

Maynooth University Crèche



**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth

Parent Handbook

See also the main Policy Document for further information.

Parents are encouraged to refer to the full document
available on the creche website or in the Office .

Address:	Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co Kildare
Phone number:	01 7083319
Email:	creche.care@mu.ie
Manager:	Mary Coleman

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Please note we do not do outings and, therefore, do not have an Outings Policy

1. WELCOME

Welcome to Maynooth University Crèche. We are committed to providing an early care and education service of the highest standard. We are registered with Tusla - The Child and Family Agency. Trained, motivated and friendly staff are the cornerstone of our service.

This service provides a service for up to 42 children and aims to provide a stimulating environment for children to develop their social, personal and educational skills and learn through a planned curriculum.

We value you as parents/guardians and the significant role you play in the education of your child. Please get involved and share information with us.

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

Thank you for choosing Maynooth University Crèche.

Mary Coleman

Manager

2. POLICIES and PROCEDURES

Our modern and friendly purpose built crèche is located on the North Campus directly across from the student apartments. The crèche is available to staff and students of the university, we cater for children aged from 1 year up to school going age. The aim of the crèche is to provide a safe, secure, stimulating environment, which embraces children.

PURPOSE AND STATEMENT OF FUNCTION:

We open 50 weeks per year and daily from 8:45am-6:15pm (term time) 9am-5:30pm (summer time) Monday to Friday. We have capacity to cater for 42 children at any one time and our ratios are listed overleaf. This service is a service run by the University and operated by Mary Coleman.

The crèche will be closed on the following Public Holidays: Saint Patrick's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Bank Holiday Monday, June Bank Holiday Monday, August Bank Holiday Monday and October Bank Holiday Monday.

Type of Service:

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

Opening Hours:	8:45am – 6:15pm (term time) 9am – 5:30pm (summer time)
No of Weeks per year opened:	50
Capacity:	42
Age Range:	1 year to 5 ½ years
Ratios:	1 – 2 years (1:5) 2 – 3 years (1: 6) 3 years – 6 years (1:8) Sessional 2.6 – 6 years (1:11)
Curriculum:	Playbased
Address:	Maynooth University, Maynooth, Co Kildare
Phone Number:	01 7083319
Email:	creche.care@mu.ie

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Maynooth University Crèche was established in 1977 to support the students and staff of the University. Its inception was to enable students to continue their education and for staff to provide said education. The aim of the crèche is to provide a safe, secure, stimulating environment which embraces children;

- to value all children as individuals and appreciate their uniqueness;
- to support the learning and development of each individual child by providing an intergraded, balanced, broad, stimulating and differentiated curriculum.

To achieve this we work in partnership with parents, carers and children as a multidisciplinary team. We want to provide a secure learning environment, which enables children to be

- ✓ Respectful of themselves and others
- ✓ Happy and confident
- ✓ Independent and inter-dependant
- ✓ Compassionate and caring
- ✓ Tolerant and patient
- ✓ Curious and creative
- ✓ Appreciative and appreciated.

We endeavour to ensure that all staff receive appropriate training and maintain high levels of practice.

WHO IS WHO?

- This service is a service run by the University and operated by Mary Coleman.
- Niamh Lynch and Mary Kelly are the Designated Child Protection Liaison Persons, should you have a child protection concern.
- Deborah Lawlor is the person in charge, in the event the Manager is absent.

OBJECTIVES:

- At this service our ethos and practice values diversity and promotes equality.
- We aim to select friendly, dependable, mature and professional staff through our rigorous recruitment and selection policy.
- To ensure that the developmental, educational, emotional and social needs of each child are met daily.
- The voice of the child is heard, respected and contributes to our programme.
- We aim to deliver a quality playbased curriculum which addresses children's well-being, identity and belonging, communication and exploring and thinking, along the principles of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- We aim to make this service accessible to all members of the community, regardless of race, gender, family status, age, disability, or religious belief.
- We aim to work with 'Síolta' The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, by following its 12 principles of quality and the 16 standards within its framework.
- We operate within the Child Care Act 1991(Early Years services) Regulations 2016 and The National Standards for Pre-Schools.
- The environment is planned and well-organised in a way that suits the different needs of individual children, while keeping in mind the importance of Safety and Hygiene.
- Parents are actively welcomed at this service at all times. We endeavour to share information and communicate with parents directly, in order to give feedback at the end of each day and to ensure that they are made aware of on-going developments in policies and procedures.
- This service wishes to promote a positive atmosphere where children, staff and parents are treated with respect.

