



## Parents Information Handbook

Directors: Ann-Mary Healy, Jennifer Byrne. Reg. 3692124MH, CRO: 672490. Postal Address: 1 Radharc na Bhoirne, Barefield Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland, V95 YA6K, Barefield National School, Gort Road, Ennis, Co. Clare. Tel: 0871380894/0858312929, [overtherainbowELC.BN@gmail.com](mailto:overtherainbowELC.BN@gmail.com), [www.overtherainbowelc.com](http://www.overtherainbowelc.com)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Services, Opening Times and Fees**
- 3. Curriculum**
  - a. The play-based curriculum
  - b. Montessori Method of teaching
  - c. Aistear - National Early Years Curriculum Framework
- 4. Staff**
- 5. Policies and Procedures**
  - a. General Rules and Guidelines
  - b. Admissions
  - c. Arrival and Departure including collections
  - d. Child Protection and welfare
  - e. Nutrition/Healthy Eating
  - f. Administration of Medication and chronic health conditions
  - g. Immunisation
  - h. Illness exclusion
  - i. Infection Control
  - j. Accident and Incident
  - k. Rest
  - l. Outdoor and physical play
  - m. Behaviour Management
  - n. Equality, diversity and Inclusion
  - o. Partnership with parents and carers
  - p. Settling in and transitions
  - q. Complaint Management
  - r. Confidentiality and Data Protection
  - s. Emergency closure and extreme weather conditions

# 1. Introduction

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Welcome to **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd.** We are delighted and privileged to be entrusted with the early education and care of your child. We are here to provide your child with the best start in life.

We aim to provide quality, affordable pre-school education and care to children aged 2yrs and 8 months to 5½ years, under the ECCE scheme in the local community.

Our vision is to provide children with the best start in life by providing a safe, developmentally appropriate, inclusive environment where children and staff are listened to and respected. We strive to work in partnership with parents, through a culture of listening, to enable everyone to achieve their true potential. We are building a successful learning community which celebrates diversity. We will be welcoming, friendly, respectful, thoughtful and supportive in providing a home-from-home where we can grow and learn together.

In an atmosphere of mutual respect, we provide a high quality, safe, developmentally appropriate rich and diverse environment, where we encourage children to experience, interact and explore the world around them at their own pace. We are committed to training and development of our staff to provide only the best care and education for all children in our care. We celebrate diversity and provide equal opportunities for all. Our goal is to support children's desire to be life-long learners.

In this booklet we aim to further explain our methods and inform you of our general policies and procedures. **Please read through this document carefully.** All policies and procedures are in accordance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 and the Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework and available within the setting or by email upon request. This booklet contains a summary of our most vital policies. Our service is inspected yearly by Tusla, The Department of Education and Skills and the Health Service Executive.

These inspection reports can be viewed online at:

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/creche-inspection-reports/> and

<https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Early-Years-Education-Reports/>

It is our intention to continuously develop and improve our service in the areas of childcare. We recognise that parents play a vital role as educators of their children, and therefore, welcome and encourage regular and continuous feedback from parents, be it face-to-face, by email or by phone.

<b>Address:</b>	Barefield National School, Gort Road, Barefield, Co. Clare, V95 FD28
<b>Postal Address:</b>	1 Radharc na Bhoirne, Barefield, Ennis, Co. Clare, V95 YA6K
<b>Tel:</b>	087 1380 894 (Ann-Marie) or 085 831 2929 (Jennifer)
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:overtherainbowELC.BN@gmail.com">overtherainbowELC.BN@gmail.com</a>
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://overtherainbowelc.com">overtherainbowelc.com</a>

## 2. Services, Opening hours & Fees

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As a sessional service, we only provide ECCE scheme pre-school places during school term for a total of 38 weeks per year. Children must be fully potty trained, and we provide 2 daily sessions, Monday to Friday. We cater for a maximum of 22 children per session in accordance with schedule 6 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. Our adult to child ratio is 1:8.

### Opening Hours

Session 1: 8:35am – 11:35am

Session 2: 12:00pm – 15:00pm

Due to insurance restrictions, children cannot be on the premise outside these timings and we ask that parents please drop-off and collect children on time.

We are closed on Public Holidays and follow the term calendar of Barefield National School.

All children are given a mixture of both morning and afternoon sessions as we are not able to give all children the more popular morning session. Please state at registration your preferred session time and we will do our best to place your child in the class with mostly your preferred time slot.

### Fees

#### ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) Scheme

- As a registered ECCE scheme provider, **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** provide free childcare places to children eligible under the scheme, for 3 hours per day, 5 days a week for 38 weeks of the year, depending on availability.
- According to the scheme rules, the programme is delivered to children of pre-school age (2 years 8 months to 5 years 6 months) prior to commencing primary school and they are entitled to 2 full academic years. The programme generally runs in line with the primary school year, which is September to June.
- The "Parent Declaration Form" must be completed in early September and the child must be verified as eligible for the Scheme.
- To check eligibility please use the ECCE calculator on our website under the enrolment page.
- A refundable booking deposit equivalent to four weeks' ECCE payment may be charged to hold a place in the ECCE provision for a child. This deposit will be returned in totality once the child's registration is approved on The Hive.
- A capitation rate is paid directly to the setting by Pobal. There is no charge to parents for the childcare hours provided under the ECCE scheme.
- Additional services will be charged in accordance with the ECCE rules, if applicable.
- Our fees list and service calendar are displayed within the setting for each programme year. You will also receive a copy when you sign the ECCE contract.
- Should your child miss days or not have regular attendance, they may lose their place and funding may be withdrawn. If a child is absent for four consecutive weeks, they may forfeit their place unless proof can be provided constituting exceptional circumstances for the absence.
- When transferring from another ECCE service:
  - ✓ a deposit equivalent to four weeks' ECCE payment will be due.
  - ✓ This deposit will be returned in totality once the child's registration is approved on PIP.
- When transferring to another ECCE service:
  - ✓ four ECCE weeks' written notice has to be provided.
  - ✓ Fees will be calculated up until your child has been fully deregistered from our service on the Hive.
- **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** reserves the right to contact the previous provider(s) to confirm any matter that determines the applicable fees payable.

### **National Childcare Scheme (NCS)**

The National Childcare Scheme is a landmark new Scheme for Ireland. It is the first ever statutory entitlement to financial support for childcare. It establishes an equitable and progressive system of universal and income-related subsidies for children up to the age of 15. It also provides an innovative and user-friendly online application process to access those subsidies.

Through all of the above, the National Childcare Scheme aims to improve children's outcomes, support lifelong learning, make work pay, reduce child poverty and tangibly reduce the cost of quality childcare for thousands of families across Ireland.

For more information and to calculate your eligibility please visit their website at: <https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/>

### **Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)**

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Its goal is to empower pre-school providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience, ensuring that every eligible child can meaningfully participate in the ECCE Programme and reap the benefits of quality early years care and education.

AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school service. For many children, the universal supports offered under the model will be sufficient. For others, one particular discrete support may be required to enable participation in the ECCE Programme, such as access to a piece of specialised equipment. For a small number, a suite of different services and supports may be necessary. In other words, the model is designed to be responsive to the needs of each individual child in the context of their pre-school setting. It offers tailored, practical supports based on need and does not require a formal diagnosis of disability.

For more information please visit their website at: <https://aim.gov.ie/>

## **3. Curriculum**

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### **a. The play-based curriculum**

Play is the collective language of childhood. It is through play that children understand each other and make sense of the world around them. Children learn so much from play; it teaches them many social skills including sharing, taking turns, self-discipline and tolerance of others. Play is children's means of assimilating the world, making sense of their experience to make it part of themselves. The play-based curriculum involves a range of activities and learning approaches - but the child's right to learn through play is at the centre of the curriculum.

The job of the educator is to facilitate play and draw out and extend what children learn through play. The daily routine is structured so that there is time for free play, both indoors and outdoors, where children choose their activities and explore and experiment with the materials around them, either on their own or in collaboration with other children.

Under the guidance of Aistear and Siolta, we encourage learning through free play with a range of activities including:

- **Imaginative Play**

The children learn to play together, to share, to use their imaginations and to expand their vocabulary. This type of play encourages children to express their feelings and engage in imaginary situations such as doctors and nurses and going to the post office. This is a safe secure environment where children feel supported in their play.

