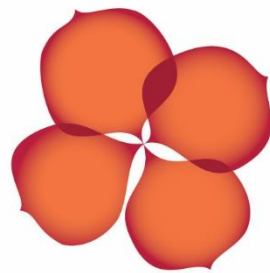


# **POLICY**

# **Physical Environment**



**NT**  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOLS

## DOCUMENT INFORMATION

**Document Title:** Physical Environment Policy  
**Policy Category:** EL - Early Learning  
**Policy Monitor:** ELC Nominated Supervisor  
**Contact:** policy@ntchristianschools.com.au  
**Approved by:** ELC Nominated Supervisor  
**Approval date:** 22 November 2024  
**Review date:** Feb 2025  
**Access Level:** Public

Policy  
Feedback



## AMENDMENT HISTORY

Version	Date	Changes Made
1.0		Version history unrecorded
2.0	02/2017	Minor adjustments made with the addition to more information about the UV Rating, the importance of checking the rating prior to going outdoors to ensure protection.
2.1	10/2017	Updated references to comply with the revised National Quality Standard.
2.2	02/2018	Minor adjustments to the working of the opening paragraph, added 'related policy' section. Minor amendments to terminology throughout the document to improve interpretation and compliance.
3.0	02/2019	Changed working stating 'should' to 'will' or similar language to imply these items are to be done. Introductory statement and purpose modified. Grammar, punctuation and spelling edited. Additional information added to points. Duplicated info deleted. Sources checked for currency. Sources corrected and updated.
4.0	02/2020	Minor changes to grammar, content changed. Sources checked for currency, addition of nappy change facilities and cot specifications.
4.1	02/2021	Minor edits and inclusions. Sources checked for currency.
4.2	02/2024	Policy maintenance, minor formatting edits. Hyperlinks checked and repaired. Continuous improvement statement added. Childcare Desktop Resourced added. (Checklist from this policy removed). Link to WA Education and Care Services National Regulations added in 'Sources'.
4.3	11/2024	New policy template and Board approved preamble.

# 1 Preamble

NT Christian Schools is an organisation that exists to advance the Christian religion through the provision of high-quality education and training services and religious instruction. A holistic and relational approach to learning for each individual student, underpinned by a biblical world view provides an education for the whole person, for the whole of life.

We believe that the Christian faith is a life-transforming faith that will be authentically evidenced in a believer's actions. The bible exhorts us to pursue godliness and to model biblical standards of behaviour. Everything we do, our practices, our conduct, our use and stewardship of resources is an act of worship to God and a witness to those around us.

All members of the NT Christian Schools community are to be committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment for students, staff and the whole community in a manner that is consistent with the Christian ethos and beliefs of NT Christian Schools.

Employees and those a policy applies to are fully supported by NT Christian Schools in ensuring compliance with these documents.

# 2 Purpose

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

Our Service will ensure the environment is 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 Service provides an environment free from the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

# 3 Policy applies to

This applies to children, families, staff, educators, approved provider, nominated supervisor, visitors, students, volunteers and management of the Service.

The policy is available to all parents, carers, children, students, visitors, volunteers and contractors via the NT Christian Schools website and on request from any office of NT Christian Schools.

The policy is available to all staff and Directors of the Board via the NT Christian Schools *Canvas Policy and Advisory Library*.

## 4 Policy

Our Service is committed to providing an environment that promotes safety and enhances children's learning and development. To do this, the approved provider, nominated supervisor and educators' responsibilities include the ensuring following:

### 4.1 Physical Environment

The physical environment of our services is to be 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;
- provide appropriate areas for food preparation;
- provide an area for managerial purposes, consultation with children's parents and for private conversations to occur (Reg. 111);
- incorporate natural and artificial lighting, appropriate ventilation, heating, cooling and fresh air into the building/premises (Reg. 110);
- always facilitate adequate supervision of children including toilets;
- ensure safety and minimal disruption for children whilst playing;
- ensure immediate communication is always available to and from parents and emergency services (Reg. 98);
- 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;
- always ensure safety of children. Non-fixed play equipment in the Service grounds can be no more than one metre high and must be always supervised 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.

## 4.2 Resources and Equipment

Choose appropriate resources and equipment that:

- Is 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 Service 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 the 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 director is responsible for consumables and the daily running purchases of the service in accordance with budget allocations and NT Christian Schools Financial Delegations Policy;
- educators will provide ideas for equipment and materials purchase based on the needs and interests of children in their particular room;
- educators/director will log any maintenance of equipment, which is seen to on a prioritised basis by the NTCS maintenance team;
- 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;
- the Service will actively seek the input of parents/guardians regarding current interests of their children 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 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 car seats etc;
- educators discuss the safety characteristics of using toys and equipment with children;
- educators will participate in on-going professional development to enhance children's learning and ensuring a safe and educational environment;
- a register of toys and equipment is maintained by educators and the director.

### 4.3 Laundering 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.

### 4.4 Rearranging, Adding or Removing Furniture

Links between the arrangements and choice of resources and equipment, and the children's learning in the program will be documented.

### 4.5 Sleep / Rest Environment

Educators and staff will strictly adhere to the *Sleep and Rest Policy* and procedures.

Mattresses should be in good condition- clean, firm and flat.

Rest mats will be positioned to encourage a calm and relaxing environment. There will be a minimum space of 300mm between each mat to reduce the possibility of cross infection.

Mats will be regularly checked to ensure all bolts and fittings are secure and safe.

Mats will be kept in an area that is easy to access for all educators and other staff.

Mats will be stored in a dry area.

Educators will ensure to use correct manual handling techniques when moving the mats.