3. CHILDREN'S CHARTER

- ✓ Children's welfare and their rights to secure, healthy and happy childhood are paramount.
- ✓ The experiences children receive in their early years are critically important in terms of future development.
- ✓ Children are entitled to expect that all adults will respect, uphold and preserve their rights and to ensure that their feelings and wishes are taken into account.
- ✓ Children should have the opportunity to make choices and develop a sense of responsibility for their own actions appropriate to their age.

- ✓ Children, parents and carers should not be discriminated against, particularly in relation to colour, age, race, religion, gender, disability medical conditions or background.
- ✓ Parents should be recognised and respected as children's first and continuing educators.

4. OUR SERVICE

- We are open 50 weeks per year.
- We will close on Bank Holidays and over Christmas (dates vary each year).
- We are offering the FREE two-year preschool session for children qualifying for the ECCE scheme.
- We also offer CCS and the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

Our Facilities include:

- Two toddler rooms, one playschool room, one preschool room, one ECCE room, one large dining room
- Large kitchen and office
- Two nappy changing rooms
- Two cot rooms
- An outdoor area with part grass and part safety flooring
- Outdoor play equipment consisting of slide, playhouse, obstacle cubes, sand-pit.

- An outdoor planting area for growing vegetables
- Trained and qualified staff

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

Toddler Room 1

Number of children: 10 children

Age range: 1yr – 2.5yrs

Staff/Child Ratio: 1:5

The room provides a wide range of activities to aid all areas of development. On offer are puzzles, music, books, circle time, sand and messy and home play, to name but a few. To further enhance childrens' interest and development, monthly themes are carried out such as colours, farm animals, pets, shapes. Children will have lots of opportunity to play outside therefore ensure appropriate clothing is provided. Time for sleep or rest is allocated for whenever a child needs it.

Toddler Room 2

Number of children: 6 children.

Age range: approximately 2yrs and 3yrs

Staff/Child Ratio: 1:6

For busy hands and curious minds, this room provides short structured programmes, such as sand and water, puzzles, circle time, music and dance, assorted arts and crafts, construction play. Varied learning programmes through monthly curriculum themes, e.g. shapes, numbers, colours, etc. also aid areas of development. Children will have plenty of opportunity to play outside therefore ensure appropriate clothing is provided. Time for sleep or rest is allocated after the child's lunch time.

Playschool

Number of children: 6 children

Age range: 2yrs to 3.5yrs

Staff/Child Ratio: 1:6

Once again we focus on the child's overall development and use a variety of toys and equipment to aid and refine the child's physical, intellectual emotional and social skills. Children are still very young so short works periods are encouraged. Table top activities such as jigsaws, sorting and pairing are introduced to promote motor skills and hand eye co-ordination along with introducing children to basic numeracy and literacy skills. Home corner, role play, various arts and crafts and music also contribute to developing your child's growing confidence. Varied learning programmes through monthly themes, e.g. friendship, transport, nursery rhymes also aid areas of development and interest. Outdoor play is very important and children are given plenty of opportunity to go outside, therefore ensure that appropriate clothing is provided. Time for sleep or rest is provided every day after lunch time.

Preschool

Number of children: 16 children

Age range: 3yrs to school going age

Staff /Child Ratio: 1:8

Focus here is on the whole child and developing the child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social skills. Once a child is in pre-school they are encouraged to be independent in toilet facilities, meal times and self-care. Children are encouraged to get involved in the planning of their day. This room provides a variety of activities taking into account diversity and equality. Monthly curriculum themes such as life cycles, community workers, me and my family also support learning and interests. Children are given plenty of opportunity to go outside, it is essential that appropriate clothing is provided.

