

INFECTION CONTROL POLICY

It is the priority of **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** to protect all children attending our service and all persons working in our service from the transmission of infections. The health and well-being of all children, staff and visitors to our service is paramount and our aim is to prevent and manage any infection which may be present in the service.

We accept that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time and that some level of risk of infection is unavoidable as a part of a normal childhood. Generally, the closer the physical contact, the more likely infection is to spread from one person to another. There are particular issues with small children because they tend to put things in their mouths and naturally seek very close contact with caregivers and other children.

Principle

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Tusla (2018) Quality and Regulatory Framework and informed by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC).

This policy has been updated in line with current guidance the HSPC Infection Prevention and Control guidance for services providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the DCYA's Return to Work Safely Protocol and Tusla's Children Services Regulations Guidance Document for Early Years Services: COVID-19

Rationale

Infection can lead to serious ill-health among infants and young children. Infection control procedures seek to reduce the risk of children and staff contracting an illness in our service by ensuring good hygiene is followed and the risk of infection is minimised. We aim to promote good hygiene practices that children and parents can implement at home.

All parents/guardians are informed of this policy and procedures on enrolment. Staff members will check with parents that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy will be included in the parent handbook. This policy will also be reviewed with staff members at induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents in the Policy Folder located in the setting.

Parents/guardians may receive a copy of the full policy and procedures at any time upon request. Parents/guardians and all relevant staff members will receive written notification of any updates to this policy.

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Preventing the spread of infection

A heightened awareness by staff, parents and children (where age appropriate) is required so that they know how to protect each other and how to recognise and report symptoms of COVID-19 infection, and of other potentially infectious diseases.

Risk Assessment

- Risk assessments are undertaken by staff to assess if activities, actions or environments pose risks from an infection control standpoint to the children and staff. Actions are implemented to eliminate or reduce the risk identified through risk assessment.

Hand washing

- We have a hand washing policy which all staff promote and model for children. Staff wash their hands upon arrival to the setting, after using the toilet, before eating/preparing food, after wiping noses, after waste disposal and mopping up spills, after assisting children going to the toilet, after caring for sick children, after handling soiled clothing, after removing disposable gloves and after coming in from outdoors.
- A hand wash basin is provided for both staff and children with a constant supply of hot (no greater than 43c) and cold running water, liquid anti-bacterial soap and paper towels. Children use cloth hand towels which was washed twice weekly at 60° and tumble dried.
- In accordance with our Hygiene Policy, children are encouraged to wash their hands with warm water and liquid soap under supervision after visiting the toilet, before eating, after sneezing, coughing or blowing noses, after handling animals, after touching a cut or sore and after outside play and activities.
- Clear guidance on hand washing is displayed above all hand wash basins within the setting.
- Staff will supervise and assist children to encourage effective hand washing.

Food handling

- Appropriate food hygiene practices are followed at all times.
- All food/snacks from home are kept within a closed container displaying the child's name clearly or within the school bag. Any perishable food left at room temperature for more than 2 hours will be discarded safely.

Cleaning and the premises

- All staff are aware of their role in maintaining high standards of hygiene as per our Hygiene policy and Cleaning policy which encourage best practice regarding keeping the environment and premises clean and safe.
- Spillages of blood, faeces, urine, vomit or other bodily fluids or excretions are cleaned immediately and with priority. Mops are not to be used for these and extreme caution is exercised at all times.
- Daily, weekly and monthly cleaning schedules are in place and records kept. Cleaning records are located at the Manager station.
- Our premises are free from pests and rodents and checked regularly.
- We maintain a good stock of cleaning products and tools to ensure that hygiene practices can be carried out at all times. Adequate supplies for cleaning are provided to be used, like clean cloths, gloves, aprons, mops, buckets and

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detergents. Cleaning products and supplies are stored safely and out of reach of children.

- Toys and play materials are cleaned regularly, with attention placed on especially soiled items which will be cleaned and sterilised. Toys are not brought into the toilet area.
- Toilets, floors, shelves storing bags, tables and chairs and other areas are cleaned daily to help decrease the spread of infection, cleaning agents used are detailed on our cleaning policy.
- Any soiled clothes are placed in a plastic bag, sealed and sent home with parents/guardians, parents and guardians are informed at collection if clothes are being sent home soiled.

