

## PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by South Kingsville Preschool to cancel bush kinder session/s in response to forecast weather conditions, and ensure that parents, guardians and volunteers understand this framework.
- Ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when the weather conditions become extreme during a session.
- Provide guidelines for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session.
- Provide an appropriate mechanism for communication of session cancellations in extreme weather conditions.
- Impress upon parents/guardians that they may collect their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason).

## POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. VALUES

South Kingsville Preschool is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children participating in the Bush Kinder program
- Facilitating a bush kinder experience in a variety of (safe) weather conditions, including rain, to allow children to experience nature across as broad a spectrum as possible and without compromising the safety of the participants.
- Accessing appropriate resources to enable well-informed determinations to be made regarding weather conditions.
- Facilitating effective and timely communication to parents and guardians regarding weather conditions, cancellations or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather
- Respecting the right of parents/guardians to remove their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason).

### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, nominated supervisor, persons in day-to-day charge, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of South Kingsville Preschool, including during offsite excursions, activities and bush kinder.



## 3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

### Background

South Kingsville Preschool's Bush Kinder program is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing the children to experience nature and its elements across the seasons. Whatever the weather, children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring, and learning in a bush or natural environment. However, extreme weather conditions may arise periodically which can put the wellbeing and safety of the children and staff at risk. This policy provides the parameters within which the kindergarten can make determinations to cancel bush kinder sessions in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensure appropriate communication channels are in place to inform participants. It also provides a framework for staff in the event that extreme weather conditions arise during a session and provides procedures for effective evacuation to a safe location.

### Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law 2010 (Vic)*;
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

## 4. DEFINITIONS

**Bureau of Meteorology:** Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Website [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) various iPhone/iPad apps use BOM data (e.g. Pocket Weather)

**Bush Kinder Mobile Phone:** Phone to be turned on, within hearing capabilities and on an educator always whilst the Bush Kinder Session is taking place (including the walk back to South Kingsville Preschool).

**Extreme Weather:** weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightning, wind or heat. The risk to individuals' wellbeing is guided by the Bureau of Meteorology's forecast conditions. An extreme weather table is shown below. Bush Kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met:

Weather Condition	Extreme weather determinant causing cancellation of Bush Kinder Session
<b>Forecast Temperature</b>	<p>BOM forecasted temperature above 30 degrees at midday on the day of the session.</p> <p>Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (refer to <i>Bush Kinder Program: Protective Clothing Policy</i>)</p>
<b>Forecast wind speed</b>	> 35km per hour and the educators decide that it would be appropriate to cancel the session. Wind gusts and educators use their discretion to cancel the session.

<b>Forecast of electrical storm activity</b>	Thunderstorm/electrical storm forecast
<b>Forecast of hail or torrential rain</b>	Heavy hail or torrential rain predicted
<b>Forecast fire risk</b>	Total Fire Ban days

In addition to the above, the 4yo kindergarten teacher in charge of the Bush Kinder Session has the discretion to cancel a session if they view the weather to be poor for Bush Kinder purposes, even if the extreme weather determinants in the above table are not reached. Weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology for the area would also necessitate cancellation.

Further, the Hobsons Bay City Council Park Ranger has the authority to override the South Kingsville Preschool's Committee's determination on safety and request cancellation of a session should he or she consider the Bush Kinder site be unsafe.

**Protective Clothing:** Refer to *Protective Clothing Policy*

### 5. SOURCES AND RELATED CENTRE POLICIES

#### Sources

Victorian Government 'Better Health Channel Website

#### Centre Policies

- *Bush Kinder Program - Protective Clothing Policy*
- *Bush Kinder Program - Emergency Evacuation Policy*
- *Bush Kinder Program - Play Benefit and Risk Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*

### PROCEDURES

#### General

**The Approved Provider is responsible for:**

- An Extreme Weather Policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a bush kinder session/s and provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session.

- All parents/guardians being aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy upon request.

### **The Four-Year-Old Kindergarten Teacher in Charge on the Day of the Bush Kinder Sessions is responsible for:**

- Ensuring that the Bush Kinder Mobile Phone is charged so educators can SMS all parents of children in a session and always receive/make calls.
- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior and the morning of the Bush Kinder session.
- Deciding to cancel based on the weather forecast - in cases of forecast Extreme Weather (see definition above), the 4yo educator in charge of the Bush Kinder Session will make the decision to cancel the Bush Kinder program for the session/s affected.
- In addition to the Extreme Weather determinants detailed in the table under 'Definitions', the 4yo educator in charge of the Bush Kinder Session has the discretion to cancel the session if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes. The Hobsons Bay City Council Park Ranger also has the authority to request that the Centre cancel a session due to extreme weather conditions at the site as stated above.
- **AND IF THE SESSION IS CANCELLED**, notifying parents by broadcast SMS from the Bush Kinder Mobile Phone by **7:30am** on the day of the session if Bush Kinder is to be cancelled. If cancelled, the kindergarten session will therefore take place at South Kingsville Preschool on that day;
- Note that a bush kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or any other time by broadcast SMS from the Bush Kinder Mobile Phone based on updated weather information.

### **The Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor and all other Bush Kinder Staff are responsible for:**

- Keeping the Bush Kinder Mobile Phone charged, turned on, within hearing capabilities and on an educator at all times whilst the Bush Kinder Session is taking place (including the walk back to South Kingsville Preschool);
- Checking the mobile phone on the day of bush kinder sessions to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are aware of this policy as part of their induction.