5. ADMISSIONS and ENROLMENT

ECCE Scheme:

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

Children can be enrolled into the scheme in September, January and April each year. It should be noted that the service may be over-subscribed and may not be able to accept children during all entry periods. ECCE is an inclusive scheme and welcomes all children regardless of ability. In some cases, parents need to be aware that the participation of their child may require additional resources which will be discussed at time of enrolment.

Criteria for Enrolment:

- Children's date of birth must fit the eligibility for the scheme as directed by DCYA

Over Subscription:

- In the event of places being full a waiting list will be kept. In addition, the following will apply when allocating a place.
 - 1 Existing Children
 - 2 Siblings
 - 3 Past pupils.
- The Manager will advise parents of their child's place on the waiting list upon request.

Each year of the two-year scheme is treated completely separately by our service with enrolment required for each year. If your child attends Year 1, you will be required to follow the enrolment criteria again for Year 2. Each year that the sessional ECCE scheme is operating, parents will be required to inform us if they are returning in September.

- A place on the ECCE Scheme will only be confirmed when the following is completed:
 - confirmation of the child's eligibility
 - a PIP Registration form (DCYA)
 - registration form.
- The service cannot 'hold' a place until the child becomes eligible. For example, if a child becomes eligible in January, a place will only be available if there is a vacancy. All details regarding a child's application form must be completed and any relevant important information or specific diet or health requirements must be noted.
- We reserve the right to terminate our services.
- Parents should familiarise themselves with our policies and procedures; they will be reviewed and changed accordingly to regulation and best practice.

Attendance:

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

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

- The service offers the two-year free preschool place for children eligible for the scheme. Children outside this age range can avail of a place based on parents/guardians paying the appropriate fee.
- Places will be allocated on a "first come first served" basis. Siblings will be given priority for available places and a discount may apply.
- In the event of places being over-subscribed, we reserve the right to select places in order of application.
- A deposit of €150 is taken, in advance, when a child is given a place. Deposits are refunded upon departure of the service or in accordance with CCS/ECCE guidelines.

- Parents/guardians are required to complete the Registration Form.
- A waiting list is established when all places are taken up and the child at the top of the list is given first available place depending on availability for the type of place required.
- The service operates an open door policy especially during the settling in period. The child may stay for a shorter day until manager and parent agree the child has settled in.
- Children with additional needs and disabilities are welcome. Parents/guardians need to be aware that it may be required for them to provide an additional needs assistant when necessary.
- All details regarding a child's Application Form must be completed and any relevant important information or specific diet or health requirements must be noted.
- We reserve the right to refuse admission.
- We reserve the right to terminate our services.
- Parents/guardians should familiarise themselves with our Policies and Procedures. They will be reviewed, and changed accordingly, to incorporate any new developments from TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency.
- We may seek clarification on the legal guardians of the child at enrolment stage.
- We will determine what supports a child may need at enrolment (e.g. trained staff, referral to the AIM programme)
- No uniform is necessary but we do ask that all children wear suitable, comfortable clothes, ideal for art work and outdoor messy play. (No 'good' clothes please). No hoop or long earrings.

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

- A bag containing a change of clothes i.e. underpants, socks, top and pants
- Wellington boots, coat, hat
- Sun cream, sun-hat
- For younger children, nappies, wipes, creams(if needed), nappy sacks.

Procedures for Children with Allergies:

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

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

- The allergen (i.e. the substance, material or living creature the child is allergic to such as nuts, eggs, bee stings, cats etc.).
- The nature of the allergic reactions e.g. anaphylactic shock reaction, including rash, reddening of skin, swelling, breathing problems etc.
- What to do in case of allergic reactions, any medication used and how it is to be used (e.g. Epipen).
- Control measures – such as how the child can be prevented from contact with the allergen.
- This form is kept in the child's personal file and a copy is displayed where staff can see it.
- Parents train staff in how to administer special medication in the event of an allergic reaction.
- If a child is identified to have a nut allergy, other parents are made aware so that no nut or nut products are accidentally brought in, for example to a party.

