

Physical Environment Policy

The physical environment can contribute to children’s wellbeing, happiness, 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 education and care 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 fitting 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

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law NSW	
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
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
112	Nappy change facilities
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
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

Related Policies

Child Safe Environment Policy

Sleep and Rest Policy

Educational Program Policy

Sun Safety Policy

Environmentally Responsible Policy

Water Safety Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Work Health and Safety Policy



PURPOSE

Our 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 learning, safety, levels of engagement and access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships. Our Service provides an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, educators, staff, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers, visitors and management of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service is committed to providing an environment that promotes safety and enhances children’s learning and development by:

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), NSW Department 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 and sleeping facilities
- Ensure toileting and hand-washing facilities are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments
- Ensure adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing are provided, which are soundly constructed ensuring children’s safety.
- Provide appropriate areas for food preparation
- Provide a separate indoor space for children who are under two years of age



- 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 including toilets and nappy change facilities
- 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 self-closing gates with safety locking mechanisms and 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. Non-fixed play equipment in the Service grounds can be no more than one metre high and must be supervised at all times by an educator.
- 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 service.
- 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.
- Resources will be adequate in number for the number of children attending our Service and be developmentally appropriate.
- 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 purchase of equipment will be the responsibility of the Approved Provider
- The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for consumables and the daily running purchases of the service.
- Educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of children in their particular room.
- 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.
- All equipment and resources including cots, highchairs meet relevant Australian Safety Standards and educators are trained in correct maintenance and assembly
- Families are provided with the latest safety information on items such as cots, highchairs, car seats etc.
- Educators discuss the safety characteristics of using toys and equipment with children.
- Educators will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment.
- A maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained by educators and the nominated supervisor.

Laundering of Soiled Items

- Laundry and hygienic facilities are located and maintained in a way that do not pose a risk to children
- Adequate storage is provided
- Soiled clothing will be returned to a child's home for laundering.
- Educators will remove soiled content and place into a plastic bag. Items will be stored near child's bag.



Rearranging, Adding or Removing Furniture

- A record of any changes that are made to the physical environment of the service is maintained, 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.

The Sleep/Rest Environment

- Educators will strictly adhere to the Sleep and Rest Policy and procedures
- All cots must meet the mandatory Australian Standard for Cots – (AS/NZS 2172)
- Mattresses should be in good condition – clean, firm and flat and fit the cot base with no more than 20mm gap between the mattress sides and ends.
- Cots and beds will be positioned to encourage a calm and relaxing environment. There will be a minimum of 300mm between each cot to reduce the possibility of cross infection.
- Cots and beds will be checked regularly to ensure all bolts and fittings are secure and safe.
- Beds will be located in an area that is easy to access for all educators and other staff
- Beds will be stored in a dry area.
- Educators will ensure to use correct manual handling techniques when moving the beds.
- Beds should not be placed on high shelves or in unstable or difficult to reach stacks.
- Light bedding will be used for cots and beds.
- Checks will be made to identify any hazards to ensure a safe environment
- Hanging cords, strings from blinds, curtains or electrical devices will be away from cots and mattresses.

Ongoing Maintenance

- The Service will continuously reflect on its environment and put in place a plan to ensure that the environment continuously reflects our ideology of providing an environment that is safe, stimulating and engaging for all who interact within it.
- 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 will also ensure that the Service and its grounds comply with Local Government and BCA regulations in regards to fire-fighting requirements, ventilation, natural and artificial lighting and safety glass.



Grouping of Children

- Our Service groups the children in accordance to their age and/or developmental stage. Within that space, there are a variety of different learning areas and opportunities for play experiences.
- Each age group has different legally required adult to child ratios, which are adhered to at all times in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Our indoor and outdoor environment provides opportunities for developmentally appropriate planned experiences, intentional teaching, and spontaneous play throughout the day.

Daily Safety Checks

A daily inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children begin to 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.

This inspection will include the:

- Service perimeters
- Fences/Fence Line
- Gates
- Paths
- Buildings
- All rooms accessible by children
- Fixed equipment
- Sand Pit
- Mud Pit

This must be done in order 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 notify the Nominated Supervisor who will contact the local police station for advice on disposal.

Similarly, trees in the grounds must be checked regularly for overhanging, dead or dangerous looking branches as well as check 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 are followed to maintain a safe environment
- Adhere at all times to manufacturer's advice and instructions when using products to clean furniture and equipment at the service.
- Store all dangerous chemicals, substances and medicines in their original containers provided by the manufacturer. All labels and/or use by dates should be kept intact at all times.
- All hazardous chemicals must be supplied with a **Safety Data Sheet** (SDS) formerly called a Material Data Safety Sheet. Our Service will adhere to the manufacturer's instructions for use, storage, and first aid instructions recorded on the SDS.

