

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The physical environment can contribute to children’s wellbeing, happiness, and creativity as well as promoting the development of independence. It can contribute to and make visible the quality of children’s learning and involvement in experiences. The choices made in an OSHC service about resources, materials, spaces, layout, air, and light in combination with access to a range of experiences in the indoor and outdoor areas, have a direct impact on the quality of learning opportunities available to children.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.1	Health	Each child’s health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child’s wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy Lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
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.

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.1.1	Fit for Purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
73	Educational programs
74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
75	Information about the educational program to be kept available
76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
80	Weekly menu
81	Sleep and rest
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol -free environment
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
102	Authorisation for excursions
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing and security
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
107	Space requirements—indoor
108	Space requirements—outdoor space
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
110	Ventilation and natural light
111	Administrative space
113	Outdoor space—natural environment
114	Outdoor space—shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
123	Educator to child ratios- centre based services
156	Relationships in groups
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures are to be followed

RELATED POLICIES

Animal and Pet Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Environmentally Responsible Policy Health and Safety Policy Programming Policy	Road Safety Policy Rest Time Policy Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy Sun Safety Policy Water Safety Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

Our OSHC Service will ensure the environment is safe, clean, and well maintained for children, families, educators, and visitors. Children's awareness of the environment and sustainable practice will be supported through daily practices, resources and interactions. The physical environment will support children's participation and engagement, development, learning, and safety, and will provide supervised access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships. Our OSHC Service provides an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to providing an environment that promotes safety and enhances children's learning and development.

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and educators' responsibilities include the following:

Physical environment is designed to:

- maximise children's engagement and positive experiences
- provide space where children can experience quality care in a safe and healthy environment
- meet licensing requirements for buildings, space requirements, fencing, light, ventilation, firefighting equipment, emergency evacuation exits and safety glass for National Regulations, the Building Code of Australia (BCA), Victoria of Planning and Environment, local councils and regulatory authorities
- provide adequate storage to meet the needs and requirements of the service
- provide sufficient and accessible handwashing, toileting, eating
- ensure toileting and hand-washing facilities are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments
- provide appropriate areas for food preparation

- provide an area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur
- incorporate natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air into the building/premises
- facilitate adequate supervision of children at all times
- ensure safety and minimal disruption for children whilst playing
- provide different types of play to occur both in the indoor and outdoor areas (e.g. quiet play areas and loud play areas)
- provide adequate shade for children in accordance with the recommendations of relevant authorities
- provide shade in the form of trees or physical shade structures
- provide a natural environment for children to explore and experience which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud and/or water
- ensure all required fencing is compliant with current regulations and is maintained to ensure it is in good condition (including boundary fencing)
- provide a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences, catering for children's interests and abilities
- provide a developmentally appropriate environment where children can explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking
- provide an environment that permits children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously
- ensure safety of children at all times. Play equipment must comply with playground standards- AS 4685-2014

Choosing appropriate resources and equipment

- appropriately sized furniture and equipment will be provided in both the indoor and outdoor environment for the age ranges represented in the OSHC service
- resources will be adequate in number for the number of children attending our Service and be developmentally appropriate
- children will be supported to access appropriate furniture, resources, materials, toys and equipment that encourage appropriate challenges and risk taking in accordance with their individual developmental level
- specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs will be catered for to ensure an inclusive environment

- resources and equipment will be chosen to reflect the cultural diversity of the Service's community and the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, including the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- large purchases of equipment will be the responsibility of the Approved Provider
- the Nominated Supervisor is responsible for consumables and the daily running purchases of the OSHC service
- educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of children attending the OSHC service
- educators will complete a log for the Nominated Supervisor of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis
- children's ideas and suggestions in planning the indoor and outdoor environments will be facilitated
- children will be encouraged to make decisions about the use of equipment and resources
- the Service will actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding current interests of their children so as to purchase appropriate toys and equipment
- climbing equipment will be installed according to manufacturers' recommendations and compliant with Australian Safety Standards. For example, incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up.
- incorporate commercial, natural, recycled, homemade, and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity
- educators will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment

Rest Environment

- educators will adhere to our *Rest Time Policy*
- provide an area/environment for children to rest and relax

Rearranging, Adding or Removing Furniture

- a record of any changes that is made to the physical environment of the OSHC Service, such as rearranging of rooms etc. to show continuous improvement
- links between the arrangements and choice of resources and equipment and the children's learning in the program will be documented

Ongoing Maintenance

- frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted in order to minimise risk and hazards.
- the Nominated Supervisor will document required maintenance in a maintenance plan/log for the Service as required. Repairs and maintenance will be conducted throughout the year according to priority including, hazard removal, safety precautions and any relevant policies
- the Nominated Supervisor is responsible for engaging an external expert to complete a building safety checklist of the service and its grounds bi-annually and ensure any work deemed necessary is completed to Australian standards
- the OSHC Service will have regular pest inspections carried out by an accredited pest control company. Documentation of these inspections will be kept and any further recommended treatments as a result of the findings from the pest control check will be carried out in a timely manner.

