

NSW Department of Education



A guide to outside of school hours care (OSHC)?

For NSW school principals







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Introduction

School principals play an important role in making sure that the benefits of outside school hours care (OSHC) services are realised.

This guide aims to help school principals understand OSHC service operations to provide valuable benefits for children, their families, and the broader school community.

In a contemporary Australian context, OSHC serves three main functions: safety, play and education.

With children in NSW spending an average of 11.3 hours in OSHC per week, and some children spending up to 5.5 hours in OSHC per day, OSHC is becoming more and more important. This is particularly true for OSHCs located on school grounds.

In the past seven years, the number of children aged 6-12 years accessing approved services in NSW has grown by 59.6%¹.

Strong partnerships between school principals and OSHC services enhance children's learning and development, in both formal and informal ways. This leads to better outcomes for children.

¹ *Report on Government Services for children accessing child care subsidy between 2013 and 2020.*

“When the school workforce value OSHC educators as partners in providing learning opportunities (both formal and informal), the outcomes for children are likely to be better.”

Thelma Harms, Donna Romano White and Ellen Vineberg Jacobs (2013).
School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale, updated edition (SACERS).
New York, NY: Teachers College Press.



What is OSHC?

OSHC services provide education and care for primary school-age children before and after school, in school holidays and on pupil free days. In NSW, some services may refer to themselves as Out Of School Hours (OOSH) services.

Approximately 50% of OSHC services in NSW are located within public school grounds. There are also many OSHCs on non-government and independent school sites as well. OSHC services also operate from non-school sites such as local community halls.

Service operating models and hours vary depending on community needs and school hours. Generally, OSHCs offer a combination of the three models below.

- Before school hours care | 6:30am-9:30am
- After school hours care | 2:30pm-6:30pm
- Vacation care (during school holidays) | 6:30am-6:30pm

“Having a Before and After School service has dramatically increased the probability of parents in our community choosing our schools... it has tipped that percentage of parents who have decided to keep their kids in that rural setting.”

Geoffrey Smith, Principal, Michelago Public School



The benefits of OSHC

OSHC enables families to work or study outside of school hours. Many families who require OSHC choose to enrol their children in a school specifically that has an on-site or off-site service.

The benefits of OSHC for children who attend OSHC services are extensive. A high-quality OSHC service will:

- Foster children’s social and emotional skills through relationship building with peers and educators.
- Provide recreational leisure time in a safe and supportive setting.
- Allow children to make choices about their play in structured and unstructured environments that support their development (learning through play is one of the most important ways children learn and develop).
- Support children’s growing sense of belonging, independence and self-help skills.
- Meet their physical activity and nutritional needs.

OSHC services offer a valuable opportunity for children to access developmental play opportunities, and encourage multi-year friendships beyond the classroom, across age groups.

OSHC programs focus on developing the social and emotional skills of the child through school connectedness, self-management, self-efficacy and social awareness.

These skills are linked to children’s overall wellbeing, their capacity to engage in academic performance and future life outcomes.

From a child’s perspective, they value the OSHC setting as a place for play and shared experiences with friends.

Building a relationship with your OSHC

There are a number of reasons why it is important for school principals to engage with their school’s OSHC service:

- The way school principals perceive OSHC is emerging as a key factor in how successfully an OSHC delivers benefits to children.
- A school principal’s leadership affects how much space or what type of space is allocated to an onsite OSHC service: this has an impact on how the OSHC service provides appropriate spaces for children for play and social engagement.
- The support of a school principal may influence and assist how well, and in what way, an OSHC service engages with families and the local community.

Strong partnerships between the school community and OSHC can lead to better decision-making and shared value of the service.

OSHC services that prioritise the development and wellbeing of children and the needs of the parent community have been found to demonstrate this collaboration.

