

The Physical Environment Policy

1. Purpose

Y Whittlesea is committed to providing safe, engaging, and inspiring indoor and outdoor environments that support children's learning, wellbeing, physical development, and connection to the world around them. This policy outlines our approach to creating environments where children feel secure, confident, and supported to explore, play, and learn.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all educators, staff, students, volunteers, children, families, and visitors within Y Whittlesea Early Years services.

3. Policy Statement

We recognise that environments are integral to learning and development, as outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

Our services will ensure that:

- Outdoor and indoor spaces are safe, clean, and well maintained
- Outdoor play is valued equally to indoor learning, offering essential physical, social, cognitive, and emotional benefits
- Environments provide rich learning opportunities, fostering children's agency, curiosity, and creativity
- Spaces reflect and respect diverse cultures, abilities, and learning needs, promoting inclusion and belonging

4. Key Principles

4.1 Indoor and Outdoor Environments - spaces will provide opportunities for:

- Gross motor development through climbing, balancing, running, jumping, and lifting
- Active, engaging supervision to always be present
- Displays and provocations to be well thought through
- Encourage respect for each of our environments.
- Risk-taking in safe, supervised ways to build confidence and resilience
- Sensory exploration with natural elements such as sand, water, plants, and mud
- Connection to nature, fostering respect and care for the environment
- Social and imaginative play, supporting relationships and creativity
- Outdoor play will be included in daily routines, regardless of weather, with adjustments for safety (e.g. shade, raincoats, sun protection).
- Warm, welcoming, and organised to promote a sense of security and belonging
- Designed to enable independent access to resources and materials
- Flexible to support individual, small group, and large group learning experiences
- Inclusive of diverse cultural materials, books, images, and languages to reflect the service community
- Learning areas will encourage curiosity, creativity, problem-solving, and engagement across all developmental domains.

4.2 Learning Opportunities - Educators will intentionally plan learning experiences that integrate indoor and outdoor environments to:

- Extend children's knowledge and interests
- Promote holistic development
- Support learning outcomes from the EYLF and VEYLDF
- Children will be encouraged to move freely between indoor and outdoor spaces, where staffing and supervision ratios allow.

4.3 Safety and Maintenance

- All environments will be checked daily for hazards and cleanliness using the service's safety checklists.

- Maintenance issues will be reported immediately to the Centre Director or Nominated Supervisor or logged directly on the internal maintenance system online.
- Resources, equipment, and materials will be cleaned, maintained, and replaced as needed to ensure safety and quality.

5. Responsibilities

Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor

- Ensure environments are safe, well maintained, and compliant with regulatory requirements
- Oversee planning for environments to support children's learning and development
- Provide resources and budget for environmental maintenance and improvement

Educators and Staff

- Conduct daily environment safety checks
- Set up and maintain learning spaces that are engaging, inclusive, and culturally responsive
- Supervise children actively in all spaces, supporting safe exploration and risk-taking
- Reflect and plan for improvements to indoor and outdoor environments regularly

Families

- Share ideas, feedback, and cultural knowledge to enrich learning environments
- Support appropriate clothing for outdoor play in all weather conditions

6. Legislative and Industry Requirements: [Link](#) to Legislative Compliance Register

- Consequences of breaching this policy:** All elements of this policy must be adhered to, and any breach will be dealt with in accordance with the [YMCA Whittlesea Disciplinary and Termination Policy](#).
- Policy owner:** The GM Early Years is responsible for keeping this policy current - including making amendments as required, and regular reviews as scheduled.
- Document Control:** Review of this policy will be undertaken every two years, or prior as required by law, in consultation with appropriate Y People.

Version:	Description	Amended by:	Updated	Approved
V1	Created	Michele Rowse & Rebecca Davis	July 2025	July 2025