Grouping of Children

- for the purposes of regulation 123 (1) (d), the educator to child ratio for children over preschool age at a centre-based Service is 1 educator to 15 children.

Daily Safety Checks

A daily inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children arrive. The *Indoor and Outdoor Daily Safety Checklists* will be used as the procedure to conduct these safety checks. A record of these will be kept by the service. The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will make the appropriate arrangements to have any identified repairs carried out as soon as possible. (see checklists in resource section of policy).

The inspection will include:

- service perimeters
- fences/fence Line
- gates
- paths
- buildings
- all rooms/areas accessible by children
- fixed equipment
- sand pit/mud pit

This must be completed to identify any dangerous objects in the grounds ranging from sharps to poisonous or dangerous plants and animals.

In the event of a sharp object being found (for example a syringe) educators will wear gloves and use tongs to pick up the object and place it in the 'sharp object box'. This box will be disposed of as per the recommendations of our local council.

Similarly, trees in the grounds must be checked regularly for overhanging, dead, or dangerous looking branches as well as checked for any infestations.

Cleaning of Buildings, Premises, Furniture and Equipment

General Cleaning

- the Service will use structured cleaning schedules to ensure that all cleaning is carried out regularly and thoroughly
- educators will clean the service at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed
- accidents and spills will be cleaned up as quickly as possible to ensure that the service always maintains a high level of cleanliness and hygiene.
- educators and staff will adhere to our *Health and Safety Policy*.

When purchasing, storing and/or using any dangerous chemicals, substances, medicines or equipment, our Service will:

- ensure all procedures ensure all procedures are followed to maintain a safe environment
- adhere to the Service's *Safe Storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy*
- adhere at all times to manufacturer's advice and instructions when using products to clean furniture and equipment at the service
- keep a register of all hazardous chemicals, substances and equipment used at the Service. Information recorded should include where they are stored, their use, any risks, and first aid instructions and the current SDS. The register will be readily accessible.

Children's bathroom

- educators will check the toilet facilities for safety and materials prior to commencement of daily program
- educators and other staff will encourage children to follow appropriate hygiene practices- hand washing, not playing in bathrooms.
- bathrooms will be cleaned at least daily and at other times as required (cleaners)
- bathroom floors will be mopped at least daily (Cleaners)
- signage is to be used after mopping to ensure that children, educators and other staff and families are aware that the floor is wet (cleaners)

- educators are to ensure they follow the bathroom and toilet cleaning procedure.

Maintenance of Fire Equipment

- all fire equipment at our OSHC Service will be maintained as per the legal standards
- external agencies will be employed to assist the Service with this maintenance if no currently employed staff or educators are qualified to complete the maintenance checks.

Sun Protection

- the OSHC Service will adhere to our *Sun Safety Policy* and procedures at all times
- a combination of sun protection measures will be implemented whenever UV Index levels reach 3 and above
- educators will continue to check the UV rating prior to going outdoors and as the heat increases throughout the day (see *Sun Safety Policy* for further information)
- temperature of outdoor equipment and surfaces will be monitored during the day to ensure the area and equipment is safe for children to play (see: Playground surface temperature check)

Water Safety

Regulations state that services in [New South Wales] are not permitted to have pools unless they existed on the premises before 6 November 1996. However, to stop accidents and illnesses relating to swimming pools, wading pools, water troughs and other water situations our OSHC service will:

- remove any items or objects that could be used to climb into the fenced area of a pool, trough, or water storage unit e.g., chairs, bins, bikes, and any shrubs or overhanging trees
- make sure no child swims in any water without:
 - risk assessments being completed and approved by the approved provider
 - written permission from family member to learn water safety and swimming
 - appropriate educators/child ratios in place
 - having sufficient numbers of educators present who have first aid or recognised water safety and rescue procedures.
- at all times children near water are closely supervised. A child will never be left unattended near any water
- staff will ensure that all water containers are made inaccessible to children and also make sure children's play areas are safely fenced off from water hazards such as rivers, dams, creeks, lakes, irrigation channels, wells etc.

