



Kinvara Community Children's Centre Parents Handbook

See also the main Policy Document for further information.

**Parents are encouraged to refer to the full document
available in the service upon request.**

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Manager: Christiane Schulte

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1. WELCOME

Welcome to Kinvara Community Children's Centre. We are committed to providing an early care and education service of the highest standard. We are registered with Tusla - The Child and Family Agency. Trained, motivated and friendly staff are the cornerstone of our service.

This service provides an excellent service for up to 122 children (60 After School) and aims to provide a stimulating environment for children to develop their social, personal and educational skills and learn through a planned curriculum.

Above all, your child's welfare and your peace of mind is most important to us. We provide a warm, loving, home-from-home environment, where each child is treated with respect and will develop and learn as individuals while feeling safe and secure.

Thank you for choosing Kinvara Community Children's Centre.

Manager

2. POLICIES and PROCEDURES

To help us provide a quality, safe and happy environment we have developed a comprehensive range of policies and procedures. All staff are required to adhere to these policies. This Parent Handbook is a condensed version of the full policy document and parents are encouraged to read the full Childcare Policy document which is available to parents in the service.

PURPOSE AND STATEMENT OF FUNCTION:

This service is a community-based facility managed by Christiane Schulte.

The ethos of this service is to treat each child with the utmost respect. Each child is valued as an individual and is encouraged to reach his/her own maximum potential at his/her own pace.

Type of Service:

Full Day Care in accordance with the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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|-----------------------|--|
| Opening Hours: | 7:30am-6:30pm |
| Capacity: | 122 / 60 After School |
| Age Range: | 3 months – 12 years |
| Ratios: | As per regulations |
| Curriculum: | Play based, Montessori, Aistear |
| Address: | Glebe Road, Kinvara, Co Galway, H91 Y097 |
| Phone Number: | 091 638552 |

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| Email: | kinvaraccc@gmail.com |
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MISSION STATEMENT:

At this service we are committed to:

- Providing the highest quality childcare for all our families.
- Continually striving to help nurture, challenge and foster independence in all the children in our care.
- Providing a safe, warm, stimulating age appropriate environment, where all children are encouraged to learn, grow and actively explore.
- Developing strong partnerships with our parents, committing to working together to build a foundation that nurtures each child's self-esteem and confidence.

WHO IS WHO?

- The manager is Christiane Schulte.
- Christiane Schulte is also the Designated Child Protection Liaison Person, should you have a child protection concern.
- Claire Shaughnessy is the person in charge, in the event the Manager is absent.

OBJECTIVES:

- At the service our ethos and practice values diversity and promotes equality.
- We aim to select friendly, dependable, mature and professional staff through our rigorous recruitment and selection policy.
- To ensure that the developmental, educational, emotional and social needs of each child are met daily.
- The voice of the child is heard, respected and contributes to our programme.
- We aim to deliver a quality curriculum which addresses children's well-being, identity and belonging, communication and exploring and thinking, along the principles of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- We aim to make the service accessible to all members of the community, regardless of race, gender, family status, age, disability, or religious belief.

- We aim to work with 'Siolta' The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, by following its 12 principles of quality and the 16 standards within its framework.
- We operate within the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and The National Standards for Preschools.
- The environment is planned and well-organised in a way that suits the different needs of individual children, while keeping in mind the importance of Safety and Hygiene
- Parents/guardians are actively welcomed at the service at all times. We endeavour to share information and communicate with parents/guardians directly, in order to give feedback at the end of each day and to ensure that they are made aware of on-going developments in policies and procedures.
- The service wishes to promote a positive atmosphere where children, staff and parents/guardians are treated with respect.

3. CHILDREN'S CHARTER

- ✓ Children's welfare and their rights to secure, healthy and happy childhood are paramount.
- ✓ The experiences children receive in their early years are critically important in terms of future development.
- ✓ Children are entitled to expect that all adults will respect, uphold and preserve their rights and to ensure that their feelings and wishes are taken into account.
- ✓ Children should have the opportunity to make choices and develop a sense of responsibility for their own actions appropriate to their age.
- ✓ Children, parents and carers should not be discriminated against, particularly in relation to colour, age, race, religion, gender, disability medical conditions or background.
- ✓ Parents should be recognised and respected as children's first and continuing educators.

4. OUR SERVICES

- We are open 51 weeks per year.

- We will close over the Christmas and New Year.
- We are offering the FREE two-year preschool session for children qualifying for the ECCE scheme
- We also offer other schemes and details can be provide upon request.

Our Facilities include:

- 6 preschool rooms in Community Children's Centre.
- 1 outside building next door in the Community Centre and one in the National School
- An outdoor area with soft surface, safety mats and climbing frame.
- Healthy and nutritious food cooked on-site. Not available in the Afterschool service within the National School
- Trained and qualified staff.

The rooms are designed in such a way as to meet the developing needs of each individual child. The children are guided through a range of educational and play activities at their own pace. Our staff create a positive and secure environment where children feel confident in exploring their surroundings.

Montessori:

The aim of Montessori Education is to prepare the child for life. The teacher introduces to each child the skills and qualities necessary to live life to the full in an independent, safe and happy way. It also develops the child to their full potential. In the Montessori classroom, the children explore the world through their senses and their own activity. They develop a love of learning and enjoy working, which hopefully will stay with them throughout life. Montessori is an education for life, a learning process environment.