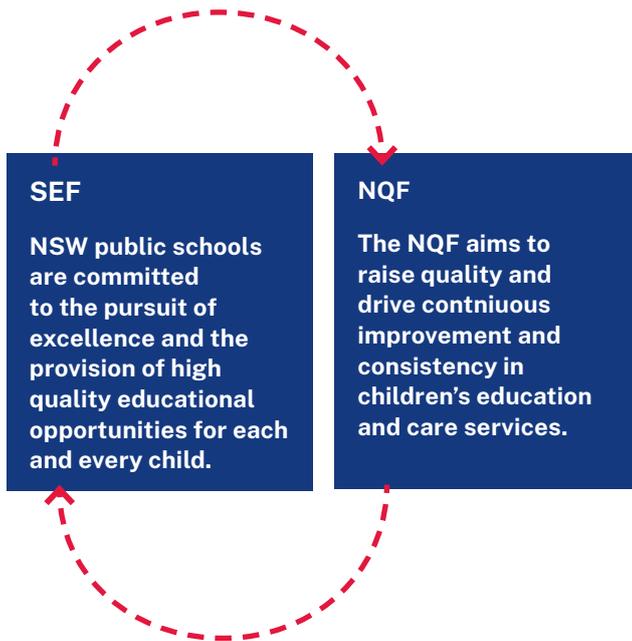
Many principals also report that through the provision of a high quality OSHC, local families are drawn to their school who would otherwise enrol elsewhere.

Best practice shows that continual, effective collaboration between the school principal and the OSHC service is essential to the ongoing success of the OSHC and outcomes for children.



Links to School Excellence Framework

The [School Excellence Framework](#) (SEF) and the National Quality Framework (NQF) are both designed with the highest standards of educational excellence in mind. Each shapes the other, calling all stages of schooling to continuous improvement for the benefit of all children.



What does 'best practice communication' between principals and OSHC services look like?

Effective communication between the school community and OSHC services support children's transitions between the OSHC service and the school classroom.

Principals help to support continuity of care between the two contexts for children and their families. You could consider:

1. Facilitating shared information between the school with the OSHC service during handovers, to achieve continued support and care for all children despite a change in setting. This is very important for children with additional needs, including those with medical conditions.
2. Supporting Kindergarten transition processes through assisted communication with the OSHC and new parents to the school.
3. Meeting with the OSHC service's Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor at least once per term to discuss ways of working together that meet the needs of the school and the OSHC
4. Speaking and visit the children at the OSHC regularly while the before or after school session is in progress, and actively take a role by staying in touch with families to ensure the OSHC program is meeting their ongoing needs.
5. Inviting the OSHC service to speak at P&C meetings and involve the OSHC educator in school and community activities where possible.

Who's who in an OSHC service?

OSHC services must operate in accordance with the Education and Care National Law and Regulations. OSHC is delivered by providers approved to operate by the Quality Assurance and Regulatory Services team within the Department of Education. They are also known as the NSW Regulatory Authority.

Approved provider/Persons with management or control

An approved provider may be an individual, body corporate, association, partnership or prescribed entity. If an approved provider is not an individual, they will be listed as persons with management or control (PMC). This includes volunteer groups of parents from the school community who form an incorporated association in order to operate a service.

The Approved Provider is responsible for all governance and financial management of the service.

Types of Approved Providers include:

- Parents in a School –Not-for-profit service operated by a specifically formed Parent Management Committee or through the school's P&C committee
- A not-for-profit organisation or charity
- Private approved providers which can be a small business owner or a large company.

Nominated Supervisor

The Nominated Supervisor is an approved person with adequate knowledge and understanding of the National Quality Standard and relevant legislation, and the ability to effectively supervise and manage an education and care service.

Educational Leader

An appropriately experienced individual to lead the development and implementation of the educational program. OSHC services are required to apply the teaching principles outlined in the My Time, Our Place –a Framework for School Age Care in Australia meet educational outcomes for children.

Responsible person in day-to-day charge

A responsible person is an individual who is physically present and responsible for the operation of the OSHC service for an agreed period of time. This person is the point of contact for parents and staff, and there must be a responsible person present at all times that the service operates.

