Hills Grammar

Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy

Policy Statement

The ECEC is deeply committed to child protection and providing a child safe environment, recognising that all children have a right to feel and be safe. This commitment extends to actively building and maintaining a comprehensive child safe culture, which involves proactively identifying and mitigating risks, promoting children's dignity, rights, and cultural safety, and embedding child, beyond just responding to incidents. The ECEC has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that the rights and best interests of the child are paramount. We will provide training, resources, information, and guidance to ensure a safe environment for all children.

Rationale

A key and important component of the ECEC's duty of care is the protection of all children from harm. All individuals caring for children within the ECEC must act in the best interests of the child and take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety. The ECEC will implement preventative procedures as a core component of child safeguarding, differentiating it from child protection which focuses on response, emphasizing that prevention is key. These procedures protect and educate children, staff, families, and community members. We will ensure that all requirements of child protection legislation and comprehensive child safeguarding frameworks are met.

The ECEC will:

- Prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of the children at the ECEC is protected at all times.
- Prioritise child safety in leadership, governance, and culture, ensuring that leaders champion and model child safe pedagogical practices and actively identify and fix risks.
- Uphold that people educating and caring for children at the ECEC act in the best interest of the children.
- Foster and support supervision procedures at all times.
- Organise rooms and environments to minimise risks to children.
- Monitor and minimise hazards and safety risks in the environment.
- Protect and advocate the rights of all children to feel and be safe, including teaching children about their rights and encouraging them to contribute to decisions affecting them.
- Embed the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and State Child Safe Standards across everyday practices, ensuring that cultural safety and the diverse needs of all children are respected and addressed.
- Maintain a culture in which children's rights are respected, and their voices are actively sought and believed.
- Implement ECEC Child Protection and Incidents, Injury, Trauma, Illness Policies.
- Take every reasonable precaution to protect children being educated and cared for at the ECEC from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury.

- Encourage active participation from families at the ECEC, supporting a partnership approach and shared responsibility for children's health, safety, wellbeing and development.
- Keep up to date with any relevant changes in legislation, national frameworks, and best practices.
- Develop and implement risks assessments as necessary.
- Maintain ECEC's strict prohibition from the use of tobacco, vaping substances and vaping devices, illicit drugs and alcohol.
- Encourage active participation from families at the ECEC, supporting a partnership approach and shared responsibility of children's health, safety, welling and development.
- Encourage children to express their views and wishes about matters affecting their lives and to have those views appropriately considered by adults.
- Support children to feel and be safe in their interactions with adults and other children and young people.
- Support children to understand, as early as possible, what is meant by 'feeling and being safe'.

Strategies

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- Oversee that the ECEC operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations with regards to the delivery and collection of children at all times.
- Implement child focused recruitment practices for all staff, volunteers, and students. This includes job advertising that emphasizes child safety, comprehensive interview questions designed to assess an applicant's values and attitudes towards child safety, and thorough reference checks.
- Oversee educators at ECEC who work with children are advised of current child protection legislation, its application and any obligations that they may have under that law.
- Support all staff to have access to relevant professional development.
- Support all staff to be briefed on the ECEC and Hills Grammar School Child Protection policies and relevant legislation upon induction and are provided with annual updates.
- Keep up to date and comply with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Support every adult working with children to be made aware of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing, and of their obligations under this law and action plan.
- Support staff to have access to the Mandatory Reporter Guide.
- Maintain that all records are retained for the specified periods, such as records relating to a child's incident, illness, injury, or trauma until the child is 25 years old, in a safe and secure place.
- Promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing that underpins all aspects of the ECEC's operations, to reduce risk to children (including the risk of abuse).
- Maintain the safe use of online environments at the ECEC and implement practices to support the safety of the children enrolled at ECEC.
- Support all families to be made aware of support services available to them and of the assistance these services can provide.
- Implement a rostering system and run of day system that supports sufficient numbers of educators employed to ensure adequate supervision of children at all times.
- Adopt policies and procedures to protect children being educated and cared for by educators at the ECEC from harm and from any hazard likely to cause injury.
- Maintain ECEC's strict prohibition from the use of tobacco, vaping substances and vaping devices, illicit drugs and alcohol.
- Oversee staff are always aware of the need for adequate and active supervision of children.

