



BUSH KINDER PLAY BENEFIT AND RISK POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Detail the benefits of outdoor play in the Bush Kinder environment, including the types of activities to be undertaken
- Give parents/guardians comfort while aiming to develop the children's self-awareness in managing risk, and that appropriate play supervision is provided to always ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants
- Detail procedures for staff and volunteers to ensure that children are appropriately supervised and assisted during play and to always ensure the safety of participants

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Rangeview Pre-School is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children and staff participating in the Bush Kinder program by following these strategies:
 - Committee of Management and staff review and adjust policies, protocols and strategies as required to continually ensure the safety of the Bush Kinder program and share this with families.
 - Staff will ensure each child participating in the Bush Kinder program will wear a hi-visibility vest with a Rangeview Pre-School label and phone number on the back.
 - Children will be a part of a smaller supervision group attached to one educator. Each small group will have an identifying colour hi-visibility vest for quick visual identification.
 - Cones will be utilised to identify boundaries to the free play space.
 - Staff will use walkie talkies to remain in communication with each other throughout the program.
- Offering children opportunities to safely explore rich, diverse natural play environments while developing self-confidence, teamwork and social skills and an understanding of their surrounding environment
- Allowing children, through play, to experience challenge and develop self-awareness in managing risk according to top ability and self confidence
- Fostering child-led play at child pace
- Allowing participants freedom (within reason) to explore using multiple senses that are fundamental for encouraging creative, diverse, and imaginative play

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in day-to-day Charge, staff, contractors, volunteers, students on placement, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Rangeview Pre-School.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

Contact with the outdoors is often limited for many children in modern society, and the vital experience of using the outdoors and being comfortable in nature is being lost. We have also developed an over reliance on digital and electronic sources for recreating, learning, and socialising.

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Rangeview Pre-School's Bush Kinder program is intended to support young children through play, to develop responsibility for themselves and others. It will even encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and others. In so doing, children learn to take on challenges and accept responsibility.

Under this policy, tree climbing for example, is encouraged on those trees deemed safe by staff (in liaison with the advice of the City of Whitehorse's Parkside Officers). With support and guidance offered to children as required. Walking across logs for example, may require staff support to provide stability and balance until the child feels comfortable to manage this task on their own.

In a Bush Kinder setting, children learn important lessons – what is slippery, what you can trip over or fall from, and how to climb.

Legislation

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Sections 167, 169
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 87, 89, 136, 137(1)(e), 168(2)(a),
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 204
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

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/

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Appropriate Clothing: Refer Protective Clothing Policy.

Footwear: It is important that children wear appropriate footwear at Bush Kinder – closed toes shoes with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree climbing and balancing on rocks or logs (refer to Protective Clothing Policy).

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

Activity	Developmental Benefit
Playing imaginative games using resources nature provides	Open ended learning allows children to explore at their own pace and with their own challenges
Role play	Shared imagination, drama, team work, recollection of models of behaviour
Building shelters or other large structures from branches, with the help of other children and adults	This requires goal definition, planning, engineering, teamwork and perseverance

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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, concentration
Arranging items to make a picture, or a toy	Art, imagination and creativity
Drawing scenes	Art, creativity, accurate inspection and copying
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
Playing hide-and-seek with others within the safe play space and with a supervising adult	Rewards accurate anticipation of the thoughts and actions of others
Walking within the parklands	Improves strength and stamina, preparation (route selection, improves planning and communication skills)
Exploring or reflecting alone	Aids self-awareness and character development
Play involving water where it occurs naturally, such as puddles and on walks in the rain in the Bush Kinder area (waterproofs - refer Protective Clothing Policy)	Experience an understanding of all weather conditions and their effect on the natural environment

Tree climbing: see Attachment 1: Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to Mitigate Risk.

(Note: 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, such as looking and playing in puddles, playing in the rain and on walks wearing waterproofs and gumboots.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Forest School at Duffryn Nursery booklet (Wales)
(<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ebc721c89fdae6f78222f33/t/5efb58da79f7d833d55f64dd/1593530608920/fr0112forestschooolsreport.pdf>)
- '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'.

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Service policies

- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Anaphylaxis Policy
- Asthma Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Curriculum Development Policy
- Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
- Diabetes Policy
- Epilepsy Policy
- Excursions, Incursions and Special Events Policy
- Food Safety Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy
- Road Safety Education and Safe Transport Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Water Safety Policy

Additional Bush Kinder Policies

Bush Kinder is conducted as part of the Rangeview Pre-School program and therefore is governed by the regulations and procedures of the kindergarten. Additional policies have been created for Bush Kinder sessions to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, staff and volunteers involved in the program. We ask parents to view the policies regarding Bush Kinder available at www.rangeviewpreschool.vic.edu.au to gain a full understanding of the responsibilities of the Rangeview Pre-School Committee, staff, volunteers and parents alike.

The policies are as follows:

- Play Benefit and Risk Policy BK
- Supervision of Children BK
- Snake Awareness Policy BK
- Delivery and Collection Policy BK
- Dog Awareness Policy BK
- Extreme Weather Policy BK
- Identification and Visibility Policy BK
- Protective Clothing Policy BK
- Emergency Evacuation Policy BK
- Stranger Awareness Policy BK
- Fauna and Flora Awareness Policy BK.

