

Policy on water play HS 05

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Policy prepared by: EH Policy reference group

Background to the policy statement:

Young children display a strong interest in the medium of water as source of exploration and discovery. The soothing properties of water calm the upset child. Water also serves as a stimulus for young children's curiosity. However this curiosity and fascination with water may impede the young child's sense of danger with the medium and place them in potentially hazardous situations. *Children can drown in very shallow amounts of water only a few centimeters deep.* Oberklaid (2004 p 27).

Whilst water in wading pools may appear to be shallow, children's faces can still be submerged under water. This is most likely to occur when large groups of children are playing in confined areas with water (such as small paddling pools).

Wet surfaces are slippery and the danger of slipping or tripping in the areas surrounding the wading pool is increased when groups of children congregate as part of, or after a wading pool experience.

Water also serves as a source for the spread of infection and **non chlorinated** 'swimming'/wading pool experiences in particular provide the following health hazards:

- The sharing of a relatively small amount of water in a centre wading pool by several groups of children i.e. water is not changed between groups of children;
- Children who are still mouthing objects may also spread germs via saliva infection;
- Diapered children who participate in wading pool experiences;

Parental concern has also been expressed in several settings as to children becoming cold whilst waiting to be changed back into clothing after a 'swimming' experience.

Aim/purpose of the policy statement:

To minimize the risks associated with immersion/swimming experiences whilst supporting young children's use of water as a meaningful (sensory) learning materials and necessary resource for living things.

Policy statement:

'Swimming'/wading pool experiences must be replaced by carefully planned water play learning opportunities e.g. use of water play troughs, gardening with hoses/watering cans, evaporation painting, which support children's engagement with water, but do not permit full body immersion into the water.

Implementation practices and procedures:

School/Centre/Staff responsibilities:

- Staff must ensure **diligent supervision** of children at all times. As stated above, children can drown in very shallow depths of water. Uncovered containers of water (water troughs, large tubs, fish ponds) must **never** be left in unsupervised areas to which young children have access;
- Staff must engage with children as to the importance of safety issues and positive behaviour when using water play equipment;
- Water play equipment (funnels; tea sets, lengths of plastic tubing etc) must be disinfected at least weekly, or as necessary during the week. Children must be discouraged from drinking water in the water trough/mouthing water play equipment. Should equipment be mouthed, it must be removed and disinfected immediately;
- Water play troughs must be emptied/replenished daily and the water play trough disinfected weekly, or as necessary during the week;
- Staff must plan learning experiences relevant to the child's interests in water and which support a meeting of the medium and long term learning goals of the centre;
- There should be alternatives to water play should children not wish to engage in water play and to prevent the water play experience from becoming too crowded;
- Staff must resource water play experiences appropriately with carefully considered materials which stimulate understanding around specific concepts related to water in e.g. water flow, water displacement, sinking and floating;
- Staff must ensure that children's clothing is protected from becoming excessively wet by use of water proof aprons. Children may need reminders to roll up sleeves when engaged in water play experiences;
- Staff must support ecologically friendly practices i.e. avoiding wastage of water;

Evaluation of this policy:

A review of this policy and implementation procedures will be conducted every two years. This review will be undertaken collaboratively between Preschool Directors, Principals and staff of the EtonHouse Education Centre (the policy reference group).

References:

- Oberklaid, F. (2004). *Health in early childhood settings*. Australia: Pademelon Press.
- Chalufour, I. & Worth, K. (2005). *Exploring water with young children*. St Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.