Life Saving Medication and Invasive Treatments:

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

The Manager must have:

- A letter from the child's GP/consultant stating the child's condition and what medication if any is to be administered.
- Written consent from the parent or guardian allowing staff to administer medication.
- Proof of training in the administration of such medication by the by a doctor or appropriate health profession or persons recommended by a manufacturer
- A copy of such proof may be required by our insurance provider for appraisal so that our insurance can be extended if necessary.
- For medicines like Epipens it will be decided on individual cases and if staff are happy and competent to administer them
- Consent forms

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

INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS:

This service is committed to:

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

See the full policy for more information.

FEES:**FEE POLICY:**

The Maynooth University Crèche fees are set annually at a rate that ensures continuance of the service. All students' fees must be paid *at least* a week in advance. There is no refund for illness, holidays or closure of the crèche due to unforeseen circumstances. Payment continues during mid-term breaks, study weeks and exam weeks.

Outside term time, all parents must pay the full staff rate, unless they can show they are participating in a University course or taking Autumn Examinations.

DEPOSIT:

A deposit of €150.00 (and an additional €50.00 for second and subsequent children) will be required from each parent at the time of booking a place in the crèche. This will be offset against the final payment(s) when the child finishes up here at Maynooth University or in accordance with CCS/ ECCE guidelines.

Four weeks' notice is required when taking a child out of the crèche; otherwise the booking deposit will be forfeited. If you pay a deposit for the coming academic year and decide not to take up the place offered to you your deposit will be forfeit.

ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) SCHEME:

The "Parent Declaration Form" must be completed in early September, the child must be verified as eligible for the ECCS Scheme in order for the subvention to be applied.

Payments to the crèche, for those eligible under the ECCE scheme, are made by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), by way of a capitation of €64.50 per week for 38 weeks (paid directly to the crèche). Each child will receive a calendar with ECCE weeks marked on it.

When transferring from another ECCE service, the parent must give the previous provider four weeks' notice in writing before starting at Maynooth University Crèche; Confirmation of this must also be provided in writing to Maynooth University Crèche otherwise the higher fee will be required (based on notice given and pending approval). Maynooth University Crèche reserves the right to contact the previous provider(s) to confirm any matter that determines the applicable fees payable.

CCS (Community Childcare Subvention) PROGRAMME:

In order for Maynooth University Crèche to determine what band you may qualify for under the Community Childcare Subvention programme (CCS), it is necessary that you provide proof of your current social welfare payment and medical card. On receipt of proof of social welfare payments, Maynooth University Crèche will make a provisional determination of your rate of subvention. It is the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) which determines the subvention you qualify for.

Once this determination is made, any parent can appeal the determination; such appeals are made directly to the DCYA and not to the Crèche.

If the subvention determined by the DCYA differs from the provisional subvention you have been receiving from Maynooth University Crèche, you must pay the Crèche any balance due. (**within 4wks of determination date**)

NON PAYMENT OF FEES:

All fees must be paid in full and on time. Where fees are not paid for the applicable week (*i.e. by the previous Friday*), the following is the usual procedure:

1. Parents/guardians will receive a verbal reminder on the Friday the payment becomes due;
2. If non-payment continues, a written notification (usually by email) will be sent on the following Monday. This email will set out the date by which all outstanding fees must be paid (*usually within one week*);
3. If payment is not received by that date, the Crèche Manager has the authority to terminate your child's place, on giving one week's notice. A place in the crèche cannot be provided again until all outstanding fees are paid in full (and there are available places).

In general, fees cannot remain outstanding for longer than the period covered by the deposit.

Any appeal arising from the implementation of this Fee Policy should be made in writing to the Maynooth University Bursar. The decision of the Bursar is final.

Name of Child/Children: _____

Signed by parent (s): _____

Date:

Reviewing Fees:

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

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

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

Closure in Exceptional Circumstances:

In the event of the closure of the service in exceptional circumstances, that is beyond the control of the Management i.e. adverse weather conditions, fees will apply.