Montessori is about learning to balance responsibility with freedom of choice. It offers children the opportunity to realize their potential, in a non-competitive environment and seeks to promote in them:

- Self-confidence and self-esteem
- A sense of responsibility and self-worth
- A sense of responsibility for themselves and their actions
- Independence and adaptability

- Co-operation with others
- A sense of community respect for the rights and needs of others
- Concentration and persistence in completing a task
- Initiative and self-motivation

Breakfast and After School:

Our Breakfast Club is a service that allows children to come along in the morning and enjoy a nutritional breakfast with their friends before being dropped to local National School. At our After School we offer fun-filled activities such as cooking, arts and crafts, and homework support.

Homework Policy:

It is the policy of the service to provide a period of time each day for homework. The service cannot guarantee that the homework is finished, as the afterschool is still offering out of school activities and is not only a homework club. This session will be scheduled to take place directly after children have had their snack/meal.

- Snack/Meal time is relaxed and leisurely to enable children to unwind, socialise and discuss daily events.
- Each child will get sufficient time to do their homework.
- Staff will contribute to a quiet relaxed atmosphere during homework sessions and encourage children to do the same and will be there to help children with their homework. However, staff will not be responsible for signing children's homework as it is very important that parents/guardians check each child's homework.
- The After School Service recognises the importance of the parent's role in homework support and encourages them to check work completed, hear reading again etc. and play an active role in the homework supervision and support of their child.
- We are not obliged to finish the child's homework it is essential for a child well-being to get a break in between the afterschool session.

Summer Camp:

Our annual summer camp is full of fun-filled, supervised activities.

Extra-Curricular Activities:

Fundamental movement skills (physical development) & physical, child appropriate activities in the local gym

5. ADMISSIONS and ENROLMENT

ECCE Scheme:

This refers to children who are eligible to participate in the Government's Free Preschool Years. This scheme covers up to two years of free early education. Children can start preschool in the term after their 3rd birthday and remain in preschool until the 30th June of the year they are commencing in Primary School, provided that by the end of the pre-school year (i.e. 30th June), the child will not be older than 5 ½ years. The level of access to the full 'two-year period' is 'date of birth' dependent and the eligibility is determined by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs [DCYA].

Children can be enrolled into the scheme in September, January and April each year. It should be noted that the service may be over-subscribed and may not be able to accept children during all entry periods.

ECCE is an inclusive scheme and welcomes all children regardless of ability. In some cases, parents need to be aware that the participation of their child may require additional resources which will be discussed at time of enrolment.

Criteria for Enrolment:

- Children's date of birth must fit the eligibility for the scheme as directed by DCYA
- Full time places (5 days) will be given as a priority
- Part time places will be offered if all full-time places are not filled

Over Subscription:

- In the event of places being full a waiting list will be kept. In addition, the following will apply when allocating a place.
 1. Priority to full time (5 days)
 2. Existing Children
 3. Siblings
- The Manager will advise parents of their child's place on the waiting list upon request.
- Each year of the two-year scheme is treated completely separately by our service with enrolment required for each year. If your child attends Year 1, you will be required to follow the enrolment criteria again for Year 2.

- A place on the ECCE Scheme will only be confirmed when the following is completed:
 - an agreement confirming the number of days required and confirmation of the child's eligibility
 - a PIP Registration form (DCYA)
 - registration form
- The service cannot 'hold' a place until the child becomes eligible. For example, if a child becomes eligible in January, a place will only be available if there is a vacancy. If parents/guardians want to guarantee a place in January, they may be required to enrol their child in September and pay full commercial fees until the child is eligible in January when the free scheme becomes operational for that child.
- If a parent/guardian wishes to increase the number of days their child is attending the service, this will only be possible if there is a vacancy. For example, if your child is currently attending three days a week [this could be a free or paid place] and you wish to extend to five days this may not be possible if the service is full.
- All details regarding a child's application form must be completed and any relevant important information or specific diet or health requirements must be noted.
- We reserve the right to terminate our services.
- In the event that we cannot offer your child a place in the service we will endeavour to source other options for you.
- Parents should familiarise themselves with our policies and procedures; they will be reviewed and changed accordingly to regulation and best practice.

Attendance:

It is essential to the efficient running of the service that you inform the Manager if your child is unable to attend the service and follow up with a telephone call to inform the Manager when the child will be returning. It should be noted that the income received by the service from the DCYA is based on the regular attendance of children. Services are subject to inspection by Pobal on behalf of DCYA. A register of the times and days that children attend is kept. Continued failure to attend may result in your child's place being withdrawn.

If a child is absent for 4 weeks, the child can be designated a Leaver on PIP which means the service will be paid for the 4 weeks. If a child is absent for more than 4 weeks (without notice) the place can be filled by another.

Enrolment General:

We also enrol non-ECCE children into our service if we have vacancies. The lowest age is 3 months old. Priority for these non-ECCE places will go to siblings of children attending. Places are then allocated on a first-come, first served basis.

(Kinvara Community Children's Centre) also offers the Childcare Employment and Training Support (CETS) scheme (Childcare places will be reserved for children of qualifying parents).