Children's bathroom

- Clear supervision is provided to children when in use (having regard to the need to maintain the rights and dignity of children)
- Educators and other staff will encourage children to follow hygiene practices – hand washing, toileting
- Bathrooms will be cleaned at least once a day and at other times as required
- Bathroom floors will be mopped at least daily.
- Signage is to be used after mopping to ensure that the child/children, educators and other staff and families are warned that the floor is wet.
- Educators are to ensure they follow the bathroom and toilet cleaning procedure.

Maintenance of Fire Equipment

- All fire equipment at our 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.
- Ensure batteries in smoke alarms are replaced annually



Sun Protection

- Educators and staff at the 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 environment and surfaces will be monitored during the day to ensure the area and equipment is safe for children to play.

Water Safety

Regulations state the services in NSW are not permitted to have pools unless they existed on the premises before 6th November 1996. However, to stop accidents and illnesses relating to wading pools, water troughs and other water situations our Service will:

- At all times children near water are closely supervised. A child will never be left unattended near any water.
- 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

- Two Educators must close the Service each night
- Both Educators are to check the entire premises to ensure that all children and families have departed by checking sign in and out sheets for all rooms AND physically checking all rooms and areas.
- Educators 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 educators must take every step to get in contact with the parent to ensure the child has safely left the 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.
- Individuals visiting our Service must also sign in when they arrive at the Service, 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. Be SunSmart. <https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/sun-safety/be-sunsmart>
- 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 Standard. (2020).
- 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).
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011



Review

Policy Reviewed	Modifications	Next Review Date
February 2017	Minor adjustments made with the addition to more information about the UV Rating, the importance of checking the rating prior to going outdoors to ensure protection and the use of sunscreen on babies.	February 2018
October 2017	Updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard	February 2018
February 2018	Minor adjustment to the wording of the opening paragraph Added 'related policy' section Minor amendments to terminology throughout the document to improve interpretation and compliance	February 2019
February 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changed all wording stating 'should' to 'will' or similar language to imply these items are being done. - Introductory statement and purpose modified. - Grammar, punctuations and spelling edited. - Additional information added to points. - Duplicated information deleted. - Sources/references checked for currency, updated, and alphabetised. 	February 2020
February 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minor changes to grammar, content changed - Sources checked for currency 	February 2021
September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-write of policy to make more relevant and succinct - Related policies added – child safe environment - Repetitive points removed - Information specific to Sun Safety removed. 	March 2022
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minor edits and inclusions to policy - Sources checked for currency 	March 2023

Signature of Director: _____

Busy Kids Child Care



- The Approved Provider will be responsible for any large purchases of equipment. The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for the daily running purchases of the service.
 - Educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of their classroom.
 - Educators will complete a log for the Nominated Supervisor of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis.
 - The Service will actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding current interests of their children so as to purchase appropriate toys and equipment.
 - 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.
 - Children will be provided with resources and equipment that encourages appropriate challenges and risk taking in accordance with children's individual developmental level.
 - The environment will be organised to ensure safety and minimal disruption for children whilst playing.
 - Specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs will be catered for to ensure an inclusive environment.
 - Climbing equipment will be set up in a safe way and compliant with Australian Safety Standards. For example, incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up.
 - Frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted in order to minimize risk and hazards.
 - An environment will be provided that allows different types of play to occur both in the indoor and outdoor areas (e.g. quiet play areas and loud play areas).
 - A natural environment for children to explore and experience will be provided which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud and/or water.
 - Educators will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment.
 - Our Service will work within our Sun Safety policies and procedures, providing adequate shade for children in accordance with the recommendations of relevant authorities.
 - An environment that ensures children are appropriately supervised at all times will be provided.
 - All required fencing will be maintained in good condition and is compliant with current regulations.
 - A variety of indoor and outdoor experiences will be provided, catering for children's interests and abilities.
 - Children will be supported to access appropriate furniture, resources, materials, toys and equipment. These resources will be adequate in number for the amount of children attending our Service and be developmentally appropriate.



- A developmentally appropriate environment will be provided where children can explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking.
- An environment will be provided that permits children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously.
- The environment will incorporate commercial, natural, recycled, homemade and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity.
- Sufficient and accessible hand-washing, toileting, eating and sleeping facilities will be available.
- Toileting and hand-washing facilities are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing are provided, which are soundly constructed ensuring children's safety.
- Natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating and cooling and fresh air will be incorporated into the building.
- Appropriate areas for food preparation are provided.
- A separate indoor space for children who are under two years of age is available.
- An area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur is available.
- 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.
- Educators discuss the safety characteristics of using toys and equipment with children.
- Where appropriate children are involved in setting classroom guidelines.
- Families are provided with the latest safety information on items such as cots, highchairs, car seats, etc.
- A maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained.
- All equipment, including resources, and equipment meets relevant Australian Standards and educators are trained in correct maintenance and assembly.