St Mark's
Preschool & Long Day Care Centre
A ministry of St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, West Tamworth

Dealing with Infectious Diseases

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

This policy is guided by the paramount consideration that children's safety, rights and best interests are upheld above all other considerations in all decisions, actions and practices.

Policy Statement

St Mark's is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children, staff, families, students, volunteers, visitors, and contractors to minimise the risk of transmission of infectious diseases and biological hazards within the service by implementing evidence-based infection prevention and control practices, consistent with WHS duties and national health guidance.

The safety, well-being, rights and best interests of every child are the paramount consideration in dealing with infectious diseases, decision-making and response actions. Where there is any conflict between operational, financial, staffing or other interests and the safety and well-being of children, children's rights and best interests will prevail.

Early childhood educators and workers may have a higher risk of exposure to different biological hazard sources, specifically contact with persons or human blood and body substances. *Safe Work Australia Managing the risks of biological hazards at work Code of Practice 2026*.

This will be done by:

- preventing and controlling infectious disease transmission
- managing biological hazards using a risk management framework in line with WHS obligations.
- maintaining a safe, hygienic and healthy environment for all stakeholders
- responding to the needs of the child or adult who presents with symptoms of an infectious disease or infestation while attending the service
- complying with current exclusion schedules and guidelines set by the NSW Public Health Unit
- providing up-to-date information and resources for families and staff regarding protection of all children from infectious diseases and blood-borne viruses, management of infestations and immunisation programs.

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Goals / What are we going to do?

The way that children interact with each other and with adults in education and care services means that diseases can quickly spread in a variety of ways.

The service recognises infectious diseases as biological hazards, including:

- viruses, bacteria, parasites and fungi
- exposure through close contact, bodily fluids, contaminated surfaces or environments.

Risk Management approach

The service will:

1. identify biological hazards
2. assess risk of exposure
3. implement control measures
4. review and update controls regularly.

Control measures: Hierarchy of control

The service will apply the WHS hierarchy where practicable:

1. **Elimination** – Exclude infectious individuals where required
2. **Substitution** – Modify activities (e.g. reduce group mixing)
3. **Engineering controls** – Improve ventilation
4. **Administrative controls** – Policies, training, hygiene routines
5. **PPE** – Gloves, masks as needed, ensuring that the PPE selected is correct for the biological hazard as well as the type and potential level of exposure.

While it is not possible to prevent the spread of all infections and diseases, minimising the risk is enhanced through implementing infection prevention and control measures and the hierarchy of control measures.

Standard precautions:

- effective hand hygiene practices
- respiratory etiquette (cover coughs/sneezes)
- use of PPE (gloves, masks where appropriate)
- environmental cleaning and disinfection
- exclusion of ill children, educators and other staff
- immunisation.

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(Staying healthy, 6th ed. 2024)

Environmental controls

In line with the Managing the Risks of Biological Hazards at Work Code of Practice:

- ensure adequate ventilation
- maintain clean and sanitised surfaces
- manage waste safely
- monitor high-touch areas.

Administrative controls:

- immunisation record management
- implementing policies and procedures, such as:
  - implementing cleaning, disinfection and sterilisation processes.
  - implementing a system which ensures waste is stored, handled, treated and disposed of correctly
  - raising awareness of potential biological hazards in the workplace, including the sources of biological hazards, how people are exposed, the potential harms and how to prevent exposure
- illness exclusion procedures
- staff training and supervision to raise awareness of potential biological hazards in the workplace, including:
- the sources of biological hazards
- how people are exposed
- the potential harms
- how to prevent exposure
- communication protocols.

Strategies / How will it be done?

Managing infectious illness

When a child or educator is unwell:

- isolate where practicable
- provide appropriate care
- contact parents/guardians
- follow exclusion requirements.

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Outbreak management:

- activate outbreak response plan
- increase cleaning and hygiene measures
- assess risk to children and staff
- seek public health advice if required.

