



NATURE WALKS POLICY

Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety

PURPOSE

This policy will provide guidelines for St Johns Kindergarten to plan and conduct safe and appropriate Nature Walks in our local parks and gardens.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

St Johns Kindergarten is committed to:

- providing opportunities through the educational program for children to explore and experience the wider environment and broader society
- ensuring that all nature walks are accessible, affordable and contribute to children's learning and development
- ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of children at all times, including during nature walks
- providing adequate supervision of all children during nature walks

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisors, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of St Johns Kindergarten during Nature Walks.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

Nature Walks and are planned to extend the educational program and further develop the current interests of children. The *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to *Sources*) states that "Participating in their communities strengthens children's sense of identity and wellbeing" (Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world). The purpose and educational value of each Nature Walk or service event should be clearly communicated to parents/guardians.

When planning Nature Walks, it is important to ensure that they are inclusive of all members of the service community. Consideration must be given to any extra costs involved and the ability of families to pay these costs. Consideration must also be given to ensuring that all children can attend regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions (refer to

Inclusion and Equity Policy, Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy). Clear procedures must be developed and followed, and these should be communicated to parents/guardians.

A risk assessment must be carried out for Nature Walks to determine any risks to children's health, safety or wellbeing before permission is sought from parents/guardians (Regulations 100, 101). The risk assessment must identify each risk and specify how the risk will be managed and/or minimised (Regulation 101). Written authorisation for the child to attend the Nature Walk must be obtained from a parent/guardian or person named in the child's enrolment record before the child can be taken outside the service premises. For details regarding information to be included in the written authorisation, refer to Attachment 1.

Active travel Nature Walks near the service have a range of benefits including:

- children and staff being physically active
- providing the opportunity to practice road safety
- engaging with the community.

Early childhood road safety education aims to reduce the risk of serious injury and death from road trauma. It also aims to lay the foundations for children to become safe and independent road and transport users in the future. Road safety education is an important part of a holistic approach to keeping children safe around traffic and in the road environment. Effective traffic skills are best learnt if they occur in a real environment i.e. using crossings and traffic lights.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *National Quality Standard*, including Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice and Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

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.

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) **supervision** entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Attendance Record: Kept by the service to record details of each child attending the service including name, time of arrival and departure, signature of person delivering and collecting the child or of the Nominated Supervisor or educator (Regulation 158(1)).

Nature Walk: An outing organised by the education and care service. The written permission of parents/guardians or a person named on the child's enrolment record as having lawful authority must be obtained before educators/staff take children outside the service premises.

Risk assessment: (In the context of this policy) a risk assessment must identify and assess any hazard that poses a risk to a child's health, safety and/or wellbeing while on a Nature Walk, and specify how these risks will be managed and/or minimised (Regulation 101). Risk assessments must consider:

- the proposed route and location of the Nature Walk
- any water hazards (refer to *Water Safety Policy*)
- any risks associated with water-based activities (refer to *Water Safety Policy*)
- transport to and from the proposed location of the Nature Walk (refer to *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*)
- the number of adults and children participating in the Nature Walk
- the number of educators or other responsible adults who will be providing supervision given the level of risk, and whether or not specialised skills are required (e.g. lifesaving skills)
- the proposed activities, and the impact of this on children with varying levels of ability, additional needs or medical conditions
- the proposed duration of the Nature Walk, and the impact of this on children with varying levels of ability, additional needs or medical conditions

- any items/information that should be taken on the Nature Walk e.g. first aid kit, emergency contact details for children, medication for children with known medical conditions (such as asthma, anaphylaxis and diabetes) and a mobile phone.

A sample Excursion Risk Management Plan is provided on the ACECQA website at: www.acecqa.gov.au (search *Sample forms and templates*)

Regular outing: (In relation to education and care services) means an Nature Walk (refer to *Definitions*) such as a walk, drive or trip to/from a location that the service visits regularly as part of its educational program, and where the circumstances covered by the risk assessment are the same on each trip. If an Nature Walk is a regular outing, an authorisation from parents/guardians is only required to be obtained once every 12 months. A new authorisation is required if there is any change to the circumstances of the regular outing.