- **Books**

The children learn to listen when a story is being read. Acting out or reading stories and describing incidents from their own experiences helps to develop their language. Story telling is an activity, which fosters the enjoyment of books, and can be a motivating factor in learning to read.

- **Music Activities**

The children enjoy singing songs, using percussion instruments and listening to a wide variety of music, from rhymes to classical and pop music. This helps to stimulate their awareness and enjoyment of music and gives them an opportunity to use music as a form of expression.

- **Creative Play**

Children are introduced to activities such as Art and Craft, paint and play dough, sand and water play.

- **Sand and Water Play**

Children have great fun, but they also develop manipulative and pre-math's skills through exploring and experimenting. Many children can express their emotions and feelings when playing with sand and water as well as finding it a very relaxing and soothing activity.

- **Arts and Crafts**

The children paint, draw, print, use scissors, glue and use clay. This allows the children to develop their creative and pre-writing skills. All this work gives the child a different medium to express their feelings, thoughts and emotions.

- **Play Dough**

This is not just a fun activity for children; it can also help strengthen muscles in their hands and develop hand eye co-ordination. Once again this is an activity where the children's imagination can be encouraged and developed. Play dough also allows the child to manipulate the material, which may relieve such emotions as anger/frustration.

- **Jig Saws, Construction and Manipulative Toys**

In this area children's pre-reading, pre-writing and hand eye co-ordination are developed. The development of reasoning and problem solving is also developed and encourages small motor movement.

- **Energetic Play**

Organised energetic activities, such as running, jumping and skipping, will be a part of the Curriculum and encourages large motor movement. As well as aiding physical growth such activities can be a learning area and a great reliever of built up stress or tension.

## **b. Montessori Method of Teaching**

Montessori is a teaching method created by Maria Montessori. Her method of teaching is almost a century old. Essentially, her method is based on observations of the children, which we use to create individual lesson plans based on the child's abilities and interests.

Most lessons are taught on a one-to-one basis and at the child's own pace. Maria Montessori believed in the ethos of "teach me to teach myself" and this is something that is very important for the children as we teach them vital skills that will help them throughout life. Her method also places an emphasis on the development of the whole child.

Montessori emphasised on the family as a vital support unit for the child, and parents role in understanding and encouraging a child's growth and education.

The characteristics can be summed up as follows:

- All children have 'absorbent' minds
- All children pass through 'sensitive' periods
- All children want to learn
- All children learn through play/work

- All children pass through several stages of development
- All children want to be independent

The curriculum covered in our Montessori classes are as follows:

- **Practical Life** – exercises which teach the child skills for life such as dressing themselves, social skills and courtesies and directionality for reading and writing.
- **Sensorial** – Refining the child's nine senses with specially designed didactic materials. (Visual, Tactile, Stereognostic, Thermic, Olfactory, gustatory, Hearing, Chromatic and Baric).
- **Mathematics** – Identifying numbers 1 to 10. Counting through and early addition.
- **Language** – Beginning with the phonetic alphabet, word building and early grammar.
- **Culture** – Early introduction to Zoology, Botany, Geography, History, Science and Nature.
- **Arts, Crafts and play** – Sand, water, dough, jigsaws, music, pretend play.

#### c. **Aistear – National Early Years curriculum framework**

In 2012, we incorporated the guidelines as set out in the new Early Years Curriculum Framework: Aistear. The Framework celebrates early childhood as a time of being, and of enjoying and learning from experiences as they unfold.

This early learning also lays important foundations for later learning. Because early childhood marks the beginning of children's lifelong learning journeys, this framework is called Aistear, the Irish word for journey.

#### **Purpose of Aistear**

Aistear is the curriculum framework for children from birth to six years in Ireland. It provides information for adults to help them plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences, so that all children can grow and develop as competent and confident learners within loving relationships with others. Aistear describes the types of learning (dispositions, values and attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding) that are important for children in their early years, and offers ideas and suggestions as to how this learning might be nurtured. The Framework also provides guidelines on supporting children's learning through partnerships with parents, interactions, play, and assessment.

This framework has elements which link in with the Montessori Teaching Method and include the following 4 themes

Well-being  
Identity and Belonging  
Communicating  
Exploring and Thinking

## 4. Staff

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The team at **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** are hardworking, committed and professional individuals with the best interest of our children and their families at heart. The happiness, safety and development of the children is our priority. If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to us.

As passionate and professional Early Years Educators, we actively participate in the daily activities and management of the service.

We are committed to ensuring that our recruitment procedures are fair, open and transparent and comply with relevant employment legislation as well as the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

All our staff hold relevant childcare qualifications as approved by the Department of Education and Skills, are Garda vetted and trained in first aid (FAR), fire safety, child protection, manual handling and food safety.

We understand the importance of continued professional learning both for the enhancement of the quality of our service as well as staff job satisfaction. We not only provide on-going in-service training through mentorship and supervision, but also encourage and support relevant external training and attendance of childcare conferences, workshops and seminars.

**Ann-Marie Healy**  
**Manager / Early Years Educator**

A native of County Clare, I have lived and work in Ennis all my life. I am passionate about children and when I am not caring for other children, I enjoy spending time with my nieces and nephews.

For the past 8 years, I have been a room leader and more recently manager of Over the Rainbow Preschool. My other interest include modelling and fitness, where I proudly represented Kilmaley in the Rose of Clare and also took part in the Miss Clare compition and 'Hell&Back' fitness challenge.

**Qualifications**

- Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education, Distinction, Fetac Level 6
- Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education, Distinction, Fetac Level 5
- Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years (LINC)
- Healthy Ireland Smart Start (HISS)

**Certificates**

- First Aid Responder (FAR)
- Fire Safety
- Manual Handling
- Keeping Safe Training workshops - Child Protection Awareness Module 1-6, Disability Awareness Module 1-2
- Children First E-learning
- Listening to young children: supporting transitions
- AIM Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter & Guidelines
- National Siolta, Aistear Initiate: Introduction, Practice Guide, Awareness raising Standards 1-16

**Jennifer Byrne**  
**Co. Manager/Early Years Educator**

Born and raised in South Africa, I moved to Ireland with my Irish husband 11 years ago. I have 2 children in primary school and have been a Montessori Room leader for the past 8 years. I love nature and the outdoors and speak both English and Afrikaans fluently.

I have also lived in Abu Dhabi and Oman where I held various managerial positions in the corporate world before I found my true calling in early childhood education about 9 years ago.

**Qualifications**

- BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies - Upper Second Class Honours, Fetac level 8
- Bachelor of Commerce specialised in Informatics, Fetac level 7
- Montessori 0-6 yrs - Distinction, Fetac level 6
- Supervision in Childcare - Distinction, Fetac level 6
- Childcare Nutrition diploma

**Certificates**

- First Aid Responder (FAR)
- Fire Safety
- Manual Handling



- Children First Child Protection
- AIM Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter & guidelines
- Curriculum Development in Early Childhood
- Fun-damental Movement skills programme
- Outdoor Play
- Aistear Explained
- Online Informal Siolta Programme

## 5. Policies and Procedures

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Below is a brief summary of our policies and procedures used in providing a safe and effective service for your child. These policies are reviewed regularly and updated in accordance with current legislation and best practice guidelines. Full versions of all policies are available to parents upon request. If you have any questions regarding any of our policies, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff.