Effective cleaning and hygiene

Our service will maintain and promote effective hygiene practices, including:

- daily cleaning schedules
- correct handwashing technique
- immediate cleaning of bodily fluid spills using standard precautions when handling blood, all body fluids, secretions and excretions, dried blood and other body substances
- regular disinfection of high-contact surfaces
- cleaning toys and other items that children are likely to put in their mouths, after use
- raking sandpits often and securely covering them when not in use
- disposing of soiled items in a container that is inaccessible to children, place in nappy bin with lid in adult bathrooms or waste management bin.
- washing rubbish bins and nappy buckets regularly
- Used PPE to be disposed of.
- actively promoting handwashing and other hygiene practices with children and families.

Exclusion of children, educators and other staff

Infectious diseases

In order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases through interpersonal contact, our service will adhere to the exclusion period table, published by the National Health and Medical Research Council www.nhmrc.gov.au, please also refer to www.healthdirect.gov.au/school-exclusion-for-health-reasons.

Fever

According to The Sydney Children's Hospital Network, in children, a temperature over 38˚C indicates a fever.

A fever is usually caused by an infection somewhere in the body. Some types of infections that lead to fever include:

- viral (caused by a virus) – around 9 out of 10 children with a fever will have a viral illness, such as a cold, flu or gastroenteritis

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- bacterial (caused by bacteria) – such as some ear infections, pneumonia or urinary infections https://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/fever-factsheet

In order to prevent the spread of infection and ensure wellbeing, children with a temperature above 38˚C will be excluded from the service.

Immunisation

Our service's practice is guided by our State/Territory's Department of Health in relation to child immunisations. We will share resources and information from government bodies and recognised authorities to support families access information regarding immunisations.

Parents who wish to enrol their child are required to provide at the time of enrolment their child's immunisation status. This may be an AIR Immunisation History Statement or Form based on regulatory requirements and/or the State/Territory's Public Health Act. We are able to refuse other forms of documentation based on the above.

A note on immunisation

Immunisation requirements vary based on each state and territory's health legislation.

Each child's record must include the immunisation status of the child (R162(f)).

The National Law and Regulations do not specify how this information must be obtained, except for at services located in NSW and VIC (R162(h) and (i)).

As part of St Mark's health practices and procedures, families are required to provide an Immunisation Statement prior to enrolment, an automated email via our third party software HubHello, sends out an email and a push notification, reminding parents of need to update immunisation records.

For National and state legislation in relation to immunisation requirements for education and care services, please go to Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care - Immunisation: www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation

Exclusion periods

Our service applies the **minimum exclusion periods** set out in the *National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Staying healthy, 6th edition (2024)* and will follow any directions given by the State/Territory Public Health Unit in the event of an outbreak. The relevant State/Territory Public Health Unit will be advised as soon as the service is aware that a child or educator has contracted a vaccine-preventable disease and any directions will be followed accordingly.

Any child or educator that is not fully immunised may be temporarily excluded for a period of time if there is a case of a vaccine preventable disease at the service, or if the child or educator has been in contact with someone outside the Service who has a vaccine preventable disease. We will consider the Exclusion Periods

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recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council and act on any directions provided by the relevant State/Territory Public Health Unit.

It is the responsibility of families to inform the Service that their child has come into contact with someone with a vaccine preventable or infectious disease.

Notification requirements
The service will:

- notify families of infectious disease occurrence promptly
- display required notices
- notify the Regulatory Authority for significant risks.

Record keeping
The service will maintain:

- incident and illness records
- notifications to families and authorities
- cleaning schedules
- staff training records.

Training and consultation

- Staff will receive training in:
  - infection control
  - WHS biological hazard management.
- Consultation with staff on infection risks and controls is required.