- all wading pools/water troughs etc. will be immediately emptied after every use: storage will prevent the collection of water e.g. upright/inverted. The grounds will also be checked after rain or watering and water that has collected in holes or containers will be emptied/removed.
- wading/water troughs are hygienically cleaned, disinfected, and chlorinated appropriately:
 - on a daily basis remove leaves and debris, hose away surface dirt and scrub inside with disinfectant
 - wash away disinfectant before filling trough.

Service Closure

- educator/s are to check the entire premises to ensure that all children and families have departed by checking sign in and out sheets
- educator/s must sign the sign in and out sheets confirming all children are signed out
- educator/s are to follow service-closing procedures each night
- in the case where a parent has omitted to sign their child out, and the educators did not witness the child leave the Service, the educator/s must take every step to get in contact with the parent to ensure the child has safely left the OSHC Service
- if unable to contact the family, the educators are to contact other educators present on that day for confirmation that the child has been collected. The Nominated Supervisor is to then be notified before leaving the Service.
- all visitors to the OSHC must sign in upon arrival and sign out when they leave
- details of absences during the day must also be recorded.

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Cancer Council NSW: <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au>

Cancer Council Australia: <https://www.cancer.org.au>

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2020).

KidSafe Australia: <https://kidsafe.com.au>

National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.

NSW Government *Kids and Traffic Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program*

Red nose Safe environment <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Swimming Pools Act 1992

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	FEBRUARY 2021	NEXT REVIEW DATE	FEBRUARY 2022
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> re-write of policy to make more relevant and succinct related policies added- Child Safe Environments, Storage of Hazardous Materials repetitive points removed as these are covered in other key policies Information specific to Sun Safety removed- (covered in Sun Safety policy) indoor and outdoor checklists moved to end of policy as a resource 		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE	
FEBRUARY 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor changes to grammar, content changed Sources checked for currency New sources added Checklist alphabetised 	FEBRUARY 2021	
FEBRUARY 2019	<p>Introductory statement and purpose modified.</p> <p>Additional information added to points.</p> <p>Sources checked for currency.</p> <p>Sources/references corrected, updated, and alphabetised.</p>	FEBRUARY 2020	
FEBRUARY 2018	New policy created to comply with revised NQS	FEBRUARY 2019	

Resources

DAILY SAFETY CHECKLIST OUTDOOR/INDOOR ENVIRONMENT

The following is a guideline.

CHECKLIST: OUTDOORS

- Bikes**—correctly fitted helmets are worn every time children use bikes (if applicable)
- Building maintenance** – regularly maintain and check for hazards, check building is in a safe, clean and hygienic condition. Records of any damage and subsequent repairs are kept.
- Dust mites, pet allergens** – regular dusting and vacuuming
- Educator’s personal items** – Educator’s personal items such as bags, sharp instruments, toiletries and medicines are kept secure and are inaccessible to children
- Fences** – securely and effectively provide a suitable barrier to all sides of outdoor play areas from roads, water hazards, and driveways. Fences have correct height for the purpose. **Childproof self-locking devices are installed on gates.**
- Finger entrapment** – all holes or openings in playground equipment are between 8-25 mm to avoid finger entrapment
- First aid kit** is approved, maintained, and accessible throughout outdoor play
- Garbage** – safe and prompt disposal. Lidded secure bins are used that prevent child access and are maintained in a clean and safe condition.
- Garden** and renovation debris removed. Branches and bushes are regularly trimmed
- Garages and sheds** – are keep locked
- Hazardous Plants** – are identified and removed or made inaccessible to children
- Heating, cooling, ventilation, lighting** – is comfortable, safe, maintained, guarded
- Machinery, tools and equipment** –all engine operated or other hazardous equipment, tools or machinery are stored securely and are inaccessible to children
- Non-slip** floors, stairs, and steps are used and nonporous indoor floors for easy cleaning
- Renovation** - dangers e.g. lead, asbestos, holes and excavations –risks are minimised according to the situation
- Pesticide residue** - dangerous chemicals are not be used to remove vermin
- Pet and animal droppings** are cleared or inaccessible to children in outdoor areas, dogs are excluded from children’s play areas, pet interactions with children are supervised

