



The Safe Use of Online Environments at the Service

Review Date: 06/08/2026

Introduction

The Early Years Learning Framework (2022 V2.0) p. 57 states 'All Children benefit from opportunities to explore the world using technologies and to develop confidence using digital technologies.

This policy sets out to guide & provide boundaries for educators and parents to observe & reduce potentially negative impacts of technology upon children's health and wellbeing, whilst optimising opportunities for learning and communication.

A review of child safety arrangements and the National model code for Early Child Education & Care under National Quality Standards (Dec, 2023) recommend changes to safe-guard children, and changes to this policy reflect these.

Cyber security is a growing threat. Evans Head Preschool Association will work to assess and mitigate risk where possible.

Goals – What are we going to do?

The policy covers roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in respect to:

- (a) Social media;
- (b) Documentation and communication;
- (c) Provision of a quality early childhood program for all children;
- (d) Child/educator relationships.
- (e) Educator/ Family relationships.

Strategies - How will it be done?

Social Media

The Approved Provider will:

- Notify the Nominated Supervisor of any concerns of inappropriate activity upon the preschool or any stakeholder's social media account which could place a child at risk or reflect poorly upon the preschool.
- Support the Nominated Supervisor by seeking out current advice and community feedback to support decision making in regards to social media.

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- ensure that only the leadership team are administrators of preschool social media pages, OWNA or website, or an administrator acting under their direction.
- Ensure that no children are identifiable in photographs posted on an internet site with public access without authorisation.

- ensure educators and staff are aware that offensive postings or online behaviour could lead to disciplinary action or even dismissal if deemed to reflect badly upon the service.
- keep the Approved Provider completely informed of any issues that have arisen and of any potential issues.
- remove any posts immediately if requested to and take serious complaints back to the Management Committee for review. Complaints will also be directed to the Regulatory Authority & ACECQA within 24 hours of a complaint being received via form "Notification of Complaints" (via NQAITS portal) in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- Act immediately to mediate any situation which causes hurt or insult to our community, places children's wellbeing at risk, or reflects badly on the preschool.

For educators this looks like:

- consider their professional reputation and that of their employer & exercise discretion before posting any offensive, indiscrete, or inappropriate material on their social media page or blog with public access, in the knowledge that it can be viewed, forwarded on or transmitted to someone other than the intended audience.
- take down posts as directed by the Nominated Supervisor or the Leadership team promptly and if necessary, make a full retraction.
- revise any concerns they may have about social media posts involving preschool staff, families or our local community to the nominated supervisor ASAP.
- provide Educational Leaders with information or material that could be useful for preschool social media pages, website, etc.

Actions which may contradict this policy may include, but not limited to:

- posting material which could harm their professional reputation in a small town.
- posting material that contradicts preschool policies, advice, casts the preschool in a negative light.
- posting material that undermines confidentiality, professional guidelines, or child protection.
- posting photographs or videos of children from our service.
- failing to flag online concerns which could adversely affect a child, preschool family, a colleague, or the service.
- using an online forum to air a grievance instead of following the Complaints and Feedback Policy or Grievance procedure.

For families this looks like:

- access the preschool's social media or website in good faith and provide appropriate feedback to the Leadership team.
- keep private disagreements, gossip or other negative interactions out of public forums.
- direct any grievances to the Nominated Supervisor as per the Complaints and Feedback Policy.

Some actions which may contradict this policy:

- posting images or information about other children or educators on social media without permission.
- having disregard or intentionally posting about our preschools, other families, or children in a way that could reasonably be expected to cause harm, distress or risk their wellbeing.
- air grievances on social media, respond to preschool posts with negative comments or seek to publicly shame individual staff or the service.

Documentation and Communication**The Approved Provider will:**

- have strict controls in place for the appropriate storage and retention of images.