The following information applies to both ECCE and Non-ECCE children:

- Children must be over 3 months to attend the service.
- The service offers the two-year free preschool place for children eligible for the scheme. Children outside this age range can avail of a place based on parents/guardians paying the appropriate fee.
- Places will be allocated on a "first come first served" basis, Siblings will be given priority for available places and a discount may apply.
- In the event of places being over-subscribed, we reserve the right to select places in order of application.
- Parents/guardians are required to complete the Registration Form.
- A waiting list is established when all places are taken up and the child at the top of the list is given first available place depending on availability for the type of place required.
- The service operates an open door policy especially during the settling in period. The child may stay for a shorter day until manager and parent agree the child has settled in. Full fees apply after settling in period-settling in period is usually before the official start date and involves ½ or 1 hour visits which are not charged for
- Children with additional needs and disabilities are welcome. Parents/guardians need to be aware that it may be required for them to provide a special needs assistant when necessary.

- All details regarding a child's Application Form must be completed and any relevant important information or specific diet or health requirements must be noted.
- We reserve the right to refuse admission.
- We reserve the right to terminate our services.
- Parents/guardians should familiarise themselves with our Policies and Procedures. They will be reviewed, and changed accordingly, to incorporate any new developments from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.
- No uniform is necessary but we do ask that all children wear suitable, comfortable clothes, ideal for art work and outdoor messy play. (No 'good' clothes please). Velcro shoes are preferable. All long hair must be tied up. No hoop or long earrings.

The following are required with the child's name clearly written on all items:

- A bag containing a change of clothes i.e. underpants, socks, top and pants.
- Wellington boots, coat, hat.
- Sun cream, sun-hat.
- Nappies, wipes, creams and/or powder, prepared baby bottles.

Procedures for Children with Allergies:

When parents/guardians start their children at the service they are asked if their child suffers from any known allergies. This is recorded on the Registration Form.

If a child has an allergy, a risk assessment is completed to detail the following:

- The allergen (i.e. the substance, material or living creature the child is allergic to such as nuts, eggs, bee stings, cats etc.).
- The nature of the allergic reactions e.g. anaphylactic shock reaction, including rash, reddening of skin, swelling, breathing problems etc.
- What to do in case of allergic reactions, any medication used and how it is to be used (e.g. EpiPen).
- Control measures – such as how the child can be prevented from contact with the allergen.

- This form is kept in the child's personal file and a copy is displayed where staff can see it.
- Staff are trained in the administration of the epipen or other similar device. . This training should be carried out by a GP or a person suitably qualified in First Aid.
If a child is identified to have a nut allergy, other parents/guardians are made aware so that no nut or nut products are accidentally brought in, for example to a party.

Oral Medication:

- Asthma inhalers are regarded as "oral medication" Oral medications must be prescribed by a GP and have the manufacturer instructions clearly written on them.
- The service must be provided with clear written instructions on how to administer such medication.
- The service must have the parents/guardians' prior written consent. This consent must be kept on file.

Life Saving Medication and Invasive Treatments:

Adrenaline injections (Epipens) for anaphylactic shock reactions (caused by allergies to nuts, eggs etc.) or invasive treatments such as rectal administration of Diazepam (for epilepsy).

The Manager must have:

- A letter from the child's GP/consultant stating the child's condition and what medication if any is to be administered.
- Written consent from the parent or guardian allowing staff to administer medication.
- Proof of training in the administration of such medication by the child's GP, a public health nurse, children's' nurse specialist or a community paediatric nurse.
- A copy of such proof may be required by our insurance provider for appraisal so that our insurance can be extended if necessary.

All records kept by the service are kept secure and confidential.

INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS:

This service is committed to:

- Providing all children with the opportunity to access our service regardless of their ability but within the expertise and resources available and in accordance with the best interests of the child.
- Respecting the rights of all children to participate in a quality children's programme.
- Providing a family-based approach which recognises that parents know their children best and want the best for their children.
- Recognising that families are different and unique.
- Recognising that all children learn in different ways and at different rates.
- A child's right to social inclusion.
- Your child may benefit from assistance from AIM, the Better Start **Access and Inclusion Model** (AIM) which is designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. This applies to ECCE children only. Please talk to us about this if you think your child is eligible for supports under this programme. For more information check <http://aim.gov.ie/>

See the full policy for more information.

FEES:

Parents/guardians are required to sign a Parent Agreement regarding fee payment:

- Fees must be paid monthly, in advance.
- Fees can be paid by standing order, cash (up to €500) or cheque.
- Fees must be paid to the 'person in charge' by cash.
- A receipt will be issued upon request.

Reviewing Fees:

- Fees are reviewed in annually by the management.
- Parents/guardians will be informed by giving service notice of increase in fees.
- Increase in fees each year will be related to the cost of living increases and/or exceptional cost circumstances.

Payments in relation to Holidays or Illness of the Child/Children:

- Parents/guardians will be required to pay for any days/weeks that their child/children do not attend the service.
- In the case of a long term, medically certified illness of a child, parents/guardians are advised to keep in contact with the manager on a regular basis. Further arrangements will be discussed with the Parent/Guardian.
- There is no reduction in fees for Public/Bank Holidays.

Late Collection of Child/Children from the Preschool:

Parents/guardians should note that due to legislative requirements under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and *Children First* – Child Protection Guidelines. Two members of staff are required to be with the child/children.

