



St Francis School OSHC
ECEC

Water Safety Policy

Policy Statement

St Francis School OSHC aims to provide and ensure a safe and secure environment for all children and adults by minimising and managing any risk of harm from water.

Catholic Education South Australia is committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing and dignity of all children and young people. How we work to fulfil these commitments is outlined in this policy.

Why we need this policy – purpose

St Francis School OSHC aims to provide a safe and secure environment where every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children and adults from the potential risks of water. The Principal of *St Francis School OSHC* has the delegated authority for the approval of the ECEC Responding to incident injury, trauma and illness policy.

Who the policy is for

There are a number of stakeholders who need to have knowledge and understanding of this policy and ensure that it is implemented.

How this policy relates to *children*

Children need:

- Opportunities to play, explore and develop safely in the inside and outside environments.
- To connect with a natural element such as water and have opportunities for unique and safe learning experiences.
- Developmentally appropriate education and resources on water awareness and safety.
- To be actively supervised by educators at all times, especially when near or in water.

How this policy relates to *parents/guardians*

Parents need:

- To have access to the Water Safety policy.
- To be confident in the knowledge that their child/ren's safety, health and well being is paramount at all times, especially when it involves water.
- Educators/staff to communicate effectively with them about developmentally appropriate experiences/activities involving water. Especially if an excursion involves children being near or accessing water.

How this policy relates to *educators/staff*

Educators/staff need:

- To read, understand, comply with and implement the Water Safety policy.
- To provide developmentally appropriate experiences/activities involving water.
- To be aware of all the risks associated with water at, near the centre, and when children are on regular outings or excursions. Specifically, to identify, risk assess and manage any water hazards.
- To ensure extra diligence and active supervision when children are in or near water.

- All educators must know and understand their obligations and responsibilities in regard to a supervision plan when children have access to water.
- Opportunities for professional development training and/or peer mentoring in how to reduce and/or manage any risks associated with children having access to water.
- To educate children using intentional teaching about water safety.
- To respond promptly, consistently and appropriately to manage and report any incidents involving water.
- To provide prompt and appropriate first aid and seek immediate medical support in the event a child is injured/harmed from accessing water.
- To communicate effectively and in a timely manner with management and parents/ guardians in regard to any water safety incidents.

How this policy relates to *management – e.g. approved provider/nominated supervisor/service director/responsible person*

Management need:

- To ensure that there is adequate and active supervision provided given the ages and developmental needs of children undertaking water activities (including careful consideration of educator to child ratios and a clearly defined supervision plan).
- To ensure risk assessments are conducted to identify the potential risk of water play/exploration at the service and/or during an excursion.
- To ensure that any water experience and/or activity provided to children is safe and hygienic.
- To ensure that educators/staff have knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to water safety (including first aid responses to emergencies).

How the policy will be implemented

Understanding Water Hazards/Risks

- Water safety and quality are fundamental to human development and wellbeing.
- Most children love water and have a natural fascination and curiosity about it.
- There are a range of water hazards that may need to be considered and managed when children are in or near water. In particular, the risk of drowning, accessing unhygienic/contaminated water (including drinking water) and burns/scalds from hot water/beverages.
- Drowning is often thought of as fatal but, in fact, drowning can have one of three possible outcomes: Death, Morbidity (injury) and No Morbidity (no Injury)
- According to Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, drowning is a leading cause of unintentional death in children under four years in Australia. For every drowning death, there is reported to be three other children who are hospitalised for non-fatal drowning incidents. Sadly, some of these incidents result in long-term, life changing consequences, such as severe brain/organ damage.
- Non-fatal drowning describes a drowning incident where an individual survives. It is sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'near-drowning'. This term is no longer used by the World Health Organisation who, along with the Royal Life Saving Society – Australia, state that the term 'near drowning' should not be used.
- Tragically, drowning can occur quickly (20 seconds) and silently without any warning noises.
- Children can drown in as little as 3 cm of water.
- The most significant issue identified in childhood drowning is lack of supervision.

- There are many potential drowning hazards for children around the centre/service and in other environments that they may visit. The most obvious water hazards are swimming pools, baths, rivers, creeks, lakes, dams and the sea. The less obvious drowning hazards are:
 - Buckets (including nappy buckets)
 - Baths, sinks and basins
 - Water courses, water troughs, sandpits and clam shells
 - Wading pools
 - Pooling water e.g. from rain and leaking taps/hoses
 - Washing machines
 - Toilets
 - Water tanks
 - Water features and bird baths
 - Fish ponds, aquariums and fish bowls
 - Animals' water bowls
 - Ice boxes/eskies
 - Any other receptacle where water can accumulate
- Proactively promoting water awareness/safety strategies is critical to help ensure that everyone is kept safe. This includes water awareness and safety familiarisation, checking for and removing water hazards (risk assessment and management), setting rules around water and discussing water safety with the children. An additional benefit of this approach is that it develops responsible habits surrounding safe water use and conservation. The risk assessment will provide clear direction to all educators/staff regarding matters such as age/developmentally appropriate experiences/activities, site/location specific considerations and adequate educator ratios required etc.

