

Child Safe Policy/Commitment

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.

Our Service embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and promotes 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.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.21	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, practised
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.
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
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing
7.1.12	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service

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 and wellbeing is paramount, and we aim to take all practical steps to protect children and young people from harm or risk of 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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, volunteers, visitors, educators, Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and management of the Service.

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

KEY TERMS-DEFINITIONS

Child Safe Standards: A list of ten standards that organisations can use to keep children safe from harm and abuse as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Code of Conduct: Lists of dos and don'ts which describe acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour
Disclosure: The process where a child or young person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused.

Information sharing: Refers to sharing or exchanging information, including personal information about or related to, abuse in organisational contexts. The terms refer to sharing information between (or within) organisations, as well as sharing information with professionals who provide key services for children.

Mandatory reporter: A person who is required to report known and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to a nominated government department or agency.

Mandatory reporting: The legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

Reportable conduct: Certain organisations or entities have legal obligations under Reportable Conduct Schemes to notify and investigate certain allegations of abuse involving a child, when the allegation is against someone they employ, engage or contract in circumstances outlined in the legislation.

Rights of the Child: Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Wellbeing: Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs.

Working with Children / working with vulnerable people check (WWCC/WWVP): A notice, certificate or other document granted to, or with respect to a person under a working with children law. The person has been assessed as suitable to work with children; there has been no information that if the person worked with children the person would pose a risk to the children; or the person is not prohibited from attempting to obtain, undertake or remain in child-related employment

Definitions sourced from ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. Providing a Child Safe Environment. NSW Department of Education (2021).

Guide to the Child Safe Standards for early childhood education and care and outside schools hours care services

COMMITMENT TO THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (National Principles 1-10)

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 Service has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children 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 dedicated in promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability. Our Service will not tolerate bullying or harassment. Our priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and encourage positive relationships.

COMMUNICATION (National Principles 2 and 3)

We aim to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families and educators of our Service and prioritise a child safe environment. We communicate regularly and clearly with all stakeholders and ensure our policies and procedures are available to employees, volunteers, families and children and young people. (Reg. 170). Feedback and evaluation of our policies and procedures is welcomed through surveys, feedback or discussions with management.

CODE OF CONDUCT (National Principles 4 and 6)

Management, educators, staff, volunteers and students will adhere to our Service's Code of Conduct Policy.

We will:

- adhere to our Child Safe Environment Policy, Child Protection Policy at all times
- provide adequate supervision of children at all times
- take reasonable action to protect children and young people for risk of harm
- ensure the service premise is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol
- be responsible for their own, and others health and safety
- be a positive role model to children and young people
- respect children's privacy and dignity at all times
- listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people
- report any allegations of child abuse to the Approved Provider
- notify the approved provider and/or the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint as per the National Regulations
- encourage children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

Staff, educators and volunteers must:

- not discriminate against any child, because of age, gender, cultural background, race, ethnicity or disability
- not put children at risk of abuse- refusing food/play, making threats, exposing children to inappropriate language or material (movies, internet, photos)
- not develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment.

[Primary policies – Code of Conduct; Privacy and Confidentiality; Probation Induction and Orientation]

PARTICIPATION OF FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (National Principle 2)

Our Service ensures families are always welcome and feel comfortable asking questions on how we prioritise child safety. We promote a respectful, child safe culture where children's concerns are always responded to, and children feel empowered to participate in decisions and provide feedback to educators and staff. 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.

[Primary policies – Interactions with Children Families and Staff]

RECRUITMENT (National Principle 5)

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 robust interviews and have 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.

[Primary policies - Probation Induction and Orientation; Recruitment]

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK- POLICE CHECKS (National Principle 5)

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. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

Management 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.

Once an employee provides their WWCC clearance, management will verify the clearance to ensure that it is valid and current. The WWCC will be placed in the staff folder file and continue to be updated as required.

[Primary policy – Child Protection, Recruitment, Staffing Arrangements]

CHILD PROTECTION- REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME (National Principle 6)

Children and young people always have a right to be safe and protected. To comply with legislation and ensure a child safe environment, educators are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. All educators and staff are mandatory reporters and must make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of significant harm.

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).

All educators complete child protection training annually.

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.

[Primary policy – Child Protection]

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) as part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Our Service will ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality of information relating to the reportable allegations as per the Children's Guardian Act 2019. 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 (National Principle 6)

Feedback from children, families, educators, staff and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving Childcare Service working towards the highest standard of care and education. 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.

[Policy – Dealing with Complaints]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT – SUPERVISION AND SAFETY CHECKLISTS (National Principles 5 and 7)

Children's safety is embedded in our day-to-day practices. We ensure effective and adequate supervision is provided to children at all times. Educators will employ 'active supervision' strategies

within the service environment and when participating in excursions or transporting children. Consideration will be made for the different ages and abilities of children and the activities that may require different levels of supervision.