### a. General Rules and Guidelines

In order to maximise children's opportunities for learning and development, it is important to note the following key information:

- To avoid disruption to the children's day we ask that children please arrive on time and is **handed over** to a member of staff at the door.
- Children should be **fully potty trained** before commencement of their ECCE year. The service does not make provision for the handling or disposal of nappies or pull-ups.
- Personal toys are **only** to be brought in on Fridays. Please note these toys are usually shared, therefore we discourage children from bringing in high value toys or irreplaceable toys. It would also be helpful if toys fit into their bags. **Please Note: during the Covid-19 pandemic, no toys from home can be permitted.**
- A cloak area is provided at the entrance door where your child will have their own peg, marked with their name for their coat and bag. Please ensure your child's belongings are **clearly marked** and placed here each day.
- For the safety of all, no running or boisterous play is allowed directly outside the setting or in the car park.
- When collecting your child at the end of the day, we ask that you please encourage your child to leave in an orderly fashion as to avoid unnecessary delays and confusion. Please ensure that you hold your child's hand at all times in the car park as it can be quite busy and dangerous. We can only hand over your child to a responsible adult over the age of 18 who is either authorised to collect as per the registration form or prearranged with management before collection time.
- Smoking is not permitted on the premises at any time.
- As we are located within Barefield National School, the school parking facilities can be used at drop-off and collection. Please be considerate to others when using the parking facility and do not block other cars or use two car spaces.
- Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, we are required to ensure the health and safety of all children attending the service. Therefore, the following foods are **NOT permitted**:
  - **Any nuts or products containing nuts including Nutella**
  - **Popcorn (choking hazard for very young children)**
- From a nutritional perspective we ask that you also please refrain from sending in:
  - **Juices or cordials, fizzy drinks or caffeinated/energy drinks**
  - **Sweets, biscuits or crisps**
  - **chocolate**

## b. Admissions

It is the policy of **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** that our service is open to all families in our community. We are committed to operating open and fair Admissions Procedures. This policy also includes the information and records required for each pre-school child.

### Procedures

- Each child must be at least 2 years and 8 months old and fully toilet trained.
- Parents seeking to secure a place for their child must complete a registration form. Registration forms can be downloaded from our website at [www.overtherainbowelc.com](http://www.overtherainbowelc.com).
- A completed registration form must be lodged with the service prior to the child attending the service. You can drop it in, send it to our postal address (Please note our postal address is different to Barefield School) or email it to [overtherainbowelc.bn@gmail.com](mailto:overtherainbowelc.bn@gmail.com).
- Children will be admitted on a 'first come first served' basis, following submission of the registration form.
- If there are no remaining places a waiting list will be drawn up.
- Referrals from family support services will be accepted provided there is a place available.
- Once a child has received a place, the parents / guardians receive an information booklet which contain the following information:
  - Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services
  - Details of the adult : child ratios
  - The type of care and curriculum provide
  - The facilities available
  - The opening hours
  - The policies, procedures and statements the service maintains

Children's records are securely stored within a locked filing cabinet within the office and keys are only available to management. Children's records are kept for a period of 2 years in accordance to the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

## c. Arrival and departure including collections

We are committed to the safety of all children attending the service. It is therefore important to us to ensure children arrive and depart from the premises with a responsible adult as named on the child's registration form. This policy outlines the protocols in relation to the drop-off and collection of preschool children from our service.

### Procedure

- Arrival and departure times of both staff and children are recorded by the room leader in the Attendance Record book provided by Early Childhood Ireland on a daily basis.
- Parents are urged to drop and collect their children on time and to say good-bye.
- Children have to be accompanied by an adult at drop-off time and **handed over to a member of staff. Children are not to be left at the gate to make their own way to the service.**
- Where a parent knows they will be late collecting their child they are required to contact the manager as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements.
- If a child is not collected by a parent 10 minutes after the agreed time the service will attempt to contact the parents or the emergency contact persons to collect the child.
- The manager will stay with the child and provide comfort until an authorised person collects the child.
- Frequent lateness will not be tolerated and will incur a late collection fee of €30 per day.
- A visitors book is available at the front door for the daily check-in and check-out of people entering the Service **other than:**
  - a child attending the service;
  - an authorised person dropping off or collecting a child;
  - an employee;

- an unpaid worker.
- Access to the service is restricted until the Visitor Book is completed by the person requesting access and their details authenticated by an employee or unpaid worker.
- Other parties recorded in the Visitors Book do not have unsupervised access to children in the service.

### **Authorised collections**

- If a child is to be collected by a person other than their parent prior signed parental permission is obtained at registration and kept on the child's file. The parent should provide the name, address, contact number of the persons authorised to collect their children and state the relationship of this person to the child. Authorised persons must be over 18 years of age.
- When an authorised person is to collect a child, the parent must inform the setting beforehand on each occasion, (in person or by phone) and also provide the service with a secret password, used to validate the identity of the authorised person. These passwords are written down in a book known to staff only and kept in a safe place.
- Only persons named and authorised by the parent may collect a child. In the rare event that neither the parents or persons authorised to collect a child, can collect the child, parents can ring the manager and let them know who will collect the child and also provide the manager with a password. The person collecting the child will need to bring photo ID as well as the correct password and sign the visitors book before a child will be handed over.
- The setting should be informed if one parent does not have guardianship and access to the child. Details of any court ordered custody arrangements, or relevant legal evidence of individuals that are prohibited from collecting a child should be kept on the child's file.
- The setting should be informed immediately of any changes to those authorised to collect their child.
- If the person authorised to collect the child is unknown to the service, the manager will contact the parents or guardians to validate collection.
- The service reserves the right to refuse entry to the service of any individual authorised or otherwise if it is determined that they pose a risk of harm to the safety, health and welfare of the service team and children.
- The service reserves the right to contact an alternative authorised contact on the child's record to collect, if they determine the authorised contact that has arrived could pose a risk to the child.

### **Covid-19 Specific procedure**

During the Covid-19 pandemic the following procedures are to be added to our existing Arrival and Departure, including collection policy:

- Only 1 parent/carer per family will be allowed to drop off or collect their children.
- A one-way system will be in place in which parents will be asked to queue, 2 meters apart at the front of the setting and proceed around the back of the setting once your child has been dropped off or collected. Appropriate signage will guide your way.
- Children will have their temperature taken at the door before they are able to enter the setting each morning.
- Parents are asked to please not stop and talk to each other on the premise as this would make it more difficult for other parents to adhere to social distancing within the premise.
- During this time, if parents require to talk to staff, we ask if at all possible, to ring or email either Ann-Marie or Jennifer. With drop-off and collection being very time consuming during the pandemic it is not possible for us to discuss matters at the door.
- Parents cannot leave equipment such as buggies, car seats, scooters in the premises.
- Children cannot bring any toys in from home.
- Parents, children and staff are to wash/sanitise their hands, on arrival at the service. Alcohol-based hand gel will be provided at all entry doors safely out of the reach of children as we do not recommend children to use alcohol-based hand gel.

#### **d. Child protection and welfare**

We are committed to safeguarding the children in our care and to providing a safe environment in which they can play, learn and develop.

We are committed to child centered practice in all our work with children and fully comply with ***Children First Act 2015*** and ***Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017*** (Tusla, 2017).

Our Designated Liaison Person is: **Ann-Marie Healy**

Our Deputy Designated Liaison Person is: **Jennifer Byrne**

We recognise the right of children to be protected from harm, treated with respect, listened to and have their views taken into consideration in matters that affect them.

Management, staff, volunteers and students in this service recognise that the welfare of children is paramount and our service will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Having procedures to recognise, respond to and report concerns about children's protection and welfare as outlined within this policy
- Having a confidentiality policy
- Having a code of behaviour for management, employees, students and volunteers.
- Having a safe recruitment procedure
- Having procedures for managing/supervising employees, students and volunteers
- Having a procedure to respond to accidents and incidents
- Having a procedure to respond to complaints
- Having procedures to respond to allegations of abuse and neglect against staff members as outlined within this policy.

As part of the policy, this service will:

- Appoint both a Designated Liaison Person for dealing with child protection concerns and a Deputy.
- Provide induction training on the Child Protection and Welfare Policy to all staff, volunteers, and students.
- Ensure that staff attend child protection training as appropriate.
- Provide supervision and support for staff and volunteers in contact with children.
- Share information about the Child Protection and Welfare Policy with families and children.
- This policy will be shared with parents on enrolment with our service and is readily available within the setting at all times.
- This policy will be reviewed by the Designated Liaison Person each time an incident is reported or every 2 years if that is sooner.
- Work and cooperate with the relevant statutory agencies as required.

#### **e. Nutrition/Healthy eating**

We believe that good health and good food in the early years helps to safeguard children's well-being throughout their lives. In our setting it is important that children develop healthy eating habits from a young age for both the pleasure of having a wide variety in their diets and gaining knowledge about nutrition. Healthy eating habits started in childhood will stay with your child forever. Children grow and develop fast, so they need a high quality, varied diet, with a good balance of energy, protein, vitamins and fibre.