- Uphold that volunteers, students or visitors are not included in the ratio of adults supervising children, nor will these people be left alone with a child or group of children.
- Make sufficient allowance within the budget to allow for the replacement of worn and damaged equipment and resources, which may provide safety risk for children.
- Make sufficient allowance within the budget to allow the adequate maintenance of the indoor and outdoor environments.
- Place the Child Protection Helpline number (132 111) and key emergency contact numbers next to all phones in the ECEC.
- Notify the regulatory authority through the NQA-ITS within 24 hours for physical or sexual abuse allegations/incidents.
- Support ECEC educators and staff through the process of documenting and reporting current concerns of children at risk of significant harm, such as the process for completing the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG).
- Organise repairs and maintenance to equipment and environments.
- Conduct a risk assessment of the ECEC environment to determine any risks to children's health and safety.
- Provide educators with a copy of the Child Protection Policy and assist them with reporting.
- Protect the rights of children and families and encourage their participation in decision making at ECEC.
- Maintain transparency with families by detailing how they will be informed during and after an investigation, while respecting privacy and legal limitations and seeking guidance from external authorities as needed

Educators will:

- Act in accordance with the obligations outlined in this policy.
- Raise concerns when barriers or threats to the protection of children and young people's safety and wellbeing are identified, including through the conduct of other adults at the ECEC.
- Keep up to date and compliant with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy.
- Inform families of support services available to them, and of the assistance these services can provide.
- Undertake appropriate training and education on child protection, trauma informed practices, and cultural responsiveness, to effectively support children's learning, development, and wellbeing, especially when dealing with adversity or trauma.
- Adequately supervise children within their room/group at all times.
- Maintain that no child is left alone with a visitor, volunteers, student of parent/ guardian at the ECEC.
- Inform the Nominated Supervisor whenever supervision is inadequate within their room to ensure the health and safety of all children.
- Oversee the safe use of online environments at the ECEC and promote online safety for children through education on risks like grooming, cyberbullying, and inappropriate content.
- Follow all record keeping requirements.
- Ensure that children being educated and cared for are provided with an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, vaping substances and vaping devices, illicit drugs and alcohol.
- Organise indoor and outdoor spaces to ensure risks to the health and safety are minimised.
- Inform the Nominated Supervisor of repairs needed within the ECEC.
- Advise other staff members when they are leaving the floor and advise again when they are back (ie, for toilet breaks).
- Report any risks or hazards within the ECEC to the Nominated Supervisor.
- If it is a hazard which requires help from outside of our staff, maintenance will be emailed or called if it is an emergency.
- Uphold that no child is left alone with a visitor, volunteer, student or parent/guardian at ECEC unless a parent has given consent.

- Maintain confidentiality at all times, understanding the balance with necessary information sharing for child safety purposes.
- Adhere to all ECEC policies that adhere to the Child Safe Standards.
- Develop trusting and secure relationships with all children, which is foundational to children's sense of belonging, wellbeing, and their confidence to explore the environment and communicate concerns.
- Actively seek children's opinions and encourage them to contribute to decisions affecting them, using specific strategies such as child friendly information on safety and reporting concerns, offering real choices, and respecting their decisions.
- Work in culturally sensitive ways, acknowledging Traditional Owners, respecting diversity, ensuring culturally safe and responsive interactions, and valuing the experiences of children and families from diverse backgrounds, including specific considerations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Acknowledge that some children may face greater vulnerability due to disability, cultural background, gender identity, or prior trauma, and implement strategies for making reasonable adjustments and creating inclusive environments to ensure equitable participation for all.
- Respond calmly and attentively to disclosures of abuse, avoiding leading questions, providing comfort, documenting exact words and observations, and continuing to monitor and respond to the child's needs within the terms of their work role, even after a report has been made.

Families will:

- Read and comply with this policy.
- Report any concerns, including in relation to potential for child abuse, to the Nominated Supervisor, confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon within a child focused complaints system.
- Be actively involved and provide feedback in the ongoing review and improvement of child safe practices and policies, alongside management and employees, recognising their essential role as stakeholders.

Statutory Legislation and Considerations

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Guide to the National Quality Standard ACECQA

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) V2.0, 2022

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission 2018)

Sources

Community Early Learning Australia www.cela.org.au

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) www.acecqa.gov.au

Australian Childcare Alliance_www.childcarealliance.org.au

Kids Safe https://www.kidsafensw.org/

Department of Communities and Justice Child Safe Standards - The Child Safe Standards (nsw.gov.au)

Office of the Children's Guardian https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/

Childstory Report https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/

NQF Child Safe Culture Guide

Links to other Policies

ECEC Child Protection Policy

ECEC Dealing with Complaints Policy

ECEC Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

ECEC Child Safe Standards Procedure

ECEC Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy

ECEC Safe Use of Digital Technology and Online Environments Policy

The Hills Grammar Community Code of Conduct

Review

This policy is reviewed by management, employees and families as required or when legislative requirements change.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.