### **Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Ensuring they are always comfortable with the forecast weather conditions, while their child is attending a Bush Kinder session. If, for whatever reason, a parent/guardian feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session and/or collect their child from a session in the event that extreme weather arises during a session.
- Ensuring protective clothing is worn by their child to suit the weather conditions and ensure a change of clothes is provided (including shoes) (Refer to *Bush*

*Kinder Program: Protective Clothing Policy)*

- Reading and being familiar with the policy
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and Committee

### IN THE EVENT OF WEATHER BECOMING EXTREME DURING A SESSION

**Bush Kinder Staff are responsible for:**

- Undertaking the following actions in each of the weather conditions listed in the table below:

Weather condition	Staff Actions
<p>Heat</p> <p><i>Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke in accordance with the signs/symptoms and treatments set out in the Level 2 (HLTFA311A) First Aid Training all staff have undertaken.</li> <li>• Offer water for hydration at regular intervals</li> <li>• Establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade</li> <li>• Ensure application of sunscreen every two hours</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate protective clothing including hats. (Refer to <i>Bush Kinder Program: Protective Clothing Policy</i> for more information).</li> </ul>
<p>Rain/Hail/Cold</p> <p><i>Risks include child getting wet (and onset of hypothermia), injury from hailstones</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary</li> <li>• Ensure appropriate clothing is worn (e.g., waterproof clothing, gloves)</li> <li>• Where necessary undertaking the emergency evacuation procedures as set out in the <i>Bush Kinder Program: Emergency Evacuation Policy</i>.</li> </ul>

<p>Electrical storm activity/lightning</p> <p><i>Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move children away from trees</li> <li>• Evacuate in accordance with the emergency evacuation procedures as set out in the <i>Bush Kinder Program: Emergency Evacuation Policy</i>.</li> <li>• See Attachment 1 for First Aid Recommendations for Lightning Victims.</li> </ul>
<p>High winds</p> <p><i>Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing particles (sand dirt) into eyes, Bush Kinder structures blowing down/away etc.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure ;</li> <li>• Move children away from trees;</li> <li>• Evacuate in accordance with the emergency evacuation procedures as set out in the <i>Bush Kinder Program: Emergency Evacuation Policy</i>.</li> </ul>

- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy* and *Bush Kinder Program: Emergency Evacuation Policy* must be followed.
- Contacting parent/guardian in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*

**Session cancellation:**

If a bush kinder session is cancelled mid session due to extreme weather, parents/guardians will be contacted via SMS from the kinder mobile phone and will be able to collect their children in accordance with the *Bush Kinder Program: Delivery and Collection Policy*. For those children that are unable to be collected or are attending Occasional Care, they will be walked back to Sth Kingsville Preschool at a safe time, via a safe route in accordance with the *Bush Kinder Program: Emergency Evacuation Policy*.

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

Collecting their child at any time during the session if they are not comfortable with the weather conditions.

**Procedures for relocating to a Safe Position:**

Relocate the session in accordance with the *Bush Kinder Program: Emergency Evacuation Policy*.

### EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the Committee of Management will:

- Where deemed appropriate, encourage feedback regarding this policy and its

implementation with parents/guardians of children participating in the Bush Kinder program.

- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
- Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any substantial changes to this policy, which would impact on the supervision and care of children, unless a lesser period is required due to risk.

### ATTACHMENTS

*Attachment 1: First Aid Recommendations for Lightning Victims.*

### AUTHORISATION

This policy was approved by the Committee of Management of the South Kingsville Preschool at a committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023

**REVIEW DATE: May 2026**



## ATTACHMENT 1 - FIRST AID RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIGHTNING VICTIMS

Source: Centre for Disease Control and Prevention  
(<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/lightning/firstaid.asp>)

### HOW TO HELP

Giving first aid to lightning strike victims while waiting for professional medical attention can save their lives. It is safe to touch a lightning strike victim. People struck by lightning DO NOT carry a charge.

Follow these four steps immediately to help save the life of a lightning strike victim:

#### 1. Call for Help

Call 000 immediately. Give directions to your location and information about the strike victim(s) (i.e. how many victims are there, where was the victim struck, is the storm still continuing). It is safe to use a mobile phone during a storm.

#### 2. Assess the Situation

Safety is a priority. Be aware of the continuing lightning danger to both the victim and rescuer. If the area where the victim is located is high risk (e.g., an isolated tree or open field), the victim and rescuer could both be in danger. If necessary, move the victim to a safer location. It is unusual for a victim who survives a strike to have any major broken bones that would cause paralysis or major bleeding complications unless the person suffered a fall or was thrown a long distance. Therefore, it may be safe to move the victim to minimize possible further exposure to lightning.

#### 3. Respond

Lightning may cause cardiac arrest. Commence cardiopulmonary resuscitation if required following the Basic life support guidelines.

##### **D danger**

R responsiveness

S send for help

A open airway

B ? Normal Breathing

C start CPR 30 compressions : 2 breaths

D attach defibrillator (AED) as soon as available and follow its prompts

Continue resuscitation efforts until help arrives. If the area is cold and wet, putting a protective layer between the victim and the ground may help decrease hypothermia (abnormally low body temperature).

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:** Lightning may also cause other injuries such as burns, shock, and sometimes blunt trauma. Treat each of these injuries with basic first aid until help arrives. Do not move victims who are bleeding or appear to have broken bones.