completed at the end of each day.

Supervision of children

- Supervision of children is essential throughout the day
- Educators are to adhere to staff to child ratios as stated in the Education and Care Services Regulations and National Law and Standards for Out of School Hours Care Services.
- Higher ratios of supervision may be required depending on the activity proposed and or support needs of children in attendance.

First aid

- An educator with a current first aid certificate will always be available to administer first aid to injured children.
- Several fully stocked first aid kits will be maintained by Health Leader/Educators and located so it is easily accessible to all areas of supervision.
- Bloodied materials to be double bagged and inaccessible to children.
- All medication needs to be in a child proof container in a locked cupboard or locked container in the fridge. The exceptions are EpiPen's and asthma medication which must be accessible to educators at all times.
- EpiPen expiry dates will be checked monthly as part of the Health Leader's duties. When close to expiring, educators are to inform parents.
- Children are unable to attend unless their medical equipment is complete.

Indoor environment

- Natural light and ventilation heating/cooling is utilised to ensure the comfort, safety and well being of children
- Storage systems will be child friendly
- Children will be provided with an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol
- Electrical tagging will be conducted yearly by a registered company and a certificate displayed
- Safety switches will be present in all power points
- Emergency lighting will be in place in the event of a black out
- Electrical circuit breakers will be installed
- Screens will be fitted to all windows and doors to provide security, protection from insects and maintain extra natural ventilation
- Outdoor lighting will be adjusted as per the natural outdoor light
- Separate areas will be provided for children to store their bags and belongings

Administration space

Areas are provided within the service for the purpose of conducting administrative functions, consulting with families, private conversations, and providing respite for educators and volunteers.

Kitchen/Storeroom

- Children are not allowed in the kitchen or the storeroom unattended. They may however assist in the kitchen for appropriate safe activities under the direct supervision of educators.
- Children are not allowed in the kitchen facility when there are hot liquids involved in the preparation of foods and or hot foods out of the microwave or oven.
- Kitchen knives are used and immediately locked in the lockable cupboard
- The locked cupboard will remain locked at all times. A list of items within this cupboard will be provided.
- Material Safety Data sheets will be available for products, kitchen cleaning, office, main room, art & craft and checked yearly

Emergency exits/fire/ safety equipment

- Morning shift educators are to ensure that all doors are unlocked and that exits are identified clearly and remain unblocked
- Fire extinguishers, hoses, blankets and fire alarms must be accessible and have the 6 monthly regulatory checks by a registered authority. All checking certificates will be displayed.
- Education will be provided to the educators, families and children in the emergency evacuation and lockdown procedures and practiced by educators and children regularly, at least twice a term for both before and after school care.
- Educators will keep a record of all evacuation and lockdown drills and evaluate the effectiveness of such drills.
- Emergency evacuation and lockdown plans and procedures are to be prominently displayed at each fire exit.
- During an evacuation drill or lockdown, signage will be provided for families on outside doors.
- The Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person will ensure that new children and educators have participated in an emergency evacuation procedure and education is ongoing.
- The service keeps and maintains an appropriate number of suitably equipped first aid kits easily recognisable and readily accessible to adults.
- Educators hold accredited first aid certificates and attend annual fire awareness training.

Risk Assessment and Risk Assessment Tool

A risk management system is in place to identify and manage hazards within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. Children will be involved in reviewing appropriate risk assessments.

The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the workplace
2. Assess the risk of each harm or ~~potenti~~potential | harm
3. Control or manage the risk
4. Monitor and improve safety
5. Evaluate and Review

It is the responsibility of all educators at the service to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/on-site visit. Common hazards within the service which may require a risk assessment include:

- Cross-Infection and Infectious Disease
- Building and Equipment (including storage)
- Inadequate space for conducting activities and experiences
- Hazardous Chemicals
- Electrical appliances
- Food preparation and storage
- Environmental influences such as shade, noise etc
- Fire equipment
- Pets and/or animals
- Inadequate supervision of children
- Children's activities and experiences
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling
- Non-Compliance risk
- Transportation of children (regular outing and regular transportation)
- Excursions
- Potential emergencies
- Natural disasters

Educators and children will regularly collaborate to identify potential risks in the various environments and play spaces utilised by the service. Risks assessments documents will be utilised to record this information.

Emergency and Evacuation Procedures

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan is displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas.

All staff and educators are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and regulatory requirements.

Rehearsals for emergency and evacuation procedures, including lock downs, are conducted at least once every 3 months. It says above that it is twice a term (I think?)

Records will be kept for all rehearsals.

Storerooms/storage container

- Children are not permitted in storerooms or the storage container unless accompanied by an educator

- These areas are to be kept clean and orderly
- Educators are to store heavier items on the ground or on bottom shelves to prevent injury.
- To remain locked at all times.

Children's resources

- Sports equipment is to be stored in the appropriate containers and allocated areas
- Checks of these areas are conducted on a regular basis as well as maintaining the cleanliness and documentation.
- A hazard form will be available within the outdoor environment for educators and children to record broken objects.
- A hazard form will be available within the indoor environment for educators and children to record broken objects. These objects will be removed to be fixed or discarded.
- Educators are to consider the age appropriateness, safety and storage of resources purchased for the service.
- Educators will monitor the use of equipment e.g., safety aspects
- An inventory will be kept of all resources and updated each term.
- Children's equipment is to be cleaned termly with the appropriate cloths and cleaning products. A record of items cleaned will be identified through a sticker system and identified on a cleaning schedule.
- Families will be utilised to assist with taking items home to be washed each term or as required.
- All areas will be kept clean and tidy as per the weekly and termly cleaning roster.
- Signage will be utilised for hazards.

