

Early Years Services – QA2.20 Bush/Beach Kindergarten Educational Program

TRIM Reference: D15/74634 Due for Review: 11 October 2026
 Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This policy aims to detail the educational benefits of nature play in the Bush/Beach Kinder environment:

- To ensure that the educational programs enhance the learning and development of each child participating in Surf Coast Shire Council early years' services.
- To ensure staff are adequately mentored and trained to deliver a high-quality nature play program that meets children's continuous learning skills.
- To ensure families are educated on the benefits on nature play

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, 6
 Evidence of link to Educational & Care Services National Regulations: Part 4.1, 73, 74, 75, 76, 100.
 Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Law: Section 168

Scope

This policy applies to all early childhood education and care programs provided by the Surf Coast Shire Early Years Services.

Policy

Activity	Developmental benefit
Imaginative games using the resources that nature provides	Open ended learning for children to explore at their own.
Role play	Shared imagination to explore drama context, teamwork and social behaviours.
Building structures from natural materials and adults	Applications of problem solving, goal definition, planning, engineering teamwork and resilience.
Counting objects or looking for mathematical patterns	Mathematics, visual recognition.
Memory games using naturally available objects	Memory, naming objects.
Listening to stories, singing songs and rhymes	Art, drama, self-expression, concentration, literacy and language skills.
Arranging items to make a picture, or installation	Art, imagination and creativity.

Drawing scenes	Art, creativity, observation of Surroundings.
Climbing at bush/beach kinder sites for example trees, logs and rocks while exploring nature. (Refer to Bush and Beach Kinder Health and Safety Policy for Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis)	Improves gross motor strength, balance and physical awareness, coordination and risk awareness benefits.
Walking within the natural habitats	Improves strength and stamina, preparation (e.g., route selection) improves planning and communication skills.
Exploring or reflecting alone	Aids self-awareness and character development. Promotes physical and emotional wellbeing.
Play involving water where it occurs naturally (for example ocean, rivers, creeks, puddles and on walks in the rain in the Bush/Beach Kinder sites	Experience and understanding of water safety and the impact of all weather conditions and their effect on the natural environment.
Using tools	Using tools safely, for example, making items out of bark & sticks, or to plant seeds/seedlings and other gardening activities.
Observing seasonal changes and weather changes	Gaining and sharing familiar and unfamiliar knowledge Broadening understanding of the world we live in.
Observing animals and their habitats and becoming familiar with local flora and fauna	Gaining and sharing familiar and unfamiliar knowledge about animals, flora and fauna specific to the local area.

General

The Surf Coast Shire Early Years Management is responsible for:

- implementing and maintaining the Bush/Beach Educational Policy which provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to the types of activities children may be undertaking in Bush/Beach Kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self-esteem, co-operation and ability to assess and respond to risks;
- providing an educational and safe environment for all participants in the Bush/Beach Kinder program;
- ensuring that all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy on the Surf Coast Shire website, and in written form upon request;
- ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy.

Staff are responsible for:

- supervising children at all times and ensuring their safety;
- educating children’s awareness of their own safety and the safety of others at all times
- supporting children’s engagement in the natural environment through play, for example – awareness of habitat features, animals, plants, weather, sounds etc.
- implementing teaching strategies that scaffold children’s emergent learning;

- ensuring every child is actively and consistently supported to engage in the nature program;
- Critically reflecting with children on their learning and development as individuals and groups to review the education program on an ongoing basis;
- actively engaging with children;
- encouraging the children during play to help each other, share and to solve problems together, and affirm positive behavior when this occurs;
- incorporating safety routines and awareness throughout the program;
- supporting the children's nature play learning and explorations from the bush/beach kinder site at the kindergarten services;
- documenting the children's learning, growth and development when at the bush/beach kinder site and sharing this with families.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- providing feedback to staff where applicable;
- ensuring protective and appropriate clothing is worn to Bush/Beach Kinder by their child, including closed footwear with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree/log climbing and balancing on uneven surfaces;
- reinforcing appropriate safety and behaviour strategies;
- reading and being familiar with the policy.

Definitions

Appropriate clothing: (Refer Bush/Beach Kinder Health and Safety Policy Policy)

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Policies

D14/94973	Delivery and Collection of Children
D15/74610	Bush/Beach Kinder - Health & Safety
D15/74476	Bush/Beach Kinder - Extreme Weather
D15/73628	Bush/Beach Kinder - Emergency Evacuation
D15/35312	Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy
D15/35364	Early Years Sustainability Policy

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

Online	Early Years Enrolment and Consent Form
D19/24712	Template - Excursion Parent Permission Form
D21/221509	Template - Bush Kinder Regular Excursion Authority

Other References

'Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing' MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)
A Marvellous Opportunity for Children to Learn 'Liz O'Brien and Richard Murray, Forestry Commission (2006)
Wikipedia – 'Forest Kindergarten'
'Nature Kindergartens' – Claire Walden
'Understanding the Danish Forest School Approach - Early Years Education in Practice' – Jane Williams-Sieghfredson

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (National Law)
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (The Regulations) and the National Quality Standard (Schedule 1 of the Regulations)

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approval Date	Manager Aged and Family - 1 October 2015
2	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family - 3 January 2018
3	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family - 23 August 2018
4	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening - 9 January 2020
6	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 4 October 2022
7	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 11 April 2024