

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 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 School. Our School 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.

PURPOSE

Our School 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 School provides children and staff with an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, all staff, volunteers, visitors, and management of the School.

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 School policies and procedures and understood and practiced by all 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 School 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 School to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children’s safety is paramount.

Our School 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 School 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 all staff of our School 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, all staff, volunteers and students will adhere to our School’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 from risk of harm
- ensure the school 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 Head of School
- notify the Head of School 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.

All staff 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.

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

Our School 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 School 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.

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 staff.

RECRUITMENT (National Principle 5)

Our School 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.

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 School 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.

The Head of School 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, the Head of School will verify the clearance to ensure that it is valid and current. The WWCC will be placed in the School's staff compliance folder and the individual's file and continue to be updated as required.

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, all staff are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*.

All 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).

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

All Staff complete a course in child protection approved by the Regulatory Authority on an annual basis.

Child protection- Allegations Against Employees

To protect children and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, the Head of School is responsible 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 School 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, 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 School 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.

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. Staff will employ 'active supervision' strategies within the school environment and when participating in excursions. 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 staff 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. Staff have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring a child safe environment.

Staff conduct regular safety checks to maintain basic standards of safety within our School. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels within our School. Children are encouraged to speak up about their safety and the safety of their friends by telling a staff member if they feel unsafe in a particular situation or environment.

Staff will complete the 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 submitted into the maintenance book depending on priority.

RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL (National Principle 8)

It is a legislative requirement that the Head of School and staff 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 School. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the school
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 at the School to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/onsite visits. Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the School. Common hazards within the School which may require a risk assessment include:

- cross-infection and infectious disease
- administration of medication
- anaphylaxis procedures and management
- 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
- sun safety
- children's behaviours
- water safety
- fire equipment
- pets and/or animals
- inadequate supervision of children

- children’s activities and experiences
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling (e.g., safe lifting children from cots and highchairs)
- non-compliance risk
- hot drinks
- transportation of children (regular outing and regular transportation)
- excursions

To maintain a child safe environment, we will adhere to School policies and procedures and conduct checklists and audits:

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

The Head of school will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan is displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the school’s 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.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE AUTHORISATION

Our School prioritises children’s safety at all times. Staff 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 School to keep a record of children and visitors 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..

To ensure children’s safety, staff have a clear understanding of their legal obligation to check identification when a person is collecting a child. To maintain compliance, parents will email staff if they authorise a person who is not on their emergency contact form to pick up their child. The email must contain the name and address of the person.

ONLINE SAFETY (National Principle 8)

Our School is committed to create and maintain a safe online environment with support and collaboration with staff, families and community. The Head of School ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable web sites, newsgroups and chat rooms.

Our School 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. Passwords are not to be shared with others as per our written agreement.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process for children to use computers/tablets; have their photo taken and published as part of promotional marketing or on the app program used by the school. The identity of a child is not published on any platform.

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

STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

We reduce the risk of harm to children and staff by using eco-friendly products. Our School will endeavour to provide a safe environment where necessary chemical and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately.

The Head of School and staff will keep a register of hazardous chemicals used at the School, including relevant Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

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 School policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The premises and all equipment and furniture used within the School are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; staff 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 School to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order.

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 staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child safe environment at our School.

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](#)

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

The *Child Safe Environment Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with children, families, staff and management.

LEGISLATIVE LINKS	
<p>Education and Care Services National Regulations 82 Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment 83 Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs 84 Awareness of child protection law 99 Children leaving the education and care service premises 102(A-D) Transportation of children (risk assessments and authorisations) 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 Premises designed to facilitate supervision 122 Educators must be working directly with children to be included in ratios 123 Educator to child ratios- centre based services 136 First aid qualifications 145 staff record 149 volunteers and students 155 Interactions with children 162 Health information to be kept in enrolment record 165 Record of visitors 166 Children not to be alone with visitors 167 Record of service’s compliance 168(h) Education and care services must have policies- Providing a child safe environment 170 Policies and procedures to be followed S162(A) Persons in day to day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training S165 Offence to inadequately supervise children S166 Offence to use inappropriate discipline S167 Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards</p> <p>National Quality Standards 2.2 Safety 2.2.1 Supervision 2.2.2 Incident & Emergency management 2.2.3 Child protection 5.1.1 Positive educator to child interactions</p> <p>Registered and Accredited Individual Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual 3.2 Staff 3.6 Safe & Supportive Environment 3.9 Management and operation of the school</p>	
LINKS TO OTHER POLICES	LINKS TO OTHER DOCUMENTS
Behaviour Guidance: Bullying, Child Protection, Code of Conduct, Cyber Safety, Arrival and Departure, Emergency and Evacuation, Excursion/Onsite Visit, Furniture and Equipment Safety, Injury, Incident, Trauma and Illness, Interactions with Children, Families and Staff, Medical Conditions, Nutrition and Food Safety, Photograph, Physical Environment, Privacy and Confidentiality, Recruitment, Safe storage of Hazardous Chemicals, Sleep and Rest, Staffing Arrangements, Student and Volunteer, Sun Safe, Supervision, Technology, Tobacco Drug Alcohol Free, Unidentified Dog, Water Safety, Work Health and Safety	Concern & Grievance forms, parent handbook, staff handbook, evacuation forms, safety checklists,
OTHER RESOURCES	
<p>Child Care Desktop Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014). ACECQA. (2021). Policy and procedure guidelines. <i>Providing a Child Safe Environment</i>. 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). <i>Child Safe Organisations</i>. https://childsafesafe.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 <i>A guide to the Child Safe Standards</i>. (2020). Revised National Quality Standard. (2018). United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child, (1989). (UNCRC)</p>	
REVIEW DATES	
<p>Created: 27th April 2023 Review: 29 January 2024 Updated: 7 February 2024 Ratified: 9 October 2023, 12 February 2024 Next review no later than January 2025</p>	

POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE
January 2025		January 2026
January 2024	No major changes Spelling errors corrected Hyperlinks and sources check and repaired as required Continuous improvement section added	January 2025

27 April 2023	Changed from Safe supportive environment policy with additions about the child safe standards added	January 2024
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