



TASMANIAN
CATHOLIC
education commission

OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING POLICY

Policy No. 02:2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. AUTHORITY AND APPLICATION.....	3
2. RELATED DOCUMENTS.....	4
3. DEFINITIONS.....	4
4. PURPOSE.....	5
5 BACKGROUND	5
6 POLICY	5
7 COVERAGE	6
8 GENERAL PRINCIPLES.....	6

Document:	Date of commencement:	Page Reference:
Outdoor Play and Learning Policy	27 July 2018	Page 2 of 7

1. AUTHORITY AND APPLICATION

Date of approval	24 July 2018
Source of approval	Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission
Start date	27 July 2018
Date of review	July 2021
Date of amendments	N/A
Previous policies replaced by this Policy	TCEC Risk and Adventure in Outdoor Learning Policy

SIGNED:



Chair of the TCEC

DATE:

24 July 2018

Document:	Date of commencement:	Page Reference:
Outdoor Play and Learning Policy	27 July 2018	Page 3 of 7

2. RELATED DOCUMENTS

This Policy should be considered in conjunction with the following related documents:

Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TCEC Workplace Health and Safety Policy• Risk Management Policy• Procurement Policy• Excursion Policy
Applicable Laws	All laws in connection with the carrying out of work or the Workplace including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas)</i>• Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012

3. DEFINITIONS

- **Outdoor Learning:** Learning experiences which take place outside of the classroom or school buildings. These may be onsite or offsite, play or planned experiences.
- **Play:** A process, which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. Children determine and control the contents and intent of their play, by following their instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons. (Play-Work Principles Scrutiny Group 2005)
- **Excursion:** School excursions are structured learning experiences provided by, or under the auspices of, the school that are conducted external to the school site.
- **Hazard:** A situation or thing, which has the potential to harm a person.
- **Risk:** The possibility that harm (death, injury or illness) might occur when exposed to a hazard.
- **Risk Assessment:** Identification of hazards and allocation of appropriate controls.
- **Risk Management:** Taking action to eliminate risk so far as is reasonably practical and if that is not reasonably practical, minimising the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.
- **Risk-benefit Analysis:** An analysis of the benefits of an activity balanced against an assessment of the risks of that activity.
- **School:** A Catholic Education Tasmania school or college.
- **Student:** Children and young people who attend a Catholic Education Tasmania school for the purposes of being educated.

Document:	Date of commencement:	Page Reference:
Outdoor Play and Learning Policy	27 July 2018	Page 4 of 7

4. PURPOSE

The Play and Outdoor Learning Policy has been developed to support the provision and use of play spaces within our schools and to encourage positive learning experiences outside of the classroom. The intent of the Policy is to ensure all parties are aware of their obligations in providing inspiring play spaces and rich outdoor learning experiences to enable students to grow and develop to their full potential in accordance with our Gospel values while ensuring the safest possible environment for those experiences.

A key aim of the Policy is to reinvigorate play spaces as areas for learning and adventure with reasonable and appropriately identified, managed risk-taking whilst ensuring Work Health and Safety (WHS) requirements are met.

5 BACKGROUND

‘No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool’.

Although the term ‘risk-taking’ often has negative connotations, the reality is that the willingness to engage in appropriately managed risky activities provides opportunities to learn new skills, try new behaviours and ultimately reach our potential, Adventure and risk, in particular during outdoor play, allows students to test the limits of their physical, intellectual and social development.

Perceptions or interpretations of WHS requirements have resulted in decisions to curtail or cancel some activities rather than take steps to appropriately manage associated risks. This has resulted in children and young people not being provided with learning opportunities that are essential for their physical, intellectual and social development.

Key messages:

- Play is important for children’s well-being and development.
- When planning and providing play/outdoor learning opportunities the goal is to eliminate health and safety risks so far as is reasonably practical and if that is not reasonably practical to minimise the risks so far as is reasonably practicable, while securing and increasing the benefits.
- Accidents happen during play and outdoor learning – but fear of litigation and prosecution should not be allowed to stifle play.

6 POLICY

Students in our schools shall be provided with valuable learning experiences within school grounds and on excursions. These experiences will be experiences where risk-benefit analysis has shown that the benefits of the experience outweigh the risks. Where risks are identified, reasonable practicable steps will be taken to manage the risks.