Our snack times are treated as an opportunity for social interaction as well as laying the foundations about making healthy choices.

## **Snacks**

- Parents are asked to please send a small snack and water (no flavoured water, cordial or juice) in with their child for break time (sos in Irish) e.g. small sandwich (no Nutella), fruit or yogurt. **No crisps, sweets, nuts or nut containing product or fizzy drinks please.**
- Please provide your child's snack in a lunch box/container so leftovers can be returned home for recycling or composting. We are proud to support the Green Flag policy in Barefield National School.
- Fresh drinking water is readily available and encouraged to all children at any time during the day.
- All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that no child will be given access to a food to which they have a known allergy and that no child will be at risk of choking on any foods.

## **Snack time environment**

- Snack time is treated as a social occasion and children are encouraged to practice a family style food service where adequate time is allowed.
- In accordance with our hygiene policy, children are encouraged to wash their hands or use sanitizer before snack time.
- We encourage children according to their age and ability to be independent at snack times by:
  - having them collect their snack from their bag and bring it to their table
  - open their lunchbox and drink themselves
  - feed themselves
  - help with the cleaning up afterwards
- Children and staff sit together in a homely style that provides encouragement and confidence to children, to experience new tastes and to feed themselves. Conversation flows, which gives a holistic experience to our environment.
- We recognise that, in addition to satisfying physical and social needs, food and the way it is experienced may also satisfy certain emotional needs. Therefore, food will not be used as a reward for behaviour or withheld as a punishment, but enjoyed as part of a positive social experience.
- Children will be encouraged to play outside every day, weather permitting, to ensure they receive sunlight which helps their bodies to make vitamin D.

## **Special Occasions**

### **Birthday Parties**

- Birthdays are celebrated on the Friday closest to the child's actual birthday and children who have a birthday during school holidays, will celebrate the last day before the holiday starts.
- We ask the parent of the birthday child to bring in a simple Swiss roll and a platter of fruit to share. The reason for this stipulation is so every child receives the same and parents are not under pressure to provide elaborate cakes.

### **Halloween**

- The last Friday before the Halloween break, children can come to class in fancy dress (if they so choose).
- Party food will consist of fruit such as Jack-o-lantern oranges, banana and raisin ghosts and apple and raisin scary teeth for the children to enjoy.
- Each child will receive a treat bag at the end of the day containing mainly non-edible treats.

### **Christmas**

- Santy and Mrs Claus pay us a visit just before Christmas and the children receive a non-edible gift to take home.

### **Easter**

- At Easter instead of eating chocolate eggs we help the children to make an Easter Bunny from empty milk cartons which we wash out. The children paint them and when they are

dry, they glue on ears and a tail. We then help them to fill them with potting compost. They then scatter water cress seeds on the compost. In a matter of days the cress will grow which look like the Bunny's fur. The children take their Bunnies home and the cress can be eaten by all the family for the following weeks.

### **Parental Responsibilities**

- If a food allergy is suspected, parents should inform the managers as soon as possible. It is unwise to restrict children's food choices without professional assessment and individual information.
- Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, we are required to ensure the health and safety of all children attending the service. Therefore, the following foods are NOT permitted:
  - **Any nuts or products containing nuts including Nutella**
  - **Popcorn (choking hazard for very young children)**
- From a nutritional perspective we ask that you also please refrain from sending in:
  - **Juices or cordials, fizzy drinks or caffeinated/energy drinks**
  - **Sweets, biscuits or crisps**
  - **chocolate**

### **Food allergies and food intolerances (including coeliac disease):**

- Staff will be made aware if any of the children in our setting have any allergies or intolerances including, but not limited to:
  - Peanuts and tree nuts
  - Wheat (gluten)
  - Sesame seeds
  - Fish and shellfish
  - Dairy products
  - Eggs
  - Soya
- Children with severe food allergies are advised to carry identification.
- It is recommended that children with a family history of asthma, eczema, hay fever or food allergy should avoid peanuts and peanut products until the age of 3 years.
- Whole nuts are not recommended for children under 5 because of the risk of choking.
- We recommend that you please cut grapes lengthwise in half as whole grapes can also be a potential choking hazard.

## **f. Administration of medication and chronic health conditions**

We are committed to supporting each child's well-being. We will work in consultation with parents to ensure the safe storage and administration of medication in the event that:

- a child is taking prescribed medication, with the prior written permission of their parent(s) or guardian(s)
- a child becomes unwell while attending the setting and, only with the prior written permission of their parent(s) or guardian(s), is given pain relief or temperature reducing medication.

Our childcare service is further committed to storing medication safely and appropriately, implementing a procedure to ensure that the right child receives the right medication, dosage, route and timing by authorised staff and documenting the administration of medication accurately.

### **Children with chronic conditions such as Asthma, epilepsy and diabetes**

We ensure that the whole setting is inclusive and favourable to children with chronic conditions. We understand that certain chronic conditions are serious and can be potentially life threatening, particularly if ill managed or misunderstood.

**Parents have a duty to inform management of such a condition and provide the necessary medical equipment to respond to emergencies.** Clear guidance on the

administration and storage of medication and necessary equipment is outlined in our Administration of Medication Policy.

- Staff understand the common chronic health conditions that affect children and has received appropriate training on chronic conditions and what to do in an emergency.
- Parents of children with a chronic condition will be asked to complete a Healthcare Plan to be kept on their child's file and updated quarterly, and will also receive a copy of our full policy on 'Managing Chronic Health Conditions' at enrolment.
- Staff are informed and regularly reminded about the 'Managing Chronic Health Conditions' guidelines during induction training, staff meetings and guidelines displayed within the setting.
- The responsibilities of staff and parents of children with a chronic condition are set out in a written format and clearly understood by all parties in the Healthcare Plan and Emergency Plan for each condition.
- Healthcare Plans are used to create a centralised register of children with medical needs.
- Parents are required to update their child's Healthcare Plan with the setting every quarter or as soon as changes to things such as their symptoms (getting better or worse) or their medication have been noted.
- Staff will regularly ask parents about the health condition of a child with a chronic condition and will ask parents to formally update and sign their child's Healthcare plan every quarter to ensure the setting has accurate and current information about a child's condition **always**.

## **g. Immunisation**

We respect parent's right to choose immunisation for their child and understand that not all children will be immunised who attend the service. Children in groups are prone to picking up infections and it can spread quickly. It is our belief immunisation gives a child protection from disease as well as protecting others around them especially those too young for immunisation.

### **Procedure**

- It is a legal obligation to keep a record of all children's immunisations therefore parents are requested to complete a record of their child's immunisations or provide us with a copy of the child's Immunisation Passport as provided by the HSE upon registration.
- 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 parent's responsibility to keep the service up to date with the child's immunisations.
- From time to time we may provide services to children with compromised immune systems. Under these circumstances, Management reserves the right to refuse entry to any child who has not been fully vaccinated as this might pose a life-threatening risk to a child with a compromised immune system.

During the Covid-19 pandemic it is recommended and encouraged that children, staff and parents have the seasonal influenza vaccination this coming winter in order to minimise the risks associated with a possible resurgence of Covid-19 during the annual influenza season next winter.

## **h. Illness exclusion**

We believe in the interest of the child who is ill and the welfare of other children and staff, children who are unwell should not attend the service. When groups of children play and learn together, illness and disease can spread from one child to another even when the service's stakeholders implement recommended hygiene and infection control practices. Our service is committed to preventing the spread of infectious illnesses through the implementation, monitoring and maintaining of simple strategies such as, hand washing, effective cleaning procedures, and an understanding and knowledge of children's health.

The well-being of all children who attend the service and the staff employed is of the highest priority. Although some illnesses do not require exclusion, sometimes illness requires a child

or staff member to be excluded from care to prevent the spread of infection to other children and staff and to allow the child time to rest, recover and be treated for the illness.