- Parents/guardians are advised to keep within their agreed time for collection of their child/children for the above reasons. We require that all children should be collected by the designated time in order that the service may follow health and safety practices to ensure that the service may close safely.
- Please see the Collections and Arrivals Policy and Procedure.
- There is a Late Collection Fee of €10 after 15 minutes late.

Withdrawal of Children:

Parents/guardians sign up to agree in the Parents/guardians Fee Agreement Form that they will:

- Give notice, in writing that the child/children are leaving the service
- Give 4 weeks' notice or pay 4 weeks of fees.
- Management also reserve the right to request that the Parent/Guardian withdraw their child/children from the service if they are not 'settling in' or adapting to the environment. The Management agrees to give two weeks' notice of this to the Parent/Guardian so that they can make alternative arrangements.

Non-payment of Fees

- Non-payment of fees may result in loss of placement.
- A repeated failure to pay fees may result in suspension or withdrawal of your child's place until the matter is resolved.

- Any delays in payments must be discussed in advance and agreed with management.

6. WORKING in PARTNERSHIP with PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- We recognise the importance of working in partnership with you and that you have a central role in educating your child.
- We have an “open door” policy where families are always welcome but where the needs of all of the children in our care are always the first priority.
- We will give you regular information about your child's progress and welcome your contribution – please share information with us.
- We will hold meetings at times suitable to you and have a comments and complaints policy if you encounter any problem.
- Please tell us of any difficulties that your child is experiencing at home such as bereavement, illness, relationship breakdown, a new baby – all these can change a child's behaviour and we want to help.
- If a parent needs to be contacted in relation to a concern about behaviour we will do this in a helpful rather than a complaining manner and we will together, try to resolve the situation.
- Regular exchange of information with parents is important; parents must inform this service of change of personal details (e.g.) new house, job, phone number.
- Employees, students or volunteers may not use social networking sites to befriend parents or accept requests to become a friend from parents who use this service or to exchange any information about the service or children attending the service or colleagues working at this service.

SETTLING-IN:

We aim to ensure children feel safe and secure in the absence of their parents/carers. We will therefore endeavour to make the settling-in process a positive experience for children and will work closely in partnership with parents/carers to ensure this is achieved.

We recognise that in some cases there may be particular difficulties experienced by children, parents/guardians, and staff during the settling-in period and we are prepared to explore and consider various ways of settling children into the service. All

children are individuals and we plan to meet their individual needs and resolve any difficulties quickly and smoothly. If you are experiencing challenges in relation to settling your child we will work with you to assist in making this transition.

See the full policy for more information.

7. ATTENDANCE, ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Attendance:

It is essential to the efficient running of this service that you inform the Manager if your child is unable to attend the service and follow up with a telephone call to inform the Manager when the child will be returning. A register of the times and days that children attend is kept.

Arrivals:

- As the main door is locked at all times, parents/guardians gain access via the Intercom System.
- A member of staff will register each child on arrival.
- Children will be supported to remove coats and find their coat pegs.
- Parents/guardians are asked to ensure that all external doors are securely closed for the safety of all the children when they leave.
- If a child will not be attending, we request that parents/guardians advise us.

Collection Policy:

The Collection Policy of will be achieved by:

- Parents/guardians must collect their child by the agreed collection time. Parents/guardians will be asked to give the names of at least two other people who are authorised to collect the child. If the parent is late arriving to collect the child, the person in charge will endeavour to contact the parent. In the event of being unable to contact the parent, the person in charge will contact the other named persons to collect the child.
- Children will not be released into the care of a person under the age of 18 years or to a person who appears to be incapable of caring for the child. Should this situation arise the staff will contact an authorised collector. If no one is available to

collect the child, then the person in charge should contact the Tusla social work child protection team.

- We ask that parents/guardians do not collect their child from while under the influence of alcohol. This can lead to embarrassment and worry within the team. If parents/guardians feel that this situation may arise they should arrange for an authorised collector to collect their child.
- Please ensure that you park safely and do not cause an obstruction, even for a very short time.
- In the event of a parent collecting another child a prior arrangement must be made.
- In order to comply with childcare legislation which determines the staff/ child ratios and in the best interest of the children (children can become distressed when no-one comes for them when all the others have been collected) it is important that children are collected on time.

Attempted collection by a person who is not on the child's records:

Children should be collected only by the adult/s named on the Collection Authorisation. Should the person responsible be unable to collect the child the parent must inform the staff about who is permitted to collect their child, a name and contact number should be given. The parent should personally arrange this with the staff by making a telephone call. If permission is not communicated by the parent the child will not be permitted to leave the premises until an authorised collector, as recorded in the child's records is available.

Late Collection of Children:

We understand that sometimes a parent is unavoidably delayed when coming to collect their child. We will ensure that the child receives a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible. Parents/guardians in this situation must contact the Manager to say that they will be late and arrange with staff what to do. Children are only released from the service to individuals named by the parent. There is a Late Collection Fee of €10 after 15 minutes late.

Early Collection of Children:

We ask that parents/guardians let us know if you will be picking up your child early so that we can have the child ready for you and to minimise disrupting the rest of the group.

Late Drop Off:

We ask parents/guardians to drop children off at the correct time to avoid disrupting the group once they have started and so that your child benefits from our full daily programme.

