



BOURKE AND DISTRICT CHILDREN'S SERVICES

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDRENS HEALTH AND SAFETY

POLICY NAME: PROVIDING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT

POLICY STATEMENT

We are advocates for children and have a strong commitment to child safety and wellbeing and establishing and maintaining a child safe environment. 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. Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in our service policies and procedures and understood and practiced by all children, educators, staff, visitors, volunteers and students.

BACKGROUND

The Education and Care Services National Regulations requires Approved Providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place for providing a child safe environment. 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. 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.

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD SAFE ORGANISATIONS

The below principles reflect ten child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and are the vehicle for giving recommendations relating to the standards.

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

OVERALL STRATEGIES / HOW WILL IT BE DONE?

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Our service is committed to providing a safe environment for children and young people. We understand our responsibilities and statutory duty of care to implement the National Child Safe Principles and embed the Child Safe Standards to build our capacity as an organisation to prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse.

Our service is committed to implementing and abiding by our 'Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy' incorporating the Child Safe Standards which accentuates our zero tolerance for child abuse and raising awareness about the importance of child safety in our service and the community.

We are dedicated to protecting children from abuse and neglect and promote a child safe environment, maintaining children's wellbeing. We ensure all staff engaged are suitable to work with children and young people through rigorous employment procedures and Working with Children Checks. We adhere to our comprehensive 'Child Protection Policy', standing by our mandatory reporting responsibilities to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and neglect. Information is shared with other organisations appropriately and lawfully to protect children.



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We work to ensure there is clear awareness between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour concerning adults and children. We require clear precincts between children and employees, volunteers and the community to maintain children's safety.

We are dedicated to promoting cultural safety for all children and young people, including First Nations children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all children and young people. We believe all children are unique and have the right to be protected. We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.

We are committed to ongoing professional development for employees to maintain their ability to distinguish and respond to situations of abuse and neglect, ensuring employees are responsive to their responsibilities in keeping children safe. We work in collaboration with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and have confidence in educating children about their right to be safe. We believe in teaching children what to do if they feel unsafe and encouraging them to express their view and thoughts on matters that directly affect them.

We listen to and empower children to act on any concerns, they or others may raise which is reflective in our policies and procedures in keeping children safe. We value the input of, and communicate regularly with families and carers and review our policies and procedures at least annually to ensure continuous improvement to child safe practices.

COMMUNICATION (National Principles 2 and 3)

We aim to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families, staff 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 staff, educators, employees, students, volunteers, families and children and young people. All of our policies are available online at www.bdcs.org.au and physical copies can be requested from any service and we welcome and any encourage feedback from all stakeholders.

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 provide a range of opportunities for consultation and collaboration about decisions about their child's safety whilst at our service. We promote a respectful, child safe culture where children and young people concerns are always responded to, and children and young people feel empowered to participate in decisions and provide feedback to educators and staff.

Our service provides opportunities for conversations with children and young people about their rights and encourages children and young people speak up if they are feeling unsafe or worried. We provide multiple channels for children and young people to lodge complaints, tailoring these options to their communication preferences based on their feedback. We work individually with children and young people about the type of support they may require to participate in the complaints procedure.

CODE OF CONDUCT (National Principles 4 and 6)

Management, educators, staff, volunteers and students will adhere to our service's Code of Conduct Policy. Our Code of Conduct Policy clearly outlines expectations regarding behaviour and describes the principles, values, and ethical guidelines that guide our staff and stakeholders in their interactions and activities. All educators and staff members are made fully aware that following breaches of the Code of Conduct and role responsibilities may result in disciplinary action which may lead to termination of employment. Individuals can report any concerns they may have about inappropriate actions of any educator, staff, student or volunteer that involves children or young people to management, ensuring a prompt and thorough response to maintain a safe and secure environment for all.

RECRUITMENT (National Principle 5)

Our Service maintains a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure the best staff members and educators are employed based on skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the position available. All staff and educators 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 and educators 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. New employees, students and volunteers are to familiarise themselves with



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the Child Protection Policy to understand the Child Protection Law and their obligations and mandatory reporting duties to ensure the safety and well-being of children at the service.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK (WWCC) & NATIONALLY COORDINATED CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS (NCCHC) (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 nationally coordinated 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 individual's file on SharePoint and continue to be updated as required. Management will verify all student and volunteer WWCCs prior to placement. The Nominated Supervisor will keep a record for each day a student or volunteer participates in the service including date and hours of participation.