**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.**

### **Strategies/Practices/Procedures:**

#### **Parents will:**

- Refer to the Infectious disease exclusion recommendations information contained within our Illness exclusion policy and this Parent Handbook, or contact the manager if unsure about whether their child can attend.
- Keep children at home or arrange alternative care for sick children until they are fully recovered. Management reserves the right to not allow a child who arrives to the services with an infectious illness to attend until management deems the child well enough to return.
- Notify staff on arrival of any signs or symptoms of possible illness for staff to monitor.
- Be notified of any signs or symptoms of illness by phone if these occur during the day within the service.
- Maintain current emergency contact information on the enrolment forms for notification of sick children.
- Be notified of an outbreak of an infectious disease within the service.
- Collect their child if their child falls ill during the day and follow exclusion guidelines.
- Provide up to date immunisation records for the service.
- Provide a 'Clearance Letter' from their doctor before their child returns to the service after illness if requested by the manager.

Certain symptoms in children and adults may suggest the presence of communicable diseases. Children/staff who display any of the symptoms will at the management's discretion be excluded from the setting until;

- a) the symptoms have subsided or
- b) the disease is no longer contagious
- c) In some cases, a medical certificate stating fitness to return to the setting/work might be required

**The Management reserves the right to exclude a child from the setting when they are ill and may refer the parent to a doctor before admission is regained.**



WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL/ CHILDCARE?				
<b>Chicken Pox</b> When scabs are dry	<b>Conjunctivitis</b> No need to stay out*	<b>Diarrhoea or Vomiting</b> 48 hours after the last episode	<b>Flu</b> 5 days after start of illness	<b>Glandular Fever</b> No need to stay out*
<b>Hand, foot &amp; mouth</b> No need to stay out*	<b>Head Lice</b> No need to stay out*	<b>Impetigo</b> When scabs are dry or 24 hours after starting antibiotics	<b>Measles</b> 4 days after rash appears	<b>Mumps</b> 5 days after swelling appears
<b>Scabies</b> After first treatment	<b>Scarlet Fever</b> 24 hours after starting antibiotics	<b>Slapped Cheek</b> No need to stay out*	<b>Threadworms</b> No need to stay out*	<b>Whooping Cough</b> 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.				

## Covid-19 specific requirements

### Children

- Any child who is unwell with a fever, have a cold, influenza or infectious respiratory symptoms of any kind or displaying any of the symptoms of coronavirus need to stay at home, contact their GP and seek their guidance on referral for coronavirus testing.
- Any child with symptoms of coronavirus or who tests positive should quarantine at home for 14 days and only return to the service when the symptoms have fully resolved and with a doctor's certificate stating that the child is no longer infectious.
- Any child who is a close contact of a person who has or is suspected to have COVID-19 should stay at home and quarantine for 14 days even though the child feels well but it is possible that they are also infected. It can take 2 – 14 days to show symptoms. They should only return to the service with a doctor's certificate to say they do not have coronavirus and are not infectious.
- During the pandemic, children's temperature will be taken with a no-touch infra-red forehead thermometer on arrival to the setting and during the day, if deemed necessary by staff. A temperature of 38° or higher is considered having a fever, in which case the child will not be permitted to enter the setting and will be advised to see a GP.

### Parents

- Only parents or carers who are well and have no symptoms of COVID-19 or who have served the required quarantine time of 14 days will be allowed to drop off and collect children.

### General

- Where at all possible, access to the service will be limited to staff and children.
- Visitors or contractors will only be permitted to enter the service on essential business e.g. essential maintenance, and they will be asked to make these visits outside of the usual operational hours. Their contact details will be collected i.e. name, address, mobile, email address for possible contact tracing purposes.
- People who are in the high risk or vulnerable categories will be asked not to attend the service.

## **i. Infection Control**

It is our priority 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

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.

### **Preventing the spread of infection**

#### **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.

#### **Handwashing**

- We have a hand washing policy which all staff regularly promote and model for children.
- 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 and staff use the Rufus handwashing resources available from the [www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu) website to aid good handwashing technique.
- Staff will supervise and assist children to encourage effective hand washing.

#### **Food handling**

- Appropriate food hygiene practices are followed at all times. Children are discouraged from sharing food.
- All food/snacks from home are kept in a refrigerator between temperatures of 0 and 5 degrees Celsius, within a closed container displaying the child's name clearly. 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.
- 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.

## 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
  - 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 keeps 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.
  - 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.
  - Parents will be informed verbally and in writing if an outbreak has occurred.

## 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;
- covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of used tissue **immediately**;
- 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. Currently, it is not recommended for young children to wear face

coverings, therefore, it is not a requirement within our setting as we will be following the 'play-pod' model to ensure staff and children's safety.

### **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.
- 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.
- As far as possible, staff will ensure only 1 child at a time will use the toilet and that the toilet, sink and taps are disinfected after every use.
- 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 and 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.
- 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.
- Toys and play materials will be organised into a number of boxes for the different sessions/play pods. Each session/play pod has its own box. All toys and play materials will be disinfected each day after use.

### **Dealing with Suspected COVID-19 Cases**

- 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 facemask/shield, 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 m 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.
  - They will be asked to wear a 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.
- We will liaise with local Public Health staff of the HSE to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.
- We will notify Tusla Early Years Inspectorate of any confirmed case of COVID-19 in the service.
- An assessment of each childcare setting where this may occur will be undertaken by HSE public health staff.
- Advice on the management of children and staff who came into contact with the case will be based on this assessment.
- The HSE Public Health staff will also be in contact individually with anyone who has been in contact with the case to provide them with appropriate advice.
- Cleaning of the setting will commence following HPSC advice and guidance.
- 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 for a minimum of 14 days and not return to the setting 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 for 14 days. We will ask them to not come to the setting for 14 days.

### **j. Accident and incident**

We are committed to safeguarding children, staff, parents and all visitors to our centre. We have policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that we are providing a safe place for children, staff, parents and visitors to be. Our policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act (2005).

All recommended best practice measures are taken to prevent accidents and incidents. Please see our policy for full details. All accidents (minor or major) and incidents will be recorded electronically on ChildPaths software where it will be visible to the parent immediately. Accident and Incident records will be retained until the child reaches the age of 21.

### **k. Rest policy**

We will facilitate each child's individual need for rest during a session.

#### **Rest facility and equipment**

We have a quiet library section with a relaxing atmosphere for resting children. Children can browse a book, look at family photos which are displayed on the wall in that area or chat with friends. A preschool leader will sit near resting children and give them one to one support if we feel that is what is needed. 'The I don't feel very well bag' contains a blanket, pillow and soft teddy to comfort those children who need it.

#### **Safe resting practices**

- Children can rest at time when they feel tired.
- If a child requests a rest, they can move to the library section to be inactive and calm, away from the main group of children.
- The rest area may also be a cushion, mat or seat in a quiet section of the care environment.

- Quiet, solitary play experiences are available for those children who request the need for a rest or time away from their peers.
- Safe resting practices are relevant to children because, if they are resting or sleeping, they should be monitored at regular intervals and a child's face should be uncovered when they are sleeping.
- Children who are unwell will be given the highest supervision priority and monitored constantly especially if the child has: a high temperature, vomited or received minor trauma to their head.

## **l. Outdoor and physical play**

We recognise the importance of outdoor play and experiences for all children. The outdoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children.

All children will have access to the outdoor play area on a daily basis weather permitting, which offer diverse, creative, challenging, and enriching age appropriate experiences with lots of opportunity for play, movement, and sensory stimulation within a safe and secure supervised environment. We provide a range of natural, recycled, and open-ended materials outdoors as a stimulus for creative, imaginative, and problem-solving activities. The outdoor area do allow and promote certain risk considered appropriate for healthy development such as climbing, jumping, rolling exploring. All risks are assessed according to our Risk Management Policy.

Our outdoor play area is directly accessible from the classrooms and we encourage staff to use the outdoors on a daily basis. Most of the things that can be done inside can also be done outside, for example reading stories, taking part in pretend play, doing group art projects, and playing with sand or water.

Equality and inclusion – Our outdoor spaces can be accessed, utilized and enjoyed by children of all ages and abilities. We provide a safe and secure outdoor area with opportunities for appropriate challenge to facilitate the children's ability to learn about risk and increase their independence and self-management skills.

### **Dress Code**

All staff and children attending the service must have appropriate outdoor clothing that allows them to access the outdoors in all weathers and keeps them comfortable, dry and protected, such as a rain jacket in the summer and a warm coat and hat for the winter.