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- ensure that all employees have the relevant skills to access technology (i.e. OWNA) to keep safe & secure records of children's progress and to document this.
- assist existing staff to access professional development, or mentoring, where they need to improve computer literacy, as identified during the appraisal process.
- ensure that team members proof-read for each other, to maintain a professional standard with respect to spelling, grammar, etc.
- encourage administration and educators to tailor communication to be inclusive of individual families' needs which may include phone contact or emails as an alternative to hard copies, depending upon need.
- actively practice inclusivity in developing process, tailoring access & participation for families around the internal Early Childhood software OWNA, including families signing their child/children in and signing out of a centre.
- ensure that educator, child, and family privacy is maintained at all times.

For educators this looks like:

- **log in** and sign into the OWNA software application & “room” when arriving to your scheduled shift, and **logging out of the OWNA software application** when not in the workplace or completing documentation.
- Signing in and out of the OWNA timesheet as per your rostered time.
- back up documentation to guard against loss of information.
- guard the privacy of children and their families at all times, particularly if taking data home to work on documentation. This includes, but is not restricted to keeping data in a safe place and **deleting data pertaining to children from private devices** as soon as it is no longer required for completing documentation.
- be aware that written correspondence with families is open to misinterpretation by the recipient without context. Emails or messages should be courteous, factual and to the point.
- sensitive matters are dealt with in person or via phone, not via email, OWNA, or google drive if possible.
- only service approved devices may be used when taking images of children.
- anyone who is working or engaged in centre based service in any capacity is prohibited from having a personal electronic devices that can take images or video, such as tablets or phones on their person whilst with children.

Actions which may contradict this policy may include, but not limited to:

- refuse to update skills needed to perform duties as required.
- failing to backup or password protect devices and files used for documentation.
- Sharing or leaving devices where they can be accessed while children’s images or data is accessible.
- using personal email accounts or phone to contact families for preschool business or documentation.
- sending information to families without checking for professionalism, (e.g. spelling, grammar, content, etc.).
- sending sensitive information without consideration for how it may be interpreted by the family, for example from a ‘deficit’ perspective, disregard for relationships and the feelings or understanding of the recipient.
- using personal devices whilst working directly with children.
- having images of children on their personal devices.

Provision of a Quality Early Childhood Program for all Children

The Educational Programming Manager will:

- oversee content of the program to promote quality, developmentally appropriate, content and delivery as directed by the Educational Leader.
- oversee the balance of sedentary and active play-based learning within the program as well as free play or child lead learning with teacher lead learning.
- ensure that educators are aware of their duty of care to ensure children are not exposed to inappropriate material, including but not restricted to:
 - offensive language;
 - nudity or lewd content;
 - depictions of violence;
 - blatant or inappropriate advertising.

For educators this looks like:

- research apps, websites and video streaming sites in advance and if possible have material ready to view so that children are not inadvertently exposed to advertisements or inappropriate material.
- ensure personal devices are password protected and inappropriate material cannot be accessed by children.
- Personal devices will be left in a pre-organised location (at the start of a scheduled shift) in the service as arranged with the Nominated Supervisor.
- No personal devices are ever to be taken into the children's bathroom.
- ensure in the event of an inappropriate "pop up" or advertising material:
 - a) immediately shut down the device;
 - b) address the issue with the children;
 - c) inform the responsible person;
 - d) inform parents of what occurred and the steps taken to address the issue.

Actions which may contradict this policy may include, but not limited to:

- internet surfing or searching for websites, video material with children, without researching sites in advance.
- directly or indirectly allowing children to access devices (phones, laptops) or storage devices that could risk children being exposed to inappropriate material.
- using devices as a time filler or as a behaviour guidance tool without documented behaviour management program.
- programming blocks of extended time in sedentary learning, contrary to children's need for active learning and to health guidelines.
- following children's lead to click on links which have not been researched and included in the program.
- using devices without first exploring if it is the best tool for the intended learning.