Separated and Divorced Parents:

Married parents are automatically joint guardians of their children. Neither separation nor divorce changes this.

- We cannot refuse either parent to collect their child unless a court order is in place.
- We ask that parents give us information on any person that **does not** have legal access to the child.
- Where custody of a child is granted to one parent, we would ask you to clarify the circumstances with us. This information will remain confidential and will only be made known to the relevant staff. If there are any legal documents i.e. custody order, barring order we would ask you to provide us with a copy to keep on file.

Attempted collection by a parent who has been denied access in a court order:

- A parent who has been denied access to a child through a court order will not be permitted on to the premises
- If the parent who has been denied access becomes threatening or violent and insists on removing the child from the service, this will be viewed as trespassing. The service will in this event contact the Local Gardaí.

By law, an unmarried mother is the automatic guardian of a child born outside of marriage. In some circumstances, unmarried fathers have automatic access. The service should be informed about access rights. Unmarried fathers will automatically become guardians of their children if they meet a cohabitation requirement. An unmarried father who cohabits for 12 months with the child's mother, including 3 months following a child's birth, will automatically become the child's guardian. This provision is not retrospective, so guardianship will only be acquired automatically

where the parents live together for at least 12 months after 18 January 2016.

After School Care Service:

If a child has not attended school due to appointment, illness etc. This service should be informed no later than 10:30am. This policy also applies to un-notified changes of collection times. This should also apply in any event where by the child does not need to be collected. Failure to do so can waste valuable time and causes undue concern for staff collecting the child from their school.

- Where the service agrees to collect the children from the school **signed consent will be sought from the parent / carer.**
- The children will be escorted by a known staff member who will always carry proof of identity. Prior contact will be made with the children and the school for new staff members.
- The children will meet the staff in an arranged place and a register will be taken. Should a child be missing, the staff member will confirm with the school if the child was absent from school that day. This will cause delays for the staff and other children therefore we would request that the parent informs the service by telephone if a child will not be attending on any day.
- The children will go in a group directly from the school to the service by the safest most direct route.
- When staff are collecting a child from school, the staff member walks up to the school.
- The children must also hold hands when crossing any roads. When walking, staff will walk behind the children.
- In the interest of child protection and to comply with legislation child / staff ratios will be adhered to at all times.

From the Afterschool Service Home:

- **Please collect child/children on time.**
- It is the policy of this service not to allow children to walk home unaccompanied.

CAR PARKING:

It is our policy at the service to provide parking for our parents/guardians.

8. COMMENTS and COMPLAINTS

We love compliments! And you are welcome to make any suggestions, comments or complaints to the Manager. We believe that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the service. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with any concerns or complaints that are raised. For more information please see our full policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

We respect the right for all information, records and observations to be treated with respect and with due attention to confidentiality and privacy. Information will not be shared with third parties, unless required under law or Child Protection Guidelines. For more information please see our full policy.

9. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Equal opportunity for children to learn is a fundamental aspect of this service curriculum. Equality means open access for every child and family to participate in the service's activities. This service is committed to promoting equality of opportunity. We promote equal opportunities through a wide range of policies and procedures that are reflected in the practice of our early years setting.

RESPECTING INDIVIDUALITY:

This service is committed to promoting equality of opportunity:

- ✓ We encourage children to celebrate difference and multiculturalism
- ✓ We encourage children to show respect for all cultures, religions, races, abilities, disabilities, and genders
- ✓ We help children to become empathetic and considerate to their peers
- ✓ We foster a sense of fairness and respect and we will challenge any discrimination
- ✓ We nurture each child's identity and self-concept
- ✓ We try to use our curriculum and equipment to encourage acceptance of all others, irrespective of cultural background

- ✓ Children will be discouraged from gender stereotyping
- ✓ Boys and girls are to have equal opportunity, and be actively encouraged to use all activities.
- ✓ Any discrimination (language, behaviour or remarks) by children, parents/carers or staff/volunteers is unacceptable in our service
- ✓ We aim to show respect for and awareness of all major events in the lives of the children and families in the service and in the wider society.

Note: We are always delighted to learn about different cultures and to celebrate diversity. If you can help us in this regard, please let us know.

10. SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

We believe that children should be encouraged to grow and develop to their full potential in a suitably planned environment. The children will know what is expected of them, and where clear limits are set, appropriate to their age and stage of development and any additional needs they may have. We have a comprehensive policy available on request.

- We want your child to enjoy his or her time with us.
- We believe in children's ability to control their own lives, to make choices and accept responsibility for their actions.
- We use a positive approach to behaviour management and encourage good behaviour.
- We encourage children to respect themselves, each other and property. We aim to provide a happy, caring environment with challenging activities.
- In the case of a particular incident or persistent unacceptable behaviour we always discuss ways forward with parents/guardians.
- Smacking or corporal punishment will never be used.
- On very rare occasions and where, together with parents, we have worked to resolve a severe behavioural issue we may have to terminate the place. This is a last resort and such decisions will be made in the best interest of your child and other children attending the setting.

11. CHILDCARE CURRICULUM

This service is committed to offering the children in its care a comprehensive play based and Montessori curriculum. This is combined with other good practice methods.