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 educators, staff, volunteers and students are advised of current child protection law and understand any obligations under the law. Supervision is effective to ensure they understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

All management, educators and staff are mandatory reporters and have a legal obligation to make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of significant harm. Neglecting these obligations could potentially be deemed a criminal offence. 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. Management will ensure training and development are provided for all educators, staff, and volunteers in child protection on a regular basis.

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. Nominated supervisors and persons in day-to-day charge must complete a course in child protection approved by the Regulatory Authority on an annual basis.

To protect children and young people and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, management is responsive to report allegations or convictions of harm or risk of harm to a child or young person and child related misconduct by any staff member, educator, volunteer or contractor to the relevant organisation or Department for Child Protection.

Our service is committed to providing support to children, young people, families, educators or staff who have made a report regarding child protection, with a focus on upholding strict confidentiality throughout the process. Our primary concern is the well-being and safety of the child or young person, and we will work closely with relevant authorities, professionals, and support networks to ensure that the child or young person's best interests are met throughout the process. Our dedicated support system will assist educators and staff in navigating this challenging process while safeguarding their privacy and professional well-being.

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) NSW 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



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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 service working towards the highest standard of care and education. We ensure educators, staff, volunteers and students are well informed about the different ways children may express concerns, distress and disclose harm as well as the process for responding to disclosures from children- including a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting sexual behaviours that may be harmful to the child or another child.

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.

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, whilst ensuring educator to child ratios are met 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 infants and toddlers 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. Consideration will be provided when older children are using the toilet and bathroom areas, including monitoring and supervision across all areas that children access.

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 the daily checklists as directed by their Nominated Supervisor, 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 scheduled for a later date depending on priority.

RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL (National Principle 8)

It is a legislative requirement that management, staff 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:

- Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the service/venue.
- Assess the risk of harm or potential harm for each hazard.
- Control or manage the risk – Risk Rating Matrix.
- Monitor and improve safety – Risk Assessment Action Plan.
- 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. There are also many other common hazards within the service which



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may require a risk assessment. To maintain a child safe environment, all staff and educators will adhere to service policies and procedures and conduct the any checklist and audits as directed by their Nominated Supervisor.

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan is displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas. All staff and educators 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 service prioritises children's safety at all times. Educators will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form. Management will 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 Arrival and Departure Policy and Safe Arrival of Children Policy to ensure children feel safe and secure. To ensure children's safety, staff and educators have a clear understanding of their legal obligation to check identification when a person is collecting a child, if the person is unknown to them.

ONLINE SAFETY (National Principle 8)

Our service is committed to create and maintain a safe online environment with support and collaboration with children, educators, staff, families and community. Management ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable web sites, 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. Passwords are not to be shared with others.

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 service. 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 service. Children are always supervised using any technology.

STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

We reduce the risk of harm to children and educators by using eco-friendly products. Our service will endeavour to provide a safe environment where necessary chemical and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately. Management, staff and educators will keep a register of hazardous chemicals used at the service, 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, our service has 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 audited 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.



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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, students 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.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE APPROVED PROVIDER AND NOMINATED SUPERVISORS WILL:

- Ensure there are policies and procedures in place for providing a child safe environment and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed.
- Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Ensure educators (including casual staff) receive information and induction training to fulfil their roles effectively, including being made aware of the Providing a Child Safe Environment policy, their responsibilities in implementing it, and any changes that are made over time.
- Ensure students, visitors and volunteers have knowledge of and adhere to this policy.
- Ensure all stakeholders are aware of how to raise any concerns or complaints.
- Ensure all staff, educators, volunteers and students have a thorough understanding of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law.
- Review all policies every 12 months and encourage feedback from all stakeholders.
- Notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint as per the National Regulations via the [NQA-ITS](#).
- Promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing in all aspects of the service's operations.
- Ensure the service premise is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol.
- Ensure all staff have access to relevant professional development.
- Co-operate with other services and/or professionals in the best interests of children and their families.
- Protect the rights of children and families and encourage their participation in decision-making at the service.
- Prior to starting employment, ensure all employees read and sign:
 - The Employee Handbook.
 - Confidentiality Agreement.
 - Social Media Agreement
- Ensure a Responsible Person is physically present at the service at all times that children are being educated and cared for.
- Ensure volunteers and/or students are not left alone with a child or group of children or be included in the educator to child ratio
- Ensure all staff members participate in regular performance reviews which include an opportunity to reflect on their understanding of an adherence to the Code of Conduct and Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy.
- Ensure the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations underpin all areas of the recruitment process.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- Act in accordance with their obligations outlined in this policy.
- Promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing in all aspects of the service's operations.
- Ensure a thorough understanding of current child protection legislation, its application, and any obligations that they may have under that law.
- Take reasonable action to protect children and young people for risk of harm.
- Adhere to all service policies.
- Follow all record keeping requirements.
- Raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people's safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the site/service.



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- Provide adequate and effective supervision of children at all times
- Offer support to the child and their family, and to other and staff in response to concerns or reports relating to the health, safety and wellbeing of a child at the service.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Be responsible for their own, and others health and safety.
- Be a positive role model to children and young people.
- Respect children and young people's privacy and dignity at all times.
- Listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people.
- Encourage children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.
- Not discriminate against any child, because of age, gender, cultural background, race, ethnicity or disability.
- Not put children or a young person 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
- Not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while working; bring alcohol or drugs onto the premises not smoke or vape in or on surrounding areas of the service.

FAMILIES WILL:

- Ensure a thorough understanding of this policy and ask for clarification if necessary.
- Report any concerns, including in relation to potential child abuse, to the Nominated Supervisor or General Manager.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with children, families, staff, educators, and management.

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Standard 1	Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture
Standard 2	Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Standard 3	Families and communities are informed and involved
Standard 4	Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
Standard 5	People working with children are suitable and supported
Standard 6	Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child-focused
Standard 7	Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
Standard 8	Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
Standard 9	Implementation of the child safe standards is continually improved and reviewed.
Standard 10	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

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2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
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.

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

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.
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EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS AND NATIONAL LAW

Sec. 162(a)	Persons in day-to-day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training
Sec. 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children



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Sec. 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
Sec. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
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 (2)(h)	Education and care services must have policies- Providing a child safe environment
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

STATUTORY LEGISLATION & CONSIDERATIONS

[Children's Guardian Act 2019](#)
[Children's Guardian Amendment \(Child Safe Scheme\) Bill 2021](#)
[Child Protection \(Working with Children\) Act 2012](#)
[Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 \(Amended 2023\)](#)
[Education and Care Services National Regulations \(Amended 2023\)](#)
[Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

SOURCES

Acknowledgement to Community Early Learning Australia and Childcare Centre Desktop.
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Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).
Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017). (Amended 2023).
Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017). (Amended 2023).
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[United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child, \(1989\). \(UNCRC\)](#)

NSW Office of the Children's Guardian [Child Safe Self-Assessment](#).

Revised National Quality Standard. (Amended 2023).

RELATED POLICIES

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival and Departure Policy • Child Protection Policy • Code of Conduct Policy • Complaints Handling Policy • Emergency and Evacuation Policy • Excursions and Incursions Policy • Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy • Induction of Staff, Volunteers and Students Policy • Interactions with Children Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Conditions Policy • Nutrition and Food Safety Policy • Safe Arrival of Children Policy • Safe Storage of Dangerous Goods Policy • Safe Transportation of Children Policy • Safe Sleep and Rest Policy • Smoke Free Environment Policy • Sun Safety Policy • Supervision Policy • Water Safety Policy |
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RELATED DOCUMENTS

Child Safe Environment – Statement of Commitment to child Safety Child Safe Standards Checklist
 Guide to the Child Safe Standards

POLICY AUTHORISED BY	Prue Ritchie	POLICY REVIEWED	August 2024
NEXT REVIEW DATE	August 2025		
MODIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New policy format • Regulation amendments incorporated • Major edit of policy to reflect Child Safe Standards 		
PREVIOUS REVIEW			
POLICY AUTHORISED BY	Prue Ritchie	DATE	January 2021