Supervision: refer to **adequate supervision** in *Definitions* above.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia>
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA:* www.acecqa.gov.au
- ELAA's Road Safety Education program www.childroadsafety.org.au
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:* www.education.vic.gov.au
- VicRoads: www.vicroads.vic.gov.au
- Child Health Promotion Research Centre & Edith Cowan University (2012) *National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education:* <https://childroadsafety.org.au/assets/Research/National-Practices-for-EC-RSE.pdf>

Service policies

- *Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy*
- *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- *Administration of Medication Policy*
- *Anaphylaxis Policy*
- *Asthma Policy*
- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Curriculum Development Policy*
- *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Diabetes Policy*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*

- *Epilepsy Policy*
- *Fees Policy*
- *Food Safety Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Nutrition and Active Play Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*
- *Privacy policy*
- *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Water Safety Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider and Persons with Management and Control are responsible for:

- developing a *Nature Walks Policy* in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, staff and parents/guardians at the service
- ensuring that staff, volunteers, students and others at the service are provided with a copy of the *Nature Walks Policy* and comply with its requirements
- ensuring that all parents/guardians have completed, signed and dated their child's enrolment form (refer to *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*) including details of persons able to authorise an educator to take their child outside the service premises (Regulation 160)
- ensuring that parents/guardians or persons named in the enrolment record have provided written authorisation within the past 12 months where the service is to take the child on regular outings (refer to *Definitions*), and that this authorisation is kept in the child's enrolment record (Regulation 161) (refer to Attachment 1 – Developing an Nature Walk/service event authorisation form)
- ensuring that a child does not leave the service premises on a Nature Walk unless prior written authorisation has been provided by the parent/guardian or person named in the child's enrolment record, and that the authorisation includes all details required under Regulation 102(4) (refer to Attachment 1 – Developing an Nature Walk/service event authorisation form)
- ensuring that the number of children attending a Nature Walk does not exceed the number for which service approval has been granted on that day

- ensuring that children are adequately supervised (refer to *Definitions*) at all times
- ensuring that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times, including during Nature Walks (Regulations 123, 355, 357)
- ensuring that parents/guardians, volunteers, students and all adults participating in an Nature Walk are adequately supervised at all times and are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children (refer to *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*)
- ensuring that a risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) is carried out for an Nature Walk (in accordance with Regulation 101) before authorisation is sought from parents/guardians (Regulation 100)
- ensuring the risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) identifies and assesses the risks, specifies how these will be managed and/or minimised, and includes all details required by Regulation 101
- developing strategies to improve children's safety in high risk situations such as Nature Walks near water or near a road (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy, Water Safety Policy and Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*)
- ensuring that staff comply with the service's *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*
- encouraging parents/guardians to comply with the service's *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*
- ensuring that Nature Walks are based on the educational program and meet the needs and interests of children and families at the service (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- ensuring that there is a clear purpose and educational value to each Nature Walk and that this is communicated to parents/guardians
- considering the financial ability of families before deciding on an Nature Walk that would require an additional charge. Events that can be planned ahead of time should be included as an expenditure item in the service's budget and, as a result, will not incur additional charges (refer to *Fees Policy*)
- ensuring that proposed Nature Walks are inclusive of all children regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy, Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy*)
- ensuring strategies are in place to provide an accurate attendance record (refer to *Definitions*) for children attending an Nature Walk, and for children remaining at the service while a Nature Walk is happening
- ensuring strategies are in place to ensure that there is an accurate list of all adults participating in a Nature Walk, including parents/guardians, volunteers and students, with contact details for each individual
- ensuring that each child's personal medication and current medical management plan is taken on Nature Walks and other offsite activities (refer to *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy*)

- providing and maintaining a portable first aid kit that can be taken on Nature Walks and other offsite activities
- providing portable first aid kits that contain the required medication for dealing with medical conditions
- providing a mobile phone to enable contact with parents/guardians and emergency services in the event of an incident, injury, trauma or illness (Regulation 98)
- ensuring emergency contact details for each child and the contact details of their medical practitioner are taken on Nature Walks for notification in the event of an incident, injury, trauma or illness.

