STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

Policy Statement

The purpose of **ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL** is to provide high quality, affordable and accessible early education to children aged from 2 years 6 months in our local community. It is a community run service and is classified as a sessional service under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Setting Details

Type of setting	Sessional
Who service is aimed at	Children from ages of 2 years and 6 months
Community or private	Community run service
Curriculum followed	Play based curriculum following Aistear guidelines
Síolta Accredited	Accredited by Síolta in 2017 & 2022
Number of weeks open	38 weeks per school calendar year
Opening hours	2 sessions – morning and afternoon 9.00 to 12.00 and 1.00 to 4.00 daily
Number of children catered for	22 children per session
Number of Educators	3
Childcare Schemes and Fees	ECCE, and NCS Fees are €14 per session

Description of Setting

Name of setting	Ardfinnan Community Playschool
Address	Lady's Abbey, Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
Eircode	E91 RP21
Person in Charge	Erica Condon
Deputy Person in Charge	Elaine Cowan
Contact Telephone Numbers	052 746 4488 086 176 2095
Email Address	ardfinnanchildcare@gmail.com ardfinnanplayschool@gmail.com
Registered Providers	Elaine Bowe

Mission Statement

Ardfinnan Community Playschool aims to provide a quality open welcoming child centred service, where children will grow and learn, in a safe environment. Begin to explore, discover and adjust socially through play situations, under the guidance of suitably qualified adults and interested parents and guardians. In a service where health, safety, welfare needs and rights of all children in our care is one of the utmost importance.

Policies

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL quality of practice is underpinned by a set of policies, procedures and practice guidelines which reflect our ethos of providing an open welcoming child centred service, where children will grow and learn in a safe environment. We are fully compliant with GDPR guidelines. All policies are available to view in the office.

This policy was adopted by **ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL** on Date: August, 2019, updated April 2023 & September 2026

Signed by: _____ Erica Condon (Lead Educator)

_____ Elaine Bowe (Chairperson)

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All policies and procedures correct at time of print in line with government legislation.
The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016
The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendments) Regulations 2016,
Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act amended the Child Care Act, 1991
Policies and procedures follow guidelines set by Túsla, Early Childhood Ireland, CCC (County Childcare Committees) and Barnardo's

Company Registration Number: 422929 CHY No.: 16937 Registered Irish Charity No.: 20062132

Our mission is "To provide high quality, affordable and accessible early education to children aged from 2 years 6 months in our local community

GOVERNANCE

ADDMISSIONS & ENROLMENT

Policy Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool welcomes all families and children into our service inclusive of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, membership of the Travelling community and religious belief. Families are always welcome especially during the settling in period

This policy is underpinned by the Childcare preschool Services Regulations 2006
Ardfinnan Community Playschool adheres to the:

- Promotion of equal opportunities
- Open and fair admission procedures
- Anti-Discriminatory procedures
- Respecting cultural and language differences

All policies and procedures are available to parents/ guardians. Parents/ guardians must agree to adhere to all policies and procedures when accepting a place

Enrolment Procedures

Upon contacting our Administrator a Pre-Enrolment form will be issued, when this is returned to our Administrator it will be stamped and dated.

- The child's name is placed on the waiting list when the Pre-Enrolment Form is returned completed to our office administrator
- When places become available places will be offered on a 'first come first served bases'
- Parents/guardians will have opportunities to visit the setting prior to admission
- Referrals will be considered as places become available

Enrolment

- Each child enrolled in Ardfinnan Community Playschool must adhere to our Vaccination Policy, which states all children attending the service must be fully vaccinated. Please refer to our vaccination policy for more details.
- Each child enrolled in Ardfinnan Community Playschool must be **fully toilet trained** prior to beginning their preschool experience.
- Each child and their parents will be invited to our opening evening prior to the start of each new school year, this evening is a chance for us to get to know the child, meet parents and introduce our educators. Each parent will be issued with our enrolment pack which includes full detailed enrolment form and information booklet along with any other relevant information necessary for each child.
- Full enrolment forms must be returned completed on or before the first day of playschool
- A copy of the child's vaccination record must accompany the enrolment form
- Children must be **2 years and 6 months** of age before enrolling in our service
- All Pre-Enrolment and Enrolment forms are securely stored

Our preschool's income from government (ECCE & NCS) is calculated on the basis of the actual number of children attending therefore by norm we cannot hold a place vacant for a child for longer than one

month from the date the offer of a place is made, (some latitude may be given based on individual circumstances following discussion with staff).

ATTENDANCE

Children are expected to attend preschool on their allocated days. Our senior session is 5 mornings per week; our junior session is 4 afternoons per week.
Your child's attendance is a REQUIREMENT to participate fully in our curriculum.
Attendance is taken upon arrival every day.
As a courtesy, we ask that you contact the playschool by phone or text if your child will not be attending that day.
We understand that sometimes your child may be ill or there may be a family situation. We ask that you commit to the following:

- Regular attendance
- Good time keeping at drop off and collection times
- If your child is absent, please text and let our educators know,
- If your child is absent due to illness, please let educators know by text or a phone call (please see our illness policy).

Absences are monitored for the health and wellbeing of children, for example so that we are aware of outbreaks of illness which may easily spread warn parents of infections such as Chicken Pox, Impetigo, Head Lice etc. Your confidentiality will always be maintained but we will send general alerts to all parents.

ECCE & NCS Attendance

To fully participate and avail of the Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) and or the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) children must not miss more than 4 consecutive weeks. Please see https://earlyyearshive.ncs.gov.ie/ for more details. Special circumstances for extended leave may be applied for please speak to the office administrator.
Our preschool's income from government (ECCE & NCS) is calculated on the basis of the actual number of children attending therefore by norm we cannot hold a place vacant for a child for longer than one month from the date the offer of a place is made, (some latitude may be given based on individual circumstances following discussion with educators).

GOVERNANCE

FEES

Policy Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool fees reflect both the need to offer high standards of practice and affordability to parents. We are committed to working together with parents to ensure quality care and learning for their child

Principle:

This policy is underpinned by the National Standards for Preschool Services 2010, the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012.

The committee are responsible for establishing fees policies and structures which must be approved by the Board of Management at Ardfinnan Community Playschool and the Tipperary County Childcare on an annual basis.

All money generated from fundraising for the service must be lodged into the bank account of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee.

Fees are to be paid in the reception office at Ardfinnan Community Playschool. Management will ensure regular lodgements or contact the Treasurer if time constraints prevent lodgements.

FEES PAYMENTS

The rate is €14 per session.

Fees should be paid weekly on Monday or the first date of attendance each week.

Receipts are issued on request only.

There will be no reduction in fees if a child is absent due to illness, or any such reason.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Weekly in advance: fees should be paid on Monday or the first date of attendance each week.

Monthly in advance: There is an option to pay fees on a monthly bases, please speak to Administrator for details

Quarterly in advance: There is an option to pay fees on a term-by-term bases, please speak to Administrator for details

LATE PAYMENT

If one month's fees are outstanding at the end of the 2nd month a written reminder will be issued.

If fees are still outstanding and no contact has been made after the 3rd month the service is withdrawn.

GOVERNANCE

CHILD ARRIVAL / COLLECTION POLICY

Policy Statement

Ardfinnan Community Playschool promotes arrival and departure time as an opportunity to actively engage with children and families to help with the children's transitions. We understand that arrival and collection are our busiest times throughout the day and are committed to following strict guidelines to ensure all children's safety is protected. This policy outlines the protocols in relation to arrival and collection of children from Ardfinnan Community Playschool.

Principle

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

- Regulation 10 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 requires that a policy relating to 'Authorisation to Collect Children' is written and implemented.

- Regulation 24 requires that children are checked into and out of the service on a daily basis and that a written record of this is kept.

Purpose of this Policy is to….

- To ensure the welfare and safety of the children in the service.
- To ensure that children are received into the service safely and securely, and that parents/guardians/carers make direct contact with educators on arrival each day with their child.
- Parents/guardians/carers are encouraged to stay until their child is safely in the playroom before leaving the premises
- To encourage all parents/guardians or carers to come for their children on time.
- To ensure children are returned safely into the care of their parents/guardians or carers.
- In cases where a parent/guardian/carer does not arrive on time for their child at the end of their session, to ensure that the child is cared for safely by at least one educator who is known to the child.
- To support educators in handling challenging or exceptional circumstances related to the children leaving the setting daily.

Children need…

- To feel safe and secure when they arrive at Ardfinnan Community Playschool and when they leave our service.
- We ask that the adult who takes them to the service to make direct contact with educators and share any information that might help their child feel comfortable and engage well during their time in playschool.
- To know who will come for them at the end of each session and that they will not be allowed to leave with anyone they don't know or anyone who is not old enough to take responsibility for them.
- Their parents/guardians and educators communicate positively with each other and make decisions in their child's best interests.

Parents/guardians need…

- To know the procedure for safely and securely leaving their child in the care of qualified Early Years Educator each day.
- To be confident that no person, other than a parent or guardian, who has not been nominated by them (in person and in writing), will be allowed to take their child from the service.
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool will provide very clear information to them, regarding who is entitled to make decisions about who can take their child from the setting.
- Provide clear information on what the procedures are for any changes to arrangements and/or authorisations agreed on their child's enrolment form.

All educators & staff members need…

- To be very clear on the service's policy and to have very clear written guidance on how children should be received into the setting.
- Absolute clarity on who children can leave the setting with, to ensure that children's safety and welfare is prioritised at all times. This requires specific information about who a child's

guardians are and any person who has been nominated by a child's parent/guardian as a person who is allowed to take the child out of the care of the service.

- Clear procedures on how people authorised/nominated by parents/guardians are to be identified where they are unfamiliar.

Management needs…

- To ensure that the requirement to have a policy on Child Arrival and Collection is met.
- To ensure that children's safety and welfare are prioritised at all times.
- This policy to ensure that everyone in Ardfinnan Community Playschool is absolutely clear on what the service requires and what the procedures are for children's safe and secure reception into the setting as well as their safe return to their parents'/guardians' care at the end of each session.
- To ensure that this policy is made clear to parents/guardians.
- To ensure that decisions can only be made by the child's parents or legal guardians.
- To ensure that educators know how to identify which persons can or cannot take a child from the service
- To ensure that persons other than parents/guardians have been nominated by the child's parents/guardians
- To ensure that children are protected where there is any dispute and/or any concern for their welfare.

Procedure:

On enrolment, a written hard copy of each child's details is obtained and kept with the following details:

- The name and date of birth of the child.
- The name, address and telephone number of the person/s authorised by a parent or authorised nominee named in the child's record to collect the child from the premises.
- The relationship to the child of the persons authorised to collect the child from the premises.
- Only persons over 18 years of age are eligible to collect children
- Details of any court ordered custody arrangements, or relevant legal evidence of individuals that are prohibited from collecting a child.
- The signature of the person providing authorisation.
- Details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention.
- Record of immunisations.
- The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner.
- Written parent or authorised nominee consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool shall ensure that a record in writing is retained for a period of 2 years for Túsla from the date on which the child ceases attending the service.

Child's Arrivals:

- On arrival at Ardfinnan Community Playschool parents/guardians/carers must ensure that they make direct contact with an educator and pass on any information that is relevant to the child's care for the session.
- Children MUST be signed in upon their arrival with the time of arrival recorded.
- Parents/guardians/carers must ensure their child has entered the playroom before leaving the premises
- Both educators and parents/ guardians should make every effort to support the child's transition each day through daily conversations and moral support.

Child's Departure Procedure:

- If a child is to be collected by a person other than their parent prior signed parental permission must be in place, see enrolment form
- 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
- All authorised persons must be over 18 years of age.
- Children can only be collected by an authorised person.
- Photographic I.D is needed for authorised persons not known to educators; this includes parents.
- On collection, parents/ guardians are encouraged to meet with educators so they can share information about the child's day.
- Children MUST be signed out upon departure and the time noted
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool should be informed if one parent does not have guardianship and access to their child.
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool should be informed immediately of any changes to those authorised to collect their child.
- Under NO circumstances will a child be released to the care of a person unknown to educators or unauthorised by a parent/guardian
- Parents are asked to notify Ardfinnan Community Playschool of any changed to their nominated persons
- Educators are able to seek emergency medical assistance for a child as required without seeking further authorisation from a parent or guardian (i.e., medical practitioner, ambulance or hospital) including for those emergencies relating to asthma and anaphylaxis.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool 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 educators, staff 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.

Separated and Divorced Parents

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

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 (applies to children born after 18 January 2016.)

- 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 you to clarify the circumstances with us. This information will remain confidential and will only be made known to the relevant educators. If there are any legal documents i.e., custody order, barring order we would ask you to provide us with a copy to keep on file.

Late Collection

Ardfinnan Community Playschool are vigilant in adhering to all Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) ratios in line with childcare regulations. Late collections present various difficulties for educators. It may affect ratio's when new children arrive and other children have not yet been collected. It also results in overtime for educators. For this reason, a fine will be applied for children that are not collected at their designated time. This has been calculated to cover two educators wages equal to €5 for every 5 min thereafter. This fine will be applied for parents who collect their child later than 10 minutes. The first instance will result in a parent being informed, however on the 2nd occasion the fine will be applied.

Late Collection Fee

We reserve the right to charge a late collection fee for persistent lateness in collection of children. Our fee is €5.

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 class.

Late Drop Off

We ask parents/guardians to drop children off at the correct time to avoid disrupting the class once they have started and so that their child benefits from the full curriculum.

In Case of Emergency

Ardfinnan Community Playschool understands that on a rare occasion the unexpected happens and an unauthorised person may have to collect the child. When this happens parents/guardians MUST make contact with the service prior to collection time informing them of their situation and who will be collecting their child, they can offer a password/code which will be known to educators and the unauthorised person and once educators are satisfied there are no child welfare issues, they may sign out the child. A picture of the person may also be required for recognition.

Persons who have not been named in the enrolment form by the parent/guardian must:

- Have a dated note from the parent/guardian allowing the child to leave with them and/or parents have contacted the service informing them of who is collecting the child

- Present photo identification and agreed password/code given to them by the child's parent/guardian.
- Parents are asked to call to the service at their earliest convenience to sign the collection permission form.

Parents/guardians/carers who arrive for children in an 'unfit state'

It may happen that a person arrives for a child in an 'unfit state' due to illness, drugs or alcohol. Where the condition is severe, it may be quite distressing for educators who have concerns for the child's safety and/or wellbeing.

The Children First Act 2015, Article 10 requires that a provider of a relevant service shall ensure, as far as practicable, that each child availing of the service from the provider is safe from harm while availing of that service. In this regard Ardfinnan Community Playschool will always act in the child's best interests. In the case of a nominated carer who is not a guardian, the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately.

In the case of a parent/guardian being in an unfit state, the following measures may be adopted where appropriate:

1. Attempt to get the parent/guardian to take some time before they leave with the child, for example invite them to sit down for a cup of tea/coffee and talk with a staff member.
2. Offer to contact a family member or friend, or the person(s) listed as the child's emergency contact person on their enrolment form.
3. Offer to call a taxi.

If the parent/guardian rejects the above suggestions and insists on taking the child, the service will follow their Child Safeguarding Procedures by contacting An Garda Síochána where there is a perceived risk to the child for example through negligent driving or the person's inability to appropriately supervise the child on the way home.

Procedure if an unauthorised or unknown person attempts to remove a child from the service

- If an unauthorised or unknown person tries to take a child from the service, stay calm, and ask for the person's identification with a photograph.
- Emphasise the rules and procedures you are obliged to follow whenever you allow a child to leave the service.
- If possible, give the person a copy of your policies to show that these rules apply to everyone, including grandparents, siblings, other relatives, neighbours and family friends.
- Explain that because you are legally bound to follow the instructions of the person with legal guardianship and you cannot allow the child to leave unless you have that person's personal or written authorisation.
- If a person (even a child's parent or parent's partner) is not a guardian and does not have legal custody and is not otherwise authorised by the person who has legal custody, a child should not be released to the unauthorised person.

- If the unauthorised or unknown person insists, telephone the parent/guardian who has legal custody and inform them of the situation.
- If you feel that the situation is getting out of control or if the person threatens you or the children in your care in any way, do not hesitate to call An Garda Síochána.

Adequate supervision is provided to ensure that no one can remove a child from the service without at least one educator knowledge and a record being kept. Any person, including a parent/guardian, who comes to take a child out of the service, must be over 18 and must make contact directly with an educator before doing so.

Attendance

Children are expected to regularly attend preschool on the days they are registered to attend. Our senior session is 5 mornings a week Monday to Friday 9 am to 12 noon. Our junior session is 4 afternoons a week, Monday to Thursday 1 pm to 4 pm.

Children's attendance is a MANDATORY REQUIREMENT in order to participate fully in our curriculum Attendance is taken upon arrival everyday by our educators and registered in the roll book. All children registered are singed in and out with the time they arrive and leave and the person dropping and collecting is recorded. As a courtesy we ask that you contact the playschool by text if your child will not be attending that day. Those absent will be marked absent and if contact was made with the preschool as to their absence this is also recorded. This book is open for inspection by Tusla.

