

CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCR) outline that children and young people have a right to be safe and cared for, no matter where they are or who they are with. Children have the right to be protected from violence, abuse or neglect. When working with children and young people, it is important to understand children’s rights and needs.

We are advocates for children and have a strong commitment to child safety and establishing and maintaining a child safe environment. Children’s safety and wellbeing are paramount at Highland Grove. We embed the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and promote 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 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child Safety and Protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding child safety, including the need 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.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 3A	Paramount consideration [NSW]
S. 4	How functions to be exercised
S. 5	Meaning of serious incident
S.5AA	Meaning of inappropriate conduct [NSW]
S.162A	Child protection training Offence relating to child protection training [NSW]

S. 162B	Child safety training
S.165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
S.165A	Offence relating to children leaving the education and care service premises unauthorised [WA Services only]
S.166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
S.166A	Offence to subject child to inappropriate conduct [NSW] Offences relating to inappropriate conduct
S.167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
S. 174AA	Educators and other staff members of education and care services to notify certain information [NSW]
S. 174AB	Approved provider must notify Regulatory Authority of event under section 174AA [NSW]
Part 6A	Devices in education and care services
S. 178	Suspension of education and care by certain persons [NSW only]
S. 178A	Supervision of certain persons providing education and care [NSW only]
S. 188	Offence to engage person to whom prohibition notice applies
12	Meaning of a serious incident
82	Environment to be free from tobacco, vaping devices, vaping substances, drugs and alcohol
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
102AAB	Safe arrival of children policies and procedures
102AAC	Risk assessment for the purposes of safe arrival of children policies and procedures
102B	Transport risk assessment must be conducted before service transports child
102C	Conduct of risk assessment for transporting of children by the education and care service
102D	Authorisation for service to transport children
102E	Children embarking a means of transport—centre-based service
102F	Children disembarking a means of transport—centre-based service
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
167	Record of service's compliance
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedure
175	Prescribed information to be notified to regulatory authority

PURPOSE

Highland Grove Preschool has a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe and friendly environment where all children are respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. Children's safety and wellbeing is paramount, and we aim to take all practical steps to protect children and young people from harm or risk of harm, ensuring a healthy and safe environment. We believe that children's safety, rights, and best interests are the paramount consideration for all Service operations, decisions and functions. Highland Grove ensures that child safety, wellbeing and best interests take priority over all other considerations, including financial interests or other obligations of management, and are embedded in our daily practices, policies and procedures.

Our centre adheres to and aligns with legislative requirements related to taking images or videos of children. (See *Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy*.) We provide children, staff, educators and visitors with an environment free from the use of tobacco (including vaping), alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, volunteers, visitors, educators, Approved Provider and management of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations the approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for providing a child safe environment and

take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed. (Regulation 168, Regulation 170). 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. Our focus is to build a child safe environment which is reflected in Highland Grove’s policies and procedures and is understood and practiced by all educators, staff, families, volunteers and students.

‘Child safety is everyone’s responsibility.’ (A guide to the Child Safe Standards. p.26. 2020)

KEY TERMS-DEFINITIONS

Child Safe Standards A list of ten standards that organisations can use to keep children safe from harm and abuse as recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Code of Conduct Lists of dos and don’ts which describe acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour

Disclosure The process where a child or young person conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been abused.

Inappropriate conduct to a child

any behaviour that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service, taking into account the child’s age, development, safety, wellbeing and the context of the interaction.

Information sharing Refers to sharing or exchanging information, including personal information about or related to, abuse in organisational contexts. The terms refer to sharing information between (or within) organisations, as well as sharing information with professionals who provide key services for children.

Mandatory reporter A person who is required to report known and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to a nominated government department or agency.

Mandatory reporting The legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

Reportable conduct Certain organisations or entities have legal obligations under Reportable Conduct Schemes to notify and investigate certain allegations of abuse involving a child, when the allegation is against someone they employ, engage or contract in circumstances outlined in the legislation.

Rights of the Child Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Wellbeing Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs.

Working with Children / (WWCC)

A notice, certificate or other document granted to, or with respect to a person under a working with children law. The person has been assessed as suitable to work with children; there has been no information that if the person worked with children the person would pose a risk to the children; or the person is not prohibited from attempting to obtain, undertake or remain in child-related employment.

COMMITMENT TO THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

(National Principles 1-10)

Highland Grove Preschool is committed to being a child safe organisation and endorses the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, and ensure children's safety is paramount.

Highland Grove has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. Our *Statement of Commitment to Child Safety* demonstrates our responsibility to protect children, uphold their rights, and embed a culture of child safety across all aspects of our operations.

