

# 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 Outside School Hours Care (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
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol -free environment
84A	Sleep and rest
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
98	Telephone or other communication equipment
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
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

## RELATED POLICIES

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

## 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, young people, families, educators, staff, approved provider, nominated supervisor, management, students, volunteers and visitors of the OSHC 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:

### ENSURE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IS DESIGNED TO:

- maximise children and young people'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), NSW of Planning and Environment, local councils and regulatory authorities
- provide adequate storage to meet the needs and requirements of the OSHC Service
- provide sufficient and accessible handwashing, toileting, eating and food preparation facilities
- ensure toileting and hand-washing facilities are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments
- provide an area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur (Reg. 111)
- incorporate natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air into the building/premises (Reg. 110)

- facilitate adequate supervision of children at all times
- ensure safety and minimal disruption for children whilst playing
- ensure immediate communication is available at all times to and from parents and emergency services (Reg. 98)
- 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
- power points not in use have safety caps, all double adaptors and power-boards are out of reach of children, and all electrical cords are secured and not dangling

### CHOOSE 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 (K-6 years)
- resources will be adequate in number for the number of children and young people attending our OSHC 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 OSHC 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 and where required, consultation with school management will be sought
- 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 of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis for the nominated supervisor
- children and young people'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 OSHC 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:

- maintain 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 [see: Record of Service Modifications]
- links between the arrangements and choice of resources and equipment and the children's learning in the program will be documented

## ONGOING MAINTENANCE

- the Service will continuously reflect on its environment and put in place a plan to ensure that the environment reflects our ideology of providing an environment that is safe, stimulating, and engaging for all who interact within it
- frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted to minimise risk and hazards
- educators will complete an *Outdoor Environment and Playground Safety Audit* at least every six (6) months
- 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 approved provider/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
- stay up to date with banned/recalled products and remove these immediately from the Service if required.

## GROUPING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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 *Opening/Closing Checklist and Outdoor Cleaning/Safety Checklist* will be used as the procedure to conduct these safety checks. A record of these will be kept by the OSHC Service. The approved provider/nominated supervisor will make the appropriate arrangements to have any identified repairs carried out as soon as possible. [See 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 OSHC 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 OSHC 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

- children will be actively supervised whilst accessing toilet facilities to ensure other children are safe from harm
- 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
- bathroom floors will be mopped at least daily
- signage is to be used after mopping to ensure that children, educators and other staff and families are aware that the floor is wet
- educators are to ensure they follow the bathroom and toilet cleaning procedure
- educators will complete the *Bathroom Safety Audit* [every 6 months].

### 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 OSHC 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: *Daily 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 (see: *Opening/Closing Checklist*)
- 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 OSHC 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.



## OSHC SERVICES LOCATED ON SCHOOL PREMISES

Approved providers and nominated supervisors must ensure school grounds meet all National Regulations and Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, licensing, Building Code of Australia, Dept of Planning and Environment, local Council and Regulatory Authorities for an OSHC Service and continuously remain compliant at all times with all regulatory authorities.

Approved providers and nominated supervisors must meet all requirements of an OSHC Service and ensure the Service maintains access to sufficient storage, equipment, food and hygiene facilities. These requirements are maintained through strong and healthy communication with representatives from the school and the school office administration. A license agreement between the OSHC Service and school representative will be developed prior to education and care being provided at the OSHC Service which sets clear expectations and formalises the working relationship.

The approved provider and nominated supervisor will ensure:

- communication between the Service and School must be regular and maintained for all managerial requirements
- an emergency contact of a representative from the school is available for the responsible person at the OSHC Service
- teachers share information about children's requirements for the day
- the school office/teacher issue an absence list at the start of each session and advise if anyone will be leaving early or arriving late due to school commitments
- all regulatory documents and posters are in the correct position and have not been removed by the school, and any notice boards are positioned in correct place on arrival and packed away on departure
- supervision plans displayed in building and grounds are displayed and not removed
- a maintenance book is completed for any building and ground repairs, hazard and risk rating included and to be kept and shared with school periodically or immediately if risk rating is high
- that all equipment used on the premises is maintained and in good repair, a maintenance of equipment record is kept with risk rating
- all resources used are owned by the OSHC Service
- items borrowed for special occasions with school permission are inspected prior and after use and any maintenance recorded. A risk assessment may be required to be made before use for some items, such as a microphone or BBQ

- schools planning any activity restricting use of normal areas to be used by the Service, such as the school hall, need to be given with two weeks prior notice. A suitable alternative arrangement needs to be made that meet all regulations for an OSHC Service
- walkie talkies are issued and working for communication between school grounds and building when the session is split into different areas to always maintain appropriate supervision
- outdoor play environments are planned and educators are positioned to ensure effective supervision is maintained whilst children are transitioning between indoor/outdoor learning environments and accessing toilets
- an identifying uniform or safety vest is worn by educators so children can quickly identify educator in the school environment in an emergency
- internet access must be established with the school either by using the school internet service or a separate internet provider established
- areas of OSHC Service and outside grounds are found and left in a safe, clean, tidy and hygienic state
- use of school bins and rubbish collection is to be discussed and prearranged with the school
- all equipment to be stored away correctly at the end of each session to ensure no safety hazard left for school
- furniture and equipment to be transported between storage and the education environment will be fixed with castors.

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

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

## CHILDCARE CENTRE DESKTOP - RELATED RESOURCES

Bathroom Safety Audit	Outdoor Environment and Playground Safety Audit
Daily Playground Surface Temperature Check	Outdoor Cleaning/Safety Checklist
Equipment and Maintenance Record	Physical Environment Audit
Equipment and Resource Audit	Record of Service Modifications
Hazardous Substances Register	Visitor sign in/sign out record
Opening/Closing Checklist	

## SOURCES

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

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). [Guide to the National Quality Framework.](#)



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

Cancer Council Australia. Be SunSmart. <https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/sun-safety/be-sunsmart>

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).

[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023).

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

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Swimming Pools Act 1992 (NSW)

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

[Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

## REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Libby Haines	Director	February 2024
POLICY REVIEWED	FEBRUARY 2024	NEXT REVIEW DATE	FEBRUARY 2025
VERSION NUMBER	V8.02.24		
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• annual policy maintenance</li> <li>• additional information added for OSHC Services that are set up on school premises</li> <li>• minor edits within policy as indicated</li> <li>• hyperlinks checked and repaired as required</li> </ul>		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE	
FEBRUARY 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• annual policy maintenance</li> <li>• minor formatting edits within text</li> <li>• hyperlinks checked and repaired as required</li> <li>• Continuous Improvement/Reflection section added</li> <li>• Childcare Centre Desktop Related resources section added</li> <li>• link to Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations added in 'Sources'</li> </ul>	FEBRUARY 2024	
FEBRUARY 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minor edits and inclusions to policy</li> <li>• sources checked for currency</li> </ul>	FEBRUARY 2023	
FEBRUARY 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• re-write of policy to make more relevant and succinct</li> </ul>	FEBRUARY 2022	

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