Immunisation

- Our immunisation policy is followed at all times with all children and staff.
- It is a legal obligation that we keep an up to date record of all children's immunisations on their file. Therefore, at enrolment parents are requested to provide us with their child's up to date immunisation information.
- Parents of children who are not appropriately immunised should be informed of the risk to their children and other children.
- The service will keep a record of children who have not received immunisation. Should there be an infectious outbreak all parents and staff will be notified in writing and, where necessary, verbally.
- It is the responsibility of the family to keep the service up to date with the child's immunisations.
- It is important to note that from time-to-time, the service may have pregnant staff members and or children with compromised immune systems to whom being exposed to an infectious illness could be life threatening or harmful to an unborn child. Under these circumstances, Management reserves the right to refuse entry to any child who has not been fully vaccinated.
- We provide information leaflets on immunisation schedules, oral hygiene and prevention of infection to parents.

Animals and pets

- Hand washing and drying procedures are followed before and after handling any animals and pets that are present within the service from time to time or that we meet on outings.
- All animals and pets are managed in accordance with required and appropriate instructions for their care as per our Pet policy.
- Children are supervised with animals at all times.
- Animals who might visit the service will have been checked by a Vet if necessary.

Illness

- If a child is unwell, we request that the child is kept at home if they are unable to participate in normal activities and/or if they may be at risk of passing the infection to another child or adult in the service.

This is likely if the child has any of the following symptoms:

- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- A temperature of 101°F / 38°C or above

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- Eye discharge
 - Rash or skin disorder
 - Strep throat
 - An earache or a bad cough.
 - displaying symptoms associated with Covid-19 such as a cough, fever or breathing difficulties
- If a child becomes ill while in our care, we request that the child's parent/guardian or person authorised to collect will collect the child within 30 minutes. Sick children are separated from well children where possible.
 - Unwell children, with a fever, headache and vomiting, will be sent home as soon as their parents/guardians can be contacted. Parents will be advised to contact their doctor immediately.
 - If we cannot contact the parents/guardians/emergency contact for a child it may be necessary to transfer the child to hospital via ambulance depending on the severity of their symptoms.
 - If there is any significant delay in contacting parents/guardians of the child with fever, headache and vomiting, **CALL AN AMBULANCE** and then continue to try to contact the child's parents/guardians. A child with fever, headache and vomiting will not be allowed to wait indefinitely in the service.
 - In addition to these symptoms, children with meningococcal infection often develop a rash that starts as red spots but will progress to purple freckles and blotches, and even bruising. If this occurs **CALL AN AMBULANCE, GET MEDICAL ATTENTION** first and then contact the parents/guardians.
 - Children/Staff must remain at home for **at least 48 hours** following the last episode of infectious diarrhoea/vomiting.
 - Unwell children and staff should only return to the setting when they have fully recovered. Our illness and exclusion policy will be followed. Staff can and will use their discretion when admitting a child back into our setting, if they believe the child is still ill and cannot take part in their normal activities they will request that the parent/guardian keep the child at home.
 - Staff will report any illness to the manager/designated person in charge.
 - A plan will be drawn up to help prevent the spread of the illness under the HSE guidelines: **Managing an infectious disease in childcare setting** will be followed in the case of a child in the service contracting an infectious illness.
 - The following exclusion periods are followed in **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd**. In certain instances, the exclusion period may be longer than outlined below. For full details, please see our Illness Exclusion Policy.

WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL/ CHILDCARE?

Chicken Pox When scabs are dry	Conjunctivitis No need to stay out*	Diarrhoea or Vomiting 48 hours after the last episode	Flu 5 days after start of illness	Glandular Fever No need to stay out*
Hand, foot & mouth No need to stay out*	Head Lice No need to stay out*	Impetigo When scabs are dry or 24 hours after starting antibiotics	Measles 4 days after rash appears	Mumps 5 days after swelling appears
Scabies After first treatment	Scarlet Fever 24 hours after starting antibiotics	Slapped Cheek No need to stay out*	Threadworms No need to stay out*	Whooping Cough 5 days after starting antibiotics or 21 days after start of illness

This information is based on the Management of Infectious Diseases in Schools guidance document.

*No need to stay out if child is well but school or childcare provider should be informed.