Educators

Educators at an OSHC service provide education and care to children in a way that:

- Encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
- Allows children to develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- Maintains children's dignity and rights
- Gives each child positive guidance and encouragement
- Respects family and cultural values and the individual development and abilities of each child.

OSHC services in NSW operate on a staff to child ratio of 1:15. In order to be included in ratio, educators must be actively supervising and engaging with children.

Educators in a NSW OSHC services are required to have a valid Working with Children's Check, and have access a wide variety of professional development opportunities.

“Collaborating with and supporting our OOSH partnership is mutually beneficial. It underpins the close-knit relationship that has been developed between OOSH and our school. The partnership of both organisations is drastically enhanced through the assistance, respect and understanding of each other. Open and clear communication is the cornerstone upon which the relationship is built.”

Trish Fisher, Principal, Coogee South Public School



Supporting inclusive OSHC at your school

OSHC services are encouraged to ensure that all children have access to their services. Like other forms of early childhood education, there are Commonwealth and State government programs that support OSHC services to reduce barriers to access, such as affordability.

These programs include:

- Child Care Subsidy (CCS), a national program that provides fee assistance for parents who use all forms of child care.
- Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS), a special form of CCS that provides short-term support for families experiencing extreme financial hardship.

The other main program targeting inclusive access is the Commonwealth Government's Inclusion Support Program (ISP), provided through the Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment.

The ISP aims to:

- support eligible mainstream early childhood education and care (ECEC) services to improve their capacity and capability to provide quality inclusive practices for all children
- provide families of children with additional needs with access to appropriate and inclusive ECEC services.

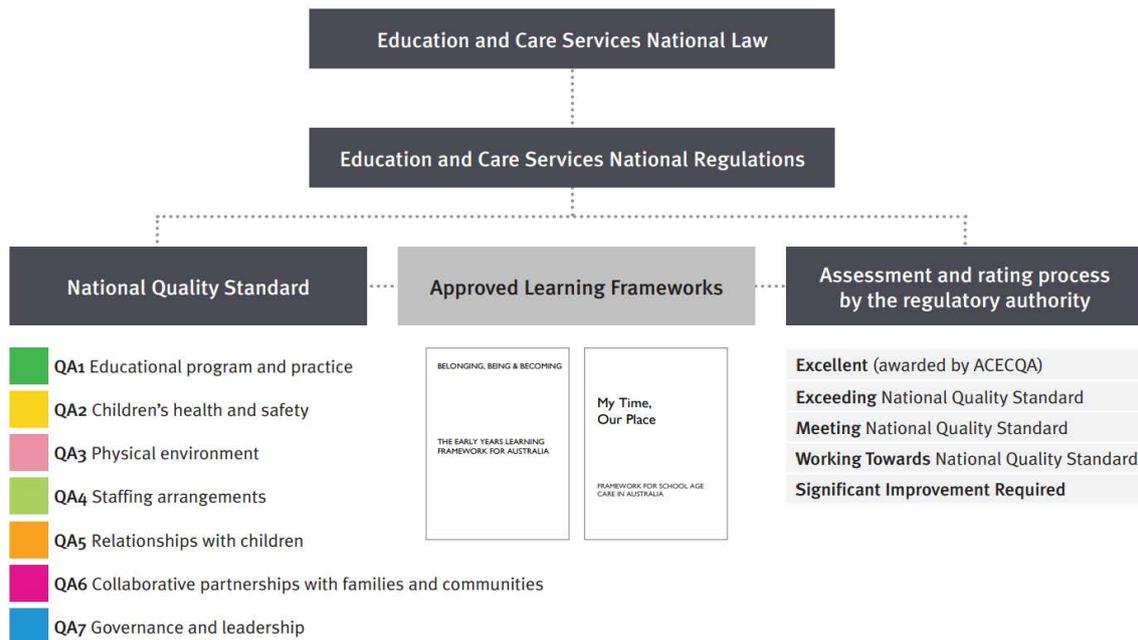
School principals are encouraged to open up a dialogue between the OSHC service's Approved Provider and/or Nominated Supervisor, the OSHC educator(s), and the School Management/ Administration team along with families and any members of children's allied health team.

