

Physical Environment Policy

The physical environment can contribute to children's wellbeing, happiness, creativity and promote the development of independence. It can contribute to and express the quality of children's learning and experiences. The choices made in an education and care service about resources, materials, spaces, layout, air and light quality and access to a range of experiences in the indoor and outdoor, have a direct impact on the quality of learning opportunities available to children.

National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment		
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.

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012	
73	Educational programs
74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
75	Information about the educational program to be kept available
76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
80	Weekly menu
81	Sleep and rest
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol -free environment
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
102	Authorisation for excursions
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing and security
105	Furniture, materials and equipment

106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
107	Space requirements—indoor
108	Space requirements—outdoor space
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
110	Ventilation and natural light
111	Administrative space
112	Nappy change facilities
113	Outdoor space—natural environment
114	Outdoor space—shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
156	Relationships in groups
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available

Related Policies

Animal and Pet Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Environmentally Responsible Policy Health and Safety Policy Programming Policy	Road Safety Policy Storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy Sleep and Rest Policy Sun Safety Policy Water Safety Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

REED will ensure all service environments are safe, stimulating, clean and well maintained for children, families, educators and visitors. Children's awareness of the environment and sustainable practice will be supported through daily practices, resources and interactions. The physical environment will support children's participation and engagement, development, learning, and safety, and will provide supervised access to positive experiences and inclusive relationships. Our services provide environments free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff and management of REED Services.

IMPLEMENTATION

REED is committed to providing an environment that promotes safety and enhances children's learning and development.

The Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and educators' responsibilities include the following:

Physical environment is designed to:

- maximise children's engagement and positive experiences
- provide space where children can experience quality care in a safe and healthy environment
- meet licensing requirements for buildings, space requirements, fencing, light, ventilation, firefighting equipment, emergency evacuation exits and safety glass for National Regulations, the Building Code of Australia (BCA), local councils and regulatory authorities
- provide adequate storage to meet the needs and requirements of the service
- provide sufficient and accessible handwashing, toileting, eating, and sleeping facilities
- ensure toileting and hand-washing facilities are accessible from both the indoor and outdoor environments
- ensure adequate and appropriate hygienic facilities for nappy changing are provided, which are soundly constructed ensuring children's safety
- provide appropriate areas for food preparation
- provide a separate indoor space for children who are under two years of age
- provide an area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur
- incorporate natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air into the building/premises
- facilitate adequate supervision of children at all times including toilets and nappy change facilities
- ensure safety and minimal disruption for children whilst playing
- provide different types of play to occur both in the indoor and outdoor areas (e.g. quiet play areas and loud play areas)
- provide adequate shade for children in accordance with the recommendations of relevant authorities
- provide shade in the form of trees or physical shade structures
- provide a natural environment for children to explore and experience which may include plants, trees, gardens, rock, mud and/or water
- ensure all required fencing is compliant with current regulations and is maintained to ensure it is in good condition (including self-closing gates with safety locking mechanisms and boundary fencing)
- provide a variety of indoor and outdoor experiences, catering for children's interests and abilities

- provide a developmentally appropriate environment where children can explore, solve problems, create, construct and engage in critical thinking
- provide an environment that permits children to participate in activities independently or in small groups, and access resources autonomously
- ensure safety of children at all times. Non-fixed play equipment in the Service grounds can be no more than one metre high and must be supervised at all times by an educator.
- power points not in use have safety caps, all double adaptors and power-boards are out of reach of children, and all electrical cords are secured and not dangling

Choose appropriate resources and equipment

- appropriately sized furniture and equipment will be provided in both the indoor and outdoor environment for the age ranges represented in the service
- children will be supported to access appropriate furniture, resources, materials, toys and equipment that encourage appropriate challenges and risk taking in accordance with their individual developmental level
- resources will be adequate in number for the number of children attending our Services and be developmentally appropriate
- specific equipment requirements of children with additional needs will be catered for to ensure an inclusive environment
- resources and equipment will be chosen to reflect the cultural diversity of each Service's community and the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, including the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- large purchases of equipment will be the responsibility of the Approved Provider
- the Nominated Supervisor is responsible for consumables and the daily running purchases of the service
- educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of children in their particular room
- educators will complete a log for the Nominated Supervisor of equipment that needs maintenance on a prioritised basis (see *Equipment and Maintenance Record*)
- children's ideas and suggestions in planning the indoor and outdoor environments will be facilitated
- children will be encouraged to make decisions about the use of equipment and resources
- Services will actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding current interests of their children so as to purchase appropriate toys and equipment
- climbing equipment will be installed according to manufacturers' recommendations and compliant with Australian Safety Standards. For example, incorporating soft fall materials wherever climbing equipment is set up.
- incorporate commercial, natural, recycled, homemade, and real resources that can be used in a variety of ways to encourage children's learning and creativity
- all equipment and resources including cots, highchairs, car seats, booster seats, etc. meet relevant Australian Standards and educators are trained in correct maintenance and assembly