## **m. Behaviour Management Policy**

We aim to support and guide all children to manage their own behaviour and learn to resolve conflicts that arise. Children attending the service are here for new learning experiences which may test their own coping strategies. All staff will support the children to regulate their behaviour and will have a number of strategies to deal with both positive and challenging behaviours.

### **Strategies for Supporting Children**

- It is recognised that all children's behaviour has some meaning to the child however at times this behaviour may be difficult or pose a danger to the child or other children.
- For minor behaviour issues e.g. children fighting over a toy, a six step to conflict resolution approach will be used:
  - **Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions** – Place yourself between the children on their level; use a calm voice and gentle touch; remain neutral rather than take sides. Put yourself in the shoes of the child. All their feelings are relevant and real in the moment. Approach the situation calmly and get down to the child's eye level.
  - **Acknowledge children's feelings** – Say something simple such as "You look really



upset;" Let children know you need to hold any object in question. Describe how the child/ children are feeling, children often don't have the language to explain how they feel leading to more frustration. Help the child by describing it for them "you both look very sad and upset"

- **Gather information** – Ask "What's the problem?" Do not ask "why" questions as young children focus on what the problem is rather than understanding the reasons behind it. Remain neutral by giving each child the opportunity to tell their side of the story. Children sometimes need lots of time to get the words out so take your time and remember the importance of the lessons learnt in these situations.
- **Restate the problem** – "So the problem is..." Use and extend the children's vocabulary, substituting neutral words for hurtful or judgemental ones (such as "stupid") if needed.
- **Ask for ideas for solutions & choose one together** (or for younger children give a solution) - give the children an opportunity to come up with solutions and keep working on it until you all agree on something. This can take a bit of time but its giving the children lots of practice compromising with one another which are vital skills they will need. Ask "What can we do to solve this problem?" Encourage children to think of a solution but offer options if the children are unable to at first.
- **Be prepared to give follow-up support** – it is important the staff member to follow through on the agreed solution. This helps place trust in the process and children will have confidence in the approach. Acknowledge children's accomplishments, e.g., "You solved the problem!" Stay nearby in case anyone is not happy with the solution and the process needs repeating.

### **Practices Prohibited**

- Corporal punishment - Any physical force which is used with intent to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, such as hitting, spanking (refers to striking a child with an open hand on the buttocks or extremities with the intention of modifying behaviour without causing physical injury), shaking, slapping, twisting, pulling, pinching, squeezing, or biting is prohibited.
- Practices or the threat of any practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitative, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful will not be carried out on any child while attending the service.
- Bullying of any form.
- Restraint of children by unapproved methods.
- The use of the bold chair or time out.

If a child is very disruptive during a specific activity, he/she may be removed from the activity and introduced to a new activity as a distraction. Staff will always explain to the child, in a child friendly manner, why the behaviour was inappropriate.

If misbehaviour continues, you will be informed and a meeting will be arranged. In some cases where a child is deemed to be too disruptive or a danger to themselves or others, their position in the setting may be reconsidered. Our procedures for dealing with negative behaviour are in accordance with the recommendations of Early Childhood Ireland.

## **n. Equality, diversity and inclusion**

### **Equality and diversity**

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

We provide equal opportunities by ensuring that:

- We are aware that everyone's tastes vary and each of us has a different way of doing things. We all have different interests and ways of expressing ourselves.
- All staff have a responsibility to show clearly, through their work, that they respect all children and their families regardless of ability, culture, beliefs and traditions.
- Staff are non-discriminatory, and we believe in equal attention and care for all children without regard to race, gender, national origin, ancestry or special needs.

## **Inclusion**

We actively promote inclusive practice in order to best meet the needs of the children, families and staff of our setting. All children are welcome to attend regardless of ability, need, background, culture, religion, gender or economic circumstances. Through inclusive practice, we aim to reflect our wider community and promote positive attitudes to both the similarities and differences in each other. In order to achieve this, we actively engage with children, parents and other organisations as appropriate. We are committed to working in partnership with parents to support children's ability, identity, cultural background and sense of belonging.

Our Inclusion policy represents the agreed principles and commitments for inclusion, in line with the Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Charter. We implement this policy to support and develop an inclusive environment for children and adults within our early years setting.

**Inclusion refers to:** A process involving a programme, curriculum or education environment where each child is welcomed and included on equal terms, can feel they belong, and can progress to his/her full potential in all areas of development (National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010).

The inclusion co-ordinator within our service is **Ann-Marie Healy**.

## **o. Partnership with parents and carers**

We agree that "Parents are the first educators of their children and should be involved at all stages of their education and development".

It is our policy that staff and parents work together to achieve the best possible outcomes and learning experiences for all the children attending the service. It is our policy to involve parent/guardians at every level of their child's development.

We use ChildPaths software a web-based platform so we can communicate quicker and smarter with parents giving you a greater insight into your child's learning and development. Through the app you will receive regular photos, observations and milestones for your child and you can make general comments at the touch of a button. Child Paths was developed to assist parents in understanding more what they can do at different stages of their child's life. Learn more about your child's interests create conversations about what they actually do during the day and understand more about what you can do with them at home to help with their development.

Any information and data that we collect will be for our record keeping use and will be treated under our confidentiality policy, which we legally have to share with the childcare inspectors. From a security perspective, the information that travels from our tablets to the servers is encrypted, and the servers are held in Ireland with one of the world's leading hosting providers, Amazon. The software is protected by a username and password to access the information. Parents obviously only have access to their own child's account.



## Procedures

- The service has 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.
- Parents will be made feel welcome and regular exchange of information with parents and staff will enable a two-way process of support.
- We recognise the limits on parents/guardian’s time but we do encourage a partnership between yourself and the staff at the service and will aim to support parents who are experiencing difficulties in whatever way we can.
- Parents/guardians are most welcome to visit their child at the service and to telephone during the day should they have any concerns. We do our utmost to accommodate parental wishes while considering the health & safety of all service users. **Please note: We are not able to accommodate visits during the Covid-19 pandemic.**
- We encourage all parents to get involved in the activities of the service and welcome any ideas and suggestions you may have.
- Opportunities for parents/guardian’s involvement include assisting with excursions, sharing personal creative skills, attending parent meetings and information evenings.
- Parents/guardians are invited to contribute to the development of policy in the service.
- Newsletters will be given out regularly. These newsletters are electronically mailed to parents who supplied us with their email information.
- Curriculums and daily routines that children engage in are displayed for parent’s information and any ideas or suggestions you may have or would like to add or include, we will do our best to try and accommodate.

## Where English is not the first language of the parent/guardian/carers:

- Staff will make every effort to communicate with the parent/guardian/carers using verbal/non-verbal methods.
- Staff will undertake to learn key phrases in the parent/guardian/carers/child’s language.
- Parents/guardian/carers will be invited to become involved in the service and share with staff and children the culture/history of their country of origin.

## Babysitting

**Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** accepts no responsibility for staff babysitting for children that attend the service.

## p. Settling-in and transition

We recognise that successful experiences during early transitions can increase a child's ability to adapt to changes in the future and can provide a more secure base for their learning and development. We are committed to work to develop strong relationships between the family and the service through frequent communication and sharing of information and goals.

We recognise that one of the key challenges for all who care for children during this COVID-19 pandemic is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a nurturing and supportive environment for children. We are committed to ensuring that any practical precautions to reduce the chance of spread of the virus such as limiting adult interaction with the service will be balanced against the needs of children which will remain our priority at all times as they transition into our service.

**Settling-in** means the procedures in place to facilitate the integration into the service of a child when they first attend the service.

**Transitions** occur as children move **within** the setting from one area to another or from one type of activity to another (for example, active play to tidy up time to eating time). They also occur as children move **between** different settings (for example, from home to the early years setting or from the early years setting to school).

## **Covid-19 restriction**

During the Covid-19 pandemic period our usual face-to-face interactions with parents/guardians will not be possible due to HSPC guidelines. Therefore, we will implement alternative arrangements such as the use of communication technology to communicate with parents. We will focus on working together with parents during this period to support the needs of children.