Notifiable Diseases

- Staff are aware of diseases classified as notifiable diseases by the Department of Public Health, a list is available with this policy and displayed at the manager station.
- When we are informed by the Department of Public Health of a diagnosis of a child attending the service or an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service, as suffering from an infectious disease, the service will notify the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate by filling out the Notification of Incidents Form.
- COVID-19 is included in the list of infectious diseases and must be notified within **three working days** of becoming aware of a notifiable incident, A notification form for COVID-19 has been created and incorporates additional information regarding the risk of closure as a result of COVID-19. The notification form for COVID-19 must be returned to Tusla: ey.reception@tusla.ie The purpose of this form is to monitor:
 - (a) any pending COVID-19 public health issue in early years settings
 - (b) the continuation of childcare provision, particularly in areas that have childcare shortages.
- We will contact the Department of Public Health if there is a concern about a communicable disease or infection or if there is an outbreak of infectious disease in the service. The Department of Public Health will also be contacted before sending letters to parents/guardians about an infectious disease. The advice of the Department of Public Health will be followed at all times in regard to the management of infectious diseases.
- Parents will be informed verbally and in writing if an outbreak has occurred – all reasonable information on the outbreak will be provided to them.

Procedure for Managing an infectious illness

- Staff will report any illness to the manager/designated person in charge.
- Unwell children, with a temperature and/or specific signs and symptoms, will be excluded from the service until a diagnosis can be made.
- Any child displaying symptoms such as a cough, fever or breathing difficulties should not attend the service (COVID-19).
- Children should remain at home if they are suffering from general diarrhoea or vomiting for at least 48 hours.
- A plan will be drawn up to help prevent the spread of the illness and the HSE guidelines: Managing an infectious disease in childcare setting will be followed.
- A list of notifiable diseases is available from the HSE. In the case of notified diseases or if the illness spreads the manager will notify the local Tusla office and the HSE Public Health Department. The new Regulations detail infectious disease outbreaks as a notifiable event.
- When you have been contacted by the Department of Public Health Medicine, HSE, in your area and you have been advised that you have a confirmed case as listed you must contact Tusla, Early Years Inspectorate. The Department of Public Health Medicine will advise you as to the next steps regarding precautions to be taken in your premises and follow up of contacts and procedures.
- Parents will be informed verbally and in writing if an outbreak has occurred.
- When to contact the local Department of Public Health:
 - If there is a concern about a communicable disease or infection, or advice is needed on controlling them.
 - If there is a concern that the number of children who have developed similar symptoms is higher than normal.
 - If there is an outbreak of infectious disease in the service.
 - To check whether to exclude a child or member of staff
 - Before sending letters to parents/guardians about an infectious disease.

Covid-19 specific procedure

In addition to our regular infection control procedures as outlined above the following precautions will also be taken:

- staying home when sick
- encouraging vaccinations
- covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of used tissue **immediately** in designated bins
- washing hands often with soap and water; and
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects
- Wearing face coverings on public transport and crowded spaces when social distancing cannot be adhered to
- Ensuring the room is adequately ventilated at all times taking in account comfort and security
- Following our cleaning policy and schedules
- Limiting contacts

Face-coverings and face masks

- Young children will not be expected to wear masks or face-coverings.

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- Parents are required to wear a face-covering or face mask within school grounds especially at drop-off and collection.
- Staff are required to wear a face-covering or face mask particularly when talking to one another or parents and while on school premises when entering or exiting the setting.
- Hand hygiene is of the utmost importance when putting on or removing face-coverings or face masks.
- Staff should generally wear a surgical mask indoors when in close proximity to children, talking to one another or parents and while on school premises when entering or exiting the setting.
- If wearing of a mask is barrier to meeting the learning and care needs of an individual child a staff member may judge that wearing of a mask is not appropriate. In such circumstances critical considerations include that all other recommended measures to manage the risk of spread of COVID-19 are in place, that the child does not have symptoms of COVID-19 and the staff member has had primary vaccination and booster (if eligible for booster).
- If a mask is not worn the staff member should consider using a clear visor that covers the entire face from above the eyes to below the chin and that folds around from ear to ear.
- Visors should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Surgical masks are intended to be used once and should be disposed of safely in a bin when they are removed. If a mask is removed to go on a break it should be disposed of in a bin and a fresh mask used after the break. Additional information on use of surgical masks is available at the following link: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/preventing-the-spread/when-to-wearface-covering/>

A supply of surgical masks and visors are available within the setting and staff are encouraged to use them in any situation they feel the need to or when dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19.