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

- developing a *Nature Walks Policy* in consultation with the Approved Provider, staff and parents/guardians at the service
- ensuring educators, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, students and others at the service are provided with a copy of the *Nature Walks Policy* and comply with its requirements
- ensuring that a child does not leave the service premises on an Nature Walk unless prior written authorisation has been provided by the parent/guardian or person named in the child's enrolment record, and that the authorisation includes all details required under Regulation 102(4) (refer to Attachment 1 – Developing a Nature Walk authorisation form)
- ensuring that children are adequately supervised (refer to *Definitions*) at all times
- ensuring that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times, including during Nature Walks (Regulations 123, 355, 357)
- ensuring only educators who are working directly with children are included in educator-to-child ratios
- ensuring that parents/guardians, volunteers, students and all adults participating in a Nature Walk are adequately supervised at all times and are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children (refer to *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*)
- ensuring that a risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) is carried out for a Nature Walk (in accordance with Regulation 101) before authorisation is sought from parents/guardians (Regulation 100)
- ensuring the risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) identifies and assesses the risks, specifies how these will be managed and/or minimised, and includes all details required by Regulation 101
- developing strategies to improve children's safety in high risk situations such as Nature Walks near water or near a road (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy*, *Water Safety Policy* and *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*)
- ensuring that educators and staff comply with the service's *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*
- encouraging parents/guardians to comply with the service's *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*

- providing road safety education as part of the curriculum
- where appropriate, taking walking Nature Walks in the local community to promote physical activity, safe active travel and community connectedness
- ensuring that Nature Walks are based on an approved learning framework, the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- ensuring the purpose and educational value of each Nature Walk is communicated to parents/guardians
- considering the financial ability of families before deciding on a Nature Walk that would require an additional charge. Events that can be planned ahead of time should be included as an expenditure item in the service's budget and, as a result, will not incur additional charges (refer to *Fees Policy*)
- ensuring that proposed Nature Walks inclusive of all children regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*, *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Epilepsy Policy*)
- ensuring an accurate attendance record (refer to *Definitions*) is kept for children attending a Nature Walk, and for children remaining at the service while a Nature Walk is happening
- ensuring that there is an accurate list of all adults participating in a Nature Walk, including parents/guardians, volunteers and students, with contact details for each individual
- ensuring that each child's personal medication and current medical management plan is taken on Nature Walks and other offsite activities (refer to *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Epilepsy Policy*)
- ensuring that a portable first aid kit (including required medication for dealing with medical conditions) is taken on Nature Walks and other offsite activities
- ensuring a mobile phone, the emergency contact details for each child and the contact details of their medical practitioner are taken on Nature Walks for notification in the event of an incident, injury, trauma or illness
- ensuring sunscreen (if required) is taken on Nature Walks and is available as required for and that outdoor Nature Walk venues provide adequate shade
- displaying a notice at the service indicating that children are on a Nature Walk, and including the location of the Nature Walk and expected time of return to the service.

Other educators are responsible for:

- contributing to the development of a *Nature Walks and Policy* reading and complying with the requirements of the *Nature Walks and Policy*