- families are provided with the latest safety information on items such as cots, highchairs, car seats, etc
- educators discuss the safety characteristics of using toys and equipment with children
- educators will participate in on-going professional development in order to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment
- a maintenance log and register of toys and equipment is maintained by educators and the nominated supervisor

Laundering of Soiled Items

- laundry and hygienic facilities are located and maintained in a way that do not pose a risk to children
- adequate storage is provided
- soiled clothing will be returned to a child's home for laundering
- educators will remove soiled content and place into a plastic bag. Items will be stored securely in a sealed container or double-bagged before being placed in the child's bag.

Rearranging, Adding or Removing Furniture

- REED Services will keep a record of any changes that are made to the physical environment of the service, such as rearranging of rooms etc. to show continuous improvement.
- Services will document the links between the arrangements and choice of resources and equipment and the children's learning in the program.

The Sleep/Rest Environment

- Educators and staff will strictly adhere to the Sleep and Rest Policy and procedures.
- All cots must meet the mandatory Australian Standard for Cots (AS/NZS 2172)
- Mattresses should be in good condition – clean, firm and flat and fit the cot base with no more than 20mm gap between the mattress sides and ends.
- Cots and beds should be positioned to encourage a calm and relaxing environment. They should also be separated by a minimum of 300mm to reduce the possibility of cross infection.
- Cots and beds should be regularly checked that all bolts and fittings are secure and safe.
- Beds should be located in an area that is easy to access for all educators and other staff
- Beds should be stored in a dry area.
- Educators must ensure to use correct manual handling techniques when moving the beds in a safe manner.
- Beds should not be placed on high shelves or in unstable or difficult to reach stacks.
- Light bedding will be used for cots and beds.

- Hanging cords, strings from blinds, curtains or electrical devices will be kept away from cots and mattresses.

Ongoing Maintenance

- REED will continuously reflect on its service environments and put in place a plan to ensure that the environment continuously reflects our ideology of providing an environment that is safe, stimulating and engaging for all who interact with it.
- Frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted in order to minimise risk and hazards.
- The Nominated Supervisor will document required maintenance with administration in a maintenance plan/log for the Service as required. Repairs and maintenance will be conducted throughout the year according to priority including, hazard removal, safety precautions and any relevant policies.
- The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for completing a building safety checklist of the service and its grounds bi-annually and ensure any work deemed necessary is done to Australian standards.
- Services will have regular pest inspections carried out by an accredited pest control company. Documentation of these inspections will be kept and any further recommended treatments as a result of the findings from the pest control check will be carried out in a timely manner.

Grouping of Children

- REED Services differ in size and facilities. Some services group children in accordance to their age and/or developmental stage, while some services operate using a multi-age grouping. Within all spaces provided, there are a variety of different learning areas and opportunities for play experiences, as well as safe and developmentally appropriate resources and activities.
- Adult to child ratios will be adhered to at all times in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Our indoor and outdoor environments provide opportunities for developmentally appropriate planned experiences, intentional teaching and spontaneous play throughout the day.

Safety Checks

A daily inspection of Service premises will be undertaken before children begin to arrive. The *Indoor and Outdoor Daily Safety Checklists* will be used as the procedure to conduct these safety checks. A record of these will be kept by the Service. The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will make the appropriate arrangements to have any identified repairs carried out as soon as possible.

This inspection will include:

- Service perimeters

- Fences/Fence Line
- Gates
- Paths
- Buildings
- All rooms accessible by children
- Fixed equipment
- Sand Pit
- Mud pit

This must to be done in order to identify any dangerous objects in the grounds ranging from sharps to poisonous or dangerous plants and animals. In the event of a sharp object being found (for example a syringe) educators will wear gloves and use tongs to pick up the object and place it in the 'sharp object box'. This box will be disposed of as per the recommendations of the local council.

Similarly, trees in the grounds must be checked regularly for overhanging, dead or dangerous looking branches as well as check for any infestations or nests.

Cleaning of Buildings, Premises, Furniture and Equipment

General Cleaning

- REED Services will use structured cleaning schedules to ensure that all cleaning is carried out regularly and thoroughly.
- Educators will clean the service at the end of each day and throughout the day as needed.
- Accidents and spills will be cleaned up as quickly as possible to ensure that the service always maintains a high level of cleanliness and hygiene.
- Educators and staff will adhere to REED's *Health and Safety Policy*.