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Implementing and maintaining a Play Benefit and Risk Policy that provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to types of activities the children may be undertaking in Bush

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Kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self-esteem, co-operation and ability to assess and respond to risks

- Providing a safe environment for all participants in the Bush Kinder program
- Reviewing and adjusting policies, risk minimisation plans, protocols and strategies as required to continually ensure the safety of the children and staff attending Bush Kinder program and ensure this is shared with staff and families.
- Ensuring staff are equipped and have the resources to ensure the Bush Kinder program policies and strategies are followed.
- A check list is supplied for relief staff to ensure that they understand the procedures and strategies required for the safety of those attending the Bush Kinder program. (Attachment 3)
- Staff are provided time at the beginning of the year to become familiar with the needs of the children before the Bush Kinder program begins.
- Staff are provided time for orientation sessions for children and families prior to beginning the Bush Kinder program at the beginning of the year.
- Ensuring that all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy at orientation sessions, in written Bush Kinder material and on the Pre-School Website, and made available upon request
- Ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, Teachers and Educators are responsible for:

- Working with the Approved Provider to review policies, risk minimisation plans, protocols and strategies as required to continually ensure the safety of the children and staff attending Bush Kinder program and ensure this is shared with staff and families.
- Reading and understanding the Bush Kinder policies, risk minimisation plans, protocols, and strategies to ensure the safety of children and staff attending Bush Kinder program.
- Ensuring all equipment and resources are in place and in working order before each Bush Kinder session. (e.g. walkie talkies charged and working, small group list, protocols in bum bags or back packs).
- Informing the Approved Provider when equipment and resources require repair or replacement.
- Ensuring that replacing staff on a Bush Kinder day where possible, is sourced from the team of staff at home kinder.
- If agency relief staff are necessary: working through the Relief staff check list to ensure an understanding of the bush kinder program and the supervision requirements during the session.
- Ensuring each child participating in the Bush Kinder program will wear a hi-visibility vest with a Rangeview Pre-School label and phone number on the back.
- Ensuring that children are a part of a smaller supervision group attached to one educator. Each small group of children will have an identifying colour hi-visibility vest for quick visual identification, that matches the group educator colour vest.
- Utilise safety cones where necessary to identify boundaries to the free play space.
- Utilise walkie talkies as one way of communicating during the bush kinder program
- Positioning themselves appropriately to ensure suitable supervision of the children attending the Bush Kinder program.
- Reviewing safety aspects of attending the Bush Kinder program with the children including but not limited to boundaries, expectations, staying with the group etc. each term.
- Informing families of the expectations of the Bush Kinder program.
- Always supervising children and ensuring their safety

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- Assessing potential climbing trees for sturdiness in liaison with Parkswide officers
- Ensuring strategies to mitigate the risks and hazards of tree climbing (as listed in Attachment 1) are carried out as required
- Education of children on water risk, providing an awareness of bodies of water and associated risks, and teaching them appropriate behaviour around water. Ensuring strategies to mitigate risks and hazards in relation to water (as listed in Attachment 2) are carried out as required
- Encouraging children to do things for themselves, such as putting on clothes, climbing and holding back tree branches and 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-and-seek for the first time)
- Encouraging 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
- Taking opportunities to reinforce safety routines applicable to play wherever possible

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Ensuring protective clothing and footwear is worn to Bush Kinder by their child in line with this policy, including closed toe footwear with a flexible sole (refer Protective Clothing Policy)
- Reinforcing appropriate safety and behaviour strategies and expectations of the Bush Kinder program with your children e.g., Social stories, listening to your teachers.
- Keeping your child home if they seem unusually emotional or challenging on a Bush Kinder day. Often children in a high emotional state find it difficult to follow instructions and may run and / or hide from educators.
- Ensuring your child has on the hi-visibility vest at the beginning of the session.
- Reading and familiarising themselves with this policy
- Bringing any relevant issues to the attention of both Kinder staff and the committee

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

To assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents/guardians of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions, surveys, and the Pre-School newsletter
- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy
- Review the first aid procedures following an incident to determine their effectiveness
- Regularly review the policy and Pre-School practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research, or best practice procedures
- Revisit the policy and procedures in light of the above as part of the service's policy review cycle, or earlier if required



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- Notifying parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to the policy or its procedures (Regulation 172 of the National Regulations) unless a shorter period is necessary due to a perceived or actual risk.

ATTACHMENTS

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

Attachment 2: Exposure to Water Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to Mitigate Risk

AUTHORISATION

The policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Rangeview Preschool on 7 October 2015.

REVIEW

DATE	NEXT REVIEW DATE (2 YEARLY)
Oct 2021	Oct 2023
Sep 2022	Apr 2023
Nov 2023	Nov 2025

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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 the tree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform the children of the hazard to allow self evaluation Remove where appropriate (staff/children)
Dead wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove dead wood branches when found Inform children of the fragility of dead wood – likely to break, encourage children to monitor
Slippery surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children self assess abilities Children and staff monitor landing spaces for obstacles and remove or change landing location as required Staff support children as required/requested – holding hands etc.
Protruding branches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children self assess climbing location Change climbing location or remove branches if deemed too high a risk

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ATTACHMENT 2

Exposure to Water Risk Benefit Analysis and Strategies to Mitigate Risk

Source: 'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Pond and Stream in Auchlone Woodland', Mind Stretchers Pty Ltd (October 2010)

Benefits of Exposure to Water (Lakes, Ponds, Streams):

1. Children become aware of open water and associated risks and learn appropriate behaviour around water
2. Awareness of seasonal and weather changes to still water and running water
3. Group care and awareness
4. Children self-risk assess open water
5. Raised awareness and appreciation of wildlife on and near lakes, ponds and streams
6. Calming effect of being near open water
7. Group co-operation
8. Group awareness

Risks/Hazards and Strategies to Mitigate:

Hazard	Precaution
Slippery banks on pond and stream <i>Children falling in</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of slippery surfaces near waters edge • An adult must be with the children near banks of lake/pond • No access to banks after heavy rain or flooding, and on recommendation by park ranger
Contaminated water <i>Illness when consumed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have limited access to pond or stream water. Staff raise awareness of contamination. Children wash hands in clean running water after contact with lake/pond/stream water