- ensure only selected quality teaching materials are chosen to enhance children's learning or relaxing; or the resource is part of a documented behaviour management program in collaboration with parents.
- ensure devices are only used under **direct supervision** for the specified purpose and timeframe within the context of the overall daily program.
- inform the Nominated Supervisor if contacted by family on their personal device about preschool matters.
- leaving devices where they can be accessed or giving a device to a child without supervising the learning

For families this looks like:

- take care when sending data to preschool to share with the group that there is nothing inappropriate on the storage device or in the material to be shared, including but not restricted to:
 - offensive language;
 - nudity or lewd content;
 - depictions of violence;
 - blatant or inappropriate advertising.
- pass on important time sensitive information **in person** or via the **preschool phone** with the understanding that the office and email are not manned full time.
- discuss any concerns with the Nominated Supervisor, or in their absence, the Responsible Person on duty that date.

Some actions which may contradict this policy:

- share data or storage devices with preschools which could possibly contain:
 - offensive language;
 - nudity or lewd content;
 - depictions of violence;
 - blatant or inappropriate advertising.
- send important and time sensitive information via social media or email which may not be checked in the short term.
- contacting individual staff on their personal devices or social media accounts about preschool matters.

Child/Educator Relationships

With the assistance of the Educational Leader, the Nominated Supervisor will:

Ensure that educators are aware of:

1. Not allowing technology to divert their attention from children i.e. being fully present in the moment with the child/ren, and
 - (a) research data prior to an activity so they are available to supervise children;

- (b) use digital technology for a specific time and purpose to avoid “surfing” behaviour which wastes children’s time and is not quality teaching.
- (c) mobile phones should not be used for personal reasons during “contact time”, unless previously arranged with the Responsible Person for the day.

Educators will:

- Follow the above guidelines.
- Critically reflect on their use of technology regularly to ensure that its use leads to quality outcomes for children in a balanced program, rather than detracting from learning, health and wellbeing.
- Critically reflect on how their use of devices is perceived by children, colleagues, visitors, and families.
- Direct any grievances to the Nominated Supervisor and/or Management Committee.

Essential purposes for which use and / or possession of a personal electronic device may be authorised for purposes other than taking images or recording videos of children include:

- communication in an emergency situation involving a lost child, injury to child or staff member, or other serious incident, or in the case of a lockdown or evacuation of the service premises
- personal health requirements, e.g. heart or blood sugar level monitoring
- disability, e.g. where a personal electronic device is an essential means of communication for an educator or other staff member
- family necessity, e.g. a worker with an ill or dying family member
- technology failure, e.g. when a temporary outage of service-issued electronic devices has occurred
- local emergency event occurring, to receive emergency notifications through government warning systems,
- for example, bushfire evacuation text notification.

Statutory Legislation & Considerations

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 73-76, 86, 155, 168-170, 176(2)(b).

National Education and Care Services National Law Act 2011: 165 (1 & 2), 168, 174(2)(b)(i).

Links

Link to National Quality Standard - Elements:

1.1.1, 1.1.3, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3
1.3.2
2.1.1, 2.2.1, 2.1.3, 2.2.3,
4.2.2
5.1.1, 5.1.2
6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.2.1, 6.2.2, 6.2.3
7.1.1, 7.1.2

Related Policies

- › Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct
- › Staff Code of Conduct
- › Child Safe Standards
- › National Model Code for Early Child Education & Care (ACECQA)

Policy Availability

The Digital Technology policy will be readily accessible to all staff, families and visitors, and ongoing feedback on this policy will be invited.

Evaluation

- Digital technology is used as a tool to enhance communication and children’s learning.
- Privacy and confidentiality is protected as per children’s families’ and staff wishes.
- A positive balance is maintained between active learning and sedentary behaviour.
- We are a child safe organisation.

President’s Name: ... Laren Heath.....

President’s Signature:

Date: ...06...../.....08...../...2024.....

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Policy Dated	Adopted by	Review Date
22/02/2024	Narissa Cuskelly	22/02/2026
06/08/2024	Laren Heath	06/08/2026