Water Safety Inside

- Active and direct supervision is required for all children when there is access to any water hazard - including hot water and unhygienic/contaminated water. No child is to be left alone when there is access to water.
- Ensure that children do not have access to hot water from taps, kettles, hot beverages or any other source. Check that the hot water temperature delivered from the taps is maintained at the recommended safe level - a maximum of 50 degrees Celsius.
- (Service Specific) Ensure, if a young child is bathed, that the water temperature is between 37 and 38 degrees Celsius. Bath water should be swirled so there are no hot or cold areas.
- Ensure that water is not left in basins, buckets and baths etc when active supervision is not possible.
- Safely empty all buckets, containers or any other water receptacle used indoors that children have access to immediately after use. It is recommended they are stored upside down and out of children's reach.
- Plugs are to be kept out of children's reach.
- Doors to be kept closed to adult toilets, laundry and kitchen.
- Ensure that bathroom areas are actively supervised when in use by children.
- Aquariums and fish bowls are to be kept out of young children's reach.

Water Safety Outside

- Always ensure that educators are actively supervising children engaged in any water play/exploration outdoors, in accordance with any risk assessments and/or supervision plans.
- Carefully consider where water experiences/activities are set up. Specifically, they should be easily accessible, on non-slip surfaces, in the shade and, if appropriate, close to drainage or on a surface that drains well/freely, so there is no unintended pooling of water.
- Ensure there is adequate and effective drainage of water occurring in the outdoor areas to prevent water pooling, especially after rain.
- Ensure there are no leaking taps/pipes and that taps are tightly turned off when not in use. Rainwater and garden tap handles, where appropriate, can be temporarily removed when not being used or supervised by an educator to prevent children unsafely accessing water.
- Ensure there are no trellises, ladders, trees, equipment etc. that a child can climb to get over fences to access a water hazard such as a nearby creek etc.
- Ensure that all gates and locks are in good working order so children cannot egress from the centre/service to a nearby water hazard.
- As is the case for water safety indoors, it is recommended that any water receptacle be emptied immediately after use in the outdoor area e.g. water troughs, wading pools etc. This is also important in relation to preventing any hygiene or health risks from the water becoming contaminated/unsafe.
- When emptying water outside, it is imperative that no unintended pooling of water occurs.
- If, for any reason, water is to be stored over a longer period, it is essential that a risk assessment is conducted to ensure that it can be safely and securely stored out of children's reach. (With a particular focus on ensuring appropriate temperature and cleanliness is maintained to prevent potential health risks from unhygienic/contaminated water causing waterborne illness or disease.)
- It is important to be aware that if any water is stored securely outside, it can provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Water containers should be securely covered and be inspected for larvae regularly and emptied every few days to prevent adult mosquitoes from hatching.
- Ensure there is a child proof lid over any water tanks to prevent children accessing. Ensure that tanks are well maintained and children are not allowed to drink any unsafe tank water.
- Ensure any water receptacles are stored upside down and in a safe and secure place e.g. in a shed or in a storage area inaccessible to children.

Water Safety Away from the Centre

- As directed by the Excursion/Incursion policy and any relevant risk assessments if an excursion involves water-based activities/swimming ensure that parent/guardian consent has been sought and given. Ensure that all relevant information about the child is collected e.g. child's experience and level of competence in the water, swimmer/non-swimmer etc.
- Ensure that a thorough and comprehensive risk assessment (including a meticulous supervision plan) is completed prior to an excursion occurring to identify and manage any water hazards. Risk assessing will also occur continuously during the excursion to manage any unexpected hazards.
- All educators must know and understand their obligations and responsibilities in regard to a supervision plan while on an excursion/outing in or near water. Especially in relation to ensuring sufficient ratios of educators to children, careful and intentional positioning and active/direct supervision.

