

Animal and Pet Policy



POLICY STATEMENT:

Grays Point Activity Centre (GPAC) acknowledges that having a relationship with a pet and/or animal can help children develop a caring disposition and skills such as nurturing, responsibility, empathy and improved communication. Having a pet in an Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) environment enables children who are not otherwise exposed to animals learn these skills. The pet will become part of the daily educational program and lead to activities and learning about other animals. The safety of children, however, is always our first priority. Our Service will ensure that no animal poses a health or safety risk to children, staff or visitors of the Service.

PURPOSE:

Having a pet at our Service can be a valuable part of children's education enriching their learning about nature, ecology and relationships. Our Service aims to provide a safe, hygienic and humane environment for all animals and pets that visit or reside at the Service, educating children in the proper care of animals.

SCOPE:

This Policy applies to children, families, staff, Educators, management, Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, volunteers and visitors (including contractors) of Grays Point Activity Centre.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The National Quality Standard encourages Educators to understand and appreciate the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. Pets help children from a young age learn to care for other living things. They can teach a sense of responsibility, caring and tolerance. They can offer many opportunities for developing observational skills and provide basic natural science experiences. If the Educators wish to have a pet in the Service, they must make all the decisions in consultation with management and families.

Whilst there are several benefits to keeping animals within the Service, there are also a range of concerns which Educators need to consider maintaining the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals. Encouraging direct contact and developing bonds with animals can help children to develop empathy. Providing children with access to animals within our Service will help them learn about life cycles and relationships and improve communication skills. We feel role modelling of appropriate behaviours with animals and guidance in caring for the needs of animals are beneficial for children.

Questions to consider prior to having a pet at GPAC:

- What are the health and safety risks?
- Who will pay for the care and upkeep of the animal, including feeding, health care and cleaning?
- How will the animal be cared for on weekends and during closure periods?
- What physical space is available at GPAC? Is it adequate for the animal you are considering?
- What regulations do we need to consider for having a pet on Department of Education premises?
- Are all Educators and families happy with the decision to keep an animal at our Service?
- What time will be available to care for the animal or will Educators be asked to give up some personal time for this?
- Are there any children or Educators at GPAC who are allergic to, or have phobias of, animals?
- What changes to our Service's Policies and Procedures need to be considered? For example, Hand-washing Policy will need to be updated to include washing hands after having contact with the animal.

Other things to consider include:

- Some animals, such as lizards, turtles, snakes, spiders and tropical fish may not be an appropriate choice. Check with a veterinarian if you are unsure whether an animal is suitable for children, and check with the local health department for regulations and advice regarding animals in a Service. Some states and territories require a license for keeping certain animals.
- Animals that may be more likely to be suitable for our Service may include goldfish, hermit crabs, stick insects, caterpillars, ant or worm farms. All of these animals are relatively low maintenance and can be left safely over a weekend if they are provided with sufficient food and water. However, arrangements would need to be made for these pets during School holidays.
- If there are voluntary carers available to take the pets home over weekends and holidays, then the Service may consider guinea pigs, rabbits, chickens, mice or rats.

Assessing and managing risks:

Whilst there are many benefits to providing children with access to animals and keeping pets at the Service, there are issues that Approved Providers and Educators need to consider for the safety and wellbeing of both the children and the animals concerned prior to choosing a pet or having an animal visit the Service.

A Risk Assessment should therefore be conducted when deciding the type of animal and the way the children engage with it.

Potential risks may include:

- Diseases- from birds (Parrot fever -psittacosis) and other animals.
- Injury due to biting, kicking or pushing a child over (e.g., farm animals).
- Scratching (e.g., chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs).
- Pests and vermin (snakes, rats, mice).
- Allergies (e.g., bees, wasps, ants).

Disease:

As animals can spread disease, access to animals at the Service requires special consideration to prevent this. Health authorities identify those germs can be present on the skin, hair, feathers and scales, and in the faeces, urine and saliva of animals. While these germs may not cause disease in the animal, they may cause disease in humans.

Effective hand washing and cleaning:

Children and adults should employ effective hand washing after touching or feeding animals, or cleaning their bedding, tanks, cages or enclosures. However, it is important to engage children with these tasks as they learn responsibility through ‘hands on’ learning experiences.

Appropriate supervision and clothing:

Children should also be appropriately supervised when they have contact with animals to avoid potential injury or harm to the child or the animal.