Sleeping children will be closely monitored at regular intervals and will always be within sight and hearing distance of educators so a child's breathing, and the colour of their skin can be monitored. Through conducting risk assessments, we assess and manage risks in the physical environment collaborating with children to develop behaviour guidelines for play including adventurous play to ensure their safety.

Educators have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring a child safe environment. Educators conduct regular safety checks to maintain basic standards of safety within our Service. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels within our Service.

Children are encouraged to speak up about their safety and the safety of their friends by telling an educator if they feel unsafe in a particular situation or environment.

Educators will complete indoor and outdoor daily checklists to assist and record inspections of the physical environment where foreseeable risks may be evident and cause harm or injury to a child. Any findings that require attention will be either dealt with immediately or written in the GA's book for attention.

(Policies – Code of Conduct; Supervision; Sleep and Rest; Nappy Change and Toileting; Health and Safety, Staffing Arrangement, Supervision]

RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL (National Principle 8)

It is a legislative requirement that Management and educators implement a risk management system where they identify and manage hazards and risks within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. Strategies are in place to make sure child safety (through the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations) and Education and Care National Regulations are embedded across our Service.

The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the service/residence/venue
2. Assess the risk of harm or potential harm for each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk – Risk Rating Matrix
4. Monitor and improve safety – Risk Assessment Action Plan
5. Evaluate and Review

It is the responsibility of all staff and educators at the Service to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion or any transportation of children.

Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the Service. Common hazards within the Service which may require a risk assessment include:

- cross-infection and infectious disease
- administration of medication
- anaphylaxis procedures and management
- building and equipment (including storage)
- sun safety
- children's behaviours
- water safety
- pets and/or animals
- inadequate supervision of children
- children's activities and experiences
- evacuation and lockdown
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling

To maintain a child safe environment, we will adhere to Service policies and procedures and conduct checklists, audits and risk assessments

(Policies – Emergency and Evacuation; Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness; Sleep and Rest, Sun Safety; Administration of First Aid; Medical Conditions]

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan are displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas. All staff 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. Records will be kept for all rehearsals.

[Policy- Emergency Evacuation Policy]

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE AUTHORISATION

Our Service prioritises children's safety at all times. We will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form. We 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.

Educators will work in collaboration with our Delivery of children to and Collection from Education and Care Premises Policy to ensure children feel safe and secure.

To ensure children's safety, educators have a clear understanding of their legal obligation to check identification when a person is collecting a child.

To maintain compliance, parents and educators will complete an Authorisation 1 or Authorisation 2 Form if they authorise a person who is not on their emergency contact form to pick up their child. If there is a change in authorised people, this will be emailed to the school office and shared with preschool (a copy put in the emergency contacts folder)

[Policy - Delivery of children to, and Collection from Education and Care Premises]

ONLINE SAFETY (National Principle 8)

Our Service is committed to create and maintain a safe online environment with support and collaboration with staff, families and community. The Department of Education ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable websites, 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.

Families are provided with information about our software program which is password protected and used to share observations, photos, videos, daily reports and portfolios. 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 any technology.

EQUIPMENT, FURNITURE & MAINTENANCE RECORD

There are several factors that can contribute to a hazard, such as a deprived program, insufficient supervision and dilapidated equipment. To ensure a child safe environment free from hazards, we have implemented practices and continue to monitor Service policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The premises and all equipment and furniture used within the Service are regularly checked to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; educators are aware that toys and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for children.

Regular checks occur within the Service to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order. These checks include the daily equipment checklists and maintenance record, and toy cleaning register.

CONTINUOUS REVIEW (National Principle 9)

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 policies 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.

Our Child Safe Environment Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS LEGISLATION/RESOURCES NSW

The Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021 came into effect on 1 February 2022 requiring organisations who work with or provide services to children to implement the NSW Child Safe Standards.

Compliance and enforcement measures under the Children’s Guardian Act commenced from 1 February 2023.

Children’s Guardian Act 2019 Children’s Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021
NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian Child Safe Self-Assessment

SOURCES

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

ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines.

Providing a Child Safe Environment. Australian Government. Department of Skills. (2022).

Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.V2.0,

2022 Australian Human Rights Commission (2020). Child Safe Organisations.

<https://childdsafe.humanrights.gov.au/>

Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 NSW

Children’s Health and Safety – An analysis of Quality Area 2 of the National Quality Standard

Department of Education NSW

Providing a child safe environment 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).

NSW Department of Education (2021). Guide to the Child Safe Standards for early childhood

education and care and outside school hours care services

NSW Government Office of the Children’s Guardian A guide to the Child Safe Standards.

(2020). Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child, (1989). (UNCRC) Work Health and Safety

Act, (2011).

Record of review

Date of review	13/3/24
Who was involved	Preschool Staff
Key changes made and reason why	Implementing the Child Safe Standards
Record of communication of significant changes to relevant stakeholders	Principal: Helen Te Rata Staff: all preschool staff read, reflected, and signed off. Parents: notified via Seesaw. Please note, parents must be notified at least 14 days prior to a change that may have a significant impact on their service’s provision of education and care or a family’s ability to use the service.