A conversation about inclusive approaches could focus on children's physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, as well as their cognitive development which may impact their future learning outcomes.

“For students with additional needs, we’ll sit down with our OSHC educators and work it through with them...to make sure the same strategies are in place so that it is simply an extension of the student’s day with consistent expectations.”

Deb Langfield, Principal, Lennox Head Public School

The National Quality Framework



The role of the NSW Regulatory Authority and the National Quality Framework

OSHC services are subject to the same system of regulation and monitoring as early childhood education services, such as long day care, preschool and family day care.

The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a national benchmark for safety and quality in ECEC and OSHC services across Australia.

The NQF includes:

- National Law and Regulations
- National Quality Standard
- Assessment and Quality Rating process (similar to external validation)
- National learning frameworks (similar to the NSW curriculum).

The NSW Regulatory Authority takes a risk-based approach to regulate, assess and rate services to ensure children are kept safe, in line with the NQF.

The department performs 2 major functions to ensure the safety of children in education and care services – Monitoring and compliance, and assessment and rating.

1. Monitoring and compliance

The NSW Regulatory Authority monitors compliance with the National Law and Regulations to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children.

This can include providing information, guidance and sector support and development for services.

Service visits may occur unannounced and through targeted compliance campaigns to monitor specific issues.

Compliance actions may be taken when a breach of the National Law and Regulations is identified.

2. Assessment and rating

The NQF requires that services are assessed and rated against the 7 quality areas of the National Quality Standard.

Services are provided with a rating against each of the 7 quality areas, and an overall quality rating which must be displayed on a certificate at the service.

The assessment and rating process provides services the opportunity to showcase how they support, educate and care for children.

Assessment and rating visits occur approximately every 3 years.

The 7 quality areas OSHC services are rated against are:

- 1**
Educational program and practice
- 2**
Children's health and safety
- 3**
Physical environment
- 4**
Staffing arrangements
- 5**
Relationships with children
- 6**
Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- 7**
Governance and leadership

The ratings are ranked in the following order from highest to lowest:

Excellent: By application from Exceeding rated services only. Service promotes exceptional education and care in all 7 Quality Areas.



Exceeding National Quality Standard: Service goes above and beyond the standards in a number of Quality Areas.



Meeting National Quality Standard: Service meets the standard in all 7 Quality Areas.



Working Towards National Quality Standard: There are 1 or more areas identified for improvement.



Significant Improvement Required: There is a significant risk to the safety, health and well-being of children and the department will take action.

In NSW, a service's quality rating is displayed on a certificate using a star graphic. The certificate must be visible at the service to give families important information about the overall rating of an OSHC service and their rating against each of the quality areas.

My Time Our Place

My Time, Our Place (the MTOP Framework) is the first ever learning framework for Australian OSHC services.

The Framework draws upon contemporary OSHC and early childhood research to outline the many ways that high quality OSHC provides more than 'just' care. The MTOP Framework recognises that alongside other children's settings, OSHC provides children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in life.

The MTOP Framework provides a broad set of principles around which professionals form their practices in ways that meet the unique requirements of their families, schools and communities (DEEWR, 2011).

Through this framework, OSHC programming prioritises social and emotional skills of self-management, self-efficacy, social awareness and communication – skills that are linked to children's overall wellbeing, their capacity to engage in academic performance and future life outcomes.

Ways your school and OSHC service can work together:

- Keep OSHC educators informed about any relevant support required for individual children with special needs.
- Encourage classroom teachers and OSHC educators to communicate regularly about general developmental and social issues affecting the children.
- Include updates from the OSHC in school newsletters and other communications to help families feel the OSHC is part of, rather than separate to, their school's activities.
- Meet with OSHC educators regularly to discuss facility use, including any physical accessibility issues.
- Educators can help with homework when children choose to complete it.