- Play equipment** that is higher than 50cm has soft fall installed underneath at least 25cm in depth and extends 1.9m from the perimeter of the equipment. Outdoor play equipment is placed away from paths and solid garden edging
- Play equipment and playground surfaces**- temperature of playground equipment and surfaces are checked and monitored throughout the day to ensure children's safety
- Pool safety, fencing and gate compliance**, paddling pools are emptied immediately after use, turned upside down, and disinfected if soiled.
- Safe play rules and adequate safe play areas** – we talk with children about how to play safely. We maintain safe layouts for outdoor play areas to avoid collisions between children.
- Safety glass** is installed according to the Australian Standards on all glass doors and windows accessible to children, and safety decals on both sliding doors and plate glass doors at child and adult eye level.
- Sandpits** – are covered when not in use, regularly cleaned, raked, and sand soiled by faeces or blood is removed. Sandpits are hosed and disinfected after removing contaminated sand and material.
- Security** - unauthorised access is minimized with appropriate fencing and locks.
- Service car park** – we ensure family members are aware of pedestrian safety rules. Families must always supervise their children in the car park to prevent accidents and injuries, which could occur as a result of reversing vehicles.
- Soft fall** - appropriate ground cover under outdoor climbing and play equipment, meets Australian playground standards [check with your State/Territory for specific regulations]
- Spills** – are cleaned up as they occur
- Sun protection** - clothing, hats, and sunscreen, for un-shaded areas – we minimise play at peak sun exposure times. A sunshade or natural shade covers sandpits and play areas
- Supervision and visibility of children** –children are visible and supervised at all times. High-risk areas requiring extra supervision include adventurous play experiences, playground equipment, ball sports. At least two educators are on the premises at all times within sight of each other and the children.
- Surfacing used underneath and around equipment** complies with Australian and New Zealand Standards AS/NZS 4422:2016 and is maintained regularly; materials may need to be raked, redistributed and checked weekly for spiders, sharp objects or animal litter
- Under Service access** (including buildings on stilts and footings) – access is blocked or locked.
- Window fly screens** are securely fitted, maintained, and permanent.
- Water hazards** – are covered and made inaccessible to children, e.g. ponds, dams, spas, creeks
- Water troughs** are used under adult supervision only.

CHECKLIST: INDOORS

- Access for children and adults with disability** - safe access is provided into, within and out of the Service. Toilet and washing facilities, are checked for hazards for wheelchairs and people with impaired sight, hearing or mobility.
- Barriers** - age-appropriate barriers are in place for balconies, stairways, kitchen, bathroom, laundry, garage, other levels in the OSHC Service, front and back garden
- Children at risk** – we maintain extra security and supervision for children at special risk
- Decorations and children’s artwork** – are not placed near ceiling fans, air conditioners or heaters.
- Educator’s personal items** –educator’s personal items such as bags, sharp instruments, toiletries and medicines are kept secure and are inaccessible to children.
- Emergency evacuations** –an evacuation plan and emergency contact numbers are displayed, families are informed, and evacuation procedures are regularly practiced
- Fire** – fire blanket, extinguisher, fire exits, smoke detectors, electrical safety switch are checked regularly and serviced as required
- First aid kit** with approved contents is maintained and accessible. First Aid certificates are current for relevant educators
- Furniture** - stable, maintained and meets safety standards
- Guard and make inaccessible to children:** heaters, coolers, fireplaces, stoves, microwaves, power points, and office equipment
- Hazardous indoor plants** are identified or removed
- Heaters** –children cannot come in contact with hot surfaces. If gas heating is used ensure there is adequate ventilation while the heater is operating.
- Hot water** - the hot water supply is regulated so as to keep it below the temperature at which a child can be scalded (the current KidSafe NSW Inc. recommendation is below 43.5°C).
- Machinery, tools and equipment** – all office and classroom machinery, tools, and equipment is stored securely and inaccessible to children
- Noise** – we reduce excessive exposure
- Non-slip, non-porous** floors and stairs are in the building
- Pets and animals** –families are informed of pets being kept on the premises and plans to obtain new pets. Pets are vaccinated, wormed, don’t have fleas, are clean, and healthy. Pet accessories such as pet food, litter boxes, and pet toys are kept away from children. Dogs are excluded from children’s play areas. Children-pet interactions are minimal and supervised at all times.
- Record details** - Parents are notified of any child accident or near accident

- Safe play rules and adequate play spaces:** we discourage running indoors and provide safe furniture layout to avoid collisions
- Safety glass used and installed** according to Australian Standards, and Australian Building Codes on all glass doors and windows accessible to children, **safety decals** on sliding doors and plate glass doors at child and adult eye level
- Security** all entry doors are locked at all times and doorbells are on doors
- Smoke / alcohol and drug free environment** in all areas
- Stairways,** ramps, corridors, hallway, external balcony are enclosed to prevent a child falling
- Store in locked cabinet** any unsafe items, e.g., chemicals, medicines, razors, knives and electrical equipment
- Supervision and visibility of children** –children are visible and supervised at all times.
- Toys** – meet safety standards, age appropriate, maintained, and non-toxic.