Vaccination

It is recommended that children, staff and parents are encouraged to have the seasonal influenza vaccination.

Covid vaccination

The rollout of Covid-19 vaccines is underway. People who are most at risk from Covid-19 are being vaccinated first. For a full schedule of the National rollout plan please see the HSE website. We would encourage all our staff, parents and their families to be vaccinated as per the government plan.

Children's learning and play spaces

Social distancing between children under the age of 6 is not recommended. Instead we will implement the play pod model.

- The “play pod” model restricts interactions between closed groups of children and adults as an alternative to social distancing, which is not possible with young children.

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- The purpose of 'play-pods' is to limit the number of people a child has contact with, to facilitate tracing, and to support close, positive interactions between children and their adult caregivers, like in a key-worker system.
- This system will also reduce the amount of contact adults have with each other.
- Pod sizes are to follow the adult/child ratios as listed in the Childcare regulations 2016. As each of our session sizes is within these limits, each session will be seen as a separate play pod.
- Time will be provided between session for the cleaning and disinfection of all shared surfaces, toys, outdoor equipment and toilet area.
- Children will have contact between each other in their play pod, play and interact as part of normal development
- As far as possible, friends will be grouped together. This grouping of children helps to keep track of who has had contact with whom and will remain the same each day.
- Circulation of children within the service will be reduced as far as possible. Movement between their room, the toilets, the outdoor area and any other areas of the service will be managed according to planned routes and best safety practices.
- Staff will introduce children to changed environment, new procedures, giving them time to ask questions, feel comfortable, use games, stories, books and activities.
- Staff will help children understand importance of hand washing and cough etiquette through games and activities.

Environment

- The room will be ventilated as much as possible within temperature requirements e.g. through opening windows in advance of children being in the room or while they are outside.
- It is not practical to separate toys and play materials between each session/pod, therefore, all toys and play materials will be disinfected between each session/pod daily.
- Soft toys and materials are cleaned regularly.

Activities

- Large group activities will not be planned at this time so as to reduce the risk of transmission of the coronavirus, such as school play.
- The use of playdough, gloop or other similar play materials will be temporarily limited so as to reduce hand to hand contact between the children and cross contamination. Each session/pod will have their own.
- Activities in which children take turns to prepare and later eat foods will be temporarily limited so as to reduce cross contamination.
- The outdoor space will be used as much as possible when the weather permits. This increases the space for activities to be set up and increases the space between children.
- Toys that have been put in their mouths will be washed and appropriately disinfected before returning it to the play area.
- Parents and children will be asked not to bring any toys from home into the setting as it could possibly be a source of transmission.

- Toys that are difficult to clean and dry on a daily basis e.g. soft toys, dressing up clothes, will be limited or removed temporarily.
- The outdoor sand pit will only be used by 1 session/pod at a time and be managed in keeping with current national guidance and is therefore unlikely to post a significant added risk for spread of COVID-19.

Trips

- Trips or outings will not be undertaken at this time as this exposes staff and children to further risks of transmission of the coronavirus which are difficult to predict and control.

Mealtimes

- Sharing of food will be actively discouraged between children and between staff.
- Snack sent in by parents are to be placed in a container which can easily be cleaned. Snacks are limited to 1 container and 1 drinks bottle per child.

Cleaning and disinfection

Current evidence indicates that the virus causing COVID-19 can live on surfaces and objects from a few hours to a few days, so enhanced cleaning schedules is essential. As per our current cleaning policy and Infection Control policy, our cleaning procedures are based on the recommendations provided within the Guide to Infection Prevention and Control booklet supplied by Tusla.