¹ Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (2011). *My time, our place: Framework for school age care in Australia*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

“I actually use my OSHC as a selling point for my school – I include them in my presentations for new enrolments, they’re include in our prospectus, and we have their leaflets in our office ... It’s a definite value-add to our school because it means parents only have to come to one place for their children.”

Deb Langfield, Principal, Lennox Head Public School

What are an OSHC services legislative requirements?

The National Law and Regulations outline the legal obligations of approved providers, nominated supervisors, and educators, who hold responsibility for supporting the health, protection, safety and wellbeing of all children, to minimise risks and protect children from harm.

Educator to child ratios

Educators must be working directly with children at the service to be counted in educator to child ratios.

An OSHC service will have the maximum number of children that may be educated and cared for at any one time listed on their service approval.

This number must not be exceeded, except for in an emergency under regulation 123.

Adequate supervision

The approved provider and nominated supervisor must ensure all children being educated and cared for by the service are adequately supervised at all times, including during excursions and on transportation provided or arranged by the service.

Adequate supervision means:

- That an educator can respond immediately, particularly when a child is distressed or in a hazardous situation.
- Knowing where the children are at all times and monitoring their activities actively and diligently.



Ensuring children's health and safety in an OSHC service

Nominated supervisors and the Responsible Person must complete an approved child protection training course, and understand their obligations under current child protection law, such as their responsibilities as mandatory reporters. They must also ensure all staff members who work with children are aware of their obligations under the law.

The Child Safe Standards provide OSHC services with further guidance to help drive a child safe culture, adopt strategies and act to put the interests of children first, to keep them safe from harm.

All services are required to have at least one staff member on site and immediately available in an emergency that holds a current approved first aid qualification, anaphylaxis management training, and emergency asthma management training.

Incidents, injury, trauma and illness

Services must have policies and procedures in place to be followed in the event that a child is injured, becomes ill, or suffers a trauma.

A parent must be notified as soon as practicable, but not later than 24 hours after the occurrence, if the child is involved in any incident, injury, trauma or illness while the child is being educated and cared for by the service.

Approved providers must keep all incident, injury, trauma and illness records confidentially and until the child is 25 years old, and must include prescribed information outlined in the National Regulations.

Services must also notify the NSW Regulatory Authority of any serious incidents, complaints and circumstances where the health, safety or wellbeing of children may have been compromised so appropriate actions can be taken.

Policies and Procedures

Services are also required to have policies and procedures in place that are followed and kept available. Policies and procedures must include information on:

- Health and safety of children, including matters relating to child protection, nutrition, sun protection, water safety and supervision
- Incidents, injury, trauma and illness
- Medical conditions
- Emergency and evacuation
- Delivery and collection of children
- Excursions.

OSHC services are also required to meet a number of other legislative requirements including but not limited to the Food Safety Standards, Anti-Discrimination Act, Child Protection Act, Children's Guardian Act, Child Care Benefit legislation, Work, Health and Safety Act, Australian Dietary Guidelines for children and adolescents, Privacy Act, Disability Discrimination Act and the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act.

What to do if there are concerns about the OSHC service

If you have concerns or there is a problem at the OSHC service, these should be discussed directly with the Responsible Person on site, Nominated Supervisor or Approved Provider, in the first instance.

The service is obliged to deal with and respond to your concerns, and must notify the department within 24 hours if it is a complaint that alleges:

- A child's health, safety or wellbeing has been compromised; or
- The National Law or Regulations have been contravened.

You may ask to see the service's written policies and procedures on managing complaints, and ask questions about the facts relating to the circumstances on the concern or issue you wish to discuss.

If you are not satisfied that the issue has been resolved by talking with the service, or you are not satisfied with the service's response, you can raise your concerns with the NSW Regulatory Authority by contacting the Information and Enquiries team at 1800 619 113 or ececd@det.nsw.edu.au.

If you receive a complaint about an OSHC service, you should notify the NSW Regulatory Authority, and if applicable, you should follow the department's [Child Protection Policy](#).