When purchasing, storing and/or using any dangerous chemicals, substances, medicines or equipment, REED services will:

- ensure all procedures ensure all procedures are followed to maintain a safe environment
- adhere to the REED's *Storage of Hazardous Chemicals Policy*
- adhere at all times to manufacturer's advice and instructions when using products to clean furniture and equipment at the service
- keep a register of all hazardous chemicals, substances and equipment used at the Service. Information recorded should include where they are stored, their use, any risks, and first aid instructions and the current SDS. The register will be readily accessible.

Children's Bathroom

- clear supervision is provided to children when in use (having regard to the need to maintain the rights and dignity of children)
- educators and other staff will encourage children to follow appropriate hygiene practices- hand washing, toileting
- bathrooms will be cleaned at least twice a day and at other times as required
- bathroom floors will be mopped at least daily
- signage is to be used after mopping to ensure that children, educators and other staff and families are aware that the floor is wet
- educators are to ensure they follow the bathroom and toilet cleaning procedure.

Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment

- REED must ensure that electrical equipment is regularly inspected and tested by a competent person if the electrical equipment is supplied with electricity through an electrical socket and used in conditions where it could be damaged, including exposure to moisture, heat, vibration, mechanical damage, corrosive chemicals or dust.
- A record of all electrical testing and tagging, must be attached and kept until the equipment is next tested or disposed of and must specify:
 - a) The name of the tester
 - b) The date and outcome of the testing.
 - c) The date on which the next testing must be carried out.

Maintenance of Fire Equipment

- All fire equipment at REED Services will be maintained as per the legal standards.
- External agencies will be employed to assist the service with this maintenance if no currently employed staff or educators are qualified to complete the maintenance checks.
- Ensure batteries in smoke alarms are replaced annually.

SUN PROTECTION

- educators and staff at the Service will adhere to our *Sun Safety Policy* and procedures at all times
- a combination of sun protection measures will be implemented whenever UV Index levels reach 3 and above
- educators will continue to check the UV rating prior to going outdoors and as the heat increases throughout the day (see *Sun Safety Policy* for further information)
- temperature of outdoor equipment and surfaces will be monitored during the day to ensure the area and equipment is safe for children to play.

WATER SAFETY

To stop accidents and illnesses relating to swimming pools, wading pools, water troughs and other water situations REED Services will:

- remove any items or objects that could be used to climb into the fenced area of a pool, trough, or water storage unit e.g. chairs, bins, bikes, and any shrubs or overhanging trees
- make sure no child swims or plays in any water without:
 - risk assessments being completed and approved by the approved provider
 - written permission from family member to learn water safety and swimming
 - appropriate educator/child ratios in place
 - having sufficient numbers of educators present who have first aid or recognised water safety and rescue procedures
- at all times children near water are closely supervised. A child will never be left unattended near any water.
- staff will ensure that all water containers are made inaccessible to children and also make sure children's play areas are safely fenced off from water hazards such as rivers, dams, creeks, lakes, irrigation channels, wells etc.
- all wading pools/water troughs etc. will be immediately emptied after every use: storage will prevent the collection of water e.g. upright/inverted. The grounds will also be checked after rain or watering and water that has collected in holes or containers will be emptied/removed.
- wading/water troughs are hygienically cleaned, disinfected, and chlorinated appropriately:
 - on a daily basis remove leaves and debris, hose away surface dirt and scrub inside with disinfectant
 - wash away disinfectant before filling trough.

Service Closure

- Educator/s responsible for closing the service are to check the entire premises to ensure that all children and families have departed and by checking sign in and out sheets for all rooms. Educator/s must sign the sign in and out sheets confirming all children are signed out.
- Educator/s are to follow Service-closing procedures each night.
- In the case where a parent has omitted to sign their child out, and the educators did not witness the child leave the service, the educators must take every step to get in contact with the parent to ensure the child has safely left the Service.
- If unable to contact the family, the educators are to contact other educators present on that day for confirmation that the child has been collected. The Nominated Supervisor is to then be notified before leaving the Service.
- Individuals visiting REED Services must also sign in when they arrive at the Service, and sign out when they leave.
- Details of absences during the day must also be recorded.

Source

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
 Cancer Council NSW: <https://www.cancercouncil.com.au>
 Cancer Council Australia: <https://www.cancer.org.au>
[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011).
 Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).
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 KidSafe Australia: <https://kidsafe.com.au>
 National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services*.
 NSW Government Kids and Traffic Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program
 Red nose Safe environment <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment>
 Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
Swimming Pools Act 1992
Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Review

Policy Reviewed	Modifications	Next Review Date
October 2023	Moved to QA 3	October 2024
March 2023	Verified links, minor editing	March 2024
July 2022	No Changes	July 2023
July 2021	Indoor/outdoor checklists moved to end of policy, repetitive information (covered in other policies) removed, sources updates	June 2022
March 2020	Minor editing and reformatting	February 2021
April 2019	Policy developed by REED management	April 2020