Late Collection of Child/Children from the Preschool:

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

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

Withdrawal of Children:

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

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

6. WORKING in PARTNERSHIP with PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- We recognise the importance of working in partnership with you and that you have a central role in educating your child
- We have an "open door" policy where families are always welcome but where the needs of all of the children in our care are always the first priority
- We document your child's learning journey in their individual learning journals, these journals give you a snap shot of the various themes and activities your child enjoys each day. We also carry out observations and milestone checklists again to help us see if there is any area of development we can help improve or an interest we can further on, we welcome your contribution – please share information with us
- Verbal and written reports are given to parents each evening, and we have a comments and complaints policy if you encounter any problem.

- Please tell us of any difficulties that your child is experiencing at home such as bereavement, illness, relationship breakdown, a new baby – all these can change a child's behaviour and we want to help
- If a parent needs to be contacted in relation to a concern about behaviour we will do this in a helpful rather than a complaining manner and we will together, try to resolve the situation
- Regular exchange of information with parents is important; parents must inform this service of change of personal details (e.g.) new house, job, phone number.
- Employees, students or volunteers may not use social networking sites to befriend parents or accept requests to become a friend from parents who use this service or to exchange any information about the service or children attending the service or colleagues working at this service.

SETTLING-IN:

We aim to ensure children feel safe and secure in the absence of their parents/carers. We will therefore endeavour to make the settling-in process a positive experience for children and will work closely in partnership with parents/carers to ensure this is achieved. We recognise that in some cases there may be particular difficulties experienced by children, parents/carers, and staff during the settling-in period and we are prepared to explore and consider various ways of settling children into our service. All children are individuals and we plan to meet their individual needs and resolve any difficulties quickly and smoothly. If you are experiencing challenges in relation to settling your child we will work with you to assist in making this transition.

See the full policy for more information.

7. ATTENDANCE, ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Attendance:

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

Arrivals:

- Parents/guardians gain access to service by using the intercom system to buzz in. Parents must clearly state who they are before gaining access.
- A member of staff will register each child on arrival.
- Parents/guardians are asked to ensure that all external doors are securely closed for the safety of all the children when they leave.
- If a child will not be attending, we request that parents/guardians advise us.

Collection Policy:

The Collection Policy of will be achieved by:

- Parents/guardians must collect their child by the agreed collection time. Where possible, parents/guardians will be asked to give the names of at least two other people who are authorised to collect the child. If the parent is late arriving to collect the child, the person in charge will endeavour to contact the parent. In the event of being unable to contact the parent, the person in charge will contact the other named persons to collect the child.
- Children will not be released into the care of a person under the age of 18 years or to a person who appears to be incapable of caring for the child. Should this situation arise the staff will contact an authorised collector. If no one is available to collect the child, then the person in charge may contact the designated Liason Person who in turn may contact TUSLA social work child protection team.
- In the event of a parent collecting another child a prior arrangement must be made.

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

Children should be collected only by the adult/s named on the Collection Authorisation. Should a person who is not on the child record form be collecting a child, staff must be informed prior to collection, this person will be required to bring photo ID and sign the visitors book before a child will be allowed to leave the service with them.

If the parent has not been personally contacted to authorise the collection of their child, the child will not be permitted to leave the premises until an authorised collector, as recorded in the child's records is available.

Late Collection of Children:

We understand that sometimes a parent is unavoidably delayed when coming to collect their child. We will ensure that the child receives a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible. Parents/guardians in this situation must contact a staff member to say that they will be late and arrange with staff what to do. Children are only released from the service to people on the authorised to collect record form.

Early Collection of Children:

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

Separated and Divorced Parents:

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

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

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

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

By law, an unmarried mother is the automatic guardian of a child born outside of marriage. In some circumstances, unmarried fathers have automatic access. The service should be informed about access rights. Unmarried fathers will automatically

become guardians of their children if they meet a cohabitation requirement. An unmarried father who cohabits for 12 months with the child's mother, including 3 months following a child's birth, will automatically become the child's guardian. This provision is not retrospective, so guardianship will only be acquired automatically where the parents live together for at least 12 months after 18 January 2016.

CAR PARKING:

It is our policy at the service to provide set down parking for our parents/guardians where possible

8. COMMENTS and COMPLAINTS

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

For more information please see our full policy.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

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

For more information please see our full policy.

9. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

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

RESPECTING INDIVIDUALITY:

This service is committed to promoting equality of opportunity:

- ✓ We encourage children to celebrate difference and multiculturalism
- ✓ We encourage children to show respect for all cultures, religions, races, abilities, disabilities, and genders
- ✓ We help children to become empathetic and considerate to their peers
- ✓ We foster a sense of fairness and respect and we will challenge any discrimination
- ✓ We nurture each child's identity and self-concept
- ✓ We try to use our curriculum and equipment to encourage acceptance of all others, irrespective of cultural background
- ✓ Children will be discouraged from gender stereotyping
- ✓ Boys and girls are to have equal opportunity, and be actively encouraged to use all activities.
- ✓ Any discrimination (language, behaviour or remarks) by children, parents/carers or staff/volunteers is unacceptable in our service
- ✓ We aim to show respect for and awareness of all major events in the lives of the children and families in the service and in the wider society.

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

10. SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

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

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

11. CHILDCARE CURRICULUM

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

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

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

Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework:

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

Child Development:

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

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

OBSERVATION, RECORD KEEPING and ASSESSMENT:

This service recognises that observation is a useful tool, which enables the assessment of several aspects of the early years setting that are directly relevant to the planning of the curriculum.

In order to plan, prepare and organise for good quality care, adults need to observe children, review and evaluate the curriculum regularly and maintain systematic records.

By observing how children respond to activities, staff will be able to evaluate if the activities and resources they have provided meet the needs of all the children and helps them to plan a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum.

Observations also enable staff to provide challenges and extensions so that each child is able to progress. All observations / records / assessments will be treated with confidentiality. Sharing observations with parents/carers strengthens the partnership between the home and the service, giving understanding and information and allowing staff and parents/carers to do their best for each child.

Your children's records are available to view upon request.

12. HEALTH and SAFETY

RISK MANAGEMENT:

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

- the building, indoors and outdoors
- the people working with children through rigorous recruitment and vetting

CHILD PROTECTION:

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

We have a duty to care for every child attending our service. We will follow *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Our Duty to Care* published by the Department of Health and Children in this regard. This details our responsibilities and outlines the reporting procedures that we use if we are concerned about the welfare of a child. This service Designated Liaison Persons are Niamh Lynch and Mary Kelly, their details are available on request or In the Maynooth University Child and Adult Protection Policies and Procedures.

HEALTHY EATING:

This service is committed to promoting children's health and encouraging healthy eating habits.

- Snack time will be enjoyed and socialisation and interaction encouraged.
- Children are encouraged to feed themselves as appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Age and stage appropriate feeding equipment such as feeder cups, knives, forks spoons etc. are always available.
- Allergens in food we provide will be listed as under Food Information for Consumers (FIC) Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 (S.I. No. 489 of 2014)
- Children with allergies and special diets will be carefully supervised.
- We do not allow fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolate, crisps, popcorn, nuts or nut spreads.

- Some children are allergic to peanuts/nuts. We request that parents/guardians do not include these in their child's snack.
- Children will be encouraged to help tidy up after snack time.
- Cultural and religious dietary habits are respected. Parents/guardians are requested to provide details of foods that children can or cannot eat..
- Healthy eating is promoted through an arrangement of activities for the children including play, stories, music, cookery etc.
- Drinking water is available throughout the day .

Important Note:

- If a child expresses that they are hungry, we will ensure they have a snack.
- If a child forgets their snack box. we will provide contingency snacks if available.
- Practitioners are required to inform parents of what the child has eaten during the day.

OUTDOOR PLAY:

Outdoor play is essential to early childhood development. Children learn social skills by interacting with other children, with adults, and even with objects and natural materials found in the environment. The outdoor environment exposes children to opportunities to explore, question, and develop theories about how things work. Negotiation, language, and cooperation are all skills that develop through a well-planned outdoor curriculum. Outdoor play, physical activity and fresh air are important to children's overall health and wellbeing. Outdoor play is an important part of our daily curriculum. We aim to ensure that children play outdoors every day. Our intention, through our outdoor programme is to enhance gross motor skills, co-ordination, balance and body awareness. It also gives children opportunities to socialise freely and use imagination and initiative.