We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them and listen and respect their suggestions and ideas. We respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm by reporting to the relevant authorities.

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. Our Service will not tolerate bullying or harassment. Our priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and encourage positive relationships.

COMMUNICATION (National Principles 2 and 3)

We aim to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families 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 employees, volunteers, families and children and young people. (Reg. 170). Feedback and evaluation of our policies and procedures is welcomed through surveys, feedback or discussions with management.

PARTICIPATION OF FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (National Principle 2)

Highland Grove 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 regarding their child's safety whilst at our Service including:

- policy and procedure review
- child protection
- Child Safe Standards
- allegations/grievance procedures
- sun safety
- written authorisations- parenting orders
- code of conduct
- inclusivity and supporting children and young people with diverse needs
- use of digital technologies and online environments

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 centre provides opportunities for conversations with children and young people about their rights and encourages children and young people to speak up if they are feeling unsafe or worried. We work individually with children to determine the type of support they may need.

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.

Highland Grove promotes a culture of child safety and wellbeing in all aspects of our service operations. The *Code of Conduct Policy* outlines expected behaviour, examples of inappropriate behaviour or inappropriate conduct and consequences of breaches of policy.

RECRUITMENT (National Principle 5)

Our centre maintains a rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure the best staff possible based on skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the position available. All staff 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 prospective applicants must declare that they do not hold any prohibition notices, including suspension, supervision or prohibition notices or enforceable undertaking, preventing them from working with children. The approved provider will verify prohibition notices using the [NQA ITS](#) 'register search' tool. Candidates applying for roles such as nominated supervisor or responsible person must also complete a Compliance History notice. Existing employees are required to disclose any enforcement actions, including suspension, supervision or prohibition notices or enforceable undertaking, taken against them to the approved provider, in writing, within 24 hours.

All staff and educators are provided with a comprehensive induction process which outlines our Code of Conduct and key policies including *Child Protection, Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy, Dealing with Complaints, Work Health and Safety Policy*, and other related policies, to ensure a child safe environment. New employees (including the nominated supervisor and staff members), students and volunteers are to familiarise themselves with the *Child Protection Policy* to understand child protection laws and their obligations and mandatory reporting duties to ensure the safety and well-being of children at the Service.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK- (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 centre and community. A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a requirement for people who work in child-related work. It involves a national 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. If any staff member's WWCC becomes invalid, the person will be removed from their role working with children immediately until the clearance is renewed or a valid clearance is obtained. It is a criminal offence to continue to engage anyone whose WWCC is not valid, expired, suspended or revoked.

Staff, educators, volunteers and visitors are informed they must notify the approved provider, in writing, of any changes to their WWCC or teacher accreditation or registration within 72 hours, or within 24 hours of becoming aware of the change [[Mandatory for NSW Services](#)]. The approved provider will notify the regulatory authority, in writing, of changes to an educator, staff member, volunteer or visitors WWCC within 24 hours [[Mandatory for NSW Services](#)].

Any Allied Health Professional or Incursion presenter visitor who has direct contact with children will be required to provide a WWCC for verification prior to coming into contact with children. Management will verify all student and volunteer WWCCs prior to placement. The approved provider will keep a record for each day a student or volunteer participates in the centre, including date and hours of participation.

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 and continue to be updated as required.

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 will be required to complete mandatory [National Child Safety Training for the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector](#). This applies to any person working in the Service whether or not they work directly with children. Staff, educators, students and volunteers must demonstrate an understanding of the role of mandatory reporter, including when a report must be made and how to make a report.

Approved providers, nominated supervisors, 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 educators, staff and volunteers are provided with up-to-date training and development 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* (Reg. 84). 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 mandatory child protection course approved by the regulatory authority and refresher training every two years. All Highland Grove permanent educators have this same training and complete a refresher every second year, which is beyond regulatory requirements.

Highland Grove 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. Supervision is effective to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*.

All allegations, concerns or suspicions of inappropriate conduct will be reported in accordance with the *Child Protection Policy and Management of Inappropriate Conduct Procedure*. Our centre will develop and maintain a *Child Protection Register* for recording child protection concerns. We will ensure all educators and staff have access to the online [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#) (MRG) and reporting decision tree via Service-supplied electronic devices. A *Child Protection Risk Assessment* will be completed and reviewed annually. Highland Grove will use a range of strategies to provide effective supervision, including using attendance records to ensure all children are accounted for (head counts) and active supervision training.

Protection against a person who has made or may make a protected disclosure is outlined within Our *Protected Disclosures (Whistleblower) Policy*, outlines the supports and protections for individuals who report concerns in good faith about child safety, breaches of the National Law, or Service operations.