Mats should not be placed on high shelves or in unstable or difficult to reach stacks.

Light bedding will be used for cots and mats.

Checks will be made to identify any hazards to ensure a safe environment.

Hanging cords, strings from blinds or electrical devices will be away from mattresses.

## 4.6 Ongoing Maintenance

The Service will continuously reflect on its environment and put in place a plan to ensure that the environment reflects our ideology of providing an environment that is safe, stimulating, and engaging for all who interact within.

Frequent risk assessments of the indoor and outdoor environment will be conducted to minimise risk and hazards.

Educators will complete an *Outdoor Environment and Playground Safety Audit* at least every six (6) months.

The director will document required maintenance on TRIP as required. Repairs and maintenance will be conducted throughout the year according to priority including, hazard removal, safety precautions and any relevant policies.

The approved provider/nominated supervisor is responsible for engaging an external expert to complete a building safety checklist of the Service and its grounds bi-annually and ensure any work deemed necessary is completed to Australian standards.

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will stay up to date with banned/recalled products and remove these immediately from the Service if required.

The Service 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 because of the findings from the pest control check will be carried out in a timely manner.

## 4.7 Grouping of Children

Our Service groups the children according to their age and/or developmental stage. Within each space, there are a variety of different learning areas and opportunities for play experiences.

Adult to child ratios are always adhered to in both the indoor and outdoor environment.

Our indoor and outdoor environment provides opportunities for developmentally appropriate planned experiences, intentional teaching, and spontaneous play throughout the day.

## 4.8 Daily Safety Checks

A daily inspection of the premises will be undertaken before children begin to arrive. The *Opening/Closing Checklist and Outdoor Cleaning/Safety Checklist* 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. [See resources section of policy).

This inspection will include the:

- service perimeters
- fences/fence line
- gates
- paths
- buildings
- all rooms accessible by children
- fixed equipment
- sand pit
- mud pit

This must be completed 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 dispose of it safely.

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

The approved provider must ensure all fences and barriers that enclose outdoor spaces used by children are of a height and design that children cannot go through, over or under. (Reg. 104).

## 4.9 Cleaning Of Buildings, Premises, Furniture and Equipment

The service 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.

Professional cleaners will be hired for daily cleaning, including the cleaning of floors, doors, windows, bins and toilet facilities.

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 our *health and safety policy*.



## 4.10 Purchasing, Storing and/or Using Any Dangerous Chemicals, Substances, Medicines Or Equipment

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

- ensure all procedures are followed to maintain a safe environment;
- always adhere 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.

## 4.11 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 (see: bathroom cleaning checklist).

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.

## 4.12 Maintenance Of Fire Equipment

All fire equipment at our Service 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.

## 4.13 Sun Protection

Educators and staff at the Service will always adhere to our Sun Safety Policy and procedures.

A combination of sun protection measures will be implemented whenever UV Index levels reach 3 and above.

Temperature of outdoor equipment and surfaces will be monitored during the day to ensure the area and equipment is safe for children to play.

## 4.14 Water Safety

To stop accidents and illnesses relating to water troughs and other water situations our Service will:

- make sure no child plays in any water without:
  - risk assessments being completed by the director and approved by the nominated supervisor,
  - appropriate educator/child ratios in place,
  - having enough educators present who have first aid qualifications.
- at all times children near water are closely supervised. A child will never be left unattended near any water;
- all water troughs 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;
- water troughs are hygienically cleaned daily, remove leaves and debris, and hose away surface dirt, and are scrubbed inside.

## 4.15 Evening Service Closure

Two educators must close the Service each night.

Both educators are to check the entire premises to ensure that all children and families have departed by checking sign in/out kiosk for all rooms AND physically checking all rooms and areas.

Educators are to follow Service-closing procedures each night (see *Opening/Closing Checklist*).

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 our Service must also sign in when they arrive at the Service and sign out when they leave (see: Visitor sign in/sign out record).

Details of absences during the day must also be recorded.

# 5 The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

## 5.1 National Quality Standard (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy Lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.
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.

## 5.2 Education and Care Services National Regulations

Regulation	Definition
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
82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol -free environment
84A	Sleep and rest
86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
98	Telephone or other communication equipment
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
105	Fencing and security
106	Furniture, materials and equipment
107	Laundry and hygiene facilities
108	Space requirements—indoor
109	Space requirements—outdoor space
110	Toilet and hygiene facilities
111	Ventilation and natural light
112	Administrative space
113	Nappy change facilities
114	Outdoor space—natural environment
115	Outdoor space—shade
123	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
156	Educator to child ratios- centre based services
168	Relationships in groups
171	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

## 6 Continuous Improvement Reflection

Policies will be reviewed regularly and updated when need identified in consultation with families, staff and management.

## 7 Related Resources – NTCS PAL / Childcare Desktop

- Bathroom Cleaning Checklist
- Bathroom Safety Audit
- Equipment and Resource Audit
- Opening / Closing Checklist
- Outdoor Cleaning / Safety Checklist
- Physical Environment Audit
- Safe Sleep Record
- Visitor sign in/ sign out record

## 8 Related legislation and policy

### 8.1 NT Christian School policies and procedures

- [Policy, procedure name], [Link]

### 8.2 Legislation

- Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
- Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023).
- Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*

### 8.3 Other relevant resources

- Cancer Council NSW: <https://www.cancer council.com.au>
- Cancer Council Australia. Be SunSmart. <https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/sun-safety/be-sunsmart>
- 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*.
- Red nose Safe environment <https://rednose.org.au/section/safe-environment>

### 8.4 Acknowledgement

Policy adapted from Childcare Centre Desktop © 2024