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Roles and responsibilities

Role	Authority/Responsibility for
Approved Provider	Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations including: • Ensuring that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of that infectious disease (Regulation 88(1)). • Ensuring that where there is an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, a parent/guardian or authorised emergency contact of each child at the service is notified of the occurrence as soon as is practicable (Regulation 88(2)). • Ensuring that information from the relevant State/Territory Public Health Unit about the recommended minimum exclusion periods is displayed at the service, is available to all stakeholders and is adhered to in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease (as designated by the Department of Health). • Ensuring that the parent/ guardian and Public Health Unit are notified as soon as possible, after being made aware that an enrolled child: ○ has one of the following vaccine preventable diseases, or ○ is reasonably suspected of having come into contact with a person who has one of these vaccine preventable diseases and the enrolled child has no evidence of immunisation lodged to show that the child is immunised against, or acquired immunity by infection from, that disease: ▪ a) Pertussis, or ▪ b) Poliomyelitis, or ▪ c) Measles, or ▪ d) Mumps, or ▪ e) Rubella, or ▪ f) Meningococcal B&C, or ▪ g) Diphtheria, or ▪ h) Haemophilus influenza Type b (Hib), or ○ i) Tetanus.

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Role	Authority/Responsibility for
	• Ensuring that any directions provided by Public Health Unit are followed regarding the possible exclusion of a child or educator who is not immunised against a vaccine preventable disease. • Notifying the regulatory authority within 24 hours of a serious incident including when a child becomes ill at the service or medical attention is sought while the child is attending the service. • Ensuring that appropriate and current information and resources are provided to staff and parents/guardians regarding the identification and management of infectious diseases, blood-borne viruses and infestations. • Keeping informed about current legislation, information, research and best practice. • Ensuring that any changes to the exclusion table or immunisation schedule are communicated to staff and parents/guardians in a timely manner. • Display a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service premises. • Meet jurisdictional requirements relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up-to-date with their scheduled vaccinations • Ensure the premises, furniture and equipment are kept safe, clean and well maintained, including high risk areas (e.g., bathroom, toilet, nappy change area, sandpit), furniture (e.g., cots), clothing, linen, and equipment (e.g., toys, carpets, mats) • Take reasonable steps to ensure that the nominated supervisor, educators and staff follow the policy and procedures • Ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators and staff, and available for inspection
Nominated supervisor	• Implement the Dealing with infectious diseases policy and procedures • Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to prevent the spread of any infectious disease at the service • Ensure that families or an authorised emergency contact of children attending are notified of the occurrence as soon as practicable and in a manner that is not prejudicial to the rights of any child, educator or staff member • Display a notice stating that there has been an occurrence of an infectious disease at the premises, FDC residence or approved venue • Meet jurisdictional requirements relating to the enrolment or attendance of children who are not up-to-date with their scheduled vaccinations • Ensure premises, furniture and equipment are kept safe, clean and well maintained

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Role	Authority/Responsibility for
	• Promote hygiene practices with all children, families, educators and staff • Ensure that notification requirements to the regulatory authority are met in relation to an outbreak of an infectious disease that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children attending the service. • Contacting the parents/guardians of a child suspected of suffering from an infectious or vaccine- preventable disease, and requesting the child be collected as soon as possible. • Notifying a parent/guardian or authorised emergency contact person when a symptom of an excludable infectious illness or disease has been observed. • Ensuring that a minimum of one staff with current approved first aid qualifications is in attendance and immediately available at all times the service is in operation. • Establishing good hygiene and infection control procedures and ensuring that they are adhered to by everyone at the service. • Ensuring the exclusion requirements for infectious diseases are adhered to as per the recommended minimum exclusion periods, notifying the Approved Provider and parents/guardians of any outbreak of infectious disease at the service, and displaying this information in a prominent position. • Advising parents/guardians on enrolment that the recommended minimum exclusion periods will be observed in regard to the outbreak of any infectious diseases or infestations. • Advising the parents/guardians of a child who is not fully immunised on enrolment that they may be required to keep their child at home when an infectious disease is diagnosed at the service, dependent on directions from the Public Health Unit. • Requesting that parents/guardians notify the service if their child has, or is suspected of having, an infectious disease or infestation. • Providing information and resources to families to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations. • Maintaining confidentiality at all times. • Providing relevant sourced materials to families. • Ensuring that an “Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness” record is completed as soon as practicable or no later than 24 hours of the illness occurring.

