

## **EMERGENCY CLOSURE INCLUDING EXTREME WEATHER POLICY**

### **Statement of Intent:**

**Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** will endeavour to be open from 8:45 – 11:45am and 12:00 – 15:00pm Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year (excluding public holidays) as per the local school calendar as far as possible, 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 must close, for any reason including extreme weather conditions, we want to ensure children, staff and parents/carers 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.

### **Measures to be taken to ensure the safety and welfare of children:**

- We have a checklist in place outlining all the considerations we will take to ensure that children's safety is prioritised.
- We will adhere to government advice and any weather warnings.
- We will undertake a detailed risk assessment to identify whether there are any hazards for children in relation to travel, building, compliance with Regulations.
- Depending on the outcome of our Risk Assessment we will consider whether it is necessary to close the service.
- We will implement a Communications Plan to ensure that all staff and parents are kept informed as events unfold and to ensure there is no unnecessary travel or risks taken.
- We have a procedure in place to contact parents at short notice.

### **Emergency situations (including extreme weather)**

We aim to ensure that the service remains open whenever possible. However, in the event of extreme weather conditions that mean that our service is unable to open (or has to close a session early), we put into practice the following procedures. These help ensure that all families of children attending the service are made aware that we will be closed.

Our decision will be based on the following risk assessment:

- Will there be enough staff to supervise the children?
- How far staff and families have to travel?
- Is access to/around the building hazardous?
- Can we maintain a reasonable temperature in the building?
- Is water available? Risk of burst pipes etc.
- Are sufficient toilets working satisfactorily?
- Are we compliant with all requirements under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services Regulations 2016)

### **Procedures for Closures in Emergencies Including Extreme Weather Conditions**

If we decide we are unable to open (or have to unavoidably close after a session has started), the following actions will be taken as soon as practicable. This includes where there are extreme weather conditions. Our policy sets out how we deal with the situation in briefing parents and staff. The Manager or designated person/s will carry out the required actions. An action plan with designated personnel, should be put in place following the risk assessment for such situations. This will allow emergency situations to be dealt with expediently and with the safety of all concerned as paramount.

#### **Parents**

##### **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 and distributed through the ChildPaths software app.
- 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

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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.

### **Staff**

#### **Prior to Service Opening**

- Management will make direct contact with staff and advise them of closure and reopening of the service, if this information is available at that time. If not, management will be in touch with staff to confirm reopening.

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

- Dependent on the situation arising, management will require staff co-operation in managing and supervising the children, particularly where evacuation is required.
- In the event of extreme weather conditions management will give consideration to staff leaving who live furthest away from the service. This of course, is dependent on the adult/child ratios being maintained.

### **General Information Staff**

In the event of an emergency management may have to reduce opening hours or complete closures, the following will be put in place. Potential emergency situations are outlined above.

#### **1. If The Service Remains Open During Emergency**

Staff are obliged to attend work in terms of their contracts of employment. This applies even in extreme weather conditions. If an employee does not present for work and the service is open the employer is not obliged to pay an employee in such circumstances. However, in the interest of health and safety and with due regard for these special circumstances management will assess each emergency situation on a case-by-case basis.

We acknowledge that the safety and welfare of our staff is paramount, and no employee should undertake travel arrangements that would jeopardize their health and safety. Management reserve the right to confirm the options outlined below in relation to any given emergency situation that arises in the workplace.

- If the service remains open and staff are unable to get to the workplace and they have informed management, they can take unpaid leave.
- In the event that staff do attend for work and arrive later or may need to leave earlier than they will be paid for full attendance and can work the time back relating to the additional hours not worked. The time may be worked back subject to agreement with management. Management will only apply the above option for 3 days.
- In the event that the service remains open on a reduced hours or skeleton staff basis for a period of time in excess of 3 days, then management reserve the right to lay staff off from work, impose a short-time working week

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or reduce working hours as outlined in contracts of employment. Staff will receive as much notice as is reasonably possible prior to such proposed measures.

## **2. If The Service Closes During Emergency**

In the event that the service has to close due to an emergency the service has set out the conditions under which staff will be paid and where they will not be paid.

### ***Payment to staff***

If the service is closed management payment to staff will be made:

- Where funding is received under Force Majeure from DCYA through Pobal for government funded schemes, staff will be paid for those days only.

In the event that management pay staff as outlined above staff may be required to undertake on-line training while off work or prepare work from home in relation to curriculum planning.

### ***Combination of Payment and Non-Payment***

If the service is closed, management may give consideration to using options of payment initially and then non-payment to staff based on the options above.

In the event that the closure is for an extended period beyond 3 days then management will implement the closure for longer periods outlined below.

### ***Closures for Longer Periods***

If the service is closed due to an emergency that is not covered under funding for Force Majeure Days from DCYA through Pobal or is of such duration that there is no funding, management reserve the right to lay staff off from work, impose a short-time working week or reduce working hours as outlined in contracts of employment. Staff will receive as much notice as is reasonably possible prior to such proposed measures. This situation will apply where the service may remain closed in excess of 3 days.

### **Non-Attendance At Work**

In the event that the service is open, and an employee does not attend work and has not made contact with management this will be dealt with as an unauthorised absence. This will result in the disciplinary policy and procedure as noted in the employees handbook being invoked.

### **Funding Implications/Pobal**

If we are forced to close, management will inform Pobal that we have invoked a Force Majeure closure within four weeks and complete relevant documentation required.

### **Payment of Fees During Closure in Exceptional Circumstances:**

In the event of the closure of the service in exceptional circumstances, that is beyond the control of Management the following will apply:

- Full fees for the closure period will be payable when there is adverse weather conditions and where advice has been given by Met Eireann or the Government National Emergency Group (GNEG) not to open.
- If the service is open during adverse weather and your child does not attend the full fees will be payable.
- No fees are payable if covered by Government funded payments.

For extended closure periods the management may require

- Full fees for the closure period will be payable when there is adverse weather conditions and where advice has been given by Met Eireann or the Government National Emergency Group (GNEG) not to travel or not to open businesses. If this situation goes beyond 3 working days fees will not be payable and staff will be laid off.

#### **Review and Evaluation** - After each event:

The Management and staff of the setting will review and evaluate each event after it has taken place to ensure that all safety measures and procedures were conducted and contributed to the safety, health and welfare of the children, staff and parents attending. Outcomes of these reviews will be recorded and policies and procedures will be updated as appropriate.

#### **Helpful documents:**

[Critical Incident Plan Toolkit](#)

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

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

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents in the Policy Folder located in the setting or on the website [www.overtherainbowelc.com](http://www.overtherainbowelc.com)

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

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
co-Manager

Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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