Early Learning Centre
Environment Policy

National Quality Standard Related Standards/ Regulations

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Aim

To ensure there are no environmental hazards in the ELC and prevent accident and injury to all children, staff and any others who may be on the grounds of the ELC.

NOTE: This policy is linked to and supported by other policies listed at the end of this document.

Explanation

The health and safety of children is central to their overall growth and development. As such, policies and procedures must be in place to ensure a high standard of safety and security in the ELC. Early identification of any potential hazards will minimize accidents and injuries, contributing to a child-safe environment.

Practice

General Safety

- All areas of the ELC and its grounds will be cleaned and maintained in a timely manner.
- Where appropriate, pathways, floor spaces and storerooms will be kept clear and safe from tripping hazards.
- Workplace, Health and Safety (WHS) is a standard item on both staff and Management meetings.
- Educators will have regular discussions with children regarding dangerous situations, dangerous substances and items, and safety practices. This will be incorporated into class programming.
- Educators will post SDS or warning signs around the ELC, where potentially dangerous substances or items are stored.
- All hot water taps will be set to deliver water 43.5 degrees Celsius (or below) to prevent scalding.
− Children will not have access to water play activities unless under supervision by educators. Water play resources (i.e. buckets and water trough) will be emptied after use and stored undercover so as not to be a catchment for water. During the day, when children are not using the water trough, it will be covered.
− Children will be supervised at all times, in accordance with the licensing conditions on educators/child ratios. The Director of Junior School (ELC) and Clerical Assistant are on hand to provide additional supervision where necessary.
− Educators will be aware of the need to place themselves in positions which allow good supervision of children, whilst also engaging with children in their activities where possible.
− Children will not be permitted to play on fences or gates, play with locks on gates, or throw sand or water.
− No child will be allowed to leave the premises or enter the office, indoor store room, staff room, art rooms or piazza area without an authorised adult.
− Children will not be allowed in the following areas: kitchen, laundry, outdoor store room (shed), the outdoor garbage area or washing line.
− Daily Outdoor Safety checks are completed by educators who set up the environment. Detailed safety inspections are completed at least annually.
− No tobacco or non-prescribed drugs will be allowed on the premises at any time.
− No alcohol will be consumed before or during school hours when children are on the premises. Any alcohol on the premises will be stored in a secure location, inaccessible to children.
− All staff are required to have current, approved First Aid qualifications, as well as up to date Asthma and Anaphylaxis training. There will always be at least one educator on site with current approved First Aid qualifications.
− All staff will undergo training in Child Protection, to ensure they are appropriately aware of their obligations as Mandatory Reporters of child abuse and neglect in the ACT.

**Electrical Safety and Fire Hazards**

− All electrical outlets/power points will be covered with safety caps when not in use.
− Electrical appliances and cords will be kept out of reach of children unless under direct supervision by an educator.
− Smoke detectors will be in place throughout the premises and linked to the electrical system.
− There will be an approved electrical cut off switch installed at the premises, to break the electrical circuit instantly if a person touches any live electrical source.
− Approved fire extinguishers in good working order will be located in the Piazza fire cupboard.
− There will be an approved fire blanket located in the kitchen.
− No smoking will be allowed on the premises at any time.
− Water hoses will be connected to the outdoor taps each day.
− All educators will be informed of emergency exits, evacuation procedures and emergency meeting points. There will be Evacuation Plan posters displayed prominently throughout the premises. Evacuation drills will be practiced at least once each term.
− All new electrical equipment will be “tagged and tested” by school maintenance before it is used in the ELC.
− All currently used electrical equipment will be checked regularly to see if it is in good condition (i.e. extension cords, power boards, compact disc players, computers, light boxes, photocopier, phones, vacuum, blow/vacuum, air-conditioning. If electrical equipment is found to be damaged or faulty it will be repaired or replaced.

**Storage of Dangerous Substances and Items**

Where appropriate, the ELC will have secure and child-safe storage facilities for:

− Medications
− First Aid equipment
− Cleaning and other harmful chemicals
− Harmful instruments and implements e.g. gardening tools, work tools, knives, sharp objects, adult scissors, matches and lighters
− Outdoor and indoor resources

− The storage facilities will be appropriate for the items e.g. stored out of a child’s reach and height, made secure by a lock and key mechanism, with the key stored away from the lock in a place inaccessible to a child.
− Cleaning materials and other chemicals will not be stored with food products.
− Chemicals and solvents will be used only in well ventilated areas.
− The Director of Junior School (ELC) will make available adequate information about any substance used in the Centre, to ensure that the substance will be used without risk to health when properly used.
− The Director of Junior School (ELC) will provide information to parents about products used within the ELC, on request.

