

Early Years Services – QA2.20 Bush/Beach Kindergarten Play Benefits and Risk Educational Program

TRIM Reference: D15/74634 Due for Review: 4 April 2024
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This policy aims to detail the educational benefits of outdoor-nature play in the Bush/Beach Kinder environment:

- To ensure that the educational programs enhance the learning and development of each child participating in Surf Coast Shire Council early years' services.
- To ensure staff are adequately mentored and trained to deliver a high quality nature play program that meets children's continuous learning skills.
- To ensure the safety, health & wellbeing of children when participating in Early Years Services activities.
- To ensure families are educated on the benefits on nature play

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 1.1.1.2.

Evidence of link to Educational & Care Services National Regulations: Part 4.1, 73, 74, 75, 76, 100.

Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Law: Section 168

All Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services staff/volunteers and children utilising the services.

Scope

This policy applies to all early childhood education and care programs provided by the Surf Coast Shire Early Years Services.

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards 1.1.1.2.

Evidence of link to Educational & Care Services National Regulations: Part 4.1, 73, 74, 75, 76.

Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Law: Section 168

Victorian Children's Services: Regulations 2020.

Policy

Activity	Developmental benefit
Playing imaginative games using the resources <u>that</u> nature provides	Open ended learning allows for children to explore at their own pace <u>and with their own challenges</u>
Role play	Shared imagination <u>to explore</u> , drama <u>context</u> , team work <u>teamwork</u> , recollection of models of <u>and social</u> behaviours.
Building shelters or other large structures from branches <u>natural materials</u> , with the help of other children and adults	This requires goal definition <u>Applications of problem solving, goal definition</u> , planning, engineering, teamwork and perseverance <u>resilience</u> .
Counting objects or looking for mathematical patterns	Mathematics, visual recognition

Memory games using naturally available objects	Memory, naming objects
Listening to stories, singing songs and rhymes	Art, drama, <u>self-expression</u> , concentration, literacy and oral language <u>skills</u>
Arranging items to make a picture, or installation	Art, imagination and creativity
Drawing scenes	Art, creativity, observation of flora, fauna and surroundings
<u>Climbing at bush/beach kinder sites for example</u> Climbing trees, walking on logs and rocks and while exploring <u>nature the bush</u> (<u>See Refer to Attachment 1 for Bush and Beach Kinder Health and Safety Policy for Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis</u>)	Improves gross motor strength, balance and physical awareness, <u>coordination and risk awareness benefits</u>
Walking within the parklands <u>natural habitats</u>	Improves strength and stamina, preparation (e.g., route selection) improves planning and communication skills
Exploring or reflecting alone	Aids self-awareness and character development. Promotes physical and emotional wellbeing
Play involving water where it occurs naturally (for example <u>ocean, rivers, creeks</u> , puddles and on walks in the rain in the Bush/Beach Kinder area sites (wearing puddle suits – see Protective Clothing Policy))	Experience and understanding of <u>water safety and the impact of</u> all weather conditions and their effect on the natural environment.
Using tools	Using tools safely to , for example, making <u>inge</u> items out of bark & sticks, or to plant seeds/seedlings and other gardening activities (<u>Refer to Safe Use of Tools Policy</u>)
Observing seasonal changes and weather changes	Gaining and sharing familiar and unfamiliar knowledge Broadening understanding of the world around <u>we live in</u>
Observing mini-beasts <u>animals and their habitats and becoming familiar with local flora and fauna</u>	Gaining and sharing familiar and unfamiliar knowledge <u>about</u> animals, flora and fauna specific to the local area. Broadening understanding of the world around

General

The Surf Coast Shire Early Years Management is responsible for:

- implementing and maintaining ~~a Play Benefit & Risk~~ the Bush/Beach Educational Policy which provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to the types of activities children may be undertaking in Bush/Beach Kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self-esteem, co-operation and ability to assess and respond to risks;
- providing an educational and safe environment for all participants in the Bush/Beach Kinder program;

- ensuring that all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy on the Surf Coast Shire website, and in written form upon request;
- ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy.

