

# PROVIDING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT

## OVERVIEW:

Education and Care Services National Regulations require that SUNBEAMS must ensure that the education and care service premises and all equipment and furniture used in providing the education and care service are safe, clean and in good repair, that each child has appropriate indoor and outdoor space as set out in the regulations, and that all staff members are aware of their obligations under section 23 of the NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD	OTHER SERVICE POLICIES/ DOCUMENTATION	OTHER
<p>r82, r84, r85, r86, r87, r89, r103, r105, r107, r108, r109, r110, r114, r115, r155, r170, r176, r168.</p>	<p>Quality Area's 2, 3, 4, 5 &amp; 7.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parent Handbook</li> <li>- Staff handbook</li> <li>- Health and Safety policies and procedures</li> <li>- Staffing policies and procedures</li> <li>- Child Protection policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme</li> <li>- NSW Children and Young Person's (Care and Protection) Act 1998</li> <li>- Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998</li> <li>- Child Protection (Working with children) Act 2012</li> <li>- Children's Guardian Act 2019</li> <li>- NSW Communities and Justice (2019)</li> <li>- NSW Child Protection Interagency Guidelines (2006)</li> <li>- NSW Office of Children's Guardian</li> <li>- Child Story Reporter</li> <li>- My Time, Our Place.</li> <li>-</li> <li>- Child Safe Standards</li> </ul>

## OUTLINE

This policy outlines the procedures in place to ensure the safety and well-being of children in Sunbeam's care, to include the management of the facility, indoor and outdoor environments, and staff obligations under child protective practices. (Standard 10 Child Safe Standards)



## WHO THE POLICY AFFECTS?

Management  
Staff  
Students  
Parents

## POLICY STATEMENT:

**SUNBEAMS** provides an environment that ensures the safety, health and wellbeing of children always. The welfare and protection of all children is of paramount importance. Educators will maintain the premises and equipment, adhere to procedures regarding safe practices and operate in line with legislative requirements relating to child protective practices and the Education and Care Services National Regulations and Law. Educators and management are aware of their legal responsibility as Mandatory Reporters to take action to protect and support children they suspect may be at significant risk of harm. Educators will ensure that children are adequately always supervised and that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury or trauma (National Quality Standards 2.3.1 & 2.3.2).

Our organization will be guided by Standard 1 of the child Safe Standards which recommends that “child safety is embedded in organizational leadership, governance and culture through prioritizing child safety in what we say and do.” Staff at sunbeams recognizes that Child Safety is a shared responsibility across the organization. Leaders will encourage day to day practices that prioritise child safety.

## PROCEDURES:

### (A) **MANAGING THE FACILITY**

#### **SECURITY:**

- Only approved educators and management members will be given a key to access the building and equipment areas.
- A key register will be maintained that indicates the person's receipt of the key, date received, and date returned on completion of employment or completion of term as member of Management. Sunbeams will adhere to key registry requirements Lakes Grammar School.



- Extra keys will only be cut after agreement by Lakes Grammar School and management and a record made of where they are.
- All monies and important documents will be kept in a lockable place offsite as part of The Approved Providers office and access will only be permitted by approved staff and management members.
- Educators will ensure that the building is left in a secure manner before leaving and all windows, cupboards, safe, and other relevant areas are locked. All heating and lighting are off, and all doors properly secured.
- Educators will inform the police as soon as possible if there has been a break into the service of any kind.
- Educators will remain at the service until the police arrive or inform them of what to do. They will also notify the Approved Provider who will contact the school.

### **BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE:**

- Equipment will be chosen to meet the children's developmental needs and interests. There will be sufficient access to furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment suitable for the education and care for each child.
- Service premises and all equipment and furniture will be maintained in a safe, clean condition and in good repair always.
- Children will be provided with adequate, developmentally and age-appropriate toilet, washing and drying facilities. These will enable safe use and convenient access by children. Children may need to be supervised around the bathroom areas.
- There must be no damaged plugs, sockets, power cords or extension cords.
- All plug sockets shall be maintained as child safe.
- Electrical appliances shall be in good working order.
- Electrical circuit breakers will be installed and be maintained.
- Provision will be made in the budget for regular maintenance and repair work and for deferred costs of major capital repairs.
- Management will develop a list of fully licensed and insured trades persons, which is made available to educators. This list will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- All contractors will have their own public liability insurance.
- The service and equipment will be regularly checked to ensure that they are in a good and safe condition, comply with relevant Australian Standards and have appropriate soft-fall surfacing maintained where appropriate.
- Equipment will be regularly washed and cleaned.
- Recycled craft materials should be checked for potential hazards.
- Educators should ensure safe handling of all tools if used as part of any activity.
- Families will be encouraged to notify educators of any safety issues they observe.



- Anything that requires maintenance is to be reported to the Approved Provider as soon as possible and documented in the maintenance book for repair.
- Faulty equipment should be removed, or protection placed around any dangerous building sites.
- A maintenance book will be kept that records any maintenance that needs to be addressed.
- The maintenance book will record.
  - ✓ Type of problem
  - ✓ Date that it was observed
  - ✓ Who notified the Approved Provider and when?
  - ✓ What was done to rectify the problem?
  - ✓ Date repaired
  - ✓ Tradesperson employed to repair the problem
- For urgent repairs the Approved Provider will organise a contractor to attend to the problem.
- Non-urgent repairs will be recorded in the maintenance book. The Approved Provider will follow up appropriately and as efficiently as possible. Management and the Nominated Supervisor will organise to rectify the problem which may include consultation and communication with Lakes Grammar.
- For major repairs a minimum of three quotes will be sought and reviewed by management who will decide on a further course of action. The Nominated Supervisor or someone with management control may obtain the quotes.
- It is the responsibility of management, once a problem has been raised, to ensure that it is rectified in the most efficient manner and that the service is safe for educators and clientele.
- Should the service be considered unsafe or as being a health risk, then the service will be closed, after notice has been given to all relevant parties, until the problem has been rectified.
- The service will have an appropriate number of first aid kits that are suitable to the ages and needs of the children attending. The first aid kit will be well stocked and be easily always recognised and accessible.

### STORAGE:

- A storage system should be devised that ensures easy access and un-cluttered storage of all equipment.
- Storage areas will be cleaned and tidied at least twice a year or when seen as necessary.



- Play equipment and toys should be easily accessible to all children during the operating hours of the service.
- Children will show respect for the equipment and be expected to pack equipment away that they have used to avoid trip hazards.
- All equipment is to be neatly packed away at the end of each session.
- Craft equipment will be stored in a separate area, children should ask permission before removing any craft equipment, such as paints and glues etc. which has not been set up by the staff.
- All craft equipment is to be properly washed and cleaned before storage.
- A separate storage area will be available for sporting and large outdoor equipment to prevent clutter.
- All items such as cleaning materials, disinfectants, flammable, poisonous and other dangerous substances, tools, toiletries, first aid equipment, and medications will be stored in the designated secured area which is inaccessible to the children. Educators are responsible to ensure that these areas remain secure and that they do not inadvertently provide access to these items.
- Educators and management will ensure that all family records are kept in a nominated secure place, ensuring that records are kept confidential and not left accessible to others during the daily operations.

### **VENTILATION, TEMPERATURE AND NATURAL LIGHT:**

- All heating and cooling systems will be of good quality and checked regularly to ensure safety and reliability.
- All heating and cooling systems and power cords will be kept in a safe area and away from children.
- Educators will take individual needs and specific activities into account when ensuring that heating, ventilation levels are comfortable.
- Should educators, children or families complain about the temperature in the service not being at a comfortable level, this matter will be drawn to the attention of management and steps will be made to address the problem.
- Adequate ventilation will be always provided. Windows will be properly maintained to ensure easy opening and protection from bugs and insects.
- Where activities involve toxic materials such as paints and glues, staff are to ensure there is adequate ventilation before undertaking the activity.
- Windows are to be opened during operation of the service unless closed to protect from extreme weather conditions.
- Natural light is most desirable. Provision of natural light areas will be enhanced as much as possible.
- In areas made available for children's homework or other fine detail, natural light will be made available where possible and good overhead lighting provided.



- Adequate light will be maintained both indoors and outdoors. A security light will be placed at the entrance to the service that clearly provides unobstructed view of the door and surrounding areas.
- Outdoor lighting will be suitable so that families, staff and children can enter and exit the building without any unsafe dark areas.

**PEST CONTROL:**

- Equipment and especially food items will be properly stored so as not to attract pests and vermin.
- Refuse bins and disposal areas will be emptied and cleaned daily.
- Kitchen, food preparation areas and storage will be cleaned and maintained daily.
- All areas will be checked daily for any signs of pests or vermin.
- Should any pests or vermin be identified then action should be taken to rid the service of the problem by:
  - o Initially using non-chemical methods such as physical removal, maintaining a clean environment, and use of any non-chemical products.
  - o Low irritant, environmentally friendly sprays to be used minimally and only with adequate ventilation and preferably not in the presence of the children.
  - o Other methods such as the employment of a pest control company if deemed necessary by management where the above methods have failed.
- If urgent, the Nominated Supervisor may obtain a contractor from management list to address the problem.
- If non urgent, the Nominated Supervisor will bring the problem to the attention of management and management will decide on the appropriate course of action.
- All families will be notified of any use of chemicals and appropriate Safety Data Sheets will be available.
- Any use of chemical products should only be conducted outside the hours of the children and educators' presence in the building.
- All action will be taken to remove the children, educators, families and visitors from the environment for as long as is safe and viable.



**(B) MANAGING THE INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT**

**INDOOR ENVIRONMENT:**

- The services indoor environment will be smoke free, and no smoking notices will be prominently displayed.
- The Nominated Supervisor will only enrol the number of children in the service, which can comfortably fit into the building space and in accordance with the National Regulations and the Service Approval.
- Where children are indoors for long periods due to weather conditions, special activities will be planned, and other areas sought to disperse the group such as school halls and verandas.
- Separate areas in the indoor environment will be provided for:
  - ✓ Signing children in/out of the service.
  - ✓ Collection of fees, answering phones, and maintaining daily records.
  - ✓ Educators and families to talk in confidence.
  - ✓ Children to store their bags and belongings.
  - ✓ Storage of equipment, food, dangerous materials, and family records.
  - ✓ Preparation of food and drinks.
  - ✓ Kitchen and other refuse.
  - ✓ Cleaning of equipment.
  - ✓ Male and female toilet, hand basins and hand drying facilities.
  - ✓ Creative and other activities.
  - ✓ Large and small group activities.
  - ✓ Display of children's activities and work.
  - ✓ Quiet space for children to retreat to or do homework or lie down for a rest.
- The indoor area is to be set up to allow children to participate in a variety of activities with easy access to equipment. Drawing paper and other materials will be always made available to the children.
- Easy access to areas should be maintained by making clear easily definable passageways and walkways through the building.
- Staff will ensure that children properly store their bags, and that bags and other items are not thrown into walkways or play areas.
- All items obstructing areas are to be removed and placed in the correct storage areas.



- Areas must be set up to ensure that proper supervision can be always maintained.
- Access to the outdoor environment should be clear and easily accessible by the children and staff.

#### **OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT:**

- The outdoor environment provides each child with at least 7 square metres of unencumbered outdoor space in compliance with National Regulation 108.
- The outdoor environment will be smoke free and where possible, no smoking notices will be prominently displayed.
- The outdoor space will be inspected daily for any obstacles or dangerous items and the hazard check will be recorded.
- Any hazardous items will be disposed of in a safe and careful manner prior to the children playing in the area.
- The outdoor space will be set up in a variety of ways to encourage participation.
- Areas will be made available where children can play in large or small groups or by themselves.
- Supervision should be properly maintained. Children are only to play in areas that are clearly visible to educators, and where child/educator ratios are maintained.
- Clear boundaries shall be set and enforced.
- When it is necessary to go outside the boundaries or line of supervision, an educator must accompany children.
- Adequate shade via trees and coverings will be maintained. Children will be encouraged to undertake sun safe practices including wearing a hat and the provision of sun cream.
- As far as possible, activities will be set up in shaded areas.
- Use of other outdoor venues will be considered where access to the area is safe, adequate supervision can be maintained, the area is considered of value to the children's physical development and personal comfort, and where adequate staff/educator ratios can be maintained.



(c) **CHILD PROTECTIVE PRACTICES:**

**CHILD SAFE STANDARDS:**

- **SUNBEAMS** 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 recommended by the Royal Commission provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount.
- As part of our commitment to ensuring a child safe environment Leaders will support staff to comply with the organisations Child Safe Code of conduct which promotes child safe practices and putting children first.
- Sunbeams has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. 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.
- 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.

**MANDATORY REPORTING:**

- A Mandatory Reporter is anybody who delivers services to children as part of their paid or professional work.
- In OSHC services mandatory reporters are:
  - o Educators that deliver services to children
  - o Management, either paid or voluntary, whose duties include direct responsibility or direct supervision for the provision of these services.
- Educators are mandated to report to Community Services if they have current concerns about the safety or welfare of a child relating to section 23 of the NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Section 23 (1):
  - o a-b) Child is at significant risk of harm – Neglect



- a) Basic physical or psychological needs not being met or are at risk of not being met.
- b) Families unwilling or unable to provide necessary medical care
- b1) Families unwilling or unable to arrange for the child or young person to receive an education
- c) Child is at significant risk of harm – Physical / Sexual abuse
- d) Child is at significant risk of harm – Domestic violence
- e) Child is at significant risk of harm – Serious Psychological harm
- f) Child is at significant risk of harm – Prenatal report
- Educators will undergo training in relation to child protection and reporting as part of the training budget.
- Reports should be treated with strict confidentiality in adherence to the service's Confidentiality Policy and Procedures.
- Any educator who forms a belief based on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of harm should discuss their concerns with the Approved Provider and/or the Responsible Person in charge of daily operation as they may have information the educator is not aware of. The incident/s that led the educator to form the belief should be recorded concisely, include as much detail as possible and be kept in a secure place to ensure confidentiality.
- The Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person will then assist staff in completing the online Mandatory Reporters Guide (MRG - [MRG \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://www.mrg.nsw.gov.au)) to determine whether the report meets the threshold for **significant** risk of harm (see point below for further information regarding the MRG).
- If directed by the MRG to report to The Department of Community and Justice, should report their concerns to the Child Protection Helpline:
  - Mandatory Reporters phone 13 2111
- When reporting to the Child Protection Helpline, it is important to have as much information as possible available regarding the child/children involved and any specific incident details. This might include child's information, family information, reporter details and outcomes of the MRG.
- If the Nominated Supervisor has been advised to but has not reported to The Department of Communities and Justice, you are legally responsible to do so.
- Once a report is made to the Child Protection Helpline no further report needs to be made unless new information comes to hand.

### MANDATORY REPORTING GUIDE (MRG):

- The MRG has been developed to help frontline mandatory reporters, including OSHC educators, determine whether the risk to a child or young person meets the new statutory threshold of 'risk of significant harm'. The MRG will guide the reporter on what action should be taken. The MRG is an interactive tool and is available online at [MRG \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://MRG.nsw.gov.au)
- If still in doubt, The Department of Communities and Justice Helpline will provide feedback about whether the report meets the new threshold for statutory intervention.
- If new information presents concerning the child or young person run the MRG tool again.
- Where concerns do not meet the significant harm threshold, the MRG tool may guide you to 'Document and continue the relationship'. This requires the service to continue to support, provide services, and coordinate assistance and referral for the child and their family.
- Regardless of the outcome of using the MRG, the family and child will require support and referral where possible.
- The report page from the MRG should be printed and placed in the child/family file for future reference regardless of whether further action is recommended.

### INFORMATION EXCHANGE:

- To provide effective support and referral it may be necessary to exchange information with other prescribed bodies including government agencies or non-government organisations and services.
- The NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 has been amended (2009) to include chapter 16A Information Exchange
- Chapter 16A requires prescribed bodies to take reasonable steps to coordinate decision making and the delivery of services regarding children and young people
- Under Chapter 16A NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, educators will exchange information that relates to a child or young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing, whether the child or young person is known to Community Services and whether the child or young person consents to the information exchange.
- The information requested or provided **must** relate to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child. Information includes:
  - o A child or young person's history or circumstances



- A parent or other family member, significant or relevant relationship
- The agency's work now and in the past
  
- Where information is provided in good faith and according to legal provisions, under section 29 & section 245G NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998; reporters cannot be seen as breaching professional etiquette or ethics or as a breach of professional standards. There can be no liability for court action.

### WHERE A COMPLAINT IS MADE ABOUT AN EDUCATOR OR SOMEONE IN THE SERVICE:

- Should an incident occur that involves a child being put at risk of harm from an educator, volunteer, trainee or person visiting the service, this is regarded as **'reportable conduct'** and necessitates such conduct being reported to the Office of the Children's Guardian within seven business days and investigate the allegations. If the final entity report is not ready to submit within 30 calendar days, the head must provide an interim report with information about the progress of the investigation and an expected timeframe for completion.
- Where the allegation is made to an educator or member of management the facts as stated will be recorded in writing, using an Incident Report template that includes dates, times, names of person/s involved, name of person making allegation and the person making the report. This report should be kept on record and treated as strictly confidential.
- If the Nominated Supervisor or responsible person in charge is suspected, then the service's management should be informed.
- The relevant forms together with information and assistance are available online at <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme/notification-forms>.
- The person making the report should follow the advice of the Children's Guardian Departmental Officers. Management will also follow this advice.
- The matter will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- For the protection of both the children and the educator involved, the educator should be encouraged to take special leave or be removed from duties involving direct care and contact with children, until the situation is resolved.
- Support should be provided to all involved. This support can be given in the form of counseling or referral to an appropriate agency.

## RECRUITMENT AND ORIENTATION OF STAFF:

- All educators employed by the service including management, full time/ part time and casual educators, volunteers and students will be subject to a Working with Children Check carried out by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People. Written approval from the prospective employee will be sought prior to this check being carried out. All employees and management will also complete a Prohibited Employment Form that will be kept on file.
- When the service engages a self-employed individual to provide services, the provider is required to provide a **Certificate for Self-Employed People**. This certificate ensures verification that the person employed is not banned by law from working with children.
- All staff will be informed of their responsibilities as a Mandatory Reporter as part of their orientation and induction process. This will involve discussion regarding their current understanding, use of this policy and resources and access to Child Protection training. Information related to sexual grooming will also be provided upon orientation and induction to ensure that staff are fully aware of the signs and limits related to appropriately interacting with children.
- The service will take steps to ensure Staff are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual Education and care. Child Safe Training will extend from frontline staff to management and boards. (Standard 7 child Safe standards)

## RISK ASSESSMENT & RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

It is a legislative requirement that all services implement a risk management system where they identify and manage hazards and risks within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the service/residence/venue
2. Assess the risk of harm or potential harm for each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk – Risk Rating Matrix
4. Monitor and improve safety – Risk Assessment Action Plan
5. Evaluate and Review

It is the responsibility of The Approved Provider/ Nominated Supervisor or Responsible persons in day-to-day charge to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion.

Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the OSHC Service.



**Common hazards which may require a risk assessment include:**

- cross-infection and infectious disease
- administration of medication
- anaphylaxis procedures and management
- building and equipment (including storage)
- inadequate space for conducting activities and experiences
- hazardous chemicals
- electrical appliances
- food preparation and storage
- environmental influences such as shade, noise etc
- sun safety
- children's behaviours
- water safety
- fire equipment
- pets and/or animals
- inadequate supervision of children
- children's activities and experiences
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling
- non-compliance risk
- hot drinks
- transportation of children (regular outing and regular transportation)
- excursions

**EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan is 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.

### CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

Management, coordinators, educators, staff, volunteers and students will adhere to our Service's Code of Conduct Policy. We will:

- always provide adequate supervision of children.
- take reasonable action to protect children and young people for risk of harm
- ensure the service premise is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol
- adhere to our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- not discriminate against any child, because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability
- be responsible for their own, and others health and safety
- be a positive role model to children
- respect children's privacy and dignity always
- not put children at risk of abuse- refusing food/play, making threats, exposing children to inappropriate language or material (movies, internet, photos)

Make sure staff understand their obligations in reporting, sharing information and keeping records. (Standard 1 Child Safe standards)

- report any allegations of child abuse to the Approved Provider as mandatory reporter
- notify the approved provider and/or the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint as per the National Regulations

### ONLINE SAFETY

Sunbeams is committed to create and maintain a safe online environment with support and collaboration with 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. (Standard 8 Child Safe Standards: "Physical and online Environments minimise the opportunity for abuse ( or other types of harm) to occur" )



Our OSHC Service 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.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process for children to use computers/tablets; have their photo taken and published as part of promotional marketing or on the app program used by the service. The identity of a child is not published on any platform.

Personal mobile phones are not used to take photos or video of children at the Service.

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

### ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:

The policy will be reviewed annually. The review will be conducted by management, children, community and staff.

Last reviewed: April 2024

Date of next review: October 2025

**APPROVAL DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE FOR REVIEW:** \_\_\_\_\_