Clothing:

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

RISKY PLAY:

A natural part of children's physical play involves engaging in play that is challenging and somewhat risky. Providing opportunities for all children to encounter or create uncertainty, unpredictability, and potential hazards as part of their play is extremely beneficial to children's development. This does not mean putting children in danger of serious harm. Good risks and hazards in play provision are those that engage and challenge children, and support their growth, learning and development. These might include being in touch with the natural environment and loose materials that give children the chance to create and destroy constructions using their skill, creativity and imagination. Bad risks and hazards are those that are difficult or impossible for children to assess for themselves, and that have no obvious benefits.

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

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS:

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

ILLNESS AND EXCLUSIONS:

You have entrusted your child into our care and we aim to ensure this environment is as healthy as possible and we want to minimise your child's risk of infection. We encourage you to get your child immunised according to the HSE recommendations.

Children with the following cannot be admitted to the service:

- Acute symptoms of food poisoning/gastro-enteritis.
- An oral temperature of 38 degrees C and over . Children that have a temperature will not be allowed to come to the centre and will be sent home. If a child develops a temperature while at the centre parents will be called and the child will be monitored and temperature recorded until their arrival.
- An earache.
- A deep, hacking cough.
- Severe congestion.
- Difficulty breathing or untreated wheezing.
- An unexplained rash.
- Vomiting (in last 48 hours). Children who vomit in the centre and are sent home will not be allowed back into the centre until at least 48 hours has passed
- Diarrhoea (in last 48 hours).
- Complaints of a stiff neck and headache with one or more of the above symptoms
- Lice or nits
- An infectious /contagious condition.
- A child who is on an antibiotic for less than 24 hours

If a child becomes ill at the service parents will be contacted so that the child can be taken home. If, for some reason, the parent cannot collect they should organise an authorised adult to collect their child.

All children must provide up to date record of immunisations.

Should there be an outbreak of any infectious disease or incident you will be informed.

Head Lice:

Head-lice are very common amongst children. All parents should check their child's head regularly for lice. If there is an outbreak you will be informed.

If your child is infected, you will be asked to refrain from bringing your child to the service until it is cleared.

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

MEDICATION:

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

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

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

ANTIPYRETIC POLICY (temperature reducing policy)

- A raised temperature is any temperature over 38 degrees Celsius. Parents are contacted if a child's temperature reaches this. They will be asked to come to collect their child immediately.
- While awaiting the parents arrival and before administering antipyretic medicine the following measures will be taken to try to reduce the temperature:
 - ✓ Give the child a cool drink
 - ✓ Loosen and remove excess clothing
 - ✓ Make sure the room is not too hot
 - ✓ Make sure the room is ventilated
- If a parent is unable to come immediately, permission will be sought to administer antipyretic medicine and the dosage is approved by the parent.
- If a parent cannot be contacted the Manager/Assistant Manager will authorize the antipyretic medicine to be administered. This will be done for the overall safety and well being of the child in our care.
- The child should be closely monitored and the temperature checked regularly until the arrival of the parent. A medicine form will be filled in and signed by the parent.

INFECTION CONTROL:

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

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

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

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

FIRE SAFETY:

All our staff are trained in fire prevention and evacuation. Your child will participate in monthly fire drills.

The Designated Fire Safety Person is Karen Tracey.

13. SECURITY

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

INTERNET AND MULTIMEDIA:

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

PHOTOGRAPHS AND OTHER RECORDINGS:

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

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

DATA PROTECTION:

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

14. STAFF MANAGEMENT

Staff Ratios:

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

Recruitment:

It is our policy to recruit and select the best candidate for any vacant position. Our employees are one of the key resources we have in achieving our aims and objectives of providing good quality care to children in our Service. Our primary concern is selecting the right candidate that will cherish children in our care and help each one of them to reach their potential. This is achieved through a rigorous interview and vetting process.

Garda Vetting:

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

Staff Absences:

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

Staff Training:

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

Supervision:

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

See our full policies for more information

15. WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SERVICE

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

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

And finally...

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

16. PLEASE SIGN and RETURN THIS SLIP

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

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

Child's name is: _____

Date commenced at: _____

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

1. _____

2. _____

Dated: _____