Ensure children wear appropriate clothing and footwear when handling animals and pets. Be aware of children who may have allergies to insects such as bees, wasps and ants that may be more apparent when animals are kept in an educational setting.

Service pets:

- Management and Educators should prepare children for the animal visit, gaining perception into how the children may react to the pet.
- Management, Educators, children and families should consider the rationale for having a pet and long-term implications of such a decision prior to getting the pet.
- All pets and their enclosures are to be kept clean and hygienic with appropriate bedding and water.

- Food will be made available for all pets and animals but kept out of reach of children at all times.
- Any animal or pet kept at the Service will be regularly fed, cleaned, vaccinated, and wormed (as appropriate), and checked for fleas and diseases.
- Animals including pets will not be allowed in the sand pit.
- Animals including pets will never be taken into the food preparation area nor will they have access to the eating or rest areas, toys, eating surfaces and/or utensils.
- Anyone who has handled the animal or pet will immediately wash their hands.
- Children's animal or pets will only be allowed in the Service when the Centre Manager has granted permission.
- The educational program will include how to properly care for animals and how to treat them appropriately.

Uninvited animal visit:

There are situations that may spontaneously occur, involving animals. For example, there may be a situation where an animal or bird has made its way into the Service. Depending upon the type of animal or bird Educators may use this as a spontaneous learning experience for the children. At all times the highest priority will be to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children.

If an animal or bird is potentially dangerous such as a snake or spider, Educators will contact an appropriate authority for assistance.

New South Wales:

National Parks and Wildlife Service Phone - 1300 361 967 (8.30am – 5.00pm)

New South Wales: [NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service](#) Inc. (WIRES) 13 000
WIRES - 13 00 094 737

Shire Snake Catchers Phone – 0415 448844

A professional should monitor the animal's movements to ensure a speedy and efficient capture, but priority is to be given to Educator, child and family safety. At no time is the potentially dangerous animal, insect or bird to be approached or touched by Educators, children or families.

Pests and vermin:

- Pest control will occur at our Service on an annual basis as a minimum.
- Negotiation or approval may be required with Grays Point Public School for GPAC, as the Service is located on school grounds.

- Educators will monitor any occurrences in the Service to determine the success of control measures.
- If pests and/or vermin are seen, or evidence of pests and/or vermin such as droppings, Educators will advise the Centre Manager or Responsible Person on duty depending on urgency.
- Management is responsible for arranging additional pest control visits as required.
- Where appropriate, Educators will discuss safety issues relating to dangerous products, plants, vermin and objects with the children.
- Educators will thoroughly clean all areas that pests have accessed in the Service with disinfectant.
- If the remains of animal or animal faeces have been found, the remains will be disposed of according to the local Council guidelines and the area where the remains were found will be thoroughly disinfected.
- Educators are responsible for assessing any situation in the Service where animals are involved to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children, families and animals.

CONSIDERATIONS:

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.
2.2	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.

QUALITY AREA 3: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The Service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
168	Policies and procedures are required in relation to health and safety
170	Policies and procedures to be followed

RELATED POLICY

Administration of First Aid Policy	Supervision of Children Policy
Dealing with Medical Conditions and Medication Administration	Workplace Health and Safety Policy
Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy	Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Management of Incident, Injury, Infectious Diseases, Illness & Trauma	Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy
	Hand Washing Policy

Source:

Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
 Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2024). [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#).
 Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority. (2018). [Keeping Pets and Animals in Education and Care Services](#).
 Bone, J. (2013). The animals as the fourth educator: A literature review of animals and young children in pedagogical relationships. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 38(2). Deakin West, ACT: Early Childhood Australia.
 Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).
 Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).
[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (Amended 2023)
 Elliott, S., McCrea, N., Edwards, H., & University of New England. (2012). Sustainable outdoor play spaces in early childhood centres: Investigating perceptions, facilitating change and generating theory.
 Kidsafe NSW Inc. <https://kidsafe.com.au/>
 National Health and Medical Research Council. (2024). *Staying Healthy: preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (6th Ed.). NHMRC. Canberra.
 NSW Government Department of Health. (2018). Petting zoos and personal hygiene fact sheet. Retrieved from <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/petting-zoos-and-personal-hygiene.aspx>
[Western Australian Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:

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*Revised 26/9/18 KG and KK GPAC
 March 2021 Change of name in line with CCare Desktop KK KG
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