

Intereach Children's Services

Physical Environment Policy



Applies to	Intereach Family Day Care (FDC) and Intereach Out Of School Hours (OOSH)				
Definitions	Refer to Schedule of Definitions: <i>Approved Provider, Educational Leader, Nominated Supervisor, and wellbeing.</i>				
Version	2.0	Date approved	26/07/2023	Next review date	26/07/2026

1. Policy Statement

This policy supports the understanding that the physical environment is critical to:

- contributing to children's wellbeing, creativity and developing independence;
- providing a diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development;
- providing inclusive environments, both indoor and outdoor, which helps children to foster positive relationships and have a sense of belonging;
- keeping children safe; and,
- creating/organising spaces to reduce the risk of injury.

2. Objective

2.1. The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.

The way in which the service environment is designed, equipped and arranged determines how children use space and resources. The environment also impacts on the behaviours and interactions of children and adults.

In the management of its services, Intereach is committed to:

- providing welcoming indoor and outdoor spaces to enable children to play, learn and develop their knowledge and skills while promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and/or children from linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- ensuring that all outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purposes;
- ensuring premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained;
- ensuring resources, materials and equipment are sufficient and appropriate, and support the flexibility of our children's programs and experiences;
- making reasonable adjustments to policy, procedure, practice and environment to enable all children to access and participate in the service on the same basis as others;
- providing a safe online environment for children taking into consideration of their wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed; and,
- providing ongoing training and information to educators and staff to support child safety.

In relation to Indoor environments, Intereach is committed to ensuring that these are characterised by open spaces that provide children with opportunities to be involved in self-chosen and negotiated experiences that can be quiet or active learning situations, solitary play experiences, or routines with small and large groups. Quality indoor spaces:

- support the emerging interests of every child and enable them to demonstrate their innate creativity and curiosity;
- reflect the cultures, interests, abilities and learning styles of every child; and,
- recognise children as active learners and competent decision makers.

Outdoor environments are characterised by both active and quiet zones that comprise a balance of fixed and moveable equipment, open space to engage in physical activities, and spaces that promote investigation and respect for the natural environment. Outdoor spaces that are dynamic and flexible:

- provide opportunities for unique play and learning;
- compliment and extend the indoor learning experiences; and,
- offer children opportunities to be active, make mess and noise, and be wholly engaged in play.

2.2. The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.

Intereach will create a service environment that:

- is inclusive, promotes competence in children and supports exploration and play-based learning creates the context for children to learn and build relationships with others;
- welcoming, home-like, inclusive, vibrant and flexible environments support children's exploration, creativity and learning, and are responsive to the individual requirements of each child;
- caters for different learning capacities and learning styles, and encourages children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions;
- supports the holistic way that children learn;
- allows for children to explore of the natural environment to helps build children's competence and play-based learning;
- encourages children to develop an appreciation of the natural world, an awareness of the impact of human activity on the environment, and ways in which they can contribute to a sustainable future; and,
- includes a range of resources that:
 - reflect the breadth of age groups and interests and capabilities of children that are sharing the environment; and,
 - are accessible to children so they can choose and be responsible for their actions.

3. Responsibilities

In all education and care environments, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Educational Leader and Educators have a shared responsibility providing safe and comfortable physical environments that actively promote children's wellbeing and learning and development outcomes.

4. National Quality Framework

Standard/ Elements	Concept	Descriptor
3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

5. Policy context: this policy relates to:

5.1. Standards or other external requirements	<p>Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2017). <i>National Quality Standards</i>.</p> <p>Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2017). <i>Guide to the National Quality Framework</i>.</p> <p>Early Childhood Australia (2016). <i>Code of Ethics</i>.</p> <p><i>Child Safe Standards NSW</i></p> <p><i>Child Safe Standards VIC</i></p>
5.2. Legislation or other requirements	<p>Education and Care Services National Regulations consolidated 2017</p> <p>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</p>
5.3. Internal documents	<p>A range of procedures and forms support the Children's Services Physical Environment Policy</p>

6. Document control

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Next review date
1.0	13/5/2020	Senior Leadership Governance Group	13/5/2023
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