Toilet facilities

- Educators are to ensure that the school toilets have been opened
- Paper towel facilities will be managed by the service
- Children will inform educators when they need to use the toilet facilities. Two children **will be together** at all times and accompanied by a nominated educator who waits outside the toilets. The nominated educator will wear an orange vest, children will be informed of this procedure during orientation.
- Toilets are to be locked by an educator at the end of the day
- Children are to be informed of expected behaviour within the toilet facilities and encouraged to use proper hygienic procedures, i.e., flushing toilets, turning off taps after washing hands with soap and drying their hands.
- Hand washing posters will be displayed, and water conservation will be encouraged.

Outdoor environments

- Educators are to conduct a Work Health and Safety checklist at the beginning of each day.
- Children are to be signed out in the morning and observed walking over to the school. The access road rope is to be up at all times during the service's operation hours.
- Lighting is to be on within the school car park/toilets and grounds, educators to check they are in working order and report to the school.
- The service lights are to be altered according to the seasons to ensure adequate lighting of the balcony and car park.
- Educators are to report all maintenance requests in the hazard reporting form.
- Children will participate in outdoor activities within the school's premises.

- Shaded areas will be provided within the outdoor environment.
- Dangerous items shall be disposed of in a safe and careful manner prior to the children playing in the area. A sharps disposal kit is available in the storeroom.
- Access for children and people with individual needs will be maintained ensuring all necessary requirements are considered.
- A WHS representative from the Management Committee will conduct a yearly Work Health and Safety audit with the assistance of the Centre Manager/Centre Coordinator.

Safety education for children

- Children will be reminded through our program about stranger danger, child protection, cyber safety, road safety, bike safety, home safety, disability awareness, safe playing and community off site visits.
- Children will be consulted in regard to safety audits, safe play spaces and use of equipment
- Children and educators will wear sunscreen and hats when UV Index is higher than 3 and will adhere to safe play times as determined by the SunSmart Guiding Principle.

Pest Control

- All areas will be checked daily for signs of pests or vermin.
- The service carpets and couches will be cleaned 6 monthly by a professional contractor.
- An annual pest inspection will be conducted.
- Should any pests or vermin be identified then action should be taken to rid the service of the problem by initially using non-chemical methods such as physical removal, low irritant, environmentally friendly sprays are to be used minimally and only with adequate ventilation and preferably not in the presence of the children.
- Material Safety Data sheets will be available for termite treatments
- All chemicals will be in a locked cupboard and possess a material safety data sheet for that product (yearly checking of these MSDS these are referred to below as SDS sheets will be attended to). Limited use of dangerous products will be adhered to a list of all contents will be displayed on the outside of the cupboard

Work Health and Safety Audits

- Will be attended to by a Management Committee representative yearly as an unannounced visit and a report compiled to submit to the next committee meeting. The representative will be supported by a member of the staff Work Health and Safety team.
- Policies and procedures will be reviewed annually in line with the service's Quality Improvement Plan and National Regulations and Law.
- The service will periodically consult with families on the safety of the service environment and WH&S will be placed as an agenda item for all Management Committee and staff meetings.
- Newsletter items and display boards will inform families of the safety and Work Health and Safety matters including lock down/evacuation procedures and practices.
- Registered authorities such as KidsSafe will be consulted in regard to play equipment/environments
- Reporting unsafe play environments to the school
- Including play space /equipment checks in the routines and education awareness with children

Storage of Hazardous Substances

- We reduce the risk of harm to children and educators by using eco-friendly products. Our service will endeavour to provide a safe environment where necessary chemical and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately.
- Management, staff and educators will keep a register of hazardous chemicals used within the service, including Safety Data Sheets (SDS). These are referred to above as MSDS
- To maintain a safe environment for children, the following audits and checklists are conducted:

Security

- Back to base monitoring will be employed by the service
- Nominated Supervisors/Responsible Persons will hold keys to the service
- The lock up procedure will cover shutting windows, switching off electrical appliances, the locking of all areas, including, school toilets, filing cabinets, office, kitchen, building and storage container and alarm setting.
- Minimal money will be kept at the premises. A sign will be displayed at the service.
- The Centre Manager will ensure that the alarm company is notified of up to date contacts.
- The school gate will be locked at the end of the day either by the service or school.
- In the event of a suspected break in a comprehensive break in procedure is located in the office, this contains contact numbers, Management Committee centre locksmith etc.
- Staff /Management/visitors will not be on site out of OOSH operating hours (6.00pm – 7.00am) or school hours without permission from the school executive.

Online Safety

Our service is committed to creating and maintaining a safe online environment with support and collaboration with children, young people, educators, staff, families and community. Management ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable web sites, newsgroups and chat rooms.

Our service ensures backups of important and confidential data is made regularly and either stored securely offline, or online. Software and devices are updated regularly to avoid any breach of confidential information.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process for children to have their photo taken and published as part of promotional marketing, Facebook and service newsletters.

Personal mobile phones are not used to take photos or video of children at the service.

Only educational software programs and apps that have appropriate content and have been examined prior to allowing their use are used in the service. Children are always supervised using technology devices.

Families

Our service ensures families are always welcome and feel comfortable asking questions on how we prioritise child safety. We provide a range of opportunities for consultation and collaboration about decisions about their child's safety whilst at our Service including:

- policy and procedure review
- child protection
- allegations/grievance procedures
- sun safety
- written authorisations- parenting orders
- code of conduct
- inclusivity and supporting children with diverse needs.

Continuous Review

To ensure we maintain a culture of continuous improvement, we will ensure our child safe practices are regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved. We aim to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child safe environment at our service.

We will regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of our Child Safe policy and procedures and invite children, staff members, families and communities to contribute to their development. Any updates or revisions will be communicated to all stakeholders.

Source

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