We understand that sometimes your child may be ill or there may be a family situation. We ask that you commit to the following:

- Your child arrives to their session on time and are picked up on time
- If your child is absent, please text and let our educators know
- If your child is absent due to illness, please let educators know by text or a phone call (please see our illness policy)

Absences are monitored for the health and wellbeing of children for example so that we are aware of outbreaks of illness which need to be investigated or to warn parents of infections such as Chicken Pox. It also allows us to manage our service and advocate with government schemes to uphold your child's ECCE or NCS entitlements where appropriate.
A copy of the ECCE and NCS attendance regulations is available on request from the office.

Non-Attendance

Where a child has not attended the service for 4 consecutive weeks without a qualifying special circumstance, the service must end date the registration immediately. This also applies to 4 consecutive days, e.g. 4 Tuesday's the child may lose their Tuesday in the service.

Special Circumstances Absence Exemptions

If under attendance of a child is due to a qualifying circumstance, or as a result of a series of medical/therapeutic appointments, upon evidence of proofs a parent may be able to retain their child's registration up to 6 /16 weeks dependent on the circumstance. For more details, please speak to our educators and refer to Chapter 7 of the Rules for the ECCE Programme 2024/2025.

Departure from the Service

If a child leaves the service, parents are required to give 4 weeks' notice of departure (excluding holidays/closed
weeks). While a parent/guardian is free to remove their child from the service at any point, they will not be allowed to avail of further childcare funding while the approved funding is committed to the service during this 4-week notice period.

Holding of Places in September

Our preschool's income from government (Early Childhood Care & Education Scheme ECCE and the National Childcare Scheme NCS) is calculated on the basis of the actual number of children attending therefore, by norm, we cannot "hold" a place vacant for a child for longer than one month from the date the offer of a place is made or the start of the new preschool year whichever is first. Some latitude may be given based on individual circumstances following discussing with educators.

Communication of Policy

All parents/guardians will to be informed of this Policy on enrolment. Educators will check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed. This policy will be reviewed with the education team at induction and annual staff training.

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

Parents may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents educators and all staff members will receive notification of any updates.

GOVERNANCE

GDPR DATA PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION: Why This Policy Exists

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL (hereafter referred to the "Service") needs to gather and use certain information about individuals.

These can include parents/guardians, children, clients, suppliers, business contacts, employees, and other people the organisation has a relationship with or may need to contact. This policy describes how this personal data must be collected, handled, and stored to meet the organisation's data protection standards — and to comply with the law.

The purpose of this document is to explain to educators and employees what can and cannot be done with this information and forms an essential part of awareness training for all staff members.

This data protection policy ensures that the Service:

- Complies with data protection law and follow good practice,
- Protects the rights of staff, clients and partners,
- Is open about how it stores and processes individuals' data, and
- Protects itself from the risks of a data breach.

Safeguarding Against Data Protection and Security Risks

This policy helps to protect the Service from some very real data security risks, including:

- Breaches of security and confidentiality. For instance, information being given out inappropriately.
- Reputational damage. For instance, the Service could suffer if hackers successfully gained access to sensitive data.
- The risk of large fines or sanctions being imposed by the authorities.
- The risks of being sued for damages by individuals whose data has been mishandled.

DATA PROTECTION LAW AND CORE PRINCIPLES

The Laws

The Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003 (the "Data Protection Acts") and the 2016 General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR") describe how organisations including our Service must collect, handle, and store personal information.

These rules apply regardless of whether data is stored electronically, on paper, or on other materials. To comply with the law, personal information must be collected and used fairly, stored safely, and not disclosed unlawfully.

The Data Protection Acts and the GDPR are underpinned by eight important principles. These, and a description of how they are implemented within the Service, are described below.

The Principles - Management of Personal Data

All personal data collected and held by the Service is managed strictly within the eight guiding principles as set out in the GDPR. **Personal Data must be:**

- **Processed Fairly and Lawfully:** At the time we collect information about individuals, they are made aware of the uses for that information. Where information is disclosed to third parties, this is also set out and explained. This information is set out in the Service's Privacy Notices.
- **Processed Only for Specific Lawful Purposes:** Personal information is only kept for clearly described and explicit purposes. The types of information retained and the specific purposes it is used for, and details of any third-party disclosures are set out in the Service's Register of Personal Data Records.
- **Adequate, Relevant, and Not Excessive:** The Service collects sufficient information to provide an early childhood care and education service to children and their families. The data collected is set out in our Privacy Notices and Register of Personal Data Records.
- **Kept Accurate and Up to Date:** The personal data that the service collects is checked for accuracy at the time of first collection, and the data subjects (e.g., parents, guardians, educators and others) are given the opportunity to update information freely whenever they are in contact with the service over the duration of the period that they attend (children, parents. Guardians) or work in the service (educators).

Personal information is retained for such time as required to provide the required services to staff and clients - or to comply with the relevant industry standards, legal requirements or guidelines. These are set out in detail in the Service's Personal Data Register with the associated retention guidelines. Once data has reached the retention threshold, it will be authorised for secure disposal and/or deletion.

- **Processed in Accordance with the Rights of Data Subjects:** Where staff or clients wish to exercise their subject rights in terms of Data Access, correction, or erasure this will be honoured as set out in the Service's Subject Access Request handling procedure.
- **Kept Secure and Protected in Appropriate Ways:** All personal information held within the Service is kept securely, and protected as described below under Information Security Guidelines, and set out in more detail in the Service's Information Security Overview document.
- **Protected Against Transfer to Countries Without Adequate Safeguards:** No personal data is currently transferred outside the European Economic Area (EEA). If this ceases to be the case, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the necessary safeguards are put in place and that the target country or territory can guarantee an adequate level of protection

Personal Data and Handling of Special Categories (Sensitive) Personal Data

- Personal Data: Under GDPR, 'Personal Data' means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject').

In other words, any information that is clearly about a particular person. In certain circumstances, this could include anything from someone's name to their physical appearance.
The definition is wide ranging but typically within the child-care environment would include:

- Names of individuals
- Postal addresses
- Email addresses
- Telephone numbers
- Photographs
- PPSN numbers
- Staff and Parent's Bank Account details and any and all other information relating to individuals.

Special Categories of Personal Data

This is a particular set of sensitive data that can only be collected and used if specific conditions have been met and which must be treated with extra security. The categories are:

- Racial or ethnic origin;
- Political opinions;
- Religious or philosophical beliefs;
- Trade union membership;
- Genetic data;
- Biometric data (where processed to uniquely identify someone);
- Data Concerning health; or
- Data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation

Under GDPR, processing of these special categories of information is prohibited unless certain conditions have been met.

Within the Early Years environment this means that **Ardfinnan Community Playschool will obtain explicit consent from the data-subject** - i.e., the staff member, or parent/guardian(s) - in each case. **The service will take care to obtain this consent at the time an employee first joins the Service or when a parent/guardian or parents/guardians register their child using the appropriate enrolment forms**.

The records of consent are retained securely for the periods recommended in the Data Retention Policy.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND COMPLIANCE

Policy Scope

Everyone who works for or with the Service has responsibility for ensuring data is collected, stored, and handled appropriately. Each person that handles personal data must ensure that it is handled and processed in line with this policy and data protection principles. Specific responsibilities are outlined in more detail below.

Management

Persons with responsibility for the implementation of the policy are as follows:

Administrator/ Data Protection Officer: Elaine Cowan Data Controller: Erica Condon and Elaine Cowan Child Protection Designated Liaison Person: Erica Condon

- Management will ensure that the basic principles of data protection are explained to educators, staff and parents/guardians. This will be done during induction, staff meetings and if possible, through the Service's parent handbook/notice board.
- There are regular updates to data protection awareness, so that data protection is a “living” process aligned to the way the service conducts its business.
- The Data Controller will periodically check data held regarding accuracy and will complete regular security reviews.
- Non-compliance of the data protection and other policies of the Service may invoke the disciplinary policy and procedure.
- Confidential and personal information about the Service's children, parents or guardians, and staff will only be shared by Management, Data Controllers, and Designated Child Protection Liaison Persons in relation to child safety, in line with our Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Statement. Any breach of confidentiality by any member of staff will lead to disciplinary action.

The Data Controller (see designated persons above)

To ensure the implementation of this policy, the Service has designated a Data Controller. All enquiries relating to the holding of personal data should be referred to the Data Controller in the first instance.

The Data Controller will:

- Inform the person or persons involved a breach of confidentiality has occurred and their personal data may have been compromised. A record of this will be kept on the employee's file or child's file as relevant.
- Investigate where the breach of security has occurred and invoke the disciplinary policy if necessary.
- Check that additional measures are in place to ensure confidentiality.
- Review and update the Data Protection Policy if required.
- Check that any information kept is necessary for running the Service.
- Check to see if clerical and computer procedures are adequate to ensure accuracy.
- Reassure parents/guardians that the Data Protection Policy has been reviewed and additional measures to ensure security.
- Advise and inform employees of the need to ensure confidentiality through additional staff training and re-implementation of the Data Protection Policy.

Employees will be required to sign off to confirm they have read and understand the Data Protection Policy and Procedures.

Employees Responsibilities

As an employee, you are responsible for:

- Checking that any information that you provide in connection with your employment is accurate and up to date.
- Notifying the Service of any changes to information you have provided, for example changes of address.
- Ensuring that you are familiar with and follow the Data Protection Policy.
- Ensuring that any personal data you hold, whether in electronic or paper format, is kept securely.
- Personal information relating to children or their families is not disclosed either verbally or in writing, accidentally or otherwise, to any unauthorised third party.

Sanctions and Disciplinary Action

Given the serious consequences that may arise, the Service may invoke the disciplinary policy and procedure in relation to employees. Sanctions include warnings up to and including dismissal for breaching the rules and guideline on data.

In the case of contractors or external service providers, serious breaches of the policies and procedures can and will be deemed grounds for termination of contractual agreements.

Any breach of the data protection policy, either deliberate or through negligence, may lead to disciplinary action being taken and could in some cases result in a criminal prosecution.

Compliance Monitoring and Review

The Service will undertake regular reviews of the internal operation and changes in the legislation to ensure on going compliance with Data Protection Regulation. These will comprise of an annual review.

INFORMATION SECURITY - GENERAL GUIDELINES

Overview

- Access to the information should be restricted to authorised staff on a "need-to-know" basis and where data is needed to carry out their job descriptions.
- **Data should not be shared informally**. When access to confidential information is required, employees can request it from management (as outlined above in this policy).
- The Service will provide training to all employees to help them understand their responsibilities when handling data.
- Employees should keep all data secure by taking sensible precautions and following the guidelines below.
- **Strong passwords must be used**, and they should never be shared.
- **Personal data should not be disclosed** to unauthorised people, either within the Service or externally.
- Data should be **regularly reviewed and updated** if it is found to be out of date. If no longer required, it should be deleted and disposed of.
- **Employees should request help** from their manager or the Data Controller if they are unsure about any aspect of data protection.

Data Storage

The security of personal information relating to children and families is a very important consideration under the Data Protection Acts. Appropriate security measures will be taken by the Service to protect unauthorised access to this data and to the data it is collecting and storing on behalf of the DCYA.
A minimum standard of security will include the following measures:

- Access to the information should be restricted to authorised staff on a "need-to-know" basis. Management will assign responsibilities regarding data at induction. Authorised staff are those identified by management and made known to such staff.
- Manual files will be stored in a lockable filing cabinet located away from public areas.
- Computerised data will be held under password protected files with a limited number of authorised staff.
- Any information which needs to be disposed of will be done so carefully and thoroughly.

The Service's premises at Lady's Abbey, Ardfinnan have the following security arrangements.

- CCTV cameras monitor all outside areas
- High locked gates and railings surround premise
- Building is alarmed when not opened
- Access is granted by using a buzzer system when playschool is opened

If you have any questions or concerns about where or how to store data, please refer to the manager or data controller as outlined above.
When data is **stored on paper**, it is kept in a secure place where unauthorised people cannot see it. These guidelines also apply to data that is usually stored electronically but has been printed out for some reason:

- When not required, the paper or files will be kept in **a locked drawer or filing cabinet**.
- Employees will make sure paper and printouts are **not left where unauthorised people could see them** (for example, parents should not have access or see other parents' names/phone numbers).
- **Data should be shredded** and disposed of securely when no longer required.

When data is **stored electronically**, it must be protected from unauthorised access, accidental deletion and malicious hacking attempts:

- Data will be **protected by strong passwords** that are changed regularly and never shared between employees.

- If data is stored on removable media (e.g., a CD or USB key device), these should be kept locked away when not being used.
- Data should be stored on designated drives and servers and should only be uploaded to approved cloud computing services.
- Servers containing personal data should be sited in a secure location.
- Data should be backed up frequently. Those backups should be tested regularly in line with the Service's standard backup procedures.
- All servers and computers containing data should be protected by an approved security software

Data Use

Personal data is at often at the greatest risk of loss, corruption, or theft when it is being used or accessed:

- When working with personal data, employees should ensure the screens of their computers/tablets/apps are always locked when left unattended
- Personal data should not be shared informally.
- Personal data shared by email should be downloaded, stored securely, and then deleted.
- Data must be encrypted before being transferred electronically.
- The manager can explain how to send data to authorised external contacts.
- Employees should not save copies of personal data to their own computers. Always access and update the central copy of any data.

Data Accuracy

The law requires Ardfinnan Community Playschool to take reasonable steps to ensure data is kept accurate and up to date.

The more important it is that the personal data is accurate, the greater the effort we will put into ensuring its accuracy. It is the responsibility of all employees who work with data to take all reasonable steps to ensure it is kept as accurate and up to date as possible.

- Data will be held in as few places as necessary. Staff will not create any unnecessary additional data sets.
- Staff will take every opportunity to ensure data is updated (for instance, by updating parent's contact information).
- The Service will make it easy for data subjects to update the information held about them, over the phone, or by email.
- Data will be updated as and when inaccuracies are discovered. For instance, if a member can no longer be reached on their stored telephone number, it should be removed from the database.

Data Disclosure to Third Parties

As the Data Controller, the Service is ultimately responsible for any personal data passed to third parties and care must always be given to procedures and security.

The only data disclosed to third parties in the normal course of events is as described in the Service's Privacy Notices and Register of Personal Data Records.

In certain circumstances, the Data Protection Acts allow personal data to be disclosed to external agencies without the consent of the data subject. Any requests from external bodies and agencies not specifically provided for in legislation including An Garda Síochána, should be in writing.

Under these circumstances the Service will disclose requested data; however, the Data Controller must ensure the request is legitimate, seeking assistance from The Board of Management and from the Service's legal advisers where necessary.

Please note that information may need to be disclosed to authorised third parties. The Service will always check validity of any requests made.
The following list includes examples of such organisations but is not exhaustive:

- An Garda Síochána
- Early Years Inspection Team
- DES Inspection Team
- Pobal Compliance Officers
- DCYA and Childcare Committees
- Insurance Company
- Health and Safety Authority
- Workplace Relations Commission
- Revenue Commissioners
- HR Advisors
- Other Professional Advisors

Please note that where information may need to be disclosed to authorised third parties,
Ardfinnan Community Playschool will always check validity of any requests made before release of the data.
Note: Data Collected Through Garda Vetting
The Service understands that sensitive information may be identified through Garda Vetting. In the event that an employee's Garda vetting raises concerns the information will be dealt with on a confidential basis. All information pertaining to such a situation must be stored in the same way as other data. The Service will not pass on a copy of an employee's Garda Vetting Form to any other party. The Service will hold original Garda Vetting forms.
We will also hold copies of police checks for staff who have lived in other countries (from age 18 years). The staff member holds the original and we hold a certified copy.

Data Erasure and Disposal
When documentation or computer files containing personal data are no longer required, the information must be disposed of carefully to continue to ensure the confidentiality of the data.
For paper-based files and information no longer required, employees should safely dispose of documents or media in shredding receptacles. The data will be shredded onsite.
In the case of personal information held electronically, temporary files containing personal information will be reviewed regularly and deleted when no longer required.
When personal data reaches the point where the retention period has expired, the information should also be securely deleted and removed.
In the event that IT equipment containing personal data is no longer required, all data stored on the devices must be removed prior to disposal or the equipment must be destroyed by a certified supplier who will provide a Certificate of Destruction to conform to the GDPR regulations

CCTV
Ardfinnan Community Playschool is a Data Controller as defined under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and is responsible for the data/information collected using CCTV.
Usage of CCTV is in line with the principles set out in **The Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003,** and the **2016 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** Where CCTV contains footage of images which can be clearly identified as a recognisable person; it is deemed to be Personal Data and is covered by the Data Protection Acts and Regulation. In short, where a data controller uses a CCTV, it is obliged to comply with all associated data protection obligations.