This service offers a range of learning opportunities to children, which are appropriate to the child's stage of development. The service is fully committed to being guided by the principles of Síolta and the curriculum framework Aistear.

We recognise how important high quality early childhood experience can be in children's lives. This Curriculum aims to encourage active learning, problem solving, effective communication, creativity and socialization. It aims to give children a good start which will benefit their long-term success in life. This service recognises the diversity of experiences and relationships that shape children's lives.

Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework:

Aistear is Ireland's curriculum framework for children from birth to six years. It contains information for parents and practitioners that will help them plan for and provide challenging and enjoyable learning experiences that can enable all children to grow and develop as competent and confident learners in the context of loving relationships with others. *Aistear* describes the types of learning and development that are important for children in their early years, and offers ideas and suggestions on how these might be nurtured. We use the Aistear guidelines to help plan our curriculum. For more information please see our full policy.

Child Development:

It is widely accepted that children develop holistically and to enhance their whole development we must provide them with a comprehensive programme that gives them active learning experiences. All children should be supported in their learning and their experiences extended in a variety of ways that are appropriate to their stage of development.

This service is committed to developing a curriculum that incorporates child development, creates a child centred play based environment, which enables young children to actively pursue their own learning. For more information please see our full policy.

MONTESSORI CURRICULUM:

The Montessori approach was designed to help children grow by letting them explore the world. The classrooms are called "prepared environments" where children are given an array of stimulating learning and purposeful activities.

The Montessori Curriculum is based on the research and findings of Dr. Maria Montessori (1870- 1952). Montessori's method is structured around, and promotes, the child's natural, self-initiated impulse to become absorbed in an environment and to learn from it. Based on her observation Dr. Montessori developed specific materials techniques and curriculum areas that assist each child in reaching his/her potential.

In Montessori classes the children follow a set programme of tasks or exercises. They learn everyday life skills such as dressing themselves, washing themselves etc. They learn social graces and manners but also cover a wide range of subjects including Mathematics, Reading and Writing, History and Geography, Science, Biology, Music, Irish, Art, Drama and Literature. Subjects may vary slightly.

Montessori Curriculum Areas:**Practical Life:**

The Practical Life section lays the foundation for all other work to be done in the classroom. The activities are everyday tasks that a child needs to learn to master the care of self and care of the environment. Such activities include pouring, sweeping and tying, as well as courtesy. The activities are presented to the child in such a way that concentration, coordination, independence and order are developed.

Sensorial:

The goal of the Montessori Sensorial Section is to educate the child's senses. The curriculum area contains Montessori-specific materials that help the child refine his or her experience of sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. In addition, the materials of this section are modelled on scientifically based concepts. Sensory experience, with these specially selected materials provides children with the first step in understanding abstract concepts.

Maths:

Maths in the Montessori classroom can be separated into a few major categories: beginning counting, advanced counting, the decimal system, rational numbers (fractions) and the operation of addition, multiplication, subtraction and division. Concepts are presented in a very concrete way so that children are not only able to count but work with square numbers and thousands.

Language:

Montessori language curriculum is an integrated approach that combines phonetics and whole language. The child is introduced to letters and sounds. After several sounds, he can begin to spell and read words by linking these sounds together.

Culture:

This topic integrates geography, history, Science art, music etc. The children study different areas of the world, and experience concrete examples of that area's language, literature, dress, food, artwork and music, both past and present. This increasingly important area introduces that child to our planet's great diversity of people.

However we are linking the Montessori approach with the Aistear approach in order to deliver the best curriculum for the children

OBSERVATION, RECORD KEEPING and ASSESSMENT:

This service recognises that observation is a useful tool, which enables the assessment of several aspects of the early years setting that are directly relevant to the planning of the curriculum. In order to plan, prepare and organise for good quality care, adults need to observe children, review and evaluate the curriculum regularly and maintain systematic records.

By observing how children respond to activities, staff will be able to evaluate if the activities and resources they have provided meet the needs of all the children and helps them to plan a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum. Observations also enable staff to provide challenges and extensions so that each child is able to progress. All observations / records / assessments will be treated with confidentiality.

Sharing observations with parents/carers strengthens the partnership between the home and the service, giving understanding and information and allowing staff and parents/carers to do their best for each child. Your children's records are available to view upon request.

12. HEALTH and SAFETY

RISK MANAGEMENT:

For the full risk management policy and health & safety policies consult the full policy and procedure document. Ask the Manager for details. We will assess any potential risks to the safety of the pre-school children, employees or visitors attending the school, and will take the necessary steps to either eliminate those risks or mitigate them. We will carry out risk assessment of:

- the building, indoors and outdoors
- outings to ensure children are safe when off our premises or when travelling to a venue
- the people working with children through rigorous recruitment and vetting

CHILD PROTECTION:

The full and comprehensive Child Protection Policy is available. Please ask the Manager for details.

We have a duty to care for every child attending our service. We will follow *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Our Duty to Care* published by the Department of Health and Children in this regard. This details our responsibilities and outlines the reporting procedures that we use if we are concerned about the welfare of a child. The Designated Liaison Person is the Manager, Christiane Schulte, and her details will be displayed on the Parents board.

HEALTHY EATING:

This service is committed to promoting children's health and encouraging healthy eating habits. **Children are always supervised when eating and drinking snacks or meals:**

- Children are welcome to bring their own mid-morning snack.