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Role	Authority/Responsibility for
Early childhood educators	• Implement the Dealing with Infectious Diseases policy and procedures • Stay at home if unwell or have an excludable infectious disease • Ensuring that any children that are suspected of having an infectious illness are responded to and their health and emotional needs supported at all times. • Implementing appropriate health and safety procedures, when tending to ill children. • Ensuring that families are aware of the need to collect their children as soon as practicable to ensure the child's comfort. • Maintaining their own immunisation status and advising the Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor of any updates to their immunisation status. • Providing varied opportunities for children to engage in hygiene practices, including routine opportunities and intentional practice. • Observing signs and symptoms of children who may appear unwell and informing the Nominated Supervisor. • Providing access to information and resources for parents/guardians to assist in the identification and management of infectious diseases and infestations. • Monitoring any symptoms in children that may indicate the presence of an infectious disease. • Maintaining confidentiality at all times.
Families	• Providing Immunisation documentation upon enrolment and as administered. • Be familiar with and follow the service's Dealing with infectious diseases policy and procedures • Keeping their children at home if they are unwell or have an excludable infectious disease. • Keeping their children at home when an infectious disease has been diagnosed at the service and their child is not fully immunised against that infectious disease if directed to do so by the Public Health Unit. • Informing the service if their child has an infectious disease or has been in contact with a person who has an infectious disease.

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Monitoring, evaluation and review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every 12 months or as required.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

Related Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety – Standard 2.1
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities – Standard 6.1, 6.2

Related Legislation

- Section 2A-Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of childre
- Section172-Offence to fail to display prescribed information
- Section 174-Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulations 85-87, 88,103, 162, 168(2)(c) ,169,170,,171,172,173,175
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code (FSANZ)

Related Topics

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Resources

- Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th ed., 2024). https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/reports/clinical%20guidelines/ch55-staying-healthy.pdf
- Safe Work Australia Managing the risks of biological hazards at work Code of Practice 2026: https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-03/modelcop_managing_risks_biological_hazards_mar2026.pdf
- National Immunisation Program Schedule - https://www.health.gov.au/childhood-immunisation/immunisation-schedule?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIwqSGmPH_hQMVUifUAR0rxwUlEAAYASAAEgKGAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds
- Australian Government Department of Health: Immunisation www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation
- Australian immunisation handbook https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au
- National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS): National and state legislation in relation to immunisation requirements for child care www.ncirs.org.au/public/no-jab-no-play-no-jab-no-pay
- The Sydney Children's Hospital Network: Signs of serious illness in children - https://www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/signs-serious-illness-children-factsheet
- ACECQA – NQF Online Safety Guide | ACECQA
- Starting Blocks -Managing illnesses in Early Childhood Education and Care Services | StartingBlocks.gov.au

Last review date	Changes made	Next review date
14/09/2026	Paramountcy principle added	September 2027
1/07/2026	General review making explicit the responsibilities of approved provider, nominated supervisor /responsible person, educator and families.	July 2027
14/05/2026	Updated to incorporate the Code of Practice - Managing the risks of biological hazards at work, March 2026	May 2027
March 2025	annual policy review. Definition of Infectious Disease added to policy. Review of practices is conducted following an outbreak of an infectious disease added. no major edits from V17	
26/09/2025	Updated to reflect Staying Healthy, 6th Edition	September 2026

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This is a sample document only. Community Early Learning Australia (CELA) considers this form to satisfy what is required under the Education and Care Services National Regulations and has taken all care in compiling this information. We have done this on the understanding that all members undertake responsibility for assessing the relevance and accuracy of the content for their service's situation.

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