

OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT POLICY

At **Over the Rainbow Early Learning Centre Ltd** we understand the importance of assessment in supporting children's early learning and development. We are committed to building a rich picture of children's individual strengths, interests, abilities and needs and using this to support and plan for their future learning and development.

Our planning and assessment is done using the Aistear themes and are informed by the Aistear, Siolta practice guide.

This policy is to be used with our Curriculum policy.

Assessment

Assessment in the early years is defined by Aistear (p72) as the on-going process of collecting, documenting, reflecting on and using information to develop rich portraits of children as learners in order to support and enhance their future learning.

Guided by Aistear's themes, aims and learning goals, our practitioners use a variety of methods to gather information on and to document children's learning and development, such as observations, notes, stories, samples of 'work' and photographs. We also record this information from different perspectives including that of the children and their parents.

Why we observe and assess

- To get to know and monitor each child's individual progress, including
 - How the child adapts to the service
 - How the child interacts with other children
 - To gain a better sense of each child's uniqueness
 - To get to know how each child is progressing
 - To get to know a child's strengths
 - To get to know a child's likes and dislikes
- To assist staff in developing a way of working, that is child-centred, built on each child's individual needs, interests and abilities, as well as, meeting the needs of a group as a whole.
- To assist staff in planning developmentally appropriate activities and choosing appropriate materials and methods for delivery to suit individual children.
- To assist staff in identifying aspects that might benefit from attention and specific supports.
- To document children's competence, achievements and progress in terms of dispositions, skills, attitudes and values, and knowledge and understanding.
- To make learning visible to practitioners, children, parents and other stakeholders

How staff observe

- Each child is allocated a member of staff as a key worker. The key worker has special responsibility for each child they are assigned. The key worker assesses the child's development and ensures that the experiences provided are matched to the child's abilities, needs and developmental level.

- All staff document children's daily activities on dedicated Ipads through the use of ChildPaths software management system. A list is displayed on the whiteboard within the room to ensure all children have at least 1 activity documented each week.
- Staff are encouraged to record factually and to make no assumptions or interpretations
- Staff conducts planned observations twice yearly on each child using the observation forms provided on ChildPaths. Where staff identify a need, more formal observations on specific learning outcomes might be done as well.
- Automatic milestone reports are available on ChildPaths with reminders set for staff to complete milestones as child reaches set age groups. These milestones are used as a general guide to child development and provide by ChildPaths in partnership with the Adult and Child Therapy Centre.
- Sample work and photographs are also gathered as part of the observation process.
- Each week, staff are allowed time away from regular activity to reflect on observations, plan activities and incorporate changes needed.
- All activities, observations and milestone reports are shared instantly with parents through the ChildPaths software and parents have the opportunity to add their own comments and must sign each observation.

Parent's involvement

- At the start of each year, each parent is given a unique username and password to access their children's information on the ChildPaths app.
- Parents are encouraged to complete the child information page as soon as possible to provide staff with an insight into the child's preferences and medical history.
- All communication to parents is mainly done through the ChildPaths app and parents are asked to check the app regularly. Paper copies are available to those parents who do not have access to the internet.
- Parents are able to comment instantly on their child's daily activities, observations or milestone reports, using the app.
- At the end of the year parents are informed how to download and keep all photos and information gathered through the year.
- Once the new school term starts, children who have gone onto primary school is removed from the ChildPaths software database. Please see our Record keeping policy and Confidentiality policy for more information on the safe storage of information.

Assessment

Assessment for Learning and **Assessment of Learning** are two approaches to assessment. The two differ in how the adult uses the information he/she collects. The main purpose of Assessment of Learning is to inform others, like parents and professionals, such as therapists, about children's achievement. Assessment for Learning focuses on using assessment information to help children with the next steps in their learning and development.

- Assessment is used to find out what children understand, how they are thinking and what they are able to do. Practitioners use this information to build rich pictures of the children in order to plan relevant and interesting experiences for them.
- Assessment focusses on children's development of dispositions, attitudes and values as well as their skills, knowledge and understandings.

- As part of everyday activities, tasks and routines, staff assess children's learning and development, in a respectful and sensitive way, by watching, listening, talking with, and empathizing with children.
- Assessment is documented mostly using the narrative approach – notes, stories, samples of 'work' and photographs, and instantly made available to parents on the ChildPaths app.
- Daily routines as well as curriculum planning are constantly reviewed and assessed.
- Resource files are available to assist staff to enhance activities following review of observations.
- The managers regularly assess children's participation in activities, effectiveness of the activities, room layout, play environment, and how effectively the Weekly Room Plans are being implemented.
- Staff are also supported through regular staff supervision meetings and discussions.
- *Mo Scéal: Moving from Preschool to Primary* templates provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) are used at the end of the year for all children moving to primary school. *Mo Scéal* means 'my story' and the templates help to tell the story of the child's learning and development throughout the year. This information will be shared with parents and, with their consent, with the primary school.
- When necessary, specific reports can be requested for the purpose of information required by professionals such as therapists or GP's or AIM support specialists. These reports can only be requested by a parent or with a parent's consent.

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

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: _____

Created: Jul20
Updated: Nov22