- We provide healthy meals freshly cooked on the premises by our cook/chef.
- Our kitchen is HACCP compliant and our meals are cooked by a qualified and experienced cook. Our menu has been developed to ensure that each meal is nutritionally balanced for growing children.
- Our staff keep a written record of what your child has eaten during the day. This allows us to ensure that your child's nutritional needs are being met on an ongoing basis.
- A Menu planning sheet will be used weekly to plan meals listing ingredients and allergens.
- Snack time will be enjoyed and socialisation and interaction encouraged.
- Children are encouraged to feed themselves as appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Age and stage appropriate feeding equipment such as feeder cups, knives, forks spoons etc. are always available.
- Allergens in food we provide will be listed as under Food Information for Consumers (FIC) Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 (S.I. No. 489 of 2014)
- Children with allergies and special diets will be carefully supervised.
- We do not allow fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolate, crisps, nuts or nut spreads.
- Some children are allergic to peanuts/nuts. We request that parents/guardians do not include these in their child's snack.
- Refrigerators will be maintained in a safe hygienic condition and fridge temperature monitored and recorded.
- Children will be encouraged to help tidy up after snack time.
- Cultural and religious dietary habits are respected. Parents/guardians are requested to provide details of foods eaten (and not eaten) by the child.
- Healthy eating is promoted through an arrangement of activities for the children including play, stories, music, outings, cookery etc.

Birthdays:

Celebration of birthdays and other special occasions, e.g. Easter, Chinese New Year etc., focus on the sense of occasion rather than simply the provision of rich, sugary food and drinks.

We will provide snacks and drinks to celebrate birthdays.

OUTINGS:

It is part of the child's development to experience fresh air and access to a variety of outdoor experiences. This service is committed to planning and undertaking appropriate supervised outings. The location for the outing will be familiar to staff and a risk assessment will be carried out prior to the visit with the children. Risk assessment forms are completed and kept for inspection. Parents are always notified in advanced and are required to complete an authorisation form.

OUTDOOR PLAY:

Outdoor play is essential to early childhood development. Children learn social skills by interacting with other children, with adults, and even with objects and natural materials found in the environment. The outdoor environment exposes children to opportunities to explore, question, and develop theories about how things work. Negotiation, language, and cooperation are all skills that develop through a well-planned outdoor curriculum. Outdoor play, physical activity and fresh air are important to children's overall health and wellbeing.

Outdoor play is an important part of our daily curriculum. We aim to ensure that children play outdoors every day. Our intention, through our outdoor programme is to enhance gross motor skills, co-ordination, balance and body awareness. It also gives children opportunities to socialise freely and use imagination and initiative.

Clothing:

It is important that children are dressed appropriately for outdoor activity. Parents are asked to ensure their children have the appropriate attire for the weather including hats and coats. Spare clothes and sun cream must be supplied by parents and everything should be labelled.

RISKY PLAY:

A natural part of children's physical play involves engaging in play that is challenging and somewhat risky. Providing opportunities for all children to encounter or create uncertainty, unpredictability, and potential hazards as part of their play is extremely beneficial to children's development. This does not mean putting children in danger of

serious harm. Good risks and hazards in play provision are those that engage and challenge children, and support their growth, learning and development. These might include being in touch with the natural environment and loose materials that give children the chance to create and destroy constructions using their skill, creativity and imagination. Bad risks and hazards are those that are difficult or impossible for children to assess for themselves, and that have no obvious benefits.

In our setting, we are aware of and alert to possible dangers, while recognising the importance of encouraging young children's sense of exploration and risk-taking. We maintain children's safety, while not unduly inhibiting their risk-taking.

INTERNET AND MULTIMEDIA:

We recognise that, to children, a variety of multimedia can provide entertainment and education to children, provided that the material listened to, watched or played is age appropriate and supervised and is a very small element of the curriculum provided. See the full policy for more information.

13. SECURITY

- The main door is locked for security reasons and there is no unauthorised access.
- Parents are requested not to admit anyone else into the service whilst entering or leaving unless they know them and to check that all doors are securely closed behind them, at all times.
- Safety checks are done regularly to ensure that no child can leave the premises undetected.
- We ask that all potential collectors be introduced to the Manager in advance.
- If a child is being collected by anyone other than the parents or usual designated person, the staff must be informed. This is to ensure our children's safety.

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS:

If your child is involved in an accident or incident a record will be written up and shared with you. You will be asked to sign these records. Staff members at this service are trained in First Aid and will treat minor injuries. If a child needs to attend hospital a staff member will travel too.

ILLNESS AND EXCLUSIONS:

You have entrusted your child into our care and we aim to ensure this environment is as healthy as possible and we want to minimise your child's risk of infection. We encourage you to get your child immunised according to the HSE recommendations. Children with the following cannot be admitted to the service:

- Acute symptoms of food poisoning/gastro-enteritis.
- An oral temperature over 37.5 degrees C. Children that have a temperature will not be allowed to come to the centre and will be sent home. If a child develops a temperature while at the centre and it will not come down the parents will be called and the child will be monitored and temperature recorded until their arrival.
- An earache.
- A deep, hacking cough.
- Severe congestion.
- Difficulty breathing or untreated wheezing.
- An unexplained rash.
- Vomiting (in last 48 hours). Children who vomit in the centre and are sent home will not be allowed back into the centre until at least 48 hours has passed
- Diarrhoea (in last 48 hours).
- Complaints of a stiff neck and headache with one or more of the above symptoms
- Lice or nits
- An infectious /contagious condition.
- A child who is on an antibiotic for less than 48 hours

If a child becomes ill at the service parents will be contacted so that the child can be taken home. If, for some reason, the parent cannot collect they should organise an authorised adult to collect their child. All children must provide up to date record of immunisations. Should there be an outbreak of any infectious disease or incident you will be informed.

