

## CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

We believe in maintaining an inclusive and welcoming environment and workplace that motivates and facilitates personal growth and development for staff and educators. The values that underpin our work ethic include equality, respect, integrity, and responsibility. Our Service is committed to adhere to the ECA Code of Ethics (2016) which is based on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) and provides a framework for the reflection about the ethical responsibilities of early childhood professionals. Highland Grove preschool is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that promotes the safety of all children and embeds the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. All staff and volunteers are responsible for promoting 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.

### NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 4: STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS		
4.1	Staffing arrangements	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development.
4.1.2	Continuity of staff	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service.
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other’s strengths and skills.
4.2.2	Professional Standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.1	Service philosophy and purpose	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service’s operations.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol-free environment
84	Awareness of child protection law

155	Interactions with children
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

## PURPOSE

We aim to establish a common understanding of workplace standards and ethics expected of all employees of Highland Grove. We aim to ensure positive working relationships are formed between all educators and management, promoting dignity and respect by avoiding behaviour which is or may be, perceived as harassing, bullying or intimidating. Educators and management will at all times conduct themselves in an ethical manner and strive to ensure that all interactions are positive and respectful and are in accordance with our philosophy.

Our Service takes every reasonable effort to accommodate the diversity of all children in implementing the Child Safe Standards. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We recognise the importance of and responsibility for, ensuring our Service provides a safe and supportive environment which respects and fosters the rights and wellbeing of children in our care. We are dedicated in promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to staff, management and visitors of the Service.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators and staff, volunteers, and students will adhere to the Early Childhood Australian Code of Ethics, Education and Care Services National Regulations and National Quality Standard, and Highland Grove policies and procedures at all times, promoting positive interactions both within the Service and the local community.

### Respect for People and the Service

- Employees and Management are committed to our centre philosophy and values, inclusive of best practice in early childhood education and building positive partnership with children, families and staff
- Employees and management adhere to our *Child Safe Environment Policy* (underway) and *Child Protection Policy* at all times and take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm
- Employees and management understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*

- Management and staff are committed to valuing and promoting the safety, health, and wellbeing of employees, volunteers, children, and families
- Effective, open, and respectful reciprocal communication and feedback between employees, children, families, and management is conveyed
- It is important to treat colleagues, children, and families with respect. Bullying or insulting behaviour towards other employees, children, visitors, or families is unacceptable and will not be tolerated
- Employees are committed to an Equal Opportunity workplace and culture which values the knowledge, experience, and professionalism of all employees, team members, and managers, and the diverse heritage of our families and children
- Employees and management respect the privacy of children and their families by keeping all information about child protection concerns confidential

## Expectations of Employees

### EMPLOYEES WILL:

- ensure their work is carried out proficiently, harmoniously, and effectively. They will act in a professional and respectful manner at all times whilst at work, giving their full attention to their responsibilities and adhering to all Service policies, procedures, Child Safe Standards, Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations, and the National Quality Standard
- act honestly and exercise attentiveness in all Service operations. They will carry out all lawful directions, retaining the right to question any direction which they consider to be unethical. If uncertain they can seek advice from the Nominated Supervisor, Approved Provider or the Ombudsman
- uphold the rights of children and always prioritise their needs
- treat all children and young people with respect
- promote the safety of children and take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- provide adequate supervision of children at all times
- understand their legislative responsibility as mandatory reporters to report any allegation of child abuse, neglect or possible risk of harm to management
- understand their legislative responsibility to report any inappropriate action of any other employee that involves children or young people to management as part of the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*
- participate in all compulsory training
- report any instances of suspected corrupt conduct, mismanagement of government funds or other serious allegation to the appropriate agency (tipoffline@dese.gov.au)
- have a solid understanding of the Service's policies and procedures and the ECA Code of Ethics. If uncertain about the content of any policy or procedure with which they must

comply, employees should seek clarification from the Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider

- be courteous and responsive when dealing with colleagues, students, visitors, children and families
- work collaboratively with colleagues and recognise and value diversity
- be mindful of their duty of care towards themselves and others
- be positive role models for children at all times
- respect the confidential nature of information gained about each child enrolled in our Service
- engage in critical reflection to inform individual and collective decision making and ensure continual improvement.

### Expectations of Leaders and Management

In addition to the above responsibilities, leaders and management are expected to:

- promote a collaborative and interconnected workplace by developing a positive working environment where all employees can contribute to the ongoing continuous improvement of the Service
- promote leadership by working with employees and providing opportunities for professional development and growth
- provide flexible opportunities to ensure all employees can participate in staff meetings and professional development
- provide ongoing support and feedback to employees
- keep employees informed about essential information and any relevant changes and make all documents readily accessible to them
- ensure copies of the ECA Code of Ethics is available to staff and families
- model professional behaviour at all times whilst at the Service
- implement supportive and effective communication systems, consulting employees in appropriate decision making
- take appropriate action if a breach of the code of conduct occurs
- share skills and knowledge with employees
- give encouragement and constructive feedback to employees, respecting the value of different professional approaches

### Reporting a breach of the Code of Conduct

- all employees are required by law to undergo a Working with Children Check (WWCC) which is verified by the employer to ensure it is valid and current
- if employees become aware of a serious crime committed by another employee, they are required to report it to management as per the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*

- as mandatory reporters, all employees must report possible risk of harm to children or young persons to management
- employees will report any concerns they may have about inappropriate actions of any other employee that involves children or young people to management as per the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*
- management will report any allegations or child related misconduct as per their legislative requirements

### Managing conflict in the workplace

#### MANAGEMENT WILL:

- remain objective and impartial when managing conflict in the workplace
- be responsive and address a possible breach of the code of conduct by any employee as soon as they are aware of the breach
- investigate all allegations
- consider all relevant facts and make decisions or take actions fairly, ethically, consistently, and with transparency. If they are uncertain about the appropriateness of a decision or action they will consider:
  - whether the decision or conduct is lawful
  - whether the decision or conduct is consistent with Service policies and objectives
  - whether there will be an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest involving obligations that could influence the business relationship or conflict with business duties.

