



**New Lambton South**  
PUBLIC SCHOOL

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# PLAYGROUND

## MEMORANDUM OF

### UNDERSTANDING



## **RATIONALE**

The importance of physical play and play based learning for students cannot be underestimated. There are multiple academic studies that cite the advantages for cognitive, physical, social and emotional development as a result of the opportunities to engage in free play, guided play and deep play. At New Lambton South Public School we are committed to providing our students with multiple opportunities to engage in play in order to develop these capabilities.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been developed with representatives from the school community and Executive staff of the school. It underpins the way in which we agree children at New Lambton South Public School will engage in play.

## **GUIDED PLAY**

Guided Play is a period of 15-20 minutes that occurs through the day in order to allow children to actively recharge and reinvigorate in order to more successfully apply themselves to learning tasks. Guided Play refers to the time when teachers are actively guiding children in exploration and learning and is also considered part of a teacher's teaching duties at the school. Early Years Learning may also utilise this type of play as a catalyst or stimulus for classroom activities, for example writing and reading on a particular topic.

## **TREE CLIMBING**

The Foundation statements contained within the NSW Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Syllabus refer to the importance for

*Students participate in regular physical activity through creative play, dance, gymnastics and minor games. They practise body movement and control, demonstrating different ways the body can move by composing and sequencing simple movement patterns. Students show awareness and consideration of others during play situations and practise the fundamental movement skills of balance, sprint run, vertical jump and catch, hop, side gallop, skip, overhand throw, kick and two-handed strike. They describe the components of an active lifestyle and identify different ways to be active at school and at home.*

In tree climbing, the child can find their own limits regarding physical movement, in a safe environment with supportive adults.

The activity lets them develop a healthy relationship with their own bodies and an understanding of their capabilities; developing not only physical skills, but constantly making conscious and unconscious judgements with regard to their own weight, balance, strength and capabilities.



It is vital that the child develops these skills of self-awareness relative to space, movement and consequent risk, as part of their development into responsible adults.

A child that has not had the opportunity to develop these skills, through play generally and climbing in particular, might subsequently be at risk from their inability to assess what they can and cannot do with their bodies. Not least because most pupils have limited access to trees, it is important for the school to offer this developmental activity.

### **Hazards**

As with any climbing on playground equipment, climbing trees can entail significant risks: pupils may climb to heights from which a fall could lead to serious injury or death.

The school will therefore strike a balance: recognising the significant benefits of tree climbing whilst seeking to reduce or eliminate those risks that lie outside of the direct control of each child.

We recognise that the following factors could increase the risks:

1. Lack of awareness among staff regarding safe play
2. Lack of education for children about safe tree-climbing practices
3. Climbing above hard surfaces or protrusions, such as stone paths or fences
4. Taking ropes or other equipment up a tree
5. Fighting or dangerous play at height
6. Peer pressure to go higher
7. Climbing on weak branches (i.e. thinner than pupil's wrist)
8. Weather conditions
9. Footwear and clothing
10. Climbing in areas out of sight of a supervising adult – when the above risks may not be controlled
11. A pupil's disability
12. Lack of routine inspection and maintenance of safe areas and trees
13. The presence of moveable objects under trees (e.g. logs, wheelbarrows, toys etc.)

### **Procedure**

To mitigate the above risks, the school will:

1. Ensure that annual tree checks are carried out by a suitably qualified person as per the Department of Education guidelines and tree safety policy.
2. Zone and identify trees suitable for climbing to maximise visibility for duty staff and eliminate risks of falling onto obstacles.



3. The designated climbing areas are selected to avoid hard ground and/or protrusions.
4. Safe trees will be identified in appropriate risk assessments which will be reviewed from time to time.
5. Install woodchips and maintain these on the ground under the climbing areas to ensure that, should a child fall from a tree, the landing will not be on hard ground, thereby, reducing the risk of injury.
6. Ensure supervision levels during break time.
7. Build on the existing best-practice in Early Years and maintain educational sessions on tree-climbing for pupils annually, with the aim of helping children enjoy the activity and becoming good at perceiving and managing risks themselves.
8. Educate duty staff on rules regarding outdoor play to support them enforcing rules based on the hazards identified above.
9. Support supervising adults to exercise their judgement to intervene or ultimately ban children from tree climbing if they deem it appropriate to do so.
10. Climbing zones and safe trees will be subject to the same routine inspections as play structures.
11. Ensure that the area underneath the tree is clear of any moveable objects that a child could fall onto.
12. Maintain a register of students who have been educated on tree climbing
13. Gain parental permission at the start of the year allowing their children to climb trees

## **SPORTS EQUIPMENT**

We allow students to access all types of Sport Equipment at all play breaks through the day. This includes bats, wheely boards, hockey stick and Frisbees as examples. We encourage students to use this equipment not only for the purpose it was intended but to be used creatively. Such examples may include using sticks for sword fighting, using wheely boards and skipping ropes to make trains.

## **NATURE PLAY**

We allow students to engage in Nature Play, to dig in the dirt, use sticks and leaves to build creations. This may lead to students becoming particularly dirty. If as a parent that your child enjoys this particular aspect of play we encourage you to send an old shirt to wear over the top of their school uniforms during play breaks.

## **SUN SAFETY**

Australia has one of the highest prevalence's of Skin Cancer due to UV radiation in the world. We encourage students to follow the following safety guidelines when at school.

1. Wear a hat during all outside activities
2. Apply sunscreen (supplied by the school) prior to outdoor activity



3. Provide outdoor sunscreen stations for students to access
4. If you do not have a hat play in a shaded area.
5. Students with no hats will be encouraged to get a spare hat or play in the shade

Students who do not have hats will not be reprimanded or have a punitive enforced onto them such as missing play. Teaching staff will encourage good choices and will educate students on the need to stay sun-safe.

### **WET WEATHER PLAY**

During times of wet weather students will be allowed to play outdoors. The school will provide adequate dry play spaces including classrooms and the hall. Outdoor spaces will also be supervised by teachers on duty. As teachers we educate our students to make good decisions about their personal wellbeing. Students will not be reprimanded or kept indoors as the only option on rainy days. Parents are encouraged to aid in facilitating wet weather play by sending suitable equipment for students to use on these days including wet weather jackets and gumboots if required.

If parents wish to send wet weather equipment at the start of the year to be stored at the school this will need to be negotiated with the classroom teacher and is dependent on adequate storage facilities which differs from class to class.

### **DOCUMENT DETAILS**

Developed in consultation with P and C committee November 2019

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Document Owner: Andrew Pryce, Principal New Lambton South Public School