Head Lice:

Head-lice are very common amongst children. All parents should check their child's head regularly for lice. If there is an outbreak you will be informed. If your child is infected, you will be asked to refrain from bringing your child to the service until it is cleared.

For a full list of exclusions see our Illness and Exclusions policy.

MEDICATION:

We do not routinely administer 'Calpol' or other non-prescription/prescription medications. We only administer medicines with the correct signed permission.

Medicines must only be brought into this service for administration by the staff when it is essential. This means where it would be detrimental to the child's health if it were not to be administered. Medicine should be in its original container with the doctor's instructions. We cannot administer medication without its original packaging. We cannot administer medication not licensed for the age of your child or where the instructions are not written in English.

If your child has an allergy or a medical condition such as diabetes, epilepsy etc. you will be asked to complete a medical emergency care plan

FIRE SAFETY:

All our staff are trained in fire prevention and evacuation. Your child will participate in monthly fire drills. The Designated Fire Safety Person is Joanne Hotchkiss.

INFECTION CONTROL:

We aim to promote and maintain the health of children and staff through the control of infectious illnesses. We aim to control infection by providing on-going infection control training for staff.

It is our aim to minimise the spread of infection for staff and children through the implementation of controls that reduce the transmission and spread of germs. We aim to promote and maintain the health of children and staff through the control of infectious illnesses.

- We follow exclusion guidelines as recommended by the Environmental Health Officer apply in the case of all suspected infectious conditions. These guidelines are contained in our policies and procedures and displayed in the service.
- Parents will be informed should staff, children or visitors to the service report the presence of any contagious condition to the manager

Any child or adult with symptoms of an infectious illness will be asked not to attend the service until they are no longer infectious. The management of the service will ensure all areas of the premises are thoroughly disinfected, including play areas, toilets, toys and all equipment.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND OTHER RECORDINGS:

We occasionally take photographs or video recordings of the children and these may be displayed within the service.

- If you **do not** want your child's photo to be taken please let us know.
- Parents are only permitted to take photos or video record their own child at the discretion of the Manager.
- You will be asked to sign a photo consent form upon registration.

DATA PROTECTION:

Under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 this service has appointed a "Data Controller" to manage the storage of personal information about staff, children and families in its computerised and manual records. All data is stored confidentially.

14. STAFF MANAGEMENT

Staff Ratios:

The adult/child ratios are governed by Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. We will not work outside ratio.

Recruitment:

It is the policy of this service to recruit and select the best candidate for any vacant position within our Service. Our employees are one of the key resources we have in

achieving our aims and objectives of providing good quality care to the children in our Service. Our primary concern is selecting the right candidate that will cherish the children in our care and help each one of them to reach their potential. This is achieved through a rigorous interview and vetting process.

Garda Vetting:

It is the purpose of this service to ensure that appropriate vetting of all staff, students and volunteers who have access to children is carried out. This requires getting references from past employers and completing Garda vetting through the National Vetting Bureau (NVB).

Staff Absences:

We have a panel of relief staff available to cover absences, including sick leave. Relief staff are Garda vetted and suitable personnel who can be contacted at times of emergency. This service will not operate if the appropriate number of staff is not available. This service will always operate within the appropriate ratios.

Staff Training:

We are committed to training and development of staff in order to meet and exceed our customers' expectations. Staff are expected to engage in ongoing education and training programmes in accordance with the Child Care (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. All staff are expected to hold qualifications required by law or required by any funding scheme.

Supervision:

We aim to provide a clear and focused supportive framework for employees to work within so that they can continually improve their practice and provide the best education and care to the children attending our service. All staff attending our service go through probation, induction and continuous evaluation and appraisal.

See our full Recruitment, Staff Absence, Training, Supervision and Garda vetting policies for more information

15. WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SERVICE

Parents/Guardians sign up to agree in the Parents Fee Agreement Form that they will:

- Give notice, that the child/children are leaving this service.
- Give 4 weeks' notice or pay 4 weeks of fees.
- The Management of this service also reserves the right to request that the Parent/Guardian withdraw their child/children from this service if they are not 'settling in' or adapting to the service. The Management agrees to give two weeks of notice of this to the parent/guardian so that they can make alternative arrangements.

And finally...

We would like to thank you for choosing us for your child's early education and we assure you of our best attention at all times

16. PLEASE SIGN and RETURN THIS SLIP

I have read the Parents Handbook and I agree to abide by the conditions therein.

I am aware that this service has comprehensive policies and procedures and that these are available to read upon request.

Child's name is: _____

Date commenced at: _____

Parents Name(s) (Block Capitals) and signature(s):

1. _____

2. _____

Dated: _____