

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY

Best practice – Quality Area 3

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Doris Blackburn Preschool in June 2017.

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines for:

- Informing and educating families and educators on the benefits of outdoor play and ensure all children have the opportunity to play outdoors throughout the Preschool year as appropriate
- The inclusion of an offsite outdoor educational program as appropriate.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Doris Blackburn Preschool is committed to:

- providing a well balanced program to support the physical development, health and wellbeing of children
- providing an outdoor learning environment with a range of opportunities, sufficient space, time and resources to allow for the effective physical development inclusive of children with motor impairments or physical disabilities
- providing an environment where children can be active in all weather conditions
- knowing that children who play outdoors will generally be more active
- promoting outdoor play where the areas usually provide children with more space and opportunities to use larger muscle groups and experience moving in a whole range of different shapes, speeds and directions

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in day-to-day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Doris Blackburn Preschool, including during offsite excursions and activities.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Providing opportunities to play outdoors in all different kinds of weather is as important as playing inside. Many indoor activities can be provided outdoors as well. For many children the learning that happens outdoors is the most important.

Being outdoors contributes to development in all areas – in order to write children need to gain muscle tone through physical activity: the spontaneity of outside play is great for children's speech and language development and other areas of learning.

Children who are constantly growing, developing and maturing, need to test their strength and recognise their limitations. Testing abilities and limitations allows children to understand the concept of trial and error. Success will build their self esteem and inevitable failures will help them acknowledge

their boundaries, provide opportunities for them to cope with the negative emotions that accompany failure and build resilience.

Getting fresh air can actually combat illnesses and help prevent children from contracting illness. Most viruses are airborne and getting children outside helps to eliminate some of the germs they carry. It also allows an opportunity to welcome fresh air into the building when the doors are opened and the children are moving in and out.

It gives children first hand contact with weather, seasons and the natural world. Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active, all the while encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

Outdoor play gives children opportunities to:

- Move freely combining both large and small muscles to improve balance, strength and coordination skills and activating both sides of the brain
- Try new movements
- Have rough and tumble play
- Seek adventure, watch, explore and connect to nature. Develops children's breadth of senses via first hand experience of the elements
- Develop a sense of wonder and respect for living things and natural phenomena
- Extend their creativity
- Develop new skills and gain a sense of achievement
- Learn from their mistakes, manage their fears and build resilience
- Maintain health and wellbeing

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Child Safe Standards
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice
- National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
- National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – ComLaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

4. DEFINITIONS

Active play: Play that involves large muscle-based activities that are essential for a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth and development incorporating:

- child-initiated active play, which is developed by the child through exploration of the outdoor environment, equipment and games
- adult-guided active play which encourages children's physical development through promoting movement skills in a non-competitive environment
- physical activity, which includes sport, incidental exercise and many forms of recreation.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) supervision entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Curriculum: All interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p45 – refer to *Sources*; adapted from Te Whariki).

Duty of care: A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations and staff to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury. In the context of this policy, duty of care refers to the responsibility of education and care services and their staff to provide children with an adequate level of care and protection against foreseeable harm and injury.

Hazard: A source or situation with a potential for harm in terms of human injury or ill health, damage to property, damage to the environment or a combination of these.

Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record: Contains details of any incident, injury, trauma or illness that occurs while the child is being educated and cared for by the service. Any incident, injury, trauma or illness must be recorded as soon as is practicable but not later than 24 hours after the occurrence.

These details must be kept for the period of time specified in Regulation 183. A sample *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record* is available from the ACECQA: www.acecqa.gov.au (Search 'Sample forms and templates')

Inclusion: The incorporation of children and families into the service to ensure that all individuals have an equal opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

Inclusive practice: The provision of a flexible, innovative and responsive program that supports the learning needs and meaningful participation of all children attending the service

Learning: A natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth, as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development.

Notifiable incident: An incident involving workplace health and safety that is required by law to be reported to WorkSafe Victoria. Notification is required for incidents that result in death or serious injury/illness, or dangerous occurrences. For a complete list of incidents that must be reported to WorkSafe Victoria, refer to the *Guide to Incident Notification* on the WorkSafe Victoria website: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

Play-based learning: A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social world as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.

Serious incident: A serious incident (regulation 12) is defined as any of the following:

- the death of a child while being educated and cared for at the service or following an incident at the service
- any incident involving serious injury or trauma while the child is being educated and cared for, which
 - a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
 - the child attended or ought reasonably to have attended a hospital e.g. a broken limb*
- any incident involving serious illness of a child while that child is being educated and cared for by a service for which the child attended, or ought reasonably to have attended, a hospital e.g. severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis*
 - *NOTE: In some cases (for example rural and remote locations) a General Practitioner conducts consultation from the hospital site. Only treatment related to serious injury or illness or trauma are required to be notified, not other health matters
- any emergency for which emergency services attended. NOTE: This means an incident, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person/s at an education and care service. It does not mean an incident where emergency services attended as a precaution
- a child appears to be missing or cannot be accounted for at the service
- a child appears to have been taken or removed from the service in a manner that contravenes the National Regulations
- a child was mistakenly locked in or out of the service premises or any part of the premises.

Examples of serious incidents include amputation (e.g. removal of fingers), anaphylactic reaction requiring hospitalisation, asthma requiring hospitalisation, broken bone/fractures, bronchiolitis, burns, diarrhoea requiring hospitalisation, epileptic seizures, head injuries, measles, meningococcal infection, sexual assault, witnessing violence or a frightening event.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- National Quality Standards – Quality Area 1,2 & 3
- Belonging, Being and Becoming – Early Years Learning Framework
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Service policies

- *Asthma Policy*
- *Curriculum Development Policy*
- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*

PROCEDURES

- The service embraces indoor/outdoor programs and the opportunity to include an outdoor classroom as an extension to the educational program.
- Throughout the winter months and extreme weather conditions the educators will assess the environment to ensure that it is safe and practical for children to go out during these weather conditions
- During the summer months, as per the Sun Smart recommendations, outdoor play will be encouraged in shady areas or not at all in extreme conditions
- The centre is committed to ensuring that each child is equipped to combat the weather conditions and that the program is suitable for the conditions of that day

In relation to EDUCATORS

The educators should be actively involved with children in their games and activities where appropriate and not solely in a supervisory capacity

- The doors to the outdoor area will be open most of the time
- The children will have ongoing access to the indoor / outdoor program as per the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) & National Quality Standard (NQS)
- Educators will make informed decisions based on the needs and development of the children and will at times close the doors to engage children in intentional teaching experiences
- Educators will always ensure that the children are dressed according to the weather conditions
- Educators will communicate with families and be sensitive to families views and needs
- Educators will use their discretion and common sense to make decisions regarding children's health and safety in relation to outdoor play

In relation to FAMILIES

- Children are expected to be able to participate in the program and routine for the day
- Families will be required to ensure their child is equipped for outdoor play

- Families will be required to supply wet weather gear such as gumboots, coats and beanies during winter
- Families will be required to supply a sun hat and adhere to the 'Sun Protection policy' during the Sun Smart period – from mid-August through to the end of April.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.