OSHC licence agreements

Asset management, tender documentation and licence agreements are managed by the department's Schools Infrastructure team.

The OSHC service operator is required to notify the Contract Manager of any changes to:

- Operations, such as adding or amending opening hours
- Location or space used by the service
- Student attendances, such as in increase or decrease in attendance, resulting in a licence variation
- Session fees.

This is in addition to any notifications required to the NSW Regulatory Authority for any changes in circumstance.

For more information on licencing and the tender process for OSHC providers, please get in touch with the Licencing team at OSHC@det.nsw.edu.au.

“The school executive and the OOSH leadership team collaborate regularly regarding specific children, events, families and learning opportunities. This allows both organisations to be flexible and aware of, and assist in the success of each other's operational requirements, objectives and goals. Our OSHC educators ensure they liaise regularly with teachers regarding the children. They focus on a daily check-in as part of attendance whilst also discussing individual medical, emotional and behavioural needs.”

Trish Fisher, Principal, Coogee South Public School

Checklist for Principals with an OSHC on-site

This checklist is a list of practical steps you can take to support best practice in your school's OSHC.

Have you...

- Met this term with OSHC management/Nominated Supervisor to foster a positive relationship and discuss:
 - Security access such as keys and alarm codes
 - Storage and shared equipment
 - Cleaning arrangements
 - Payment of licence fees
 - Building or grounds works that might impact the OSHC
 - School events the OSHC could participate in (fundraising, transition to school)
 - Sufficiency of indoor and outdoor space
 - Additional needs of individual children
 - Vacation Care plans (if applicable)
 - Visited the OSHC service occasionally to check in with educators, families and children?
 - Checked the OSHC operating hours and organised sufficient time for the educators to access the licenced premises?
 - Understood the management structure of the on-site OSHC?
 - Read and understood the terms and conditions of the licence agreement for both parties?
 - Read the department's Sharing of School Facilities Procedure including tender procedures?
 - Recorded the name and contact number of the OSHC Nominated Supervisor/Coordinator?
 - Provided the OSHC Nominated Supervisor/Coordinator with an after-hours contact number?
 - Considered inviting the OSHC educators to school professional development opportunities?
 - Promoted the OSHC service regularly via the school newsletter, website and social media?
-

Checklist for Principals with an OSHC nearby (off school grounds)

This checklist is a list of practical steps you can take to support best practice in your school's use of OSHC.

Have you...

- Discussed with OSHC the transport collection location, times and supervision arrangements before collection this term including requesting a list of children attending?
- Recorded the name and contact number of the OSHC Nominated Supervisor/Coordinator?
- Provided the OSHC Nominated Supervisor/Coordinator with an after-hours contact number?
- Promoted the OSHC service regularly via the school newsletter, website and social media?
- Advised the OSHC service of any school events they could participate in or support? (e.g. fundraising, transition to school)
- Discussed regularly the additional needs of individual children attending OSHC?

Resources

Resource	Website
Children's (Education and Care Services) National Law and National Regulations	acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations
Guide to the National Quality Framework	acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide
Department of Education - NSW Regulatory Authority	education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education
Schools Infrastructure	schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au
Sharing school facilities procedures	education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2009-0400-01
Expanding access to Before and After School Care	education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/primary-schools/before-and-after-school-care
ACECQA National Registers	acecqa.gov.au/resources/national-registers
BASC/AHSC and Vacation care finder	startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care
NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency	inclusionagencynswact.org.au
My Time Our Place – Approved Learning Framework for School Age Care	acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-05/my_time_our_place_framework_for_school_age_care_in_australia_0.pdf

Key Contacts

Organisation	Information
Department of Education – NSW Regulatory Authority	1800 619 113 ececd@det.nsw.edu.au
Schools Infrastructure	132 779 oshc@det.nsw.edu.au
Network of Community Activities (NSW Peak Body for OSHC)	02 921 23244 network@networkofcommunityactivities.org.au

We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay our respect to Country.

Say hello

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-  @NSWEducation
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education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education

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