Staff are responsible for:

- supervising children at all times and ensuring their safety;
- educating children's awareness of their own safety and the safety of others at all times
- supporting children's engagement in the natural environment through play, for example – awareness of habitat features, animals, plants, weather, sounds etc...
- Implementing teaching strategies that scaffold children's emergent learning
- ensuring every child is actively and consistently supported to engage in the nature program.
- Critically reflecting with children on their learning and development as individuals and groups to review the education program on an ongoing basis.
- Actively engaging with children
- encouraging the children during play to help each other, share and to solve problems together, and affirm positive behavior when this occurs;
- Incorporating safety routines and awareness throughout the program.
- Supporting the children's nature play learning and explorations from the bush/beach kinder site at the kindergarten services.
- Documenting the children's learning, growth and development when at the bush/beach kinder site and sharing this with families.

====
•

- ~~all staff sign the applicable site WHS bush kinder checklist each session assessing potential tree climbing trees for sturdiness in liaison with the Coordinator of Open space operations~~
- ~~ensuring strategies to mitigate the risks and hazards of tree climbing are carried out as required;~~
- ~~educating the children on water risks, providing an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks and teaching them appropriate behaviour around water. Ensure strategies to mitigate risks and hazards in relation to water are carried out as required;~~
- ~~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;~~
- ~~offering help and encouragement during play whenever needed (for example, a more timid child may need support when tree climbing for the first time);~~
- ~~encouraging the children during play to help each other, share and to solve problems together, and affirm positive behavior 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);~~
- ~~helping children become aware of features, insects, plants, weather, sounds etc. that children may not have noticed;~~
- ~~taking opportunities to reinforce safety routines applicable to play wherever possible.~~

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- providing feedback to staff where applicable
- ensuring protective and appropriate clothing is worn to Bush/Beach Kinder by their child ~~in line with Bush/Beach Kinder Protective Clothing 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/or Team Leader of Kindergarten programs.~~

Definitions

Appropriate clothing: (Refer ~~Protective Clothing~~ Bush/Beach Kinder Health and Safety Policy Policy)

Footwear: It is important that children wear appropriate footwear (closed toe with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree climbing, balancing on rocks, logs etc.) Refer to Protective Clothing Policy.

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

- Tree climbing: This activity has been singled out, as it is an activity likely to cause the most unease amongst parents/guardians.
- Water play: Water play during Bush Kinder will take place from time to time in cases where water occurs naturally, for example, looking at and playing with puddles, play in the rain and on walks wearing puddle suits. There are some bodies of water in the Bush Kindergarten sites, which may be encountered by the Bush Kinder group during a supervised walk. Children will be taught an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks, and will learn appropriate behavior around water.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Policies

~~D15/74620~~ ~~D14/94973~~ Bush Kinder – Delivery and Collection of Children
 D15/74610 Bush/Beach Kinder - Snake awareness and first aid Health & Safety
~~D15/74606~~ Bush Kinder – Protective Clothing
~~D15/74583~~ Bush Kinder – Management of Dogs
~~D15/74477~~ Bush Kinder – Identification & Visibility
 D15/74476 Bush/Beach Kinder - Extreme Weather
 D15/73628 Bush/Beach Kinder - Emergency Evacuation
 D15/35312 Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy
 D15/35364 Early Years Sustainability Policy
~~Tree climbing Guidelines – are currently being developed~~

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

~~D14/28442~~ Family Day Care 'Active Play' Work Instructions
 Online Early Years Enrolment and Consent Form
 D19/24712 Template - Excursion Parent Permission Form – 2019
D21/221509 Template - Bush Kinder Regular Excursion Authority

Other References

'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing' MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)
 A Marvellous Opportunity for Children to Learn 'Liz O'Brien and Richard Murray, Forestry Commission (2006)
 Wikipedia – 'Forest Kindergarten'
 'Nature Kindergartens' – Claire Walden
 'Understanding the Danish Forest School Approach - Early Years Education in Practice' – Jane Williams-Sieghfredson

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:
 Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
 Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (National Law)
 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (The Regulations) and the National Quality Standard (Schedule 1 of the Regulations)

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approval Date	Manager Aged and Family - 1 October 2015
2	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family - 3 January 2018

3	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family - 23 August 2018
4	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening - 9 January 2020
6	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 4 October 2022