



Physical Environment Policy

Introduction:

The physical environment can contribute to children's wellbeing, happiness, creativity and developing independence. It can contribute to and express the quality of children's learning and experiences. The choices made in our preschool about resources, materials, spaces, layout, air and light quality and access to a range of experiences in the indoor and outdoor, have a direct impact on the quality of learning opportunities available to children.

Aim:

Toukley Preschool will ensure the environment is safe, clean and well maintained. Children's awareness of the environment and sustainable practice will be supported through daily practices, resources and interactions. The physical environment, both indoors and outdoors will support children's learning, safety, levels of engagement, agency, ability and access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships.

Strategies / How will it be done

Supporting children's active involvement in the indoor and outdoor environment.

Our service will promote and encourage active involvement in planned physical activities each day.

Educators are guided by the Munch and Move Program. In line with this, children will not be sedentary or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time – with the exception of sleeping.

Implementation:

The Approved Provider will ensure that:

- Fencing and barriers which enclose outdoor areas used by children in the education and care service are maintained to ensure they are of a height and design that prevents children of preschool age from going through, over or under the structure. Considerations about minimising access to the preschool by unauthorised people and animals will also inform the height and design of fencing and barriers.
- Sufficient furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment are provided and maintained in the centre in order to support all children's independence, ability and agency in engaging and accessing the program.
- Any laundry facility in the premises is located and maintained in a way that does not pose any risks to children.
- Adequate space requirements are maintained in both the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Toilet, washing and drying facilities are developmentally and age appropriate and are located and designed in a way that support safe use and convenient access by children.
- Our classrooms are well ventilated and have adequate natural light.
- Indoor temperatures are maintained at levels that support children's safety and wellbeing.
- The play spaces in the centre provide children with opportunities to explore and experience the natural environment.
- The outdoor environment has adequate shaded areas to protect children from ultraviolet radiation from the sun.
- The environment has been adapted to support access to both indoor and outdoor play activities and to toilets and facilities according to supervision requirements, children's independence and developmental needs.
- Our gardens reflect the local natural habitat and encourage native wildlife into the education and care environment.

- Our centre will be professionally cleaned every day.
- Our centre will be sprayed for pests twice a year during holidays when children are absent.
- Carpets will be cleaned at least annually.
- Our centre will follow the cleaning schedule of material items

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- Ensure that plants are selected to minimise risks to children. No poisonous or dangerous plants will be included in the education and care environment. See fact sheet on *Poisonous Plants* - http://www.kidsafensw.org/imagesDB/wysiwyg/Poisonousplantstoavoid2010100429_1.pdf
- Collaborate with educators to carefully select and provide adequate numbers of resources in order to contribute to children's sense of belonging and to provide new learning opportunities that extend and challenge children's learning and development incorporating risky play.
- Develop a system of daily checks to ensure the safety of the Indoor and Outdoor Environments. See the following attachments
 - Attachment A - Indoor Morning Checklist
 - Attachment B - Outdoor Morning Checklist
 - Attachment C - End- of day Checklist

The Educational Leader will collaborate with educators to:

- Equally value both the outdoor and indoor learning environments as places that support children's learning, creativity, social engagement and sense of belonging.
- Seek to develop learning environments that are secure and that support children to take increasing responsibility for their health, hygiene and personal care.
- Design learning environments that are welcoming and accessible for all children and families, considering cultural diversity, social and physical inclusion.
- Design environments that reflect children's different cultures, interests, abilities and learning styles.
- Design environments that support small group work in ways that minimise the risk of injury, minimise disruption between activities, minimise conflict between children and reduce prolonged exposure to excess internal and external noise.
- Design outdoor learning experiences that complement and extend the indoor activities and learning experiences.
- Ensure that outdoor environments provide opportunities to learn through play, incorporate risky play, enabling access to materials that stimulate investigation and reflection, and enriched with natural resources and opportunities to connect with nature.
- Design indoor environments that are enriched by natural resources and opportunities to engage with nature.
- Offer children opportunities to be active, messy, noisy, challenged, take risks and play on a large scale.
- Encourage and nurture children's interest in the world around them. By providing children with materials, resources and information, educators can help children to appreciate and respect the beauty of their natural and built environments.
- Select resources and design learning environments that foster children's connections with the natural environment.
- Select natural materials and fibers if possible, when purchasing new equipment and resources. These include items such as wooden shelving and natural materials. Such resources enhance the look and feel of nature within the environment.
- Natural and flexible play materials such as sand, leaves and water will be available for children.
- Encourage children and families to collect and bring recycled equipment and natural resources into the environment.
- Encourage children to care for plants by growing plants from seeds.

- Design areas for appreciation of nature, where educators and children can observe the natural play environment and reflect on nature. This will include the introduction of indoor plants into indoor areas. Educators and children will be responsible for the care of these plants ensuring they have enough sunlight and water. As in the outdoor garden, plants will be selected to minimise the risks to children.

Educators will:

- Encourage children to participate in physical activities through programming and spontaneous experiences.
- Encourage and support children to undertake and participate in new or unfamiliar physical activities.
- Participate in physical activity with the children.
- Show enthusiasm for participation in physical activity and organise play spaces to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all individuals in the environment.
- Set up and plan for physical play activities and equipment and where appropriate encourage the children to help with the set-up.
- Listen to children's suggestions on what physical activities they would like to participate in and where appropriate incorporate them into the program
- Set up indoor and outdoor areas in a manner that promotes and encourages safe physical play for all age groups and developmental abilities represented in the service.
- Actively encourage children to accept and respect each other's range of physical abilities.
- Consult with families and resource agencies on providing physical experiences that reflect diverse backgrounds and abilities.
- Role model appropriate footwear and clothing for physical activity.
- Reflect on the Australian Federal Government Department of Health, 24-hour movement guidelines to ensure that appropriate sedentary experiences and physical activity are offered throughout the day.
- Manage routine times to provide children with sustained periods of uninterrupted play and movement across both the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Promote lifelong learning and enjoyment of physical activity through a range of experiences, careful structure of the routine and considered planning and implementation of the program.
- The implementation of The Munch and Move program as well as a range of physical activities will support children in:
 - » Developing Fundamental Movement Skills
 - » Exploring, challenging, extending and testing their limits in a safe and appropriate environment.
 - » The development of their physical skill set by talking with children about the human body and how important physical activity is for an individual's health and wellbeing.
 - » The development of their physical skill set by providing experiences for the children that draw on elements of dance, dramatic play and creative movement.

Evaluation

The education and care service has aesthetically pleasing, safe, flexible and functional play and learning environments. Educators, children and families are supported to consider environmentally sustainable practices. Children's emotional, physical, social, cognitive and spiritual wellbeing are supported by the design and functions of the indoor and outdoor environments. The environment complements the educational and care aims of the service, supporting children to have a strong sense of being and belonging, as well as facilitating their growth and development

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Legislative Requirements:

Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 104 - 114

Links to National Quality Standard – Quality Area 3

Sources:

< Guide to the National Quality Framework ACECQA (2018)

< Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations

< Kidsafe NSW Inc – www.kidsafensw.org

< Early Childhood Australia Statement on young children and digital technologies: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-work/submissionsstatements/eca-statement-young-children-digital-technologies

< NSW Munch and Move

< Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years): An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep

Reviewed: March 2021