## **Procedures**

### **We always:**

- Consider transitions from the perspective of the wellbeing, learning and development needs of each child.
- Build partnerships with families to support the development of responsive, respectful relationships among children and staff.
- Adapt routines and practices to support each child's needs, interests, temperament, their own and their family's circumstances and their preferences, their culture and first language, whenever possible.
- Create a welcoming environment where the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for their children, are respected.
- Incorporate family photos and other aspects of children's home life into the environment and the curriculum.
- Use routines and transitions as opportunities to promote children's learning and development.
- Plan for transitions and placements that provide consistency and continuity for children and their families.
- Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of transitions using various means such as observations and feedback from families.
- Liaise with other settings appropriately and provide any relevant information via parents or with parents' consent, that is helpful in ensuring a successful transition from the setting.
- Use the templates provided by NCCA (*Mo Sceal: Moving from preschool to primary*) to transfer information from this setting to the primary schools. It is the parents' choice to pass the information to the primary school or not.

## **On entering the setting for the first time**

Children settle into preschool in lots of different ways. Some children will confidently move into the room as soon as they come in. Other children may be nervous and anxious about leaving their parent. Most children will be somewhere in between. Please try not to worry if your child experiences difficulties – it is a very normal part of a child's development to be anxious, nervous or angry about starting preschool. We also recognise that many parents will find this a difficult and sometimes upsetting process. We hope that we can use our experience to support you and your child in whatever way suits you. Please remember that we require all parents and carers to help their children settle in. In our experience, all children benefit greatly when the preschool works closely with the family on settling in.

### **We will:**

- Encourage parents/guardians to visit the service before and after their child is enrolled. *We will not be able to facilitate this during the Covid-19 pandemic.*
- Include the Key Person in the enrolment meeting and make plans with parents at that time to ease the child's transition and settling in to the programme. *This will be done virtually if possible, during the Covid-19 pandemic.*
- Request information from parents which will help us to get to know their child such as the child's likes and dislikes; their particular needs; who the important people in their lives are; their interests; their ability to communicate; their temperament and their dispositions.
- Introduce the child and their parents to the environment, the adults and the other children who will be in their room and the daily routines. *We will not be able to facilitate this during*

*the Covid-19 pandemic. As an alternative we will make photographs and a virtual tour of the setting available to new parents and children.*

- Settling-in is done over a period of two weeks. All new children will stay for an hour to an hour and a half during week 1. At the end of week 1 each child will be assessed individually in partnership with parents/guardians to see if the child needs more reduced hour days or whether they will be able for the full 3-hour session. Depending on the outcome, children will either come in for the full 3-hour session in week 2, or will continue with reduced hours.
- If the child has adapted well, they will come in full time from week 3, unless it is deemed that the child requires more time to settle in which case another schedule will be drawn up in consultation with the parents.
- Empathise with parents' concerns about leaving their child in our care.
- Parents are encouraged to:
  - ✓ develop a goodbye routine or ritual that they can use with their child each day, such as giving the child a kiss or a big hug, waving good-bye from the door or through the window. This way the child knows that they can trust them and that they won't leave without warning.
  - ✓ collect their children on time every day so their child can be confident they won't be left at the service when the other children have all gone home.
  - ✓ Keep their child's Key Person up to date with relevant information on any big changes in the child's home life or circumstances and small changes, such as when their child masters new skills or helps out with tasks and routines at home. Knowing this information, the educators can provide individualised support for the child where needed and recognise and build on the child's skills.
- Feedback about the child's day is provided to families after each attendance. *During the Covid-19 pandemic feedback will be provided electronically.*
- It should be noted that Garda Vetting is not required for parents/guardians who are settling-in their children.
- Informal and formal meetings between families and staff can be arranged to discuss children's learning and development, and to express any concerns that may arise at home or at the setting. *These meetings will be conducted online or by phone during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

### **Guidance on saying good-bye and moving on**

The following suggestions can help children accept changes and deal with them in appropriate ways.

- Prepare the child by giving them some notice when a relationship is about to change. (For example, tell them, *"Sam is going to be moving soon, and he won't be able to come and play every day"*).
- Help the child understand their feelings by using words like lonely, worried, sad or unhappy to describe how they might be feeling if they are showing signs of such feelings.
- Put things in perspective (For example, *"We won't see Ava as much now but you will still have Sophie and Joe to play with"*).
- Help the child express the meaning of the relationship by encouraging them to make a card, draw a picture or make a small gift. Let them know that relationships are very important by creating an opportunity to express affection and validate their feelings.
- Focus on the positives associated with change. When people grow and move forward, there will always be changes in relationships. New teachers, new friends, and changes in activities are part of life.
- Share with the child some of your own experiences in leaving valued relationships. Tell them how you felt at that time.
- Create a memento. Children are concrete thinkers and having a physical reminder reassures them that the relationship was shared and is an important part of their lives.

## Transition to school

- Throughout the years before children move to school they are supported to develop the skills and dispositions they will need to transition and settle in well to the school setting.
- These skills and dispositions are developed through our quality curriculum, which is informed by Aistear the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. The curriculum we provide supports children's learning and development under the themes of Wellbeing, Exploring and Thinking, Communication and Identity and Belonging. (See the Curriculum Policy.)
- Staff will use the *Mo Scéal: Moving from Preschool to Primary* templates provided by the NCCA. *Mo Scéal* means 'my story' and the templates help to tell the story of the child's learning and development. This information will be shared with parents and, with their consent, with the primary school.
- Staff will endeavour to liaise with Infant teachers within Barefield National School to gain a better understanding of each other's practice and learning environments.
- We will support and encourage parents and children when visiting Barefield National School at their open day events.

## q. Complaints Management

We are committed to providing a quality service to children and their parents/guardians and we regularly evaluate our services in order to ensure this and to monitor the standard of our performance.

While this is always our aim, we accept that sometimes things do not always go to plan. In such circumstances, we want to know, so that we can put things right and learn from our mistakes.

We welcome all comments on our services, positive or negative. Complaints will be accepted and investigated irrespective of the nature of the complaint or who the person making the complaint is.

All complaints will be dealt with seriously, sensitively and appropriately to ensure that the standard of service provided by **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** is maintained at a high level. The quality of the service provided to any child and family will never be adversely affected because a complaint has been made.

The complaints procedure is kept as simple as possible. Anyone making a complaint will be supported through the process as needed and given a copy of the 'Complaints Policy and Procedures'. The complaints procedures are displayed on the parents notice board.

### What is a Complaint?

A complaint can be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, made by a child, parent, member of the public or partner agency such as Tusla. Complaints may be made in writing, by phone, in a face-to-face meeting or by a third party acting on behalf of the parent or member of the public.

### How to make a complaint

A complaint can come to the attention of the service in a number of different ways:

- Contact, by phone or in person, with a staff member or by letter, email, and/or text.
- The complaint may be made by the person directly affected or by a person acting on their behalf.

### To whom a complaint can be made

If a person has a complaint about some aspect of the service's activity, or about the conduct of an individual member of staff, it will often be possible to resolve the problem by simply speaking to the individual concerned and/or to the owner/manager.

Some complaints may fall more into the category of disagreements or differences of opinion, and may be resolved through discussion and compromise on the part of both the person making the complaint and the staff member concerned.

## **How a complaint will be managed**

### **Stage One: Informal Process**

In the first instance, those who wish to make a complaint are encouraged to speak directly to the relevant member of staff. If they do not want to do this, they can speak with one of the managers who will try to resolve the problem.

The details of the complaint and the response will be recorded by the person taking the complaint.

If one of the owner/managers has a direct or indirect involvement in the matter being complained of, the complaint will be passed to the other manager or, if necessary, another person who has had no involvement in the matter, such as Clare County Childcare Committee.

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be found, then Stage Two of the procedure will formally come into operation.

### **Stage Two: Formal Process**

If informal discussions of a complaint or problem have not produced a satisfactory resolution to the situation, those making the complaint should be encouraged to put their complaint in writing to the owner/managers using the form attached to this policy. All necessary support will be provided. Relevant names, dates and any other important information on the nature of the complaint should be included.

The Complaints form (available on the Parents Notice Board) can be handed to a member of staff directly or sent by:

**E-mail:** overtherainbowELC.BN@gmail.com

**Post:** 1 Radharc na Bhoirne, Barefield, Ennis, Co. Clare V95 YA6K., marked for the attention of The Managers.

Either Ann-Marie Healy or Jennifer Byrne will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing as soon as possible – usually within 2 working days – and fully investigate the matter within 5 working days.

Where the owner/managers (or other appropriate person) investigating, finds grounds for the complaint, they will ensure that all of the required details are available from the person making the complaint.

### **Any complaints not within the scope of the service to investigate, will be referred appropriately. For example:**

- If the owner/managers has good reason to believe that the situation has Child Protection implications, they must inform the designated Child Protection Officer and ensure that the local Tusla Duty Social Worker is contacted, according to the procedure set out in the Child Protection Policy.
- If any person involved in the complaint has good reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed, they should contact An Garda Síochána.

***Where a complaint relates to Health and Safety it may be appropriate to notify the Health and Safety Authority.***

### **Communication of the Response/Outcome**

The formal response to the complaint will be sent from either Ann-Marie Healy or Jennifer Byrne to the person who made the complaint and copied to all relevant members of staff if appropriate. The response will include recommendations for dealing with the complaint and any necessary amendments to the service's policies and/or procedures and/or risk management procedures, arising from the investigation.

### **Stage 3: Review**

If, at the conclusion of the above process, those who made a complaint are dissatisfied with the response they have received, the original complaint along with the service's response will be passed to the Clare County Childcare Committee who will ensure that there is a complete review of the complaint. This review will be undertaken by a person not previously involved.

### **r. Confidentiality and Data Protection**

We will conform to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 as well as the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and EU GDPR 2016/679 (Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC).

Under the provisions of the Act's our service has appointed a Data Controller, who along with the manager will be responsible for the storage of personal information about staff, children and families in its computerised and manual records.

#### **Privacy notice for parents/guardians**

We respect your privacy and your rights to control your personal data and your child's personal data. This privacy statement explains the personal information we collect from you, why we collect it, how we will use it and how we protect it. The reference to personal data in this privacy notice applies to the personal data of you and your child.

We collect personal data about you and your child in order to provide a care and education service to your child. By registering your child with us, you agree to the use of your personal information as described in this Statement.

**Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** is a Controller of the personal data you (the data subject) provide us. We collect the following types of personal data from you, about you and your child:

- **Personal Data:** your child's name, date of birth, gender, home address, parents contact details, contact details of adults authorised to collect your child, PPS number (for all government scheme registrations such as ECCE) and social welfare status, emergency contact person and contact details. PPS numbers are securely disposed of immediately after it has been processed.
- **Sensitive Personal Data:** health and medical needs of your child, developmental progress, religion and ethnicity.

#### **Why We Collect Your Personal Data?**

We use the personal data you share with us in the child record form for administrative purposes so we can communicate with you and provide the best care and education for your child.

We will also ask for information about who has parental responsibility for your child and any court orders pertaining to this. We will also request information on adults authorised to collect your child. This is required to ensure the safety of your child while they are attending our service.

Sensitive personal data includes medical information/instructions about your child, this would be required in case of emergency or if medication needs to be administered. Sensitive personal data also includes religious beliefs, we collect this information so we can respect religious festivals, days and events.

#### **Sharing & Disclosure**

We strive to keep yours and your child's personal data safe and only share it when necessary. We recognise that parents have a right to know that the information they share with us is maintained confidentially. We only disclose your information as authorised in this Statement.

We do not rent or sell your personal Information to anyone. We may share your personal information with the third parties listed below.

**Who We May Share Your Personal Information With:**

- Department of Children & Youth Affairs (DCYA)
- Pobal PIP System & Pobal Compliance Officers
- An Garda Síochána
- Tusla Early Years Inspectorate
- Health & Safety Authority
- National Employment Rights Authority
- The Revenue Commissioners
- Tusla - Child and Family Agency
- Kidd Insurance (in case of a claim)
- Early Childhood Ireland (learning stories for quality in practice awards)
- County Childcare Committee

**Protection of Named Service & others and Disclosures for Law Enforcement**

Under certain circumstances we may be required to disclose your personal information in response to valid requests by public authorities to meet law enforcement requirements.

**What we do with your data?**

Your personal data is stored and processed in **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** located at Barefield National School, Gort Road, Barefield, Ennis, Co. Clare.

**How long we keep your personal data?**

We are required to keep records relating to your child for a period of **2 years** after your child has left our service. There may be a circumstance where data relating to your child is required to be held for a longer period of time. This will be outlined to you. In the event of an accident/incident personal data relating to your child will be held on file until your child is 21 years of age. After this period, your personal data will be irreversibly destroyed.

**What are your rights?**

We use appropriate technical, organisational and administrative security measures to protect all personal data we hold in our records and keep it secure. Unfortunately, no organisation can guarantee complete security.

***Right of Access***

Individuals have the right to access their personal data and supplementary information. Please use the Data Subject Access Request Form available from management to request access of personal data. We will acknowledge your request and respond to you within 1 month.

***Right to Rectification***

Please advise the service of any changes in your or your child's personal information, **as soon as possible**. Should you believe that any personal data we hold on you is incomplete or incorrect, you have the ability to request to see this information and have it rectified.

***Right to Erasure***

In certain circumstances, data subjects have the right to erasure of their data. Please contact management who will acknowledge your request and respond to you within 1 month. This is not an absolute right and only applies in certain circumstances.

***Right to Restrict Processing***

Individuals have the right to request the restriction or suppression of their personal data. Please contact management who will acknowledge your request and respond to you within 1 month. This is not an absolute right and only applies in certain circumstances.

### ***Right to be Informed***

This privacy policy explains what information we need to collect and how we use it.

### ***Right to Portability***

Data subjects can ask that their personal data be transferred to them or a third party in machine readable format (Word, PDF, etc.). However, such requests can only be fulfilled if the data in question is: 1) provided by the data subject to the service, 2) is processed automatically and 3) is processed based on consent or fulfilment of a contract. An example of this would be if a parent wanted their child's file sent to a new service.

## **s. Emergency closure and extreme weather conditions**

We will endeavour to be open from 8:35 – 11:35 and 12:00 – 15:00 Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year (excluding public holidays) as per Barefield National School calendar, without disruption. Where disruption is unavoidable, all involved in the service will be kept informed and the service will reopen at the earliest possible opportunity.

If our service has to close, for any reason including extreme weather conditions, we want to ensure children, staff and parents are kept safe and well informed. We will work with staff and parents to achieve this.

### **Emergency closures may include:**

- When the building is unusable through accidental or malicious damage.
- When the building is unusable due to required maintenance work. Where possible we will endeavour to negotiate scheduled work to be carried out during times of closure.
- When an outbreak of illness requires closure in line with HSE recommendations.
- When illness levels within the staff team mean it is impossible to maintain the correct ratios of suitable adults to children as per the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.
- During extreme inclement weather; including warnings from the Irish Meteorological Service - Met Eireann.
- Advice from the Government National Emergency Group (GNEG).
- When an emergency occurs during the opening hours which requires the service to close early.

### **Emergency Closure Prior to Service Not Opening**

- Make contact with the families via email, text message or telephone as soon as possible before the start of a session. A note will also be attached to the entrances of the service where possible.
- Circumstances of the closure and when we are likely to open again will be communicated as mentioned above. Parents will be informed of a number they can contact if they require any further information.

### **Emergency Closure During Opening Hours**

Where practical, the Manager or designated persons in charge will remain at the building until such time as it can be determined that all the affected families have been made aware of the situation.

- In the event of an emergency closure [e.g. extreme weather conditions] after the session has started, parents and carers will be informed by telephone that they are required to collect their child as soon as possible.
- If the closure is due to sickness, the children and all staff who are unaffected will remain on the premises until all children can be collected.
- If the closure is due to an emergency which requires the building to be evacuated, the children will be safely evacuated according to the current Fire Drill procedures. Contact information for all the children will be taken out of the building alongside the daily register.
- Once the building is evacuated, the emergency services will be called.



- The children will then be taken to a place of safety until such time as they can all be collected by parents/designated person. Parents will be contacted by the person in charge. All staff will remain with the children during this time. If parents cannot be reached, the emergency contact persons will be contacted.
- A record will be kept of any incidents and reported to TUSLA as required (see Accidents and Incidents policy for more information).
- In the event of non-collection of a child we will follow our Arrivals and Departure including Collection policy and procedure.

**--- END ---**