Document:	Date of commencement:	Page Reference:
Outdoor Play and Learning Policy	27 July 2018	Page 5 of 7

7 COVERAGE

Each school shall:

- Manage the risks in student's playing and outdoor learning but not allow unreasonable and/or overly pedantic risk management to be the guiding principle when creating play spaces/facilities and planning excursions.
- Ensure student's play and outdoor learning experiences are supported by adequate planning and documentation.
- Provide parents with clear statements of beliefs around play provision and outdoor learning including a statement outlining how risks are managed.
- Ensure all staff understand the importance of play and outdoor experiences in student's lives and how to reconcile the WHS requirements and the learning needs of students.
- Undertake a risk assessment when an outdoor learning area is created or new items are included or conditions change. Regular inspections of the area shall be carried out to ensure risks are being managed as planned.

The Principal shall:

- Ensure possession of current knowledge and awareness of age appropriate health and safety management practices for play and outdoor learning.
- Ensure play and outdoor learning opportunities are not being restricted by fear of litigation around WHS concerns.
- Allocate appropriate resources to manage play and outdoor learning experiences and to manage risks.
- Oversee the adequate use of risk management including risk assessment and risk benefit analysis.
- Ensure staff are aware of risk management requirements.
- Monitor the impact of this Policy on learning opportunities and WHS outcomes.

Teachers and teacher assistants/other staff shall:

- Support play and outdoor learning experiences with appropriate risk management.
- In the case of excursions, prepare adequate risk management documentation including a risk assessment to support applications to the Principal.

8 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

WHS laws exist to protect workers and others from death, serious injury and ill health at work, not to ruin student playtime or outdoor learning experiences. Not providing students with play or outdoor learning experiences may of itself create risk.

Play and exploration is a fundamental human right for all children and young people regardless of age, gender, culture, social class or disability. This needs to be reflected in the range of play environments and outdoor learning opportunities we offer students to ensure students are able to engage in experiences that help improve their quality of life.

While elimination of risks is preferable it may not be possible 'if doing so means that you cannot make the end product or deliver the service' (Safe Work Australia How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks: Code of Practice). In this case, the product or service is education. It is our

Document:	Date of commencement:	Page Reference:
Outdoor Play and Learning Policy	27 July 2018	Page 6 of 7

responsibility to educate students to take informed and reasonable risk.

The Victorian Health Foundation Study 'Nothing but fear itself' (2010) noted the following benefits of physical activity:

- Children and young people learn to regulate their emotions.
- Children and young people learn to engage in exploratory behaviour.
- Children and young people learn to communicate effectively.
- Children and young people become more self-directed.
- Children and young people develop greater intellectual flexibility.

Risk has both positive and negative aspects. With careful thought and planning it is possible to manage risks without extinguishing the possibility of personal adventure at the heart of outdoor learning.

The law imposes a duty on a person to eliminate the risk to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable, and if not reasonable practicable to do so, to minimise the risk as far as is reasonably practicable. This **does not** mean eliminating **all** risks. The emphasis should be on eliminating unacceptable risks and controlling acceptable risks. It follows that, for every experience, an appropriate person should decide if the balance between risk and opportunity as appropriate for the children and young people concerned.

Educators taking students outdoors are uniquely placed to manage this process. They should adopt an enabling attitude towards outdoor learning that identifies exciting, creative opportunities for learning.

Students should not be denied an experience simply because a risk could not be completely eliminated. A venture where all conceivable risk has been eliminated removes the opportunities for students to develop their own strategies and attitudes towards risk and, furthermore, avoidance can of itself create other risks.

Risk/benefit analysis consciously balances the benefits of an experience against the risks.

In planning and considering risks and benefits it is important to consider:

- Is the level of challenge appropriate to the learner group?
- How will risks be assessed and balanced against the benefits that can be expected?
- Can the rationale for this experience be justified even if events don't go according to plan?
- Are the management arrangements appropriate to the location selected?
- Is the leadership and supervisory staff appropriately skilled, qualified and experienced?
- Are there any relevant examples of good practice that we can draw on?

Document:	Date of commencement:	Page Reference:
Outdoor Play and Learning Policy	27 July 2018	Page 7 of 7