- Active and direct supervision of the children is required at all times during regular outings/excursions to protect children from any water hazards.
- Educators must have a current first aid qualification to respond appropriately to any emergencies involving children in water.
- Ensure children have been provided explicit teaching about water hazards and the behaviour expected (including limits) during regular outings/excursions.
- Ensure that environmental events/conditions such as flooding, stormwater flushing into the sea, blue green algal blooms, water contamination as a result of bushfires, are taken in to consideration and risk assessed to ensure water safety is always paramount.
- Specifically:
 - Be aware of any safety warnings in advance and be vigilant and alert during excursions/outings. Read and obey any warning signs.
 - Be careful to prevent any accidental falls in to water when walking around the edge of dams, rivers, creeks or lakes etc. especially if there are any slippery or steep banks, sloping edges or overhanging banks that can easily break off.
 - Avoid allowing children to walk or wade through floodwater and mud as it may be contaminated by sewage and debris. Contaminated floodwater and mud can carry an increased risk of wound/broken skin infections, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, ear, nose and throat infections and other infections such as leptospirosis.
 - Be aware that receding floodwaters and pooling water from heavy rainfall provide perfect conditions for mosquito breeding, potentially leading to outbreaks of mosquito-borne infections.
 - Do not allow children to access water that is contaminated by a blue green algae bloom outbreak (Cyanobacteria). Blooms can occur in freshwater, coastal and marine waters and can pose a health risk for humans.
 - Avoid contact with fresh water (e.g. rivers, lakes, creeks, dams) if it has any scum or a coloured film on the surface.
 - If using/accessing unchlorinated/untreated water that is warm (especially during summer) from sources such as tanks, lakes, rivers, dams and bores etc. do not allow the warm water to go up a child's nose to avoid any risk of an amoebic infection such as the very rare Naegleria Fowleri.
 - While the risk of amoebic infection from unchlorinated/untreated warm water is very low, it is recommended that caution be exercised not to allow children to get unchlorinated/untreated water up their nose when bathing, showering, washing faces and playing with hoses and sprinklers. Flush stagnant water from hoses before allowing children to play with hoses and/or sprinklers. Teach children not to squirt unchlorinated/untreated water up their nose.
 - Do not allow children/adults to drink water unless it is known to be safe. Untreated water can cause gastroenteritis including diarrhoea, vomiting and nausea.
 - Be aware that bushfires have the potential to degrade water quality and safety. In particular, this is most critical when there has been a heavy rain soon after a fire. This is due to the loss of vegetation and altered soil structure, including chemical reactions triggered by fire that release nutrients, metals and other toxicants stored in vegetation and soil. The soil becomes more erodible and the run off can wash sediments and contaminants into waterways and reservoirs that may have substantial implications for human safety.
 - Be aware of the health hazards (waterborne illnesses) when playing, wading or swimming at the beach after a storm, especially when a significant amount of untreated stormwater makes its way to the ocean. The stormwater can be polluted with a mixture of waste and debris, such as leaves, rubbish, oil and sewage. (Sewers can, on occasions, overflow into stormwater causing sewerage to wash into the ocean untreated.)

- SA Health has advised that, after heavy rain, the beach should be avoided if there is discoloured or murky water. Discolouration of the ocean is an indication that there is likely to be storm water present. Where there is stormwater, it can be assumed there is bacteria and other pathogens present.
- The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), South Australia’s independent environment protection regulator, provides free subscription to a beach alert. During summer, the EPA sends emails or SMS alerts when poor water quality has been identified to advise that accessing the water at the beach is unsafe and should not be accessed for about 72 hours. Specifically, the following beaches have been identified: Henley, Glenelg, Hallett Cove, Christies Beach, Noarlunga and Moana as they are near mouths of rivers or creeks or large stormwater outfalls.
- In addition, the EPA recommends that the Surf Lifesaving - Australia’s Beachsafe app is visited to check all safety information before accessing a local beach. The Beachsafe app provides detailed information from patrol status, facilities and hazards to weather, swell and tide.
- Information and guidance is available from professional agencies such as Kidsafe, Life Saving Society - Australia, SA water, EPA, SA Health etc. to ensure that water safety is paramount for all children and educators.

Sources

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Record history

Approved by: Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) & Preschools Compliance Officer

Approved date: 30 August 2024

Review date: 28 February 2026

Revision record: 0

This policy and procedure is approved and in place until the review date, unless during that time the Nominated Supervisor, Phil Schultz instructs a revision. In this case, parents of children enrolled at the service will be notified at least 14 days before any change to this policy or procedure comes into effect. Less time of advice before a change will only happen if SACCs has reason to believe the safety, health or wellbeing of any child enrolled at the service is at risk if a change is not immediately made. [Regulation 172]

Please note that the policy template was provided for SACCS Early Childhood Education and Care services and has been approved by the CESA Early Years team.
This policy template will be reviewed as per policy review schedule held by the Early Years Team.