Purpose of the CCTV

The system has been installed by the service with the primary purpose of ensuring the safety of children in our care, and helping to ensure the safety of all staff, parents/guardians and visitors, consistent with respect for the individuals' privacy.

This will be achieved by monitoring the system to:

- Assist in the **PREVENTION and DETECTION OF CRIME**,
- Building entrance can allow us to **IDENTIFY VISITORS** arriving at the service
- Increases **SECURITY** at the premises 24/7 will help to deter burglars and keep your staff and children safe

The system will **not** be used:

- To provide recorded images for the Internet,
- To provide images for a third party other than An Garda Síochána, Tusla, or the Child and Family Agency during their enquiries,
- For continuous monitoring of staff,
- For monitoring staff performance,
- As a supervision tool, or
- For recording conversations.

Note: If after viewing the CCTV for any of the reasons stated above, incidents of inappropriate practice or breach of policies are observed, these can be brought to the attention of the employee. The employees should be given the opportunity to view the footage. Depending on the circumstances, this may result in the discipline policy and procedure being invoked.

Fairness

The Service and its management respect and support the individual's entitlement to go about his/her lawful business, and this is the primary consideration in the operation of CCTV.

Although there will be inevitably some loss of privacy with CCTV, cameras are not used to monitor the progress or activities in the ordinary course of lawful business. New employees will be informed immediately at induction that a surveillance system is in operation. Parents/guardians will be informed when they enrol their child. They will be informed of the purpose of the CCTV and what it can and cannot be used to monitor.

Responsibilities of Management

Management is responsible for the operation of the system and for ensuring compliance with this policy. In particular:

- To ensure the system is always operational,
- To ensure that servicing and repairs are carried out as necessary to the system,
- To respond to any individual's written request to view a recording that exists of him/her or his/her children,
- To ensure prominent signage is in place that will make individuals aware that they are entering a CCTV area.
- To ensure confidentiality is always maintained.

Recorded information will be stored in the office and will only be available to those directly connected with achieving the objectives of the system.

Location of Cameras

The choice of sites for locations of CCTV Cameras will be in line with the primary purposes outlined above, i.e., where they assist in ensuring the safety of children and the safety of all staff, parents/guardians and visitors. Cameras will not be in areas where people expect to have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

The following areas are currently monitored by CCTV:

- Outside areas of the premises are monitored by CCTV

Signage

Signage will be clearly displayed advising that CCTV is in operation for ensuring the safety of children in our care, and helping to ensure the safety of all staff, parents/guardians and visitors. There is a sign advertising the usage of CCTV beside the main entrance door.

Right to View or Access Recordings

In line with the requirements of the GDPR, data subjects have the right to request access to their images or personal data captured by CCTV. Management will respond to a request to view a recording by allowing the viewing to take place in the presence of management on the premises. This is to protect other children/staff that may be present on the recording.

Sharing or Copying Recordings with Data Subjects (i.e., parents, guardians, or staff)

Any person whose image is recorded on a CCTV system also has a right to seek and be supplied with a copy of their own personal data from the footage. To exercise that right, a person must make an application in writing or by email. The data controller must respond within 30 days.

In the first instance, the individual should be asked whether they would be satisfied with merely viewing the images recorded.

Recordings will however be provided, where formally requested by parents, guardians, or staff.

- Requests for access to recordings must be made in writing, or by email.
- Sufficient information must be provided to locate the relevant recording, a specific date, and reasonable time window.
- Viewings will take place, if appropriate, in the service in the presence of management.
- Management will have 30 days to respond.
- If a copy of recording is given to a third party, that third party must sign a declaration form that they will not share the tape with anyone else, copy it, or use it for unauthorised purposes.
- An incident report will be completed for each incident requiring investigation.

If access to or disclosure of the images is allowed, then the following should be documented:

- The date and time at which access was allowed or the date on which disclosure was made,
- The identification of any third party who was allowed access or to whom disclosure was made,
- The reason for allowing access or disclosure,
- The extent of the information to which access was allowed or which was disclosed, and
- The identity of the person authorising such access.

Where images of parties other than the requesting data subject appear on the CCTV footage, the onus lies on the Service to pixelate or otherwise redact or darken out the images of those other parties before supplying a copy of the footage or stills from the footage to the requestor.

If the system does not have the facilities to carry out that type of editing, an editing company may need to be hired to carry it out. If an editing company is hired, then the Manager or designated member of staff needs to ensure that there is a contractual relationship between the Data Controller and the editing company.

Retention Period

Recordings will be retained for no longer than 30 days (or as defined in the Service Personal Data Register & Data Retention policy - unless there is requirement to retain CCTV footage to assist with the investigation of incidents, accidents, or other serious issues.

DATA BREACHES

Definition: A data breach is an incident in which the Service's staff or client's **personal data or that of a child has been lost, accessed, and/or disclosed in an unauthorised fashion.**

This would include, for instance, loss or theft of a laptop containing client or staff details, an email with personal information being sent to the wrong recipient, as well as more organised incidents of external hacking.

Responsibility and Immediate Action Required

All employees have a responsibility to take immediate action if there is a data breach.

- If an employee suspects at any time and for any reason that a breach may have occurred, then there is a **need to report it to the Administrator/Data Controller as an urgent priority**
- Once notification of an actual or suspected breach has been received, the Manager/Data Controller will put the **Data Breach Procedure** into operation with immediate effect.

DATA SUBJECT RIGHTS/SUBJECT ACCESS REQUEST HANDLING

Privacy Notices

The Service aims to ensure that individuals are aware that their data is being processed and that they understand:

- How the data is being used, and
- How to exercise their rights.

For parents of children this is set out in the Service's **Privacy Notice**, provided when they first apply to register their child with the Service.

For new staff members, this is set out as part of the contract and induction material supplied at time of recruitment.

Subject Access Requests

All individuals who are the subject of personal data held by the Service are entitled to:

- Ask **what information** the Service holds about them and why.
- Ask **how to gain access** to it.
- Be informed **how to keep it up to date.**
- Be informed how the Service is **meeting its data protection obligations**.

If a person requesting this information from the Service, this is called a Subject Access Request.

The handling of access requests is described in more detail in the **Subject Access Request ("SAR") Handling Procedure.**

Sharing of CCTV Images with Garda Siochana or other Authorised Third Parties

At times it may be necessary at times to provide copies of recordings to An Garda Siochana or other authorised parties.

CCTV footage should only be provided to An Garda Siochana when a formal written request is provided to the data controller stating that Garda Siochana is investigating a criminal matter.

For practical purposes, and to expedite a request speedily in urgent situations, a verbal request may be sufficient to allow for the release of the footage sought. Any such verbal request must be followed up with a formal written request. It is recommended that a log of all Garda Síochána requests is maintained by data controllers and processors.

There is a distinction between a request by Garda Síochána to view CCTV footage and to download copies of CCTV footage. In general, Garda Síochána making a request to simply view footage on the premises of a data controller or processor would not raise any specific concerns from a data protection perspective.

For authorised third parties, similar rules apply - copies of CCTV footage can be viewed or made available subject to the requirements and restrictions as set out above.

CONFIDENTIALITY

STATEMENT
The purpose of the confidentiality policy is to ensure that the rights of all children and parents are respected at all times. Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to keeping all information about the children, families, staff and volunteers using the service confidential. Unless there is a child protection obligation for to disclose such information or the service is legally obliged to do so.

PRINCIPLE
This policy is underpinned by the Freedom of Information Act 1998, the Data Protection Act 2002 and Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

PROCEDURE: CHILDREN

- Parents have the right to access the files and records of their children, but will not have access to information about any other child
- Educators will not discuss individual children, other than for the purposes of curriculum planning/group management, with people other than the parents/carers of that child
- Accidents resulting in injury will be shared with the authorised person who collects a child. Information of a sensitive nature will only be shared with parents of that child and any person that the parent has nominated to share information with as noted on the child's registration form
- Feedback is given directly to parents on their child's progress
- Information about a child's medical needs or status, or concerns about child protection issues will be kept in a locked file and will only be available to authorised personnel.
- Information is shared on a need-to-know basis only
- All confidential information will be stored securely, information is shared on a need-to-know basis
- In the event of a suspicion of child abuse, the mandated person along with the Designated Liaison Person will contact Tusla

Parents/ guardians cannot be guaranteed confidentiality in the event of a suspected abuse necessitating reporting

PROCEDURES: ALL STAFF

- All matters relating to Ardfinnan Community Playschool, educators and staff are confidential
- Educators and staff must not disclose any trade secrets or other information of a confidential nature relating to their employment
- Educators and staff may not disclose any information relating to individuals who avail of our service (children, parents, guardians, carers)
- All Staff members must not at any time remove any documents, computer software or items containing any confidential information from the premises

PROCEDURES: FILE MANAGEMENT

- All records of children and information supplied by parents/guardians are kept in a confidential file, are not seen by anyone other than, authorised educators/staff members, the parents/guardians (their own child's details only) and Tusla inspectors

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL is aware of the principles of the Freedom of Information Act 1998, and the Data Protection Act 2002 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018

GOVERNECE

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool uses the internet, photographic and recording devices to support the provision of a quality service for children and families.
Parents/guardians are fully informed where technology is used as part of the curriculum or programme and how the internet is used as a learning tool within the service.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that photographs, video and audio recordings are increasingly used to document children's learning and development; to support quality assurance and to communicate with families and learning communities we have developed this policy to ensure the wellbeing of all within our playschool.

Principle
This policy was developed with regard to Regulation 10 and Regulation 17 of the Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Children First Act 2015, Our Duty to Care: Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People 2002 and Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF)

The purpose of this policy is to support the Child Protection policy and to ensure the rights and privacy of all children is respected.

A Parent/Guardian Consent Form (as part of our Enrolment Form) is provided by Ardfinnan Community Playschool and must be completed and signed before any child has their photo or moving images taken or posted anywhere.

Photography and recording of children will only take place

- When at least one other adult is present.
- When the child or group of children agrees to be photographed.
- When the parents/guardians have given their consent

Policy Guidelines

Digital equipment always remains in the service and is stored securely when not in use.
Images in hard copy are returned to parents and images are deleted from digital records when children leave the service in accordance with GDPR requirements

Photography and recording of children while they are in the service by any parent must only be taken with the consent of management and other parents.
All use of the internet, photographic and recording devices will be considered within our risk assessment process.
We do our best to ensure that all parents have the same level of access to information shared about their child's learning and development while in the service.
Images and recordings are stored safely and appropriately returned to parents and/or disposed of/deleted when no longer needed for the purpose for which they were taken.
We request that photos or images taken of children while attending the setting are not posted elsewhere by others without the consent of parents/guardians.
Non-staff photographers are never allowed to have unsupervised access to children.

Email and Internet Usage

The internet is not to be accessed by children unless under the supervision of service educators for the purpose of educational research or learning opportunities. The email system and internet must only be used by staff for business purposes which include the following activities:

- Communication on matters relating to job requirements or for administration purposes.
- Communication of information relating to the service.
- Research of new technologies and educational resources.

What is unacceptable use of email and internet?

- Providing children with opportunities to unsupervised internet access or access to inappropriate internet content, that could affect a child's health, welfare and development.
- To access, download or store inappropriate, defamatory or offensive material.
- For personal financial gain or profit.
- To disclose or publish confidential information about children, families or staff.
- For posting messages to any internet bulletin or discussion board, newsgroup or other publicly accessible discussion forum except for authorised business purposes.
- Offensive language and language that would breach any other service policy.
- The service reserves the right to block inappropriate websites

Communicating Information via Email

All guidelines and policies relating to signing and authorisation for written communications must be observed when sending electronic mail. Staff must keep in mind that anything created on a service computer network or the internet may be reviewed by others. Copies of any business-related electronic communications and attachments (sent or received) should be kept in accordance with proper record-keeping practices.

Social Networking Sites and social media Tools

The requirements outlined above in relation to the use of service email and internet systems apply to social networking sites and other social media tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter Ardfinnan Community Playschool has an active Facebook page & Instagram account which are updated on a regular basis with notices of our activities, holiday dates, general information and pictures of some arts and crafts the children have done. The Lead Educator also uses private message on

Facebook to send pictures of their child progress in playschool; these pictures are not for general publication.

Educators & Staff

- Must not share photography, videos or information about any child or parent on any of their social network sites
- must not make any derogatory comments about the service, its team members, contractors, or children/families attending the service on social networking sites;
- When commenting either on blogs or in public forums, be mindful of their association to the service and their obligation to be responsible and positive in their portrayal of the service.
- Photographs, videos and/or information about other staff members are not to be posted without the specific permission of the individual.
- Staff are not to divulge or discuss any confidential or personal information obtained while employed or associated with the service.

Parents

- Are asked not to share photography, videos or information about any other child or parent on their social network site without the permission of the other parent.
- Are asked not to share photography, videos or information about any staff members
- On occasions we post group pictures of the children e.g., Christmas Concert, Graduation parents are informed of this on enrolling their child
- Ask that parents refrain from sharing private pictures of their child in playschool that are messaged to them.

Television

Ardfinnan Community Playschool does not incorporate the use of television in our curriculum; it does not form part of our daily or weekly activities. The only exception to the rule is a special occasion which can be linked to our curriculum or celebration, e.g., Christmas holidays

On these rare occasions it is the responsibility of educators to ensure the programme is age appropriate and educational. Consideration must also be given to appropriate viewing and it is noted that even age-appropriate programmes can be scary.

Telephone calls and mobile phones

Telephones are essential for our business. Personal calls are restricted and we ask all staff to keep these to a minimum.

The use of mobile phones is not permitted during working hours; the service understands that from time-to-time staff may need to make or take personal calls, but they are asked that this be restricted to emergency basis. We ask that all staff members turn off phones and use lockers to store their phones during work hours.

All staff are asked to only use the services mobile phone and iPad to take photos and videos of the learning that occurs in the playschool and on outings and of the children attending our playschool.

GOVERANCE

STORAGE OF RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to meeting our obligations to store records under the relevant regulations.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool has put together a step-by-step approach to familiarise all staff members with the relevant regulations as well as the procedures for storing records.

Principle
This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and informed by the Workplace Relations Commission, Data Protection Act and Revenue.

Procedure

- Appropriate filing space will be allocated to store records to ensure they are kept securely and confidentiality
- All staff will be informed of how long each type of record must be kept
- A log will be maintained of the records being stored
- An appropriate person (usually the manager) will be appointed with responsibility to store and maintain the records
- All records will be dated and signed by the appropriate person

The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 requires all services to keep the following records:

Type of Record Time to be retained

- Record of all visitors -- 1 Year
- All child records -- 2 Years
- Details of daily attendance -- 2 Years
- Staff rosters -- 2 Years
- Medication administered -- 2 Years
- Any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service -- 2 Years
- Complaints received -- 2 Years

Child Records
In addition to the requirements under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 all services should keep **Child Records until the child is 21 years old**. This is for insurance purposes. Once a child turns 18, they have a period of 3 years to make a claim over an incident that occurred in an early year setting if their parents have not already done so. For clarity here are the type of child records you should maintain:

Type of Record Time to be retained

- Child attendance records Until child is 21 years' old
- Child Accident/ Incident Books Until child is 21 years' old
- Child Observations Send home with family when child finishes unless there is specific reason for keeping

- Child Development Records Send home with family when child finishes unless there is a specific reason for keeping

Financial Records

Type of Record Time to be retained

- CCTV footage 28 days unless an issue has been identified
- Unsolicited applications for jobs -- 1 year
- Applications for vacant post -- 1 year
- General job descriptions -- Hold until superseded
- Vacancy notifications -- 1 ½ years
- Copies of advertisement -- 1 ½ years
- Job Description -- 1 ½ years
- Applications/ C.V of applicants called for interview -- 1 ½ years

Candidates not qualified or short listed -- 1 ½ years
Candidates short listed but not successful at interview or successful but do not accept -- 1 ½ years
Interview board marking sheet and interviewers' notes -- 1 year
Allegations/ complaint -- 2 years if unfounded or investigation not warranted
Training Files -- 5 years

GOVERNANCE

ARDFINNAN CHILDCARE COMMITTEE CLG

Code of Conduct for Board Members

The Committee

Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG is a community based sessional preschool facility, named Ardfinnan Community Playschool, which is managed and run by a Voluntary Management Committee. This committee is made up of local people and/or parents who contribute their relevant expertise to assisting the development and sustainability of the service. It is supported by Tipperary County Childcare, Túsla and Early Childhood Ireland.

The Committee elects officers to management rolls which support the business. They have responsibilities such as

- Maintenance of premises and equipment
- Employment, support and supervision of staff
- Responsibility for all financial matters pertaining to the service
- Compliance with all relevant legislation
- Liaising with all relevant agencies
- Staff and committee training
- Review and approval of policies and procedures / objectives
- Preparation of funding submissions
- Renewal of equipment and supplies
- Fundraising

- Review of the preschools staffing requirements
- Keeping up to date with developments within the childcare sector

The elected members include a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, the following is an outline of their roll in Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG.