When using any chemical substance educators will:

− Read any Material Data Sheet and follow the manufacturer’s directions for use and storage, as well as First Aid instructions on the label.
− Use the approved personal protective clothing equipment such as gloves, aprons, goggles, masks, etc when using chemicals.
− Chemicals and cleaning products will be stored in clearly labeled, appropriate bottles. Chemicals will never be stored in soft drink bottles, or other food or drink containers.
− The different types of bulk chemicals will be stored with space between the containers in the large cupboard in the shed at the front of the ELC premises. This storage area allows the chemicals to have space to breathe, but also keeps them inaccessible to children.

Building, Furniture, Fittings, Fencing and Gates

− The ELC building will be maintained in good working order by Canberra Girls Grammar School.
− Fencing, gates and doors at the Centre will be maintained in good condition. They will be checked regularly for splinters, sharp edges, protruding or loose screws or bolts.
− The gates will be fitted with approved child safe self-closing mechanisms.
− The Centre will be kept clean and tidy. Floors will be kept smooth and even with non-slip surfaces.
− Paint on walls will be well maintained in clean and safe condition to ensure children have no access to old paint.
− Furniture and fittings will be kept in good condition, cleaned daily and will be suitable for the age group of the children using it e.g. the height and size of tables, chairs, shelving, toilets, basins.
− Shelving or cupboards will be secure or will have secure castors. Chair legs will have secure legs. Table tops will have no sharp edges.
− Furniture and equipment will be placed in safe positions, not blocking walkways or posing tripping hazards and not placed near windows or glass.
− Furniture will be checked regularly for possible safety hazards. If hazards are found, the item will be withdrawn from use until repaired.

Toys, Equipment and Play Areas

− Equipment purchased will be checked for safety.
− Toys and equipment will be in good condition and clean and will be appropriate to the age and development of the children.
− Toys and equipment will be cleaned regularly with water and detergent, or disinfectant.
− Damaged or broken toys and equipment will be repaired or replaced when they are found or will be withdrawn from use until they are repaired.
− Toys and equipment will be tidied and put away where possible, when not in use.
- All art and craft materials purchased will be non toxic.
- Potentially dangerous items (i.e. knives during cooking activities) will only be used with children under direct supervision by a staff member. Items will be removed from activity areas when not in use and stored appropriately.
- All outdoor equipment will comply with current Australian Standards and child care regulations.
- Adequate shade areas will be provided through shade sails and large trees.
- The sand area will be cleaned regularly and will be covered when not in use.
- Poisonous or toxic plants will be removed from the Centre or made inaccessible to children when found.
- Trees and shrubs found to have low or dangerous branches will be pruned to ensure safety.
- Insects, spiders and small animals which could pose a hazard to educators and children will be removed from the premises when found.

When setting up the playground environment educators members will be aware of:

- Soft fall surfaces under and around equipment
- The height from which a child can fall
- The size of the equipment
- The age and development of the children
- The need to check for sharp or rough edges
- Holes or areas that can trap body parts
- The need to maintain equipment in good order
- Safe positioning on even surfaces with secure anchoring

The ELC premises will be fumigated annually by a professional pest controller during a vacation period.

**Car Park Safety**

Parents will be encouraged to:

- Drive within the speed limit on the roads surrounding the ELC and to watch for pedestrians.
- Drive at a very slow, safe speed within the car park, looking out for pedestrians other reversing cars.
- Not double park cars
- Always use approved child restraints when traveling in cars, with children in the back seat of vehicles.
- Be aware of other cars in the carpark as they remove their child from the car.
- Always hold their child’s hand when moving through the car park.
- Take young children out of the car when entering the building.

**Other Policies**

Further information about our safety practices and procedures can be found within these related policies:

- Cleaning and Hygiene Procedures
- Medical Conditions and Medication Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Emergency Evacuation Policy
- Emergency Containment Policy
- Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- UV Protection Policy (SunSmart)
- Food and Nutrition Policy
References

- Staying Healthy in Childcare – Preventing Infectious Disease in Child Care 4th edition
- Education and Care Services National Regulations, 2011