- providing parents/guardians or a person named in the child's enrolment record with an Nature Walk authorisation form
- checking that a parent/guardian or person named in the child's enrolment record has completed, signed and dated the Nature Walk authorisation form prior to the Nature Walk
- allowing a child to participate in an Nature Walk only with the written authorisation of a parent/guardian or person named in the child's enrolment record
- maintaining the required educator-to-child ratios at all times, and adequately supervising (refer to *Definitions*) children during Nature Walks and service events
- adequately supervising parents/guardians, volunteers, students and all adults participating in an Nature Walk, and ensuring that they are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children (refer to *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*)
- undertaking a risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) for an Nature Walk prior to obtaining written authorisation from parents/guardians
- ensuring the risk assessment (refer to *Definitions*) identifies and assesses the risks, specifies how they will be managed and/or minimised, and includes all details required by Regulation 101
- implementing strategies to improve children's safety in high risk situations such as Nature Walks near water or near a road (refer to *Supervision of Children Policy, Water Safety Policy and Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*)
- complying with the service's *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*
- developing Nature Walks and based on an approved learning framework, the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and the individual differences of each child (refer to *Curriculum Development Policy*)
- providing road safety education as part of the curriculum
- taking Nature Walks in the local community to promote physical activity, safe active travel and community connectedness
- communicating the purpose and educational value of each Nature Walk or service event to parents/guardians
- supporting all children to participate in Nature Walks and regardless of their abilities, additional needs or medical conditions (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy, Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy*)
- taking each child's personal medication and current medical management plan on Nature Walks and other offsite activities (refer to *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy, Asthma Policy, Anaphylaxis Policy, Diabetes Policy and Epilepsy Policy*)
- taking a portable first aid kit (including required medication for dealing with medical conditions) on Nature Walks and other offsite activities

- keeping an accurate attendance record (refer to *Definitions*) of children attending Nature Walks, and for children remaining at the service while a Nature Walk is happening
- keeping an accurate list of all adults participating in a Nature Walk, including parents/guardians, volunteers and students, with contact details for each individual
- taking a mobile phone, a copy of the attendance record, emergency contact details for each child and the contact details of the child's medical practitioner on Nature Walks for notification in the event of an incident, injury, trauma or illness
- taking sunscreen (if required) on Nature Walks
- discussing the aims and objectives of the Nature Walk and items of special interest, with children prior to undertaking the activity
- informing parents/guardians of items required by children for the Nature Walk
e.g. snack/lunch, sunscreen, coat, gumboots etc.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- reading and complying with the requirements of this *Nature Walks Policy*
- completing and signing the authorised nominee section (refer to *Definitions*) of their child's enrolment form (refer to *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*) before their child commences at the service
- completing, signing and dating Nature Walk authorisation forms
- providing written authorisation for their child to leave the service premises on regular outings (see *Definitions*)
- reading the details of the Nature Walk provided by the service and asking for additional information if required
- providing items required by their child for the Nature Walk e.g. snack/lunch, sunscreen, coat, gumboots etc.
- understanding that, if they participate in an Nature Walk as a volunteer, they will be under the immediate supervision of an educator or the Approved Provider at all times
- if participating in an Nature Walk informing an educator immediately if a child appears to be missing from the group
- supervising and caring for siblings and other children in their care who are not enrolled in the program
- complying with all service policies while participating in an Nature Walk or service event including the *Code of Conduct Policy*, *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*, *Sun Protection Policy* and *Hygiene Policy*.

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

EVALUATION

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

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Developing an Nature Walk authorisation form

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of [Service Name] on March 3rd 2020

REVIEW DATE: 01/03/2022



ATTACHMENT 1

Developing an Nature Walk/service event authorisation form

The *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (Regulation 102) specify that written authorisations for Nature Walks, given by a parent/guardian or person authorised on the child's

enrolment record, must include the following details:

- the child's name
- the reason the child is to be taken outside the service premises
- the date the child is to be taken on the Nature Walk (unless the authorisation is for a regular outing (refer to *Definitions*))
- a description of the proposed location of the Nature Walk
- the method of transport to be used
- proposed activities to be undertaken as part of the Nature Walk
- the period of time that the child will be away from the service premises
- the anticipated number of children attending the Nature Walk
- the anticipated ratio of educators to children attending the Nature Walk
- the anticipated number of staff members, and any other adults who will accompany and supervise children on the Nature Walk
- confirmation that a risk assessment has been prepared and is available at the service.

The authorisation form should require parents/guardians to include contact details for two people and for the child's medical practitioner in the event that the child experiences an incident, injury, trauma or illness while on the Nature Walk.

The form must be signed and dated by the parent/guardian or a person authorised on the child's enrolment form.

Services should also include information about:

- additional costs involved, if any, and
- whether parents/guardians/siblings are able to participate in the Nature Walk and, if so, details of the supervision requirements for additional family members.