We are committed to excellence in matters of cleanliness and hygiene and therefore the following procedures will be carried out in addition to our regular cleaning schedule and not as a substitute:

- Surfaces and objects that are regularly touched such as e.g. door handles, light switches, desks, tables, presses, cupboards, toilets, taps, sinks, computer keyboards, printing equipment, kitchen surfaces and floors will be cleaned at least twice a day.
- Children's room, washroom and outdoor area will be cleaned twice daily.
- If disinfection of an area is required, it must be performed in addition to cleaning and never as a substitute.
- Order and ensure that the service has a good supply of liquid soap, hand gel, face masks, gloves and disposable aprons, cleaning and disinfectant products.
- If the preschool has been closed for a period of time, either term break or lockdown closures, a deep clean of the premises both indoor and outdoor will be carried out before re-opening.
- Play items and toys will be cleaned daily and dried completely.
- Toys which have been placed in their mouths, will be temporarily removed from circulation, washed, disinfected and dried completely before returning to circulation.
- Toys and materials such as dress-up and soft toys will temporarily be removed as they are difficult to keep clean and dried on a daily basis.
- Parents and children are asked not to bring toys from home into the setting.
- Bins will be emptied at least twice a day using gloves.
- Surfaces will be cleaned in accordance to our cleaning policy.

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Staff

- While it is recognised that young children need physical contact and comfort for their safety, their wellbeing and to attend to their personal care needs, it is recommended that staff do not kiss children.
- Staff should implement social distancing of 2 meters between themselves at all times with no physical contact between them and will implement our no hand shaking policy.
- Staff are to wear face-coverings or face masks at all times, especially when talking to each other or parents or when in close contact to a child.
- Where possible, staff rotas will be organized to ensure continuity of staff with the same group of children each day.
- Staff must wash hands on entry and leaving the setting.
- Staff are not to share equipment such as pens, cups, plates but should have these items for their own personal use.
- New Infection control protocols will form part of staff training.
- Our Staff absenteeism policy will be followed in the instance of a staff member contracting Covid-19 or being deemed a close contact.
- Support for employees who may be feeling anxious or stressed when they return to work will be provided. A list of mental health and wellbeing support services will be provided during training.

Staff Meetings

- Face to face meetings will be kept to a minimum and the participants will maintain physical distancing at all times.

Uniforms

All staff have been issued with 3 uniforms and are required to wear a fresh laundered one each day. To facilitate this measure, staff can wear non-uniform clothing if needed.

Dealing with Suspected COVID-19 Cases

If a child or staff member feels unwell and develops symptoms:

- If a child develops any symptoms of acute respiratory infection including cough, fever, or shortness of breath while in the service, a staff member will take the child to the isolation area, ensuring they are kept 2 meters away from others in the room at all times.
 - Parent/guardians will be called and asked to collect their child as soon as possible.
 - A staff member will remain with the child at all times until parent/guardian arrives. Due to the nature of COVID-19 physical distance will need to be retained as much as possible, and the staff member will need to wear a surgical facemask, apron and gloves.
- If a staff member develops symptoms of acute respiratory infection including cough, fever or shortness of breath while in the setting, they will be asked to go home without delay and contact their GP by telephone.
- They will be located 2 meters away from others as much as possible.
 - They will be asked to avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the pedal bin provided.

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- They will be asked to wear a surgical mask.
- If there is an emergency, one of the managers will call an ambulance, and explain that the child or staff member is unwell with symptoms of COVID-19.
- The isolation area where children or staff need to be isolated is cleaned and contact surfaces disinfected once they leave.

Dealing with a confirmed case of COVID-19

- We advise all individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 to stay/go home and contact their GP for further advice and to follow the current public health advice with regard to isolation or restricted movement.
- Since September 27th, 2021 there is no requirement for contact tracing outside of the household setting when a single case of COVID-19 is diagnosed in a child aged less than 13 outside of the household setting. This means that the Department of Public Health will not contact the service as a matter of course when a child attending the facility is diagnosed with COVID-19. If you have particular concerns about your facility e.g. number of cases or specific queries, the HSE CCF line is still available and public health teams will support as necessary. If there are particular concern regarding a childcare facility for example high numbers of infection or specific issues, the Department of Public Health may contact the childcare centre directly
- **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** will notify Tusla Early Years Inspectorate of any confirmed case of COVID-19 in the service.
- Cleaning of **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** will commence as soon as possible.
- Symptomatic staff or children are advised to self-isolate and arrange to get tested for COVID-19.
- We will advise confirmed COVID-19 cases to continue to self-isolate at home as per the current HSE recommendations and not return to **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** until they are advised that it is safe to do so.
- Close contacts of a confirmed case will be advised to go home and restrict their movements as per the current HSE recommendations.

This policy was adopted by **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** on:

Date: _____

Manager

co-Manager

Review Date: _____