CHILD PROTECTION-REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME - Allegations Against Employees (National Principle 5)

To protect children and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, management is responsible 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 centre 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 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 Early Learning Centre working towards the highest standard of care and education. We aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness. Highland Grove 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.

The approved provider will place a notice in the foyer, providing contact information, including the name and telephone number for lodging complaints. Educators and staff will receive guidance on the complaint/ grievance policy and procedure. Families, children and young people will be advised of the complaint/ grievance policy and procedure and how to report complaints. All grievances and complaints will be treated seriously and as a priority, in accordance with the *Dealing with Complaints Policy* and procedure.

Any complaints that allege a breach of the National Law and Regulations or alleges that the health, safety and wellbeing of a child or young person at the Service may have been compromised will be documented and reported to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours. In the event that the child, young person or family is dissatisfied with the complaints process, they are advised they have the option to reach out to the regulatory authority for further assistance.

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. Educators employ 'active supervision' strategies within the service environment and when participating in excursions.

Consideration is made for the different ages and abilities of children and the activities that may require different levels of supervision.

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 Highland Grove. We conduct regular head counts throughout the day. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels. 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 daily indoor and outdoor checklists 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 submitted into the maintenance book (Hazard Register) depending on priority.

Educators and staff implement child safe procedures outlined in the *Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy* to ensure children are always supervised and never left unattended whilst using any electronic devices. The physical environment, layout and design ensure it supports child-safe practices when children are engaged in using technology and regular audits are conducted to identify any potential risks to children's safety. All electronic devices are password protected with access for staff only.

RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL (National Principle 8)

It is a legislative requirement that Management 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 is embedded across our centre through compliance with the *Education and Care National Regulations* and the National Principles for Child Safety – Child Safe Standards.

It is the responsibility of all staff and educators at Highland Grove to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion or any transportation of children. Risk assessments must be approved by the nominated supervisor prior to any excursion taking place. Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the centre.

To maintain a child safe environment, all staff and educators will adhere to centre policies and procedures and conduct **daily/bi-annual/annual** checklists and audits.

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES (National Principle 8)

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plans are

displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas.

All staff 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 are kept for all rehearsals, with reviews noted.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE AUTHORISATION (National Principle 1 & 8)

Highland Grove prioritises children's safety at all times. We will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form, or changes/additions made in writing (via email is fine). We request families provide current court orders, and parenting plans to ensure our records are up to date.

National Regulations require our centre 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.

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. To maintain compliance, parents will provide written authorisation (email is fine) if they authorise a person who is not on their emergency contact form to pick up their child from the ECEC Service. Educators and staff will ensure court orders are strictly adhered to and protect children from any potential harm.

ONLINE SAFETY (National Principle 8)

Highland Grove Preschool is committed to creating and maintaining a safe online environment with the support and collaboration of 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 centre 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, daily reports and portfolios.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process to have their child's photo taken to be used within the centre for displays and as a part of the program. Parent permission will be sought in writing (text message or email is fine) for the centre to include a child's photo on social media.

All staff and educators have knowledge of and adhere to legislative requirements and not use, or have access to, any personal electronic devices, including mobile phones or smart watches used to take images or videos when educating and caring for children at the Service.

Only Service supplied or issued and registered electronic devices are used and strict controls are in place to ensure the appropriate storage and retention of images and videos of children. Personal mobile phones, watches that take photos or any personal electronic devices are not used to take photos or video of children at our centre.

Only educational software programs and apps that have appropriate content and have been examined prior to allowing their use are used in the centre. Children are always supervised using any technology.

STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES (National Principle 8)

We reduce the risk of harm to children and educators by using eco-friendly products. We endeavour to provide a safe environment, where necessary chemical and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately.

Management and educators keep a register of hazardous chemicals used at Highland Grove and the relevant Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

To maintain a safe environment for children, the centre also conducts bi-annual safety audits alongside the daily checks, numerous risk assessments and 12 weekly emergency rehearsals.

EQUIPMENT, FURNITURE AND MAINTENANCE RECORD (National Principle 8)

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 centre has implemented practices and continue to monitor policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The premises and all equipment and furniture used within the Service are audited bi-annually 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.

CONTINUOUS REVIEW (National Principle 9)

To ensure we maintain a culture of continuous improvement, we ensure our child safe practices are regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved. We aim to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child safe environment at our centre.

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.

Our *Child Safe Environment Policy* will be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if there are changes to legislation, ACECQA guidance or any incident related to our policy. Feedback will be requested from children, families, staff, educators and management and notification of any change to policies will be made to families within 14 days.

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS LEGISLATION/RESOURCES - NSW

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.

[Children's Guardian Act 2019](#)

Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021

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

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