### Adhering to Service confidentiality

- Unless authorised to do so by legislation, employees must not disclose or use any confidential information without appropriate approval
- All employees are to ensure that confidential information is not accessed by unauthorised people
- Employees will adhere to the Service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*.

### Babysitting

- We do not provide babysitting services outside normal operating hours
- Should employees undertake private babysitting arrangements with families, Highland Grove takes no responsibility for any private arrangements between staff members and the family. However, we do expect staff to inform centre management if they are babysitting or caring for a child that attends our centre.

## Record keeping

- Employees and Management will maintain full, accurate, and honest records as required by the Education and Care Services National regulations
- Managers have a responsibility to ensure that employees comply with their record keeping obligation outlined in the *Record Keeping and Retention Policy*
- Records must be retained and stored securely as per our *Record Keeping and Retention Policy*

## Duty of care

- Management and employees have a responsibility to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others at the workplace to enable compliance with the work health and safety legislation outlined in the *Work Health and Safety Policy*
- Duty of Care relates to both physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals
- Management and employees must provide adequate supervision of children at all times and ensure the health, safety and welfare of children and young people in their care. This includes taking all reasonable action to protect children and young people from risk of harm that can be reasonably predicted.

## Appropriate use of electronic communication and social networking sites

### Social media

- As a Child Safe Organisation, our Service has the responsibility to ensure children and educators are protected from harm when they engage in with digital technology including social media
- Strict guidelines for the use of social media are outlined in our *Social Media Policy*

### Personal phone calls/mobile phones/smart watches

We are mindful that educators have a duty of care to ensure children are protected from potential risk of harm. It is imperative that all employees of the Service provide children with their full attention, ensuring supervision is maintained and remains on the children at all times.

- employees are not authorised to use the Service's phones for personal reasons unless in the case of an emergency or with permission from management
- no personal mobile phones are to be used, checked or brought on the floor during working hours
- mobile phones are to be kept in one of the two the staff rooms

## Use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco

- Smoking is NOT permitted in or on surrounding areas of the Service
- Our Service is bound by the Education and Care Services National Regulations. Alcohol, drugs, or other substance abuse by employees can have serious adverse effects on their own health and the safety of others.
- If a co-worker suspects a colleague to be affected by drugs or alcohol, they must inform the Nominated Supervisor immediately. No employee will be allowed to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

## Dress code

- Staff must abide by the Centre's Sun Safe Policy.
- Staff are asked to wear their badge which is supplied during induction, particularly at the beginning of the year and during orientation events
- Staff are asked to not wear 'flip flop' opened-heel shoes.
- Clothes must be smart casual (no mini-skirts or mid-drift tops please) and suitable for free movement, active play, and messy play.
- No offensive logos or political statements are to be displayed on clothing.
- Body piercing should be kept to a minimum
- Educators are to avoid wearing tracksuit clothing where possible
- Educators are required to uphold good hygiene practices at all times
- Staff are to present themselves professionally at all times

## Breach of the Code of Conduct

All staff members are made fully aware that the following breaches of the Code of Conduct and role responsibilities may lead to termination of employment:

- reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- refusal to complete mandated professional training
- possessing or selling drugs at the Service
- immoral, immature, or indecent conduct while at the Service
- inappropriate use of company equipment and/or resources
- refusing to work as reasonable directed
- possessing a dangerous weapon whilst at the Service
- bringing disrepute to the Service
- causing disruption or discontent in the relationship between a family and the Service
- disclosure of confidential information
- falsifying documentation
- associating with families without disclosing this information with management
- stealing, abusing, defacing, or destroying company property

- falsification of reports, documents, or wages information
- failure to report for work without notice
- failure to follow policies and procedures
- vulgarity or disrespectful conduct to families, management or colleagues
- making or publishing false, vicious, or malicious statements about any employee of the Service, or the Service itself

## SOURCE

*Anti-Discrimination Act*: See <https://raisingchildren.net.au/disability/disability-rights-the-law/law/anti-discrimination-laws> for Acts for specific Australian states and territories.

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Human Rights Commission <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights>

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

*Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).

Guide to the National Quality Framework. (2017) (Amended 2020).

NSW Government Office of the Children's Guardian *Code of Conduct- a guide to developing child safe Codes of Conduct*. (2020).

*Ombudsman Act 2001* (Cth).

*Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (Cth).

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Victoria State Government Department of Health and Human Services *Child Safe Standards toolkit*

*Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth).

*Workplace Relations Act 1996* (Cth).

Work Place Law <https://www.workplacelaw.com.au/getting-your-mobile-phone-policies-right/>

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