

Montessori Works

Background

Children have the right to be safe. The physical environment plays a critical role in keeping children safe, particularly as they are often unable to identify risks and dangers for themselves. In early education and care services, the buildings, furniture and equipment must meet initial service approval requirements and, after that, be kept safe, clean and well-maintained so that unintentional injuries to children and adults in the service are minimised.

“Organisations and people working with children in NSW share responsibility for keeping children safe. Applying the Standards makes it easier for children, parents, carers and staff to share their understanding of child safety across different settings. The Standards promote consistency across care environments.”

Policy statement

This Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Approved Provider, staff and educators in maintaining a safe environment free from risk of abuse or harm for children and adults at the Service.

Strategies and practices

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The Service’s building, facilities, furniture and equipment meet licensing requirements and those of all relevant national and state regulatory bodies, local council, and the National Construction Code (2019).
- Play equipment has been installed strictly according to manufacturers’ instructions. All fixed equipment and moveable playground equipment shall meet the Australian Standards (AS 4685.1-6,:2021 and AS 4685.11:2014), and will be inspected and maintained in accordance with AS 4685.0:2017 Playground Equipment and surfacing.
- Synthetic impact attenuating surfaces used as playground surfacing will need to be tested post installation then every 3 years to verify ongoing compliance with Australian Standards ([AS 4422:2016 Playground Surfacing](#)).
- If loose fill surfacing is used as playground surfacing, materials which are tested and comply with Australian standard (AS 4422:2016 Playground Surfacing). A certificate of compliance will be obtained from the supplier and kept as a part of your playground safety management system. Loose fill surfacing is to be installed at a depth of 300mm and inspected routinely, ensuring it is maintained at no less than 200mm in depth.
- All toys meet Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 8124 Part 6 (ISO 8124-4:2014, MOD) Safety of toys - Swings, slides and similar activity toys for indoor and outdoor family domestic use; are age appropriate, well maintained and have non-toxic finishes. 

Child Safe Environments

- Before introducing new activities or equipment into an environment, one must conduct a risk/benefit assessment to determine if all implications have been considered.
- The Service employs a handyman to repair equipment when necessary. A Maintenance Book is used to record the details of repairs. No item is used after repair until the Nominated Supervisor has checked and approved the repair.
- Educators complete a Safety Check List – Outdoor Daily and a Safety Check List – Indoor Daily before the Service opens to ensure the environment is safe for children. Each Friday morning after the check is completed, the lists are taken to the main office to be filed.
- Should any matter requiring immediate attention be identified during the educators' checks, educators complete a Hazard Report Form and place it the designated place for the Nominated Supervisor's immediate attention and if applicable, item needs to be removed from the reach of children.
- The Service is safe, clean and well maintained. Refer to the *Service's Cleaning Policy*.
- The Nominated Supervisor conducts a comprehensive Service safety audit every three months, and documents it. This audit covers all play areas, approaches to the Service, outdoor environments, kitchen, laundry and other utility areas, fences and general maintenance items. Any items requiring attention are recorded in the Maintenance Book, and the audit document filed.
- The Approved Provider must consider engaging with a qualified person to complete regular/annual comprehensive inspections of the services facilities externally such as the service building, fencing and other equipment.

Child Safe Standards:

- Child safe standards should be implemented into the culture of the Service, throughout the policies and procedures and instilled into the minds of all who enter the childcare Service. Have a child safe environment is more than the physical and what is surrounding the children but also who is working with and around the children.
 - Child Safety is embedded in the service leadership, governance and culture
 - Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
 - Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
 - People working with children are suitable and supported
 - Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused
 - Staff are trained and equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe
 - Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
 - Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
- Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

Child Safe Environments

- Educators are trained in child protection and Services provide a Protective Behaviour program which is available for all staff working with children.
- Educators are aware and respond appropriately to child behaviours which are linked to abuse.
- Educators should be fully aware of their reporting obligations when a child is at risk of abuse or harm or when a child discloses information to them.
- The Service needs to consider what procedures and policies are in place to identify, respond to and report child abuse whether in the service or not. The Service will need to look at preventative measures such as awareness through training and staff meetings.
- The Service should have a reporting log of harm for any disclosure or harm done to children.
- Children have a voice in the service and are encouraged to share what makes them feel safe and also unsafe. They are to share their opinions on policies, procedures and any decisions that affect them.
- Children should always be within close proximity to educators where they can hear and or see children at all times.
- Never leave volunteers, visitors or families alone with children and never leave unqualified staff or educators under the age of 18 alone with children while at the education and care Service.

Additional safe practices for babies

- All equipment (e.g. cots, high chairs, prams) used by babies is regularly cleaned and serviced.
- Mouthed toys are set aside for cleaning every time it is mouthed by a baby
- Unused Baby dummies are to be placed in separate containers labelled with the child's name

Responsibilities of parents

- To ensure their children do not drop items along pathways, halls and entry areas when entering or leaving the Service.
- To ensure that they close the gates and doors securely behind them whilst checking no child is following them as they move into and out of the building and rooms.
- To drive slowly and carefully in and around the driveways and car park areas as children may be moving through those spaces with parents.
- Be aware of signage across the service pertaining to allergies and anaphylaxis. Services are nut free (aware) and sometimes egg free zones so be careful to not bring in items containing these foods.

Child Safe Environments

- Parents need to ensure they report to the Responsible Person, any misconduct of educators including being aggressive or acting inappropriately toward a child.

Procedures and forms

Hazard Report Form
Maintenance Book
Outdoor Play Surface Temperature Check
Safety Checklist – Indoor Daily
Safety Checklist – Outdoor Daily
Sandpit Cleaning Procedure
Sandpit Cleaning Register

Links to other policies

Cleaning Policy
Dangerous Products, Plants, Vermin and Objects Policy
Supervision Policy

Links Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, National Quality Standard 2011

Regulation	103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
Regulation	104	Fencing and security
Regulation	105	Furniture and equipment
Regulation	120	Educators who are under 18 to be supervised
Regulation	168	Education and care facilities must have policies and procedures
Regulation	173	Prescribed Information to be displayed

NQS	QA2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child
NQS	QA2.2.1	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
NQS	QA3.1.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child
NQS	QA3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained

Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018 (September 2020 Update): Section 4 – Operational Requirements <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Guide-to-the-NQF-September-2020.pdf>
Office of the Children’s Guardian <https://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-standards>

Further reading and useful websites *(Consistent with the approach of the National Quality Framework, the following references have prioritised efficacy and appropriateness to inform best practice, and legislative compliance over state or territory preferences.)*

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Child Safe Environments

- Kidsafe. (2022). *Playground Information sheets*.
<https://www.kidsafensw.org/resources/information-sheets/playground-safety>
- Standards Australia – <http://www.standards.org.au/> Office of the Children’s Guardian
<https://www.ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/training-and-resources/child-safe-resources/child-safe-training>

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service’s commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Version Control

Version	Date Reviewed	Approved By	Comments/Amendments	Next Review Date
1	8 January 2018	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated to changed NQF requirements 1 February 2018. Service to modify policies to its specific needs.	
2	6 September 2019	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Update references.	
3	29 November 2020	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
4	30 December 2020	Dr Brenda Abbey (Author)	Updated references.	
5	August 2022	Susan Chahwan	Adapted ACA NSW policies	