The Chairperson's Roll

- Ensures the group operates as per guidelines of the group's constitution or per company Articles of Association.
- Makes all committee members aware of their responsibilities with due regard to the above.
- Stresses the importance of confidentiality for all committee members.
- Organises meetings with the Secretary.
- Keeps order during meetings, ensuring that everyone has a turn to speak, summarises general information received from everyone and makes a proposal if a decision is necessary.
- In the event of tied votes, the Chairperson has a casting vote.
- Ensures all decisions made at meetings are minuted and acted upon
- Ensures that minutes of the previous meeting are correct and signed
- Being the contact person with relevant agencies.
- Signatory on accounts
- Ensures a satisfactory reporting mechanism between the staff and the committee.
- Ensures budgeting guidelines for expenditure are followed

The Secretary's Roll

Works in partnership with the office administrator to maintains good record keeping of the group's data and ensures all members are notified of meetings either in writing or by telephone and ensures appropriate logos are included on stationery / advertising / recruitment material. Maintain a record of all expenses including postage, phone call, receipts for stationery etc.

Maintaining of minutes, these can be recorded in a hard back book or meeting notes retyped and circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. All decisions should be recorded and also who has responsibility for any actions to be carried out before the next meeting. A copy of the approved and signed copy of the minutes should be retained on file

Handling Correspondence, letters from relevant agencies should be filed under suitable headings in different folders according to the subject matter e.g., Pobal, Health Services Executive, Local Development. Replies drafted and reviewed with Chairperson and a copy kept on file. A summary of correspondence can be given at meetings

A.G.M., Assembles data and documents for the Annual Report for A.G.M and ensures all data is available for the AGM i.e., information for the Chairperson's reports, Secretary's Report, Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Roll

The Treasurer will manage the finances of a group. This will include:

- Opening and maintaining of records of bank accounts – all to have the same group name. Arranging the Banking protocol and ensuring all monies movement approved by a minimum of 2 committee members.

- Obtains cheque books and ensures the group complies with agreed cheque signing procedure i.e., who will sign cheques and the number of signatures needed (i.e., 2 signatures). Prepares a simple cheque requisition form for each cheque to be signed at meetings once expenditure agreed.
- Maintains cheque journals and receipt books for all accounts. Ensures that one copy of bank statement for each account in sent to at least 2 committee members i.e., one copy to the Chairperson and one copy to the treasurer.

CASH SHOULD NEVER BE ACCUMULATED OR KEPT AT HOME

Working in cooperation with the office administrator the treasure shall….

- Ensures the timely payment of wages and all that this entails e.g., making sure employees are given the correct tax credits and make the right PRSI contributions, issuing of a salaries/wages payment or using the agreed banking protocol, according to the hours worked the relevant week on the time sheet, issuing a payslip.
- Paying out money as necessary, however within the limit agreed by the Management Committee, e.g., rental, insurance, replacement of toys, curriculum expenses.
- Presenting of regular simple accounts detailing Income and Expenditure at committee meetings.
- Sets out petty cash
- Collecting and recording Fees, where applicable, and lodging to an account.
- Lodging and recording any grants received in the correct account and ensuring they are spent on what they were claimed for.
- Supports fund-raising and handles the practicalities of counting and lodging money from fund-raising activities.

Co-operating with the business accountant ….

- Prepare the financial part of the Annual report.
- Ensure that all records are maintained as required for external auditing i.e. CRO Company Returns, Pobal, and other funding agencies.
- Ensure that all records are maintained as required for the internal auditing process
- Ensure the committee is complying with all legislation

Code of Conduct

In accordance with the laws Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG will comply with all statutory obligations by

- The board of directors will direct the service ensuring that it has proper plans, procedures, policies, structures and resources in place to achieve its objectives.
- The directors are entirely accountable for the organisation which they govern and must manage risk and be accountable to members and other stakeholders for both its financial affairs and activities and ensure the organisation's procedures are reviewed regularly.
- Regularly reviewing and confirming on an annual basis the adequacy of internal financial controls
- Oversee items of expenditure

- Establish and monitoring procedures for the retirement and re-appointment of board members
- Publish annual reports and financial statements
- Maintain an appropriate relationship with the external auditor
- Review the board's operation and effectiveness ensuring best practice is adhered to

All Board and Committee Members will:

- Act in good faith and in the best interests of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG, promoting its work and reputation
- Ensure that they are loyal to the organisations aims, strategies and policies as agreed by the Board, that their interests and those of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG are not in conflict and that they conform to the highest standards of ethics
- Integrity honesty and trustworthiness are the hallmarks of all their conduct when dealing with colleagues, employees, parents, organisations and individuals
- Integrity, honesty and trustworthiness will be the hallmarks of all my conduct when dealing with colleagues within ECI and equally when dealing with individuals and organisations outside it.
- Ensure Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG complies with all relevant legislation.
- Support the mission, values, aims, objectives and strategy of the service and abide by the constitution, articles of association, its policies and its procedures.
- Each member is required to declare their interests and absent themselves when the Board is deliberating or deciding on matters in which they, or a person or an organisation connected to them has an interest.
- Will strive to uphold the reputation of the service and those who work in it and will take an active interest in the organisation's public image and understand that each member has a duty not to do anything that may damage the reputation of the preschool.
- Will respect the committee, board and individual confidentiality.
- Will not gain materially or financially from my role as Director, beyond seeking reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.
- Each member will strive to punctually attend all board meetings (and other relevant meetings), giving apologies ahead of time to the Chairperson if unable to attend.
- Each member will study the agenda and other information sent in good time prior to meetings and be prepared to engage in debate, and if necessary, vote, on agenda items during the meeting.
- Each member will respect the authority of the Chairperson.
- Each member will accept a majority board vote on an issue as decisive and final.
- Each member will take an active involvement in the service, including contributing to special events where help is needed (e.g., Christmas show, graduation, opening nights)
- Each member will promptly undertake actions that they have agreed to take on during meetings.

- Each member of the Board understands that substantial breach of any part of this code may result in their removal from the board. Should they resign from the board, they must inform the Chairperson in advance in writing, stating their reasons for resigning
- Board members will not speak in their Board capacity about the business of Ardfinnan Child-care Committee CLG in any public forum without prior knowledge of the Chairperson.

Confidentiality: all Board members must treat the information presented to them in their role as a Board member as being confidential unless the Board has authorised its release or its release is required by law. The duty is indefinite and applies even after a Board member has ceased to be a Board member.

Code of Behaviour between Educators, Staff & Children

Our code of behaviour is based on an ethos of:

- Listening to children
- Valuing and respecting children as individuals
- Involving children in decision making, as appropriate
- Encouraging and praising children

Code of behaviour

- While physical contact is a valid way of comforting and reassuring a child, it should only be in response to the need of the child, not the adult
- Educators should never physically punish or verbally abuse a child
- Educators should never tell jokes of a sexual nature in front of a child
- Educators should not develop favouritism or become over involved with any one child
- All staff must respect the personal space, safety and privacy of each child

** It is not recommended that educators or staff give lifts in their cars to an individual child, especially for long journey

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PARENTS

PARTENERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool gives parents and families opportunities to share, get involved and make suggestions about all the activities happening in our service. Families are the most important people in their children's lives, and we are committed to be open, inclusive, welcoming, accepting, and respectful of all family types. As a partnership we ask families to show respect and value for all staff, children and families in return.

Principle
This policy is underpinned by the National Standards for Preschool Services 2010 & the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

Procedure

- All families will be greeted on arrival by an educator. This is an opportunity to share information and grow the relationship between our service and families
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool has an Open Door Policy where families are welcome in the setting throughout the day
- We will share information with our families in number of ways including daily conversations, letters, emails, phone calls, our newsletter and text messages
- Information on children's progress, interests and development will be shared daily through conversation and pre-arranged appointment times
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool ensures all families are consulted with during periods of change or decision making
- There are lots of opportunities for formal and informal conversations with both edcuators and management
- Involvement on management committees by parents is encouraged
- We ask families to get involved with activities, outings and fundraising events. It is voluntary and there is no obligation to take part.
- Information on how family's contribution of their skills and sharing of individual interests are valued and accommodated
- We value and appreciate any information on family customs, belief, language and culture
- As a partnership we ask all families to respect educators & staff members, children and other families in the setting
- Any complaints, concerns or comments should follow the procedure in our Complaints Policy
- Parents are provided with a handbook giving details of the service before the child starts at the service

Ardfinnan Community Playschool provides time to meet with parents to discuss their…

- Child's progress and documented learning
- Child's relationships and interests
- Suggestions for the service.
- Joint behaviour management if necessary
- Difficulties or concerns.

PARENTS

EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Principle

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises and welcomes all

'…without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his/her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status'.

U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child 2.1

Statement

At Ardfinnan Community Playschool we value diversity and uniqueness in people; both adult and children. We acknowledge disability as an expression of human diversity.

We uphold the social model of disability which teaches that it is with society that the problem lies, not the child or adult with different abilities.
We aim to ensure that people with specific needs or cultural differences are not excluded by barriers of rejection, discrimination, negative attitudes and poor social organisation.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a policy of equality of care, respect and value for all children. We welcome and support children with additional needs, and their families. These needs may be physical, intellectual, social and emotional. Children communicate in many different ways. For those learning English or who are non-verbal, we offer support to help them develop communication in ways that work best for them.
We aim to provide a physically accessible indoor and outdoor environment.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool displays books and posters with positive images of people with disabilities, and people from different ethnic backgrounds.
Gender biased/stereotypical posters are not encouraged.
We will work closely with external agencies e.g., HSE, Early intervention teams, etc.
We will set up an agreed means to review, examine and assess the programmes for each child.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool encourages parents to translate our mission statement into the first language of the child, for inclusion in our policies and procedures. In addition, parents of new children are encouraged to write out a few words that have special meaning to the child, so that educators can understand their needs.
Our Getting to know you form which is included in our full registration form, allows educators to know more about the child's personal life, pets, etc., so that children can feel a link between their home and our Early Years' Service.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool undertakes to ensure all educators & staff are trained to understand diversity in children and to foster this diversity as a positive aspect of our service.
Discrimination against other members of staff, children or their families is seen as a serious disciplinary offence. Any bias or discriminatory conduct about any person is not acceptable.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool will undertake the necessary training in order to support children with a disability through the Access and Inclusion Model, AIM.

"The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a programme of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme in mainstream preschool settings." Tipperary Childcare Committee.

Interactions

Ethos: To encourage warm nourishing relationships between children and educators that support and view children as strong, powerful, competent, complex and full of possibilities.

Children need positive relationships with adults that they can trust and who respond to them in a positive manner. This is the basic foundation that they need in order to feel good about themselves and their being in the world, and secure enough to take pleasure in actively exploring and learning about themselves, people and things around them. Educators will endeavour to support the development of each child's communication and social skills by responding to each child's individual needs

and enabling them to develop the ability to relate in a similar positive way to others. Educators will build upon their existing and emerging social and interactive communication skills by providing them with opportunities and activities to develop these skills.

Educators at Ardfinnan Community Playschool will…

- be responsive to children's strengths, interests, abilities
- provide opportunities to become self-reliant and develop self-esteem,
- uphold children's dignity and rights
- provide positive guidance and support towards acceptable behaviour
- promote a safe, secure and nurturing environment;
- be authentic and responsive;
- be based in fairness, acceptance and empathy with respect for cultural and linguistic rights

Toileting

Ardfinnan Community Playschool operates a policy where all children are **fully toilet trained** prior to beginning their journey with our service. We are committed to providing all children with the opportunity to access the service regardless of their ability within the expertise and resources available and in accordance with the best interests of the child, we understand that in some cases children find it difficult to toilet train due to their special needs.

We ask parents to make contact as soon as possible to put a care plan into place to support their child in playschool.

Procedures

To support all children, parents, staff and management Ardfinnan Community Playschool has implemented the following procedures

We will provide Children with….

- A safe, accessible environment that facilitates supports and encourages a positive individual and group identity.
- Well-trained and informed staff who understand their individual culture, identity, needs and interests.
- Equal access to a differentiated and full curriculum that caters for their individual needs.
- A policy that ensures that they can learn to be comfortable with difference, to identify what is fair and unfair and to be able to stand up for themselves and others.

Children need:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
- Know they belong and are valued as unique individuals
- Feel strong and confident about their identity
- Know their cultural backgrounds are respected and valued
- Learn in groups that allow them all to experience success
- Engage with materials and experiences that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds, gender and ability (visitors, books, music, musical instrument, cooking activities, craft, clothing, multicultural dolls, multicultural jigsaws, games, play equipment, posters and other props.
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles
- Participate fully, having regard for and being cognisant of children with a variety of disabilities

- Respect the purpose for which other children's aids or assistive technology are intended.

Communication

All parents/guardians are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Diversity, Equality and Inclusion on enrolment. The Policy Statement will be included in the Parents/Guardians Handbook. This policy will also be reviewed with all educators and staff members at induction. All policies and procedures are available during all hours of operation to educators and staff in the office and are available on request to all parents and guardians.

Communication between Parents and educators

- Parents know that their child will have their individual learning and development needs met and that their family culture and identity will be recognised and valued.
- Parents will be communicated with clearly and effectively, and be able to communicate effectively, with educators who they trust to care for and educate their children.
- Parents will have access to and participation in our service and feel a sense of belonging when visiting.

Educators need:

- To know and to ensure that all the service's processes are fair, open and transparent and not discriminatory.
- To work in and be involved in providing a safe, anti-bias, accessible environment.
- Be supported to be comfortable with difference and to engage effectively with parents/guardians and families; to be able to critically think about and confidently engage in dialogue around issues of equality, diversity, inclusion, bias and discrimination.
- Be able to have effective two-way communication with all of the children they care for and educate, and with their parents/guardians and families.

Management will ensure that:

- That all those who use the service or who work in it have their individual needs met as far as possible within the context of the service and that educators and staff members have the appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the diverse needs of all of the children who use the service and their families.
- The service does not discriminate against anyone directly or indirectly, that all relevant legislation and regulation is fully complied with and that the service meets quality standards.
- All of the service's policies and procedures reflect a commitment to equality and inclusion and that the service promotes positive and proactive approaches to valuing and respecting diversity.
- All staff members, educators and management (including committee members) contribute to the development and review of policies.
- Steps are taken to enable the contribution of the children to the development of policies and procedures.
- Parents/guardians are facilitated to contribute in whatever ways suit them best.
- The review and evaluation of policies is used to identify specific actions to address equality, diversity and inclusion issues.

- Interactions with children and curriculum/programme content are monitored to ensure appropriate content and breadth of content.

Dealing with Discriminatory Incidents:

- The first step in handling incidents involving discrimination is to recognise and acknowledge what is happening.
- All children will be informed that name-calling or physically hurting someone is unacceptable.
- When an incident occurs (hurtful remark made by one child to another) both children learn from the incident.
- Educators will endeavour to determine the real reason for incidents involving exclusion or conflict. It may not be a discriminatory incident, so educators will be careful not to make assumptions.
- Some issues may be brought into the playschool by the child, arising from comments made by adults outside the service. Educators will recognise when it is an adult issue and identify appropriate actions for addressing the issue with the child's parents or guardians.
- An incident should be considered from the perspective of all individuals involved as well as those who witnessed it. Appropriate actions will be taken, at circle time or in a group discussion, to address incidents witnessed by children who were not involved. This does not mean singling children out in the group.
- By showing empathy and expressing our feelings, we help children to express their feelings.
- It is important to be aware of how our own attitudes can shape how we respond to a given situation. Educators will be mindful that early childhood educators are role models for the children and the early childhood service. "Children *will do as we do"*

LINC and AIM program

LINC (Leadership for Inclusion in an Early Years Setting) this is a national programme designed to enhance inclusion of children with additional needs in early childhood care and education settings Erica Condon is our Inclusion officer (INCO) she is completing her LINC training which is a Level 7 Special Purpose Award in Leadership is for Inclusion in an Early Years setting this year. Erica's role is to ensure best practice is being implemented in leading the inclusion of children with additional needs in our playschool. Erica will support all of our Educators to plan for, implement and review inclusive practice in our playschool.

Erica will also engage with the children ensuring their needs, ideas, feelings and thoughts are listened to. Erica advocates on their behalf to ensure Inclusion procedures are in place. She will liaise with parents and other professionals working with their child e.g., speech therapist, through the AIM (Access and Inclusion Module) program.

Open Door Policy

Ardfinnan Community Playschool operates and encourages an open-door policy. This policy encourages parents/guardians to come to visit the playschool at any time throughout the day, as we believe that co-operation between educators and parents/guardians in all aspects of decision making can benefit their child. Parents/guardians do not need to inform us of their intention to visit but if a parent or guardian would like to speak to our educators about their child's learning, we recommend parents

make an appointment so as not to disrupt the daily routine of the children in our playschool or our child: adult ratio.

Change of Circumstance

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognise that details can often change throughout the duration of a child attending our playschool, phone numbers may change, addresses may change, child minders may change. We ask that parents or guardians inform educators immediately so their child's records may be altered. This is essential in case of an emergency such as the child becoming ill at playschool. We understand that there are times when a child's family life changes, such as, a family pet dies, parents may separate, a close family member dies. We recognise that this is a difficult time for everyone involved but it is in the best interests of the child that their "teacher" knows the situation. This will be treated with great care, and only relevant staff members will be informed of any changes. The "teacher" will then be able to support the child in a positive way dealing with their circumstances.

Social Media

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a detailed policy on Media and Communications which covers all areas of Media and Communications; this is available to view in our office.

Our Enrolment form contains a section on Consent for use of photos and videos and how these will/may be used. These Consent forms must be signed by parents/guardians and copies of the enrolment forms will be provided for the parents when requested.

Parents/guardians have a right to refuse or to withdraw permission at any time.

Images cannot be used for purposes other than those agreed.

All images are to be stored and disposed of in line with the Data Protection GDPR 2018.

Where group photos of children are taken, they will not be shared unless consent is given by ALL parents/guardians.

The purpose of taking images must always be clearly explained to parents/guardians.

The use of any photographic or recording devices by parents or guardians must be with the consent of the designated person in charge.

Parents/guardians must be informed of their responsibilities around the taking of group photos and that it is not ok to take group photos if not all children present have consented to their photograph being taken.

Any consent must be reviewed on a regular basis and at least annually.

Facebook

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has an active Facebook page which it updates on a regular basis with notices of our activities, holiday dates, general information and pictures of some arts and crafts the children have done.

On occasions we also post group pictures of the children e.g., Christmas Concert, Graduation.

Facebook is an excellent opportunity for our playschool to connect with parents and share special photos instantly on its private message system while also posting pictures of our celebrations during the year.

Parents are given the option of allowing their child's picture to be posted by signing a consent form when enrolling their child.

Instagram

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has an active Instagram account which it updates regularly with notices of our activities etc. The account is public and there are NO pictures of children, staff or other people shared on this account.

We ask that parents refrain from sharing private pictures of their child in playschool that are messaged to them.

PARENTS

Complaints Policy

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone that comes in contact with our playschool, we welcome children's and parent's views of the service and value their feedback.

We understand that at times families may have a concern about the service. We are committed to giving careful attention and a courteous, timely response to your suggestions, comments or complaints so that we can learn from them and continuously improve our service. Complaints will be accepted and investigated irrespective of the nature of the complaint or who the person making the complaint is.

Principle
This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Quality and Regulatory Framework.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool endeavours to fulfil the following values in all aspects of our work:

- Respectful partnership
- Focusing on the needs and well-being of the children attending our service
- Positive engagement with parents
- Openness and sharing of information
- Professional and efficient

Problem solving

A child, parent guardian or member of staff may express dissatisfaction with any aspect of our service, it is hoped that most issues can be resolved at this stage and become a grievance or an expression of dissatisfaction rather than becoming a complaint. Educators will take a proactive approach in dealing with an issue of dissatisfaction.

There may need to be improvements in communication, improvements in the service provided or lessons to be learnt. All episodes should be recorded in the incident/accident book as an initial recording measure and in the complaints register should a formal complaint be received.

Where possible we endeavour to handle all complaints informally if possible. We aim to ensure making a complaint is as easy as possible and to deal with it promptly and politely. We endeavour to learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures. We aim to informally resolve a complaint as soon as possible. If your complaint cannot be dealt with informally, we will direct you to our formal complaint's procedure.

Complaints procedure

Any complaints made about the service will be dealt with in an open and impartial manner. The following procedures will be followed:

- Complaints should be made to the room leader Erica Condon or Chairperson Elaine Bowe
- Every attempt is made to resolve the matter as amicably as possible and to the parent's satisfaction.
- If agreement cannot be reached the parent may make a formal complaint in writing to the chairperson Elaine Bowe, letter should include ….
    - Name
    - Address
    - Day time telephone number
    - Full details of the complaint, including relevant dates and times
    - Names of those involved (including any staff)
    - Copies of any relevant documentations
    - Be clear about what you are hoping to achieve (apology, explanation etc.)
    - State your preferred method of communication
- The complaint is recorded.
- If the complaint is made against a member of staff, the staff member must be informed that a formal complaint has been made and be given full details. The staff member will be given the right to reply. If determined necessary by the registered provider, a staff member whom a complaint has been made about may be placed on paid suspension pending the investigation.
- If a complaint against a staff involves a child protection concern a second separate reporting procedure will be followed in line with our child protection procedures.
- The parent/guardian is sent an acknowledgement that the complaint has been received and told how it will be dealt with, by whom, and within what time limit. The person investigating the formal complaint will keep dated records summarising what has been said and done by those involved.
- The complaint will be dealt with in an open and impartial manner.
- Parent/guardians will be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their ongoing interaction with the service
- All staff must participate in the investigation of a complaint, as required. Any staff member involved in the complaint will be supported throughout the process.
- If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the outcome, he or she may make a written request to go to the third stage of the procedure, which involves an independent mediator or panel.

- The panel will include an external mediator e.g., a representative of the Tipperary County Childcare Committee or Túsla
- This panel will not include any person directly involved in the complaint or related to the complainant or staff member
- The person making the complaint will be advised that they are free to bring another person with them to the meeting and to record minutes.
- The panel, having considered all the relevant material and talked with all those concerned, will reach a decision and if necessary, make recommendations. These recommendations will be issued in writing to all involved.
- The complainant and other interested parties involved will be informed of the outcome following the recommendations of the panel.
- Records in writing of any complaints, including any outcomes, must be retained for a period of two years and should be available for inspection.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool will endeavour to support you in making your complaint.

Contact Details

Complaints can be made by calling to the playschool,

Telephone: 052 74 66 448

Email: ardfinnanplayschool@gmail.com

Postal Address: Ardfinnan Community Playschool,
Lady's Abbey, Ardfinnan, Clonmel Co. Tipperary, E91RP21

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CHILDREN

PLAY CURRICULUM

Principle

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that each child's holistic development and learning is fully encouraged and supported through the implementation of a quality play-based curriculum informed by the principles of Síolta – The National Framework for Quality in Early Childhood Education; Aistear-- the early childhood curriculum framework and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Framework

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that children are often filled with curiosity about the world around them and through our curriculum we have the opportunity to support and develop a lifelong love of learning for each child. Our emergent play-based curriculum supports planned learning, spur-of-the-moment learning, adult and child led learning.

Statement

Ardfinnan Community Playschool's curriculum planning is based on the following principles:

- Quality care is educational and quality education is caring.
- Play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child.

- Learning is holistic and cannot be compartmentalised: trust, motivation, interest, enjoyment and physical and social skills are as important as cognitive/academic gains.
- The child's needs, rights, individuality and strengths are central.
- All children are entitled to equality of access and to opportunities to enjoy and to learn within a stimulating and safe care environment.

When planning the curriculum attention and consideration is given to:

- Children's needs including special needs.
- Children's interests.
- Children's learning styles.
- The age and developmental stage of each individual and group.
- Varied experiences and activities for the individual and group.
- Social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills.
- Equality and diversity.
- Documented observations and assessments.

Developmentally appropriate activities will be offered which support and promote children's:

- Social and emotional development.
- Positive attitudes and values.
- Positive self-concept.
- Positive family, social and peer relationships.
- Literacy and language development.
- Mathematical development.
- Physical development.
- Positive health, safety and nutrition practices.
- Creative expression and appreciation of the arts, culture, nature and the environment.
- Understanding of right and wrong.
- Thinking, reasoning, questioning and experimentation.
- Respect for ethnic, cultural and physical diversity.
- Making choices and using their initiative.
- Spiritual and moral well-being.
- Knowledge and understanding of their world.

We aim for an equal balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities

Observations

Curriculum plans are informed by observations and regular evaluations and the principles and themes of Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, and a record is kept of the planning process and of decisions made.

Skilled and careful observation is the key to helping children to learn. Observations must be carried out with proper respect for the children, for their parents/carers and for educators. We respect children's and families' ethnicity, their cultural heritage, their religions and the languages they speak. We respect all children whatever their gifts, abilities or special learning needs. When we observe chil-

dren, we attend to the whole of their development, in line with Aistear's themes of Well-being, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, and Exploring and Thinking. Children's learning to respect one another is as important as their learning to count. Educators meet children's needs through sensitive and appropriate interactions that promote their self-esteem.

Use of observation in our Curriculum Planning, guided by Aistear is used to:

- Ensure learning experiences are child-led, play-based and informed by Aistear.
- Review provision as a whole.
- Provide continuity of care.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps and inconsistencies in the curriculum.
- Identify significant moments of learning for individual children and build on these.
- Share with parents/carers how their children are developing.
- Plan together as a team and decide what areas of learning experiences should be focused on.
- Plan and review provision for individual children.
- See changes in a child and how particular interests develop.
- Reduce assumptions and inferences.
- Increase our knowledge and understanding of children and their learning.
- Identify our own learning needs.
- Give a stronger sense of purpose in planning and development.

Play

Ardfinnan Community Playschool believes that play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child, play underpins all our curriculum planning. Children need and want to take risks when they play. We aim to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities.

We consider it essential:

- To involve parents/carers in our curriculum planning
- For educators to have sufficient non-contact time to engage in quality curriculum planning.

We provide children with the opportunity to:

- Play – Toys and play equipment that are safe are stored within easy reach of children. The environment, space and layout facilitate different types of play and activity:
    - Messy play (water, sand, clay, paint, etc.)
    - Pretend play (clothes for dressing up, variety of materials for role-play and imitation)
    - Construction play (blocks of different textures, Lego, straws, etc.)
    - Social play involving interaction with other children
    - Activities using fine finger movements (jigsaws, threading, drawing)
    - Activities involving music and drama
    - Activities involving whole body movement (ball games, running, dance, etc.)
    - Reading
    - Outdoor play
- Develop academic skills (maths games, time for reading individually and in groups)

- Enhance creativity and express themselves through art.
- Explore and develop interests and talents.
- Learn to work as part of a team.
- Experience the satisfaction of completing both long and short-term hands-on meaningful projects with tangible results.
- Think about and develop positive character traits (such as honesty, kindness, and friendship) and social-emotional competence through projects, discussions, stories, and games.
- Develop leadership skills
- Relax and interact socially with each other.
- Learn about healthy eating and get the nutrition they need by preparing and eating healthy snacks.

Responsibility of Educators

Activities will be well planned with adequate materials available. Educators will be prepared to lead activities. All educators have specific responsibilities for planning, preparing materials and leading activities. The children will be involved in regular meetings to help plan activities, discuss and talk about current issues in the curriculum. Educators will be friendly, approachable and respectful of all children. All staff members are responsible for working cooperatively to ensure a safe, secure, comfortable and stimulating environment.

Educators will co-ordinate information about the individual child's needs and progress – this includes information to and from the child's parents/carers. Educators will coordinate the planning and record keeping for individual children.

The daily schedule and the activity plans include a balance of:

- Indoor/outdoor
- Quiet/active
- Individual/small group/large group
- Gross motor/fine motor activities
- Child-led /adult-led activities
- Time to respond to 'teachable moments'

There will be appropriate materials and equipment for each developmental stage. The schedule will allow transitions without children having to stand in line or to sit for long periods. Areas are to be arranged for children to do things for themselves with a minimum of adult intervention. Shelves and interest areas will be labelled appropriately using pictures and words. These will be placed in the children's line of vision. Children will be encouraged to try new activities in a safe and supportive environment. Children will be given reassurance, encouragement and appropriate praise

Daily Routine

Ardfinnan Community Playschool operates a flexible daily routine which enables our curriculum to change and adapt to support teachable moments, child led learning, support children who need it on any particular day for any issues e.g., child gets a new pet, new brother or sister, visit to the dentist or doctor.

The following are Ardfinnan Community Playschool principles of our daily routine:

- Children engage in enjoyable active learning experiences throughout the session.

- Children plan their activities, carry them out and are encouraged and supported to talk about them.
- Children choose, use and return materials at 'clean up time'.
- Children solve problems and resolve conflicts.
- Children play alone and together in small and large groups.
- Adults use systematic observation to support and encourage children's development and learning.
- Children and adults play, eat, talk and learn together as partners
- Routine opportunities are provided for children to rest

Our day at preschool consists of

- **Free play** begins as a child enters the playroom, this consists of interest tables, children have free choice on what they would like to play, make, take out etc.
- **Clean up time** depends on what the children want to do, if some would like lunch, they may tidy their toys and wash up for lunch, or the group as a whole will tidy up together
- **Circle time** is where we meet to chat, tell each other our news, discuss what we would like to learn next and lots more
- **Story time** happens throughout the day, educators will read to children individually or as a group, children are also encouraged to read to themselves and to others
- **Song movement time**, we have a range of musical instruments and also some great dance songs which get us all up and moving and singing along
- **Outdoor time** in winter we try get out every day even if only for a short while but at all other times the door is open and the children have the choice to go out to play or stay in the play-room
- **Lunch time** is when the child is hungry, sometimes children are too busy to eat or are hungry coming to playschool, educators are sensitive to their needs and recognise when each child needs to eat. We also encourage children to eat together developing their social skills and encouraging their independence managing their own lunch & bag

Times of opening

Our morning session begins at 9:00 and ends at 12:00 Monday to Friday

Our afternoon session begins at 13:00 and ends at 16:00 Monday to Friday

Adult: Child Ratio

In accordance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 the ratio is 1 adult for every 11 children where the children's ages range from 2 years 6 months to 6 years. Ardfinnan Community Playschool is also compliant with regulations regarding the size of our room. The room size is 7.4 meters by 7 meters; regulatory space area requirements are 1.818 metered square per child.

AISTEAR

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum 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. (Aistear, P.6, 2024)

Ardfinnan Community Playschool implements the Aistear Framework in line with the guidelines set down by the National Curriculum Framework. It provides information for educators to 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.
The aim of Aistear is to help every child to grow and develop as a competent and confident learner. It is based on 12 principles of early learning and development. These are presented in three groups:

1. The first group concerns children and their lives in early childhood:
    a) **the child's uniqueness**
    b) equality and diversity
    c) children as citizens.
2. The second group concerns children's connections with others:
    a) Relationships
    b) parents, family and community
    c) **the adult's role**.
3. The third group concerns how children learn and develop:
    a) holistic learning and development
    b) active learning
    c) play and hands-on experiences
    d) relevant and meaningful experiences
    e) communication and language
    f) **the learning environment**.

Aistear encourages children's learning and development using 4 themes:

- **Well-being:** by developing meaningful relationships with children and allowing them to express their feelings
- **Identity and Belonging**: by promoting each child's uniqueness, by sharing control with the children, by providing an environment where they can find things for themselves
- **Communicating:** by asking children what they plan to do and reviewing what they have done and by talking about problems to resolve them together
- **Exploring and Thinking**: by providing a wide range of materials that children can choose to use in whatever way they desire by embracing nature at outside time by providing opportunities for mathematics and science language and literacy music and movement

These principles and themes are achieved through the contexts of play and supported by caring, learning relationships with educators and peers and firmly establishes the child's right to a safe, stimulating, nurturing and play-based environment.

SÍOLTA

Síolta is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education. Its core elements comprise of three distinct but interrelated elements: Principles, Standards and Components of Quality. The 12 Principles provide the overall vision of the Framework, while the 16 Standards and 75 Components allow for the practical application of this vision across all aspects of our practice. The Components of Quality are further set out through a set of Signposts for Reflection and 'Think-abouts' which support us in our daily practice.

The 12 Principles are:

1. Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right.
2. The child's individuality, strengths, rights and needs are central in the provision of quality early childhood experiences.
3. Parents are the primary educators of the child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her/his well-being, learning and development.
4. Responsive, sensitive and reciprocal relationships, which are consistent over time, are essential to the wellbeing, learning and development of the young child.
5. Equality is an essential characteristic of quality early childhood care and education.
6. Quality early childhood settings acknowledge and respect diversity and ensure that all children and families have their individual, personal, cultural and linguistic identity validated.
7. The physical environment of the young child has a direct impact on her/his well-being, learning and development.
8. The safety, welfare and well-being of all children must be protected and promoted in all early childhood environments
9. The role of the adult in providing quality early childhood experiences is fundamental.
10. The provision of quality early childhood experiences requires cooperation, communication and mutual respect.
11. Pedagogy in early childhood is expressed by curricula or programmes of activities which take a holistic approach to the development and learning of the child and reflect the inseparable nature of care and education
12. Play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child

There are 16 Standards which are:

Standard 1: Rights of the child

Ensuring that each child's rights are met requires that she/he is enabled to exercise choice and to use initiative as an active participant and partner in her/his own development and learning.

Standard 2: Environments

Enriching environments, both indoor and outdoor (including materials and equipment) are well maintained, safe, available, accessible, adaptable, developmentally appropriate, and offer a variety of challenging and stimulating experiences.

Standard 3: Parents and Families

Valuing and involving parents and families requires a proactive partnership approach evidenced by a range of clearly stated, accessible and implemented processes, policies and procedures.

Standard 4: Consultation

Ensuring inclusive decision-making requires consultation that promotes participation and seeks out, listens to and acts upon the views and opinions of children, parents and staff, and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

Standard 5: Interactions

Fostering constructive interactions (child/child, child/adult and adult/adult) requires explicit policies, procedures and practice that emphasise the value of process and are based on mutual respect, equal partnership and sensitivity.

Standard 6: Play

Promoting play requires that each child has ample time to engage in freely available and accessible, developmentally appropriate and well-resourced opportunities for exploration, creativity and 'meaning making' in the company of other children, with participating and supportive adults and alone, where appropriate.

Standard 7: Curriculum

Encouraging each child's holistic development and learning requires the implementation of a verifiable, broad-based, documented and flexible curriculum or programme.

Standard 8: Planning and Evaluation

Enriching and informing all aspects of practice within the setting requires cycles of observation, planning, action and evaluation, undertaken on a regular basis.

Standard 9: Health and Welfare

Promoting the health and welfare of the child requires protection from harm, provision of nutritious food, appropriate opportunities for rest, and secure relationships characterised by trust and respect.

Standard 10: Organisation

Organising and managing resources effectively requires an agreed written philosophy, supported by clearly communicated policies and procedures to guide and determine practice.

Standard 11: Professional Practice

Practising in a professional manner requires that individuals have skills, knowledge, values and attitudes appropriate to their role and responsibility within the setting. In addition, it requires regular reflection upon practice and engagement in supported, ongoing professional development.

Standard 12: Communication

Communicating effectively in the best interests of the child requires policies, procedures and actions that promote the proactive sharing of knowledge and information among appropriate stakeholders, with respect and confidentiality.

Standard 13: Transitions

Ensuring continuity of experiences for children requires policies, procedures and practice that promote sensitive management of transitions, consistency in key relationships, liaison within and between settings, the keeping and transfer of relevant information (with parental consent), and the close involvement of parents and, where appropriate, relevant professionals.

Standard 14: Identity and Belonging

Promoting positive identities and a strong sense of belonging requires clearly defined policies, procedures and practice that empower every child and adult to develop a confident self- and group identity, and to have a positive understanding and regard for the identity and rights of others.

Standard 15: Legislation and Regulation

Being compliant requires that all relevant regulations and legislative requirements are met or exceeded.

Standard 16: Community Involvement

Promoting community involvement requires the establishment of networks and connections evidenced by policies, procedures and actions which extend and support all adult's and children's engagement with the wider community.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool received its first Síolta Award in 2017 and was awarded with it's second in 2022.

CHILDREN

SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to promoting positive behaviour through a warm, respectful, and inclusive environment. We encourage children to develop self-confidence, empathy, and respect for others by modelling positive interactions and using age-appropriate guidance. Behaviour is supported through praise, encouragement, and clear, consistent boundaries. We focus on understanding children's needs and helping them learn appropriate social skills, rather than using punishment. Our approach aligns with national frameworks such as Aistear and Síolta, promoting the wellbeing, belonging, and development of every child

Principle
This policy is underpinned by the Child Care (Pre-school Services) (no 2) Regulations 2006
Child Care (Pre-school Services (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 Part II 9. (1 – 3) Behaviour Management)
Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education

Children's needs
Children need:

- Freedom and scope to learn through hands-on exploration and experimentation in a well-planned, well-resourced and well-organised environment, where they can test their limits to learn what they are capable of
- To be able to do this within reasonable and appropriate limits for their own and others wellbeing and safety
- To receive the support, guidance and understanding that will help them to learn how to manage and regulate their own behaviour in ways that are appropriate for their age and understanding
- To be supported to learn and understand their feelings and how to express them appropriately
- To help them understand and manage conflict positively

Parents & Family's needs
Parents/guardians need:

- To know their child will be safe and happy
- To know their child needs are appropriately met and their child's development is supported in a positive and supportive way
- To know their opinion matters and they will be involved in decision-making about how their child's social emotional and behaviour skills are supported and developed.
- To know that the service will contact them and work in partnership with them in the event of any challenging or concerning behaviours

Educators & Staff needs
All staff need:

- To have clear policy and procedural guidance on what the services approach is to support children in their social emotional and behavioural development

- To be clear what are and are not acceptable ways of responding to behaviours they may find challenging
- To know what is expected of them in relation to working in partnership with parents to ensure children receive a consistent and shared approach to supporting them develop their behaviour skills

Management needs

Management need:

- To ensure parents are clearly informed about the services approach to supporting children's social emotional and behavioural development
- To ensure that clear policy and procedures are in place for how educators and staff members work with children and collaborate in partnership with parents to support their child's social emotional and behavioural development
- To ensure all regulatory requirements to have a policy on managing behaviour is adequately met

Parents/Guardians

This policy is shared with parents/guardians during the enrolment process, and we invite families to provide information about the behaviour guidance approaches they use at home. We recognise the importance of understanding parents'/guardian's expectations and perspectives regarding behaviour guidance before the child begins preschool.

We are committed to maintaining open respectful and ongoing communications with families to support consistency and positive relationships between home and preschool.

We respect and value the individual backgrounds, beliefs and experiences of all children and their families. In partnership with parents/guardians, we aim to ensure that approaches used within the service reflect developmentally appropriate practice and current professional guidance, while always acting in the best interests of the child.

Policy Details

Ardfinnan Community Playschools approach to supporting children's social emotional and behavioural wellbeing reflects professional knowledge and best practice. We aim to provide an environment where children feel safe, secure, relaxed, happy and actively engaged in play and learning experiences. Educators and staff model positive respectful and caring interactions with children and with each other.

We recognise that children's behaviour is a form of communication and seek to understand possible triggers or underlying needs while supporting children to express their feelings appropriately and develop positive ways of managing conflict.

Our responses to challenging unsafe or disruptive behaviour are developmentally appropriate and focused on helping children develop self-regulation skills. Positive guidance strategies are used at all times, including redirection, encouragement of appropriate behaviour, anticipating and reducing potential difficulties, and supporting children to understand the natural or logical consequences of their actions.

Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited, as are any practices that are disrespectful, degrading, intimidating, exploitative, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful. Children are never humiliated, isolated or denied comfort, support or opportunities to participate in activities as a form of discipline.

Educator's and all staff interactions with children are intended to promote their wellbeing, learning and development, including their social and emotional growth. Children are provided with appropriate

support, stimulation and guidance, and any challenging behaviour is responded to in a sensitive respectful and supportive manner without threats or punishment.
Educators and all staff acknowledge and respect that every child and family may have different beliefs, values, cultural practices and parenting approaches. However, there may be occasions where a family's preferred approach does not fully align with what is considered best practice for a child's development, wellbeing or safety.
In these situations, educators will carefully balance respect for the family's views with professional knowledge, child development guidance and recognised standards of practice. The main priority will always be to support the child's overall wellbeing, safety and best interests.

Procedures & Practices

It is essential for educators and staff to understand that there are many influences on a child's behaviour, these include:

- Age and development
- General health and well-being
- Relationships with and within their family
- Play and learning environments, which includes the physical indoor/outdoor settings, the weather, the time of year, the time of day
- Educators practice and interactions
- Relationships with other children and others
- Factors, such as family, home life or peer group experiences.

Families, especially parents/guardians are important partners in supporting children's positive social emotional and behavioural development at Ardfinnan Community Playschool. Parents/guardians will be provided with regular opportunities to contribute to the service's overall development and review of their own child's individual care and development.

Creating An Environment That Supports and Promotes Children's Social, Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing

The Role of The Educator

Educators who are loving, patient and firm help children to learn that it makes sense to act in certain ways. Behaviour guidance based on trust, respect, love and consistency helps children to build self-esteem and self-discipline. They can help children to avoid inappropriate behaviour by helping them to understand rules and guidelines.
When a child does something inappropriate, educators can help them look at the consequences of their actions and think about what they can do to make things better. Educators always need to consider whether a child may have some unmet need that is leading to the inappropriate behaviour or is experiencing some distress and look at ways to address this in addition to helping the child manage their behaviour.

In Daily Interactions

- All children regardless of race, religion, family background, culture, gender or ability are treated with respect and consideration
- Children's efforts, achievements and feelings are acknowledged and given sincere encouragement leading to growth in self-esteem and self-regulation.
- Independence in children is encouraged and scaffolded as they are ready
- Educators and staff interact frequently with the children in a calm, friendly positive respectful manner

- Educators and staff are available and responsive to children
- Children are generally comfortable, relaxed, happy and involved in play and other activities
- Pro-social behaviours among children are recognised and encouraged
- Educator's expectations for children's social behaviour are developmentally appropriate- children's level of understanding and maturity are taken into account
- Children are encouraged to communicate and voice their feelings, ideas and interests
- Educators plan activities and tell stories that help children learn about right and wrong
- Children are distracted from unwanted behaviour
- When behaviour is unacceptable, educators explain to the child/children why it is unacceptable in a way they can understand
- Children need movement from their learning and development and are allowed to move freely for a significant part of their day in preschool
- Soft, quiet spaces are provided for children to withdraw comfortably when they are feeling tired or overwhelmed or just want to be alone

Strategies Recommended in Aistear That We Use Include

- Anticipating conflict and supporting children in resolving it, coming to the assistance of frustrated children and helping them find solutions
- Modelling social behaviour when interacting with adults and children, thus helping children to learn from others social skills such as taking turns, listening, sharing, asking for something, and saying excuse me, sorry, please, and thank you
- Encouraging children to help each other during their activities, play and routines
- Helping children share skills and knowledge with each other
- Encouraging and acknowledging spontaneous co-operative efforts made by the children
- Talking to children about the time they spend together
- Encouraging children to play co-operative games
- Interacting with (play and converse with) children rather than managing (giving instructions and warnings)

Boundary/Limit Setting and Rules

- Any limits are clearly related to the safety, welfare and protection of the child themselves and others around them.
- Limits are communicated in a way that is respectful of all.
- Rules are as few as possible, consistently upheld and within the children's understanding.
- Educators consult with the children in an age-appropriate way, regarding the codes of behaviour and rules.
- Clear, reasonable boundaries on behaviour are provided and explained.
- Rules are spoken & written positively, e.g. 'we walk inside' rather than 'no running'.
- Children are allowed enough time to respond to requests for them to behave within the rules or codes of behaviour, according to their needs and understanding – young children may take more time than adults to think through what is being asked of them.

Provide Choice

- Negotiating choices between the adult and child can help children take appropriate responsibility and prepares them with positive life skills such as listening and reasoning.
- Whenever there is an opportunity for a real choice to be made, children are given the chance to exercise choice and then follow through on it.
- Younger children are given choices within limits, as appropriate to their level of development, e.g. 'would you like me to put your coat on or will you do it yourself?'

Positive Reinforcement and Encouragement

- Positive behaviour, however small, is encouraged and affirmed with both words and body language (e.g. nods, smiles).
- When a child is behaving well and when they are trying to stop themselves engaging in negative activities, this is noticed and acknowledged. This builds self-confidence and encourages children to repeat positive behaviour.
- Negative behaviour is ignored when it is judged safe and appropriate to do so.
- Children are encouraged in their activities.
- Encouragement is demonstrated by all adults participating with children in their activities, at the children's invitation, taking care not to 'take over'

Schedules, Routines and Transitions

- Schedules, routines and transitions serve as a framework from which children gain trust, security and order. These are always flexible, with as few transitions as possible, but they provide clear guidelines about what is expected.
- Any changes to the scheduling within the timetable will be clearly communicated to the children (and their families where necessary), along with clear reasons for the change

The Physical Environment

- The physical environment can promote or discourage desired behaviour. An aesthetically pleasing, carefully planned, and well-organised environment helps reduce the likelihood of problems.
- Space is sufficient so children can play and work creatively in a relaxed setting. Providing, or allowing for, insufficient space for an activity will limit and is likely to influence children's behaviour negatively.
- The outdoor space provides opportunities for children to move more freely, be louder without restrictions and become calmer.
- Active, loud and energetic play spaces are balanced with soft, passive, quiet and peaceful areas both indoors and outdoors.

Toys, Materials and Resources

- Resources for working with children are developmentally appropriate and in good condition.
- Open-ended materials allow for children to use them in whatever way they choose and support engagement in play.
- There are enough easily accessible materials and equipment with enough complexity to keep children engaged for long enough without having to share too much or wait too long.

Responding To Challenging Behaviour

We recognise that some of the ways children tell us they are stressed and overwhelmed are when they show the following behaviours on a regular basis. For example, they:

- are overactive
- have difficulty focusing on or completing a task
- become easily frustrated
- have difficulty making decisions
- have difficulty following directions
- solve problems by hitting, biting, grabbing or pushing
- have tantrums
- cling to adults
- avoid new tasks
- do not play with other children
- cry frequently and cannot be soothed easily
- do not eat

Adults always respond supportively to children's distress

Guidance For Conflict Management and Resolving an Incident

- Approach the situation calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.
- Remain neutral rather than taking sides.
- Focus on the behaviour, rather than the child.
- Acknowledge the children's feelings with open statements, e.g. 'You seem upset...' and ask them if they agree with the observation and if so, do they want to talk about it? Start the negotiations with them by reflecting back their behaviour and involving them in checking out the details.
- Restate the problem, e.g. 'So you both want to play with the train at the same time …'
- Ask for ideas for solutions and decide on them together, e.g. 'What can we do to solve this problem?' Encourage the children to think of a solution and check to make sure that the solution is acceptable to the children involved and realistically achievable. Clarify all the feelings with the children involved so that you are aware of anything that remains unresolved for them.
- If a child uses positive problem-solving behaviour, reinforce this, for example by saying 'You solved the problem…' then state what they did.
- Stay near the child/children so that you are prepared to give follow up support and clarification.
- Follow through with your decisions but be prepared to change them if they prove inappropriate for the individual needs of the child/children.
- Explain the reasons behind why something cannot happen or why some behaviour is inappropriate.

Losing Control

- When a child becomes so angry, anxious or frustrated to the extent that they themselves and others have been unsettled, it is important that staff remain calm and settles the situation for this child and the others around.
- Staff will stop a child's aggressive or destructive behaviour such as biting, kicking or hitting and give a reason for their action such as 'biting must stop, biting hurts'.
- Staff model positive behaviour to the child and will never mirror the child's behaviour by raising their tone of voice or acting inappropriately.
- When the situation has been diffused, it is important that staff offer support, time and further discussion with the child, to reflect on what happened and to plan an alternative coping strategy in case a similar issue arises again.
- A positive approach that the child may use in the future is reinforced such as walking away and playing elsewhere or by stating clearly that they don't like what is happening and/or it hurts.

Holding Or Restraining a Child to Prevent Harm

- Physical holding as prevention must only be used:
    - To prevent an accident such as a child running across a road.
    - To prevent injury, e.g. if a child is having a temper tantrum.
- No matter what age the child is, physical restraint must only ever be used for immediate safety reasons, with the minimum force and for the minimum amount of time. The purpose of this intervention can only be to prevent injury to the child, another child or to an adult, or to prevent serious damage to property.
- Where a child is expressing feelings of anger, anxiety or frustration, in a way which is unsafe for themselves and others and where reasoning has not stopped the behaviour, an educator may assist the child in re-establishing control by holding them, to contain their feelings safely, as a last resort and for the minimum length of time. This intervention will only be used in an age-appropriate way, e.g. it may be appropriate to pick a very young child up.
- Great care will be taken when holding a child with particular attention paid to their individual needs.
- The intent of this action is to keep the child and others safe until their self-control is regained and they feel contained, but it will only be used in exceptional and rare circumstances.
- A calm and caring attitude on the part of the educator is critical in ensuring that this is supportive and in no way a punishment.

Note: Educators giving comfort by holding a child when they are distressed is not physical restraint. This should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.

Time To One Side with Support of an Educator

- In some very rare situations, it may be appropriate to use time to one side with the support of an educator, for short periods of time, to enable a child to calm down. This may follow an incident in which the child may have felt very angry, anxious or frustrated to the extent that they themselves and others have been unsettled.

- Educators support is needed throughout this time and the child can decide when they feel able to continue to participate in the activities.
- A child must never be isolated in any space or room without educator's support.
- The use of the 'naughty step' or similar is never used as this can lead to feelings of isolation and stigmatisation of the child.
- Outdoor time will never be taken away as a form of punishment.
- Children who require space to calm and regulate their emotions may access the sensory room or outdoor area with appropriate supervision

Educators & Staff Behaviour

- It is important to promote only limits that guide children's safety and security rather than any that might curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity.
- Educators and staff are aware of and understand that their own dispositions, values, attitudes, temperaments, expertise, reactions and responses to children impact on the behaviours that the children learn.
- Educators and staff acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant, e.g. an adult who is not scared of thunder will support a child not to overreact but will not trivialise the fear or anxiety the child expresses.
- Educators and staff respond to and acknowledge children's feelings and emotions such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride and help children to learn to name their feelings and emotions.
- Educators and staff understand that children may not yet have developed the appropriate ways to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Educators and staff attitudes and practice demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their level of development and/or general disposition.
- Educators and staff are committed to nurturing and supporting children by suggesting alternative ways of responding and where possible giving children choice, rather than telling them how to behave.
- An atmosphere which fosters trust, security and comfort is created by giving children time and attention to enable them to talk and express their feelings.
- Children are in an environment that encourages caring and co-operative relationships, which supports them to relate with each other in more positive ways by learning through example from the adults and positive behaviour from their peers
- Educators and staff model appropriate behaviour, so that children can see what to do and learn from positive examples, rather than simply instructing them to do things. An example of this is joining in and encouraging children to clear up toys or paints after an activity and making this fun, ending the activity in a positive way
- Any limitations to a child's behaviour are phrased in a positive way, focusing on 'what to do' rather than 'what not to do'. By using these positive statements, educators reinforce for children appropriate and desirable ways of communication. It also decreases the likelihood of children responding with resistance or defensiveness.

- Explaining to children the 'why' of behaviour guidance and the limits which help them to internalise and learn the rules of positive social interaction.
- Minor incidents are best ignored. If their behaviour is not impacting negatively on others, educators sometimes need to step back, take a breath and decide not to speak or intervene.
- Educators and staff listen to children and respond in a fair and supportive way; this gives them a greater sense of comfort and trust and encourages them to use the adults as a reliable source of advice by demonstrating that what they say is valued.

Prohibited Practices

It is important to note the following:

- Children are never ignored, spoken to sarcastically, humiliated, segregated, or have food withheld.
- 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 this service.

SERIOUS BEHAVIOUR ISSUES

Serious behaviour issues may include:

- Any repeated pattern of behaviour that interferes with the child's learning or engagement in social interactions with peers and educators such as withdrawal
- Behaviours that are not responsive to the guidance procedures/approaches described above
- Prolonged tantrums, physical and verbal aggression, disruptive behaviour (e.g. screaming, property destruction, self-injury, persistent non-compliance).

When a child's serious behaviour issues are causing disruption and problems for the other children in the group, the following approaches will be considered:

- Reviewing the programme to ensure that it is meeting the child's care, learning and development needs
- Reviewing the service's approaches to addressing the child's behaviour
- Discussing with the child's parents/guardians to help to develop a specific plan for that child. The purpose of the plan will be to help ensure that the reason the child is having difficulty with regulating their behaviour, is identified if possible and addressed. It is also to provide whatever support they need to be able to relate well to other children and adults, make friends, feel secure and valued, explore and learn confidently and feel good about themselves.

An individualised plan that takes a positive, learning approach, will be developed. This plan may include:

- Observing and recording the behaviour
- Identifying the triggers for the challenging behaviour (best guesses about why and when the behaviour happens, using observations)
- Considering ways to make the events/interactions that the child seems to find difficult, easier to manage (e.g. less difficult, less confusing, more engaging)

- Skills to teach the child to be able to deal with the situation without resorting to the problem behaviour
- Ways in which educators will respond when the problem behaviour occurs - to ensure a consistent response
- Ways that parents can help the child at home
- Ways to review and evaluate the plan.

Recurring problems are dealt with in an inclusive manner following observations and involving the child's parents/guardians and, where necessary, other appropriate adults e.g. Early Years Specialist, (with parents'/guardians' consent).
Discussing a child's behaviour with educators'/staff members or parents/guardians in front of the child or other children is to be avoided.
Parents/guardians are encouraged to maintain on-going communication with educators on the approaches being implemented.
When all reasonable attempts to support the child, whose challenging behaviour is causing the difficulties have failed, it may be necessary to suggest to parents/guardians to seek professional advice, such as a psychologist or play therapist. The parent/guardian may then seek the advice or request referral to other professionals.
In partnership with parents, any programme designed for a child by an appropriately qualified specialist will be fully implemented as far as the resources of the service allow.
In exceptional circumstances and following specialised advice and guidance, it may be considered necessary for the child to leave the service to move to a service that can better meet their needs.
Educators and all staff members will be provided with support to deal with stressful situations arising from dealing with challenging behaviour.

Recording Incidents

Records are kept of significant incidents to include:

a) The child's name
b) Time and location of the incident
c) Events leading up to the incident
d) The nature of the incident
e) Others involved
f) Witnesses
g) How the situation was handled
h) Whether restraint was used, what form of restraint and the reason for it
i) Consequences
j) Parents/guardians signature/s.

(See Accidents and Incidents Policy)

Communication Plan (For Educators & Families)

Expectations and agreed codes of behaviour are accessible and communicated to all, using a variety of media, e.g. handbooks, posters and pictures. They are communicated in a way that ensures that they are understood according to the levels of literacy and understanding of every child.
All parents/guardians are informed of the Policy on Managing Behaviour on enrolment. Educators check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.
A summary of this policy is included in the Parents'/Guardians' Handbook. This policy will also be included in staff induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to all educators and staff and to parents/guardians in the Policy Folder located in the office
Parents/guardians may receive a copy of the full policy at any time upon request. Parents/guardians and staff will receive written notification of any updates.

CHILDREN

INTERACTIONS POLICY

Purpose:
The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all interactions between children and staff, staff and parents, and staff and visitors are positive, where parents can share in the education of their child in an open and friendly environment, where health, safety, welfare, needs and rights of all children in our care is one of the utmost importance, where all staff are valued for their contribution to our playschool.

Interactions with Children

Ethos: We believe children are capable, competent, curious and full of potential. Positive responsive and nurturing relationships support children's emotional wellbeing, learning, confidence and sense of belonging.
Educators recognise that every interaction with children is important and has the potential to positively influence children's self-esteem, development and emotional security.

Guiding Principles: All interactions within the service will support children's safety, wellbeing and protection in accordance with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*
Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to upholding the rights of the child in accordance with the *United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*
The policy is guided by:

- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016
- Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF)
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education

Policy Statement:

At Ardfinnan Community Playschool educator's will…

- Treat all children with warmth, kindness, dignity and respect
- Support children's rights, voice, agency and participation
- Provide a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for all children and families
- Promote equality, diversity and anti-bias practice
- Support the inclusion and participation of all children, including children with additional needs, ensuring reasonable accommodations where appropriate
- Support children's emotional wellbeing and emerging self-regulation skills
- Foster secure and trusting relationships
- Encourage positive relationships between children
- Encourage independence, confidence and resilience
- Use positive behaviour support strategies at all times

Implementation

At Ardfinnan Community Playschool we are very proud of the way in which our staff interact with the children. We believe that any interaction between a child and staff member can have a profound effect on a child's self-esteem and overall development. We are privileged to be part of each child's life and with this in mind we aim to care and educate each child through positive interactions which are caring, respectful and friendly.

- Children are encouraged to express themselves and their opinions
- They are given the opportunity to become self-reliant and to develop self-esteem
- Children are given guidance as to positive and responsible behaviour
- Each child will have their dignity and rights maintained at all times,
- No child is isolated for any reason other than illness
- Each child and their family's values acknowledged and respected
- Children are supported in their learning experiences
- Emotional support is offered to each child as they begin to recognise and deal with their feelings
- Educators will be responsive to each child's strengths, interests and abilities
- Educators will encourage language development by listening to the children and patiently answering their many questions
- Educators will model appropriate behaviour and plan activities that help children learn about right and wrong
- Educators will speak to the children in a calm, friendly, positive, respectful manner, getting down to the child's level and using eye contact or face to face contact.
- When behaviour is unacceptable educators will explain why simply to the child or children
- Educators will use positive worded directions not just "no" or "don't"

At Ardfinnan Community Playschool we hope our interactions with children will encourage children to play together, to share experiences together, to help and talk to each other solving problems which may arise and to have fun together. We endeavour to encourage each child to feel safe in communicating their needs, interests, wants and ideas, to develop a positive relationship of trust and to explore our playschool.

Educators will:

- Allow children adequate time to respond to questions or requests
- Let children know in advance when the daily schedule will change
- Allow children to make their own decisions
- Allow children to make mistakes
- Give children many opportunities to solve problems without pressure
- Be responsive and alert to signs of stress in each child's behaviour and respond with appropriate stress-reducing activities and techniques
- Continuously facilitate the development of self-esteem by respecting and accepting children, regardless of their behaviour

- Join the children while they eat and ensure that meal times are occasions for social interaction and learning about texture, taste and colour

Where children experience distress, frustration or conflict, educators will respond in a supportive, nurturing and developmentally appropriate manner

Children will never be

- subjected to corporal punishment,
- be humiliated, threatened, shamed or ridiculed
- be isolated, excluded or withdrawn from activities as a form of punishment

Discriminatory, disrespectful or intimidating behaviour towards children, families, educators or visitors will not be tolerated

Interactions with families

Ardfinnan Community Playschool values families as the child's primary educators and believes that positive partnerships with parents/guardians support the best outcomes for children

We aim to build open, respectful and collaborative relationships with families through honest communication, mutual respect and shared support for children's learning and wellbeing

Educators will:

- Warmly welcome children and families each day
- Support children and families during settling-in and transitions
- Respect the diversity, values, cultures, languages and beliefs of all families
- Maintain confidentiality and privacy
- Provide opportunities for parents/guardians to share information, concerns and ideas
- Always communicate respectfully and professionally
- Support parents/guardians in participating in playschool activities where appropriate

All communication, including digital communication, will remain respectful, professional and confidential

Parents are encouraged to get involved with our playschool…

- By participating on our committee
- Volunteering
- Attending family events and activities
- By supporting ongoing communications regarding their child's experiences and development

Interactions with colleagues

Positive interactions between all staff are essential in creating an environment and atmosphere where children feel emotionally safe, secure and happy.

All educators and staff members are expected to:

- Treat colleagues with respect, fairness and professionalism
- Communicate openly, honestly and respectfully
- Work collaboratively as part of a team
- Support and encourage each other

- Maintain confidentiality
- Engage in reflective practice and continuous professional development
- Resolve disagreements professionally and respectfully
- Promote a calm, positive and supportive atmosphere within the service

All staff will demonstrate patience, empathy, cooperation and professionalism creating a positive environment that benefits children, families and colleagues

Interactions with Students, Volunteers and Visitors

Students, volunteers and visitors are expected to interact respectfully and appropriately with children, families and educators at all times

All students' volunteers and visitors must adhere to the services policies and procedures including:

- Safeguarding procedures
- Confidentiality requirements
- Health and safety procedures
- Respectful communication expectations

CHILDREN

HEALTHY EATING AND NUTRITION

Statement

At Ardfinnan Community Playschool we believe that eating a balanced diet is vital for good health and wellbeing. Food provides the energy, protein, essential fats, vitamins and minerals to live, grow and function properly. We understand that children need a wide variety of different foods to provide the right amounts of nutrients for good health and development. The food a child eats in their early years influences their eating habits as they grow and develop. We recognise that it is important to teach young children about healthy food choices and staying well hydrated, and to help them develop good habits and a healthy relationship with food from an early age.

In promoting healthy eating, children's and parents' individual needs, requirements, cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, and personal preferences will be respected and supported in an inclusive and sensitive manner.

Principle

This Healthy Eating Policy is developed in line with the Child Care Act (1991) Early Years Services Regulations (2016), Schedule 5.1 (l) and the Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Services

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises the needs of Children, Parents, Staff and Management when writing this policy

Children need:

- Their educators to understand the importance of healthy nutrition.
- This policy to recognise that food has always been a central part of community, social, cultural and religious life.

- This policy to recognise in its practice guidance that, in addition to satisfying physical and social needs, food and the way it is experienced may also satisfy certain emotional needs (not to be used as a reward for behaviour but enjoyed as part of a positive social experience). These emotional needs include a sense of security, love and acceptance.
- The interactions relating to eating and drinking to always be positive.
- The effect of poor nutrition on learning to be considered.
- This policy to ensure that all aspects of healthy eating are considered and their dietary requirements are appropriately met as well as any particular religious requirements their family may have.
- Children with allergies and very young children also need this policy to help ensure that they are not put at risk of allergic reactions to food or drink or of choking.

Parents and guardians need:

- This policy to clearly outline the service's approach to healthy eating
- To know what foods and drinks are to be included by them in their child's lunch box, how they are provided and what foods or drinks should not be included.
- To be aware of the service's positive approach to interactions with the children relating to eating and drinking.
- To know what the service's specific approach is 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.

Educators and staff need:

- This policy to provide clear information on what the service's approach is to provide healthy, safe and nutritious food for the children.
- This policy to provide the correct information for them to give to parents/guardians about what types of foods they encourage parents/guardians to provide for their child in snack or lunch boxes.
- The policy to include guidance on how to ensure that food provided in the service is safe for the children.
- Clarity on what kinds of interactions with the children are expected of them around and during mealtimes.
- To know how to access the quality guidelines relating to food and nutrition that are associated with the policy, and how these guidelines are to be implemented in the service.

Management needs:

- This policy to ensure that the service meets the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 in relation to Food and Drink (Regulation 22) and the provision of a Healthy Eating Policy (Regulation 10).
- To ensure through this policy that all staff members and all parents/guardians of children attending the service are clear on the service's approach to healthy eating and positive interactions relating to eating and drinking.
- Educators, staff and parents/guardians/carers to clearly understand their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to all children attending the service being provided appropriately

with healthy, safe and nutritious foods that meet their particular needs and religious requirements.

Curriculum

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognise the importance of food in our daily routine, healthy food is a key part of our curriculum, where the children are offered learning on the food pyramid and how to choose a healthy choice for a snack, fruit and vegetables are available to explore and taste during this learning. Our garden is also a key learning experience for the children where we may grow vegetables or herbs or fruit.

Procedure

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that we may not all be hungry at the same time, with this in mind lunch times vary from day to day depending on the needs of the children.

Following discussions with parents Ardfinnan Community Playschool recommend that only Water and Milk be consumed in playschool. We also recommend that the children have access to their drinks bottle throughout the day as water is a vital necessity for healthy life

Lunch time:

- Educators sit with the children during lunch times encouraging conversations and extend interactions
- Children are encouraged to get their own lunch box, and drink and tidy up afterwards
- Encouraging children to make choices, drink and feed themselves and look after their own lunches during mealtimes will help to develop each child's independence
- Mealtimes are an important social aspect of the daily routine within our playschool. They provide opportunities to inform and educate children about nutrition and healthy eating.
- Parents will be encouraged to promote healthy eating by providing healthy snacks for their children
- Suggestions of healthy snacks will be made available for parents at the start of the pre-school year
- Fizzy drinks, sugary snacks or crisps will not be allowed in the pre-school
- Snacks such as fruit, yoghurt, sandwiches will be encouraged as healthy alternatives for children.
- All special dietary requirements will be respected inclusive of dietary needs and cultural and religious dietary habits.
- Educators and staff are encouraged to lead by example

Síolta and Aistear

Ardfinnan Community Playschool refers to Síolta and Aistear when discussing a healthy eating and nutrition policy, *Síolta Standard 9 Component 9.4 states that a quality service is proactive in supporting the development of healthy eating habits in children while supporting their enjoyment and appreciation of eating and drinking as a positive social experience*

Aistear states that *adults support children's psychological and physical well-being by helping them to make healthy choices about nutrition, hygiene and exercise (this also applies to hydration). One of Aistear's learning goals for young children is to "make healthy choices and demonstrate positive attitudes to nutrition, hygiene, exercise, and routine".*

Storage of Children's Lunches

- All lunch boxes, bags to be clearly labelled with your child's name prior to coming to playschool
- All water bottles to be labelled clearly with your child's name prior to coming to playschool
- All lunch boxes drinks bottles are stored in your child's school bag and placed on their peg in the hallway, the children have free access throughout the day to their school bags

Recommendations for your child's lunch

Drinks:

- Water is the best thirst quencher.
- Milk is an important part of a growing child's diet.
- Milk and water are the most tooth-friendly drinks

Snacks:

- Fresh fruit pieces (apple, banana, kiwi orange, plum, pear, pineapple, strawberries, blueberries, tomato) we recommend that **all grapes are cut in quarters** to reduce the risk of choking.
- Fresh vegetable pieces (cucumber, carrot, celery, salad leaves)
- Cheese slices/cubes and crackers
- Fingers of toast, sandwiches, wraps, pitta bread, scone
- Sliced rolls of cooked ham, tuna, chicken.
- Raisins or other dried fruit
- plain yoghurt
- pasta
- hard-boiled egg
- nuts (pine nuts, peanuts)

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has adopted this policy recognising that healthy eating is a key part of learning in preschool; it is a valuable life skill as we believe that learning about how to eat healthy, drink healthy, getting exercise at a young age and being able to take responsibility for making good health choices and caring for themselves enables children to experience wellbeing and lays the foundation for a healthy lifestyle in the future. This is accomplished with the help of parents and guardians, educators, staff and management.

CHILDREN

HAND HYGIENE

Statement

Ardfinnan Community Playschool aims to keep children happy and healthy by supporting the children to understand the importance of hand washing. This policy is underpinned by the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2016. Good hand hygiene is the most effective way of preventing transmission of Infection, and staff will support children in using the proper technique for hand washing.

Procedure

- Hand washing facilities are available the playroom toilets, staff toilet, food preparation areas and cleaning areas.
- Children can avail of the hand-washing facilities when they need it, and they will be encouraged and supported to practice this skill.
- Wash hand basins have hot and cold taps; hot taps are thermostatically controlled to ensure that hot water is a suitable temperature for children so as to avoid scalding and facilitate hygienic hand washing.
- Educators encourage children to wash their hands after using the toilet, before eating any food, messy play and after playing outside.
- Guidelines on hand washing are displayed in the toilets. These guidelines incorporate visual images that are appropriate for all staff and children.

Hygiene Procedures

All new staff and students are informed of the hygiene procedures as part of their induction programme.

- Hand washing – after using the toilet, after outdoor play, after painting & gluing activities, before and after handling food.
- Cuts and sores must be covered with suitable dressings
- After cleaning duties
- Handling or dealing with waste or rubbish
- After the removal of disposable gloves and/or aprons
- Coughing or sneezing
- After applying sunscreen
- Any other time where staff feel it is necessary to wash hands

Dealing with spills

- Disposable gloves must always be used when cleaning up spills of body fluids
- Disposable towels must always be used when cleaning up spills of body fluids
- A supply of clean clothing is readily available for accidents
- The area of the accident is treated with suitable disinfectant

Cleaning procedures

- All toilets, surrounding walls, hold rails, door handles and sinks are cleaned and disinfected at the end of every day
- Floors, tables and equipment, are cleaned, disinfected and checked for breakage at the end of every day or when necessary
- Sand is covered when not in use
- Water tray and play sinks empty and clean when not in use
- All left over food is disposed of properly

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a detailed cleaning policy.

CHILDREN

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY

Policy Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises the importance of outdoor play and experience for all children. The outdoor environment provides a range of developmentally appropriate, challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences for all children.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to following good practice in relation to ensuring ratios are maintained when outside the service and all staff members are aware of which ratios will be maintained.

Principle:
This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

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Rationale
A new requirement under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 stipulates that all services *shall ensure that—*
(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or
(b) where no such space is provided, the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis to a suitable outdoor space.

The regulations also outline that where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises, services must ensure that the outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

In Ardfinnan Community Playschool a strong emphasis is placed on the importance of children's play as a critical factor in children's wellbeing, learning and development. We believe that outdoor play has much to offer children therefore we see it as an essential part of the curriculum every day. Outdoor play activities are a vital part of childhood experience and an important complement to our indoor activities. We consider that outdoor play is just as important as the indoor programme.

The outdoor environment is an invaluable place of learning and engagement and has a positive impact on children's physical and mental wellbeing. It provides opportunities for children to explore discover and develop an understanding of the natural environment around them with unique opportunities for: sensory experiences, physical activities, observations, constructive play with sand, water and mud, socio-dramatic play, art, science, mathematics, environmental learning and many others. Therefore, the outdoor play environment at Ardfinnan Community Playschool is planned with the same care and attention as the indoor environment

Ardfinnan Community Playschool

- recognises the importance of outdoor play and experiences for all children and provides access to outdoor play each day weather permitting.

- believes that outdoors is one of the best learning environments for young children. Our outdoor environment is accessed daily and offers diverse, creative, challenging, and enriching experiences for our children.
- offers seamless provision where the children can choose to spend their time either indoors or outdoors. Our outdoor environment offers diverse, creative, challenging, and enriching experiences for our children with lots of opportunity for play, movement, and sensory stimulation.
- plans outdoor experiences having observed the children and their interests, linking experiences with Aistear and Síolta providing open ended materials as a stimulus for creative, imaginative play
- will liaise with parents discussing any concerns they may have such as outside play in winter, having a change of clothes or overalls for use in our mud garden.

Aim:

We aim to provide a safe, stimulating outdoor environment where space is used effectively to enable children to explore a broad and balanced curriculum using a range of interesting and engaging resources suitable to both their individual and group needs.

The outdoor space is designed to provide:

- Varied multisensory, challenging, creative and enriching experiences.
- Opportunities for noisy, boisterous, vigorous, physically active play.
- Opportunities for appropriate physical challenge and risk-taking that are inherent in the value of play.
- Different surfaces and opportunities for the development of physical strength, balance and coordination.
- Natural elements and loose materials that children can combine, manipulate, use and adapt in their own way, for their own purposes.
- Opportunities to develop language and social skills
- Opportunities for exploration, observation and experimentation

Weather

Ardfinnan Community Playschool believes outdoor play is a natural enhancement and extension of indoor environments and children should ideally be able to choose to play outside at any time. Parents are asked to give their children the appropriate clothing, hats, gloves and coats for cold weather, sun cream, sunhats and tee-shirts which cover the shoulders for the summer. Children are given the choice to go outside in snow, frost, rain, wind and sunshine to experience all types of weather and its effect on our environment.

Planning for learning

The outdoor play area is included in all planning for learning. It is important to ensure that:

- Children are enabled to access the outdoors on a daily basis taking appropriate measures to deal with the weather conditions.
- The outdoor play area is used as a context and a natural resource for learning and development.
- Children are consulted about their interests, needs and wishes for outdoor play and the outdoor environment.

- Children are given the opportunity to plan and have ownership of their learning in the outdoors.
- The strengths and needs of each child are considered.
- A wide variety of challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences are planned for to ensure that children's learning and development needs are met under all four themes of Aistear:
    - Wellbeing
    - Identity and Belonging
    - Communicating
    - Exploring and Thinking
- The opportunities for appropriate challenge and risk-taking in play are considered in planning.
- The learning that happens in the outdoor play area is observed, assessed and recorded in the same way as learning indoors.

Play opportunities

The outdoor play area offers children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve, use their imagination and creativity.

- Children experience social interactions – being able to choose whether and when to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, compete and resolve conflicts.
- Long, uninterrupted periods of time are provided for spontaneous free play.
- A variety of materials is provided to stimulate different kinds of play including:
    - sand, mud, water, clay, paint, and other open-ended materials for sensory and exploratory play
    - a large supply of blocks and construction toys and materials for cognitive and physical development
    - balls, balancing and climbing places
    - materials for building dens, making concoctions, using tools
    - small world play
    - art, writing, modelling and other creative activities
    - natural materials for matching, sequencing, measuring, weighing, pouring for learning maths concepts.
- Open space is available for running, cycling and general free movement.
- Children are encouraged to manipulate the environment and the materials in their own way, to support their play.
- Activities which test the limits of capabilities such as lifting, balancing and climbing and chase games are included.
- All children, including those with physical impairments/disabilities, have access to play opportunities and are included in play – for children with limited motor abilities and/or health impairments this means that activities may need to be positioned to allow children to relax, to focus attention on the activity and have sufficient controlled movement for independent play.

- The value of messy play, rough-and-tumble play, and nonsense play is recognised.
- Children can enjoy energetic activity and have opportunities to run, jump, scoot, crawl, climb, swing and ride on wheeled toys.
- The outdoors offers the children opportunities for manipulative play and to develop their fine motor skills.
- Children are helped to care for the outdoor environment through the context of their outdoor play area.
- Children are given opportunities to care for living things (gardening with non-toxic plants).
- Children learn how to use tools safely and effectively and to follow safety rules.

Play values

- Play is valued both for its own sake and as a critical factor in children's wellbeing, learning and development.
- All children have the right to engage in play experiences.
- Children are capable and active learners.
- Children learn through active hands-on experience – playing, exploring, experimenting and discovering.
- Children are enabled to develop an appreciation of natural beauty and a sense of wonder about the world.
- Children can play for their own purposes.
- Children are played with on their terms.
- Children are allowed to manage and use the space and freedom afforded by the outdoor play area.
- Children are given the opportunity to relax, enjoy and have fun outdoors.
- Both boys and girls can be competent in all areas.

Supervision

- All staff members must be vigilant in their supervision of the children.
- Appropriate staff ratios must be maintained in the play area at all times.
- It must be ensured that an adult directly supervises the use of each large play structure.
- Staff members should place themselves strategically around the play area so that all children can be observed and heard and reached quickly, especially when engaging in activities that have a level of challenge/risk, for example:
    - In all areas with access to water in tubs, buckets, water tables
    - When children are building and/or climbing high structures
    - When children are using sharp items, such as sticks or tools.

Safety

Safety is a primary consideration in planning all activities. Appropriate supervision of children while playing outside is paramount. We aim to ensure that the risk of injury is minimised while allowing children appropriate challenges. This is important for their learning and development. Children are given the chance to stretch themselves, and to test and develop their abilities, without exposing them to unacceptable hazards

A risk assessment is taken prior to going out by a member of staff, ensuring that the outdoor area is free of harm for the children e.g., animal fowling's, damaged play equipment, etc.

Safety procedures

- All staff members must be diligent in the inspection of the play areas.
- All equipment must be maintained to ensure the children's safety.
- New equipment must be installed to the most up to date Safety Standards. Where equipment is installed that has a recommendation for a shock absorbing surface this must be rated and installed as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Visual inspections of the playground and equipment must be carried out daily before the children go outside to ensure safety is maintained.
- A monthly and seasonal inspection of the playground and equipment must be carried out to determine the need for repairs.
- The use of wheeled toys must be carefully monitored.
- Emergency/first aid kits must be easily accessible.
- It must be ensured that all the children are clear about the safety rules.

Playground and equipment maintenance procedures

All staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the route the children take from the indoor to the outdoor area is free of hazards – this must be checked daily.
- Ensuring that the play area boundary (fence and gate) is secure, that no adult can access the area without the knowledge of the staff members in charge and no child can leave the area without supervision.
- Ensuring that children cannot access the bins, oil tank/gas supply, boiler or pest control bait boxes.
- Checking the area for hazards such as sharp points, protruding nails, nuts, rivets or such like
- Checking daily for broken glass, plastic, animal droppings.
- Checking for choking hazards where children under three are present.
- Sweeping hard play surfaces clean of stones, sand and gravel.
- Checking sand for contamination. Ensuring the sand is cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Always remove cords, string or skipping ropes tied to slides, or other playground equipment.
- Ensuring climbing equipment is not placed near clothes lines or overhead wire.
- Restrict the use of climbing structures if they cannot be kept dry.
- Check structures for frost and/or ice build-up.
- Though the presence of ice provides a learning opportunity, ice poses an extreme fall risk. Ice underfoot must be broken, sanded or salted where appropriate before children are allowed to play in the area.
- Conducting daily checks on equipment. Watching for signs of decay, rust, splinters, sharp protrusions, protruding nuts, rivets or nails.
- Taking whatever action is necessary to ensure children's safety such as removing broken equipment or erecting temporary barriers. Recording any problems that require specific

maintenance or repair skills that staff members cannot provide and/or removal of equipment and bring them to the attention of the manager.

- Checking for any toxic plants, these can sometimes be present through self-seeding from neighbouring property.

CHILD WELFARE

CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL

Lady`s Abbey, Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary E91RP21
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Ardfinnan Community Playschool is a registered early years' service providing preschool education to children aged 2 years and 6 months to 5 years. The service offers ECCE and NCS programmes, with a fee-paying option available, and operates as a sessional service for 38 weeks of the year
Room Leader: Erica Condon,
Administrator: Elaine Cowan
Early Years Educators: Christine O Connor
AIM Support Worker: Elaine Cowan

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM HARM

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that the best interests of the children attending our service are paramount. We are fully committed to safeguarding the children in our care and to providing a safe, nurturing environment in which they can play, learn, and develop.
We believe that all children attending our service have the right to be protected from harm, to be treated with respect, to be listened to, and to have their views taken into consideration in all matters affecting them.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool:

- Is committed to safeguarding the children in our care and to providing a safe environment in which they can play, learn, and develop.
- Acknowledges that the welfare of the children attending our service is paramount at all times.
- Recognises the rights and welfare of all children to be protected, treated with dignity and respect, listened to, and supported to express their views.
- Operates in accordance with **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and relevant legislation including:**
  - **Children First Act 2015**
  - **Child Care Act 1991**
  - **Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998**
  - **National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012–2016**
- Applies this policy declaration to all educators, staff, volunteers, committee/board members, and students on work placement within the organisation. All such persons are required to sign

and adhere to the policies, procedures, and guidance outlined in this Child Safeguarding Statement and the accompanying Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

- Commits to reviewing this Child Safeguarding Statement and associated policies and procedures every two years, or sooner where required due to changes in legislation, national guidance, or service needs.

Designated Liaison Person:	Deputy Designated Liaison Person:
Erica Condon	**Breda Murphy**

Ardfinnan Community Playschool is operated by Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee. The object for which the company is established are: Provision of high quality, affordable and accessible community based childcare facility, enabling parent's avail of education training and employment opportunities and all related activities

Ardfinnan Community Playschool – Safeguarding Statement

Name of service and service provided	**Ardfinnan Community Playschool** Sessional Preschool service providing early childhood education to children aged 2 years and 6 months to 5 years. ECCE & NCS programmes are offered with a fee-paying option available	
2**. Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm** (brief outline of what our service is, what we do and our commitment to safeguard children):	**Ardfinnan Community Playschool:** • Is committed to protecting and promoting the welfare and safety of all children who attend the service. • Operates in line with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and acknowledges the rights of all children to be protected from harm, treated with respect, listened to, and supported to have their views taken into consideration in matters affecting them. • Has developed and implemented child safeguarding policies and procedures which all childcare staff are required to follow in relation to the identification of, and response to, child protection and welfare concerns. • Has a statutory obligation under the Children First Act 2015 to report child protection concerns to Tusla. • Carries out a written Risk Assessment identifying any potential risks of harm to children while availing of the service and implements appropriate controls to manage and reduce these risks.	
Risk assessment Ardfinnan Community Playschool carries out a written assessment of any potential risks of harm to a child while availing of our services. The following outlines the areas of risk identified and the procedures in place to manage and reduce these risks.	Policy and Procedures	The service is committed to developing, implementing, and regularly reviewing policies and procedures to minimise risk by responding in a timely and appropriate manner to identified safeguarding concerns.
	A designated Liaison Officer/Officers	The service has appointed Designated Liaison Persons in accordance with Children First requirements
	Safe Recruitment and Garda Vetting for all educators, staff and committee members	The welfare of the child is paramount in the recruitment of staff and committee members. All educators, staff and relevant personnel are subject to Garda vetting in accordance with the National Vetting Bureau Acts, and references are obtained and verified prior to appointment
	Management of educators & staff	The service ensures that appropriate adult–child ratios are maintained at all times in line with Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. Staff are appropriately

		supervised and supported to ensure children's safety, wellbeing, and quality care at all times.
Procedures	This Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice. **Ardfinnan Community Playschool** has procedures in place for: • The management of child protection concerns and allegations of abuse, including allegations against staff. • Safe recruitment practices, including Garda vetting of all staff and relevant personnel. • Provision of Children First training for all staff. • Mandatory reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, with reporting forms accessible to all staff. • Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person (DLP), whose role is known to all staff.	
Implementation	**Ardfinnan Community Playschool** is committed to implementing this Child Safeguarding Statement. The welfare of the child is paramount, and we strive to provide a safe, supportive environment where every child is valued, respected, and encouraged to reach their full potential. **DLP: ERICA CONDON DDLP: BREDA MURPHY**	

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL
CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to protecting and promoting the welfare of all children who attend the Service. The service uses recommendations made by the Department of Health and Children publication "Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017" and acknowledges the rights and welfare of all children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration. Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a statutory obligation to report concerns of harm under the Children First Act, 2015 directly to Tusla. Ardfinnan community Playschool believe that the welfare of the child is paramount we create a safe environment where each child is valued, respected and encouraged. We ensure that this is adhered to by educators & staff through the following procedures: -

- Supporting all persons and children
- All educators, staff, committee and board members are mandated to report reasonable concerns of harm about a child to Tusla
- A designated Liaison Officer is appointed who is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and they act as liaison person with other agencies
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool ensures Safe Recruitment and Garda Vetting of all educators & staff
- Provision of child protection information, instruction and training of all educators & staff
- Educators & staff follow a Code of Behaviour
- Confidentiality Statement
- Supervision
- Management of educators & staff

The educators, staff and volunteers are committed to safeguarding the Safety and Welfare of all the children in our care. We will also adhere to The Criminal Justice (withholding of Information on Offences Against the Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, which requires any person with information regarding an offence against a child to report it to An Garda Síochána.
Our policy is to co-operate with TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána and we will share records should a child welfare or protection issue arise with the appropriate authorities.
Signed: The Management,
June, 2023

RISK ASSESSMENT - CHILDREN FIRST ACT 2015

Under the Children First Act 2015, Ardfinnan Community Playschool must undertake a risk assessment, this assessment considers the potential for harