

BUSH KINDER: PLAY BENEFIT AND RISK

QUALITY AREA 2



Working in partnership with Cancer Council Victoria, ELAA has aligned this policy to the key policies and guidelines of the Healthy Early Childhood Services Achievement Program.

This policy, Bush Kinder: Play Benefit and Risk, is a special circumstance policy which augments the main Ferguson Park Preschool *Supervision of Children Policy* and should be read in conjunction with this policy.



PURPOSE

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines and procedures for Ferguson Park Preschool to:

- detail the benefits of outdoor play in the Bush Kinder environment, including the types of activities to be undertaken
- give Parents/Guardians comfort that while aiming to develop the children's self awareness in managing risks and undertaking challenges, that appropriate supervision is provided to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants at all times
- detail procedures for staff and volunteers to ensure that children are appropriately supervised and assisted during play and to ensure the safety of participants.



POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Ferguson Park Preschool:

- offers children opportunities to safely explore rich, diverse natural play environments while developing self-confidence, teamwork and social skills and an understanding of their environment
- allows children, through play, to experience challenges and develop self-awareness in managing risk according to ability and confidence.
- fosters child-led play at the child's pace
- gives participants freedom to explore using multiple senses which are fundamental for encouraging creative, diverse and imaginative play.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Ferguson Park Preschool Bush Kinder program.



| RESPONSIBILITIES | Approved provider and persons with management or control | Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge | Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff | Parents/guardians | Contractors, volunteers and students |
|---|--|---|--|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted | | | | | |
| Implementing and maintaining a Play Benefit & Risk Policy which provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to types of activities the children may be undertaking in Bush Kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self esteem, cooperation and ability to assess and respond to risks | R | ✓ | | | |
| Providing a safe environment for all participants in the Bush Kinder program | R | ✓ | | | |
| Ensuring that all parents/guardians being aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy, in written Bush Kinder material, on the Ferguson Park Preschool website and StoryPark | R | ✓ | | | |
| Ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy. (Relief ECT/Educator will not run the sessions, therefore affected session(s) will be cancelled) | R | ✓ | | | |
| Assessing potential tree climbing trees for sturdiness in liaison with Nillumbik Shire | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Ensure strategies to mitigate the risks and hazards of tree climbing (as set out in Attachment 1) are carried out as required | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Supervising children at all times and ensuring their safety | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Encouraging the children to do things for themselves e.g. putting on clothes, climbing and holding back branches, assessing risk through conversation with staff | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Talking and listening to the children as much as possible | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Offering help and encouragement during play whenever needed (for example, a more timid child may need support when playing Hide & Seek for the first time) | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Encouraging the children during play to help each other, share and to solve problems together, and give praise when this occurs | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Encouraging children during play to reflect on how they have changed (for example, how they can now walk along a log by themselves) | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Pointing out features, insects, plants, weather, sounds etc. that children may not have noticed | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Liaising with Wurundjeri Peoples and Respecting the Traditional Custodians of the land and their way of being out in the Bush | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |



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|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Ensuring protective and appropriate clothing is worn to Bush Kinder by their child in line with this policy, including closed toe footwear with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree/log climbing and balancing on uneven surfaces | | | | ✓ | |
| Reinforcing appropriate safety and behaviour strategies | | | | ✓ | |
| Reading and being familiar with the policy | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee | | | | ✓ | |
| Assisting with the supervision of children whilst on duty and following directions provided by the educators. Siblings of children (or other children with the parent) attending the pre school unfortunately cannot participate or attend while parents are on duty and assisting with bush kinder supervision | | | | ✓ | |



PROCEDURES

- Implementing and maintaining a Play Benefit & Risk Policy which provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to types of activities the children may be undertaking in Bush Kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self esteem, cooperation and ability to assess and respond to risks
- providing a safe environment for all participants in the Bush Kinder program
- ensuring that all parents/guardians being aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy, in written Bush Kinder material and on the website
- ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy.



BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

In modern society, opportunities for free, outdoor play can be limited and the valuable experience of free play in the outdoors, learning to accept challenges and taking considered risks is one that is not available to all children. Some educational leaders feel that we have developed an over reliance on digital and electronic sources for recreation, learning and socialising.

Ferguson Park Preschool's Bush Kinder program will support young children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the consequences of their actions, for themselves and for others and will support the children in taking on challenges and accepting responsibility. This program will support the children in becoming independent, responsible and motivated learners.

Under this policy, climbing, running, rolling and balancing will all be available to children, with such support and guidance as is deemed necessary for safety. In a Bush Kinder setting children learn important lessons – what is slippery, will I trip over that, is that safe to climb, how many of us can fit in that space?

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

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- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (The Regulations)
- National Quality Standard, including Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au



DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the PolicyWorks catalogue.

Appropriate clothing: (*refer to Bush Kinder: Protective Clothing Policy*)

Footwear: It is important that children wear appropriate footwear (closed toe with a flexible sole to facilitate effective climbing, balancing). (*refer to Bush Kinder: Protective Clothing Policy*)

Play: Play activities at Bush Kinder are diverse but typical activities and goals may include (though not limited to):

| EXPERIENCE | DEVELOPMENTAL BENEFITS |
|---|--|
| Engaging in pretend play with natural resources | Open ended learning allows children to explore at their own pace and with their own challenges |
| Building shelters or other large structures from branches, with the help of peers and adults | This requires setting goals, planning, engineering, teamwork and perseverance. |
| Counting found objects, categorising found objects, finding patterns in nature | Exploring mathematical concepts, visual discrimination |
| Observation of surroundings | Making observations, predicting patterns and outcomes |
| Arranging items to create transient art or an installation | Using natural materials creatively; creating with an emphasis on the “doing” rather than the outcome; Using photography to record and display outcomes |
| Photography | Using digital technology to record and share their learning experiences |
| Climbing trees, walking on logs or rocks, and exploring the bush (refer Attachment 1 for Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis) | Improves strength, balance and physical awareness |
| Exploring or reflecting alone | Aids self-awareness and character development, enjoying solitary play, celebrating own discoveries, success |
| Connecting to the land using the Aboriginal | Learn and use Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander |



| | |
|---|---|
| Perspectives | names for the land, local plants and animals, becoming familiar with the Aboriginal way of living |
| making explorations walking around, paying attention to detail, discussions about why things happen in nature | Understanding the human effect on nature, understanding and being a part of the biodiversity |

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES



SOURCES

- Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing – Mindstretchers Pty. Ltd. (Oct. 2009)
- ‘A Marvellous Opportunity for Children to Learn’ O’Brien & Murray, Forestry Commission (2006)
- Nature Kindergartens – Claire Walden
- Wikipedia ‘Forest Kindergarten’: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_kindergarten
- EYLF V.2 (Outcomes)

RELATED POLICIES

- Bush Kinder: Protective Clothing
- Bush Kinder: Supervision
- Excursions and Service Events
- Hygiene Policy
- Inclusion and Equity
- Supervision of Children

EVALUATION



In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the approved provider will:

- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedures, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk (*Regulation 172 (2)*)
- where deemed appropriate, encourage feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents/guardians of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions and the annual parent satisfaction survey/StoryPark posts
- ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy
- regularly review the policy and Ferguson Park Preschool practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.

ATTACHMENTS



- Attachment 1: Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to Mitigate Risk.

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AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the approved provider of Ferguson Park Preschool on **05/06/2024**.

REVIEW DATE: 05/06/2025.



ATTACHMENT 1. TREE CLIMBING RISK BENEFIT ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE RISK

Source: 'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing' Mind Stretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)

Benefits of Tree Climbing

1. Knowledge: tree characteristics (bark/wood/branches), seasonal changes, weather implications
2. Develop physical motor skills
3. Build self confidence
4. Group co-operation
5. Group awareness
6. Aesthetics/spirituality

Risks/Hazards and Strategies to Mitigate

| HAZARD | PRECAUTION |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Material on the floor beneath tree | Inform children of the hazard to allow for self evaluation Remove where appropriate(staff/children) |
| Deadwood | Remove dead wood branches overhead when found Inform children of the fragility of dead wood - likely to break, encourage children to monitor |
| Slippery Surfaces | Check condition of climbing surfaces prior to activity Evaluate weather conditions linked to hazard and desist if necessary Inform children of the hazards and allow self monitoring |
| Drop Heights | Children self assess abilities Children and staff monitor landing spaces for obstacles and remove or change landing location as required Staff support children when required/requested - hand held etc. |
| Protruding Branches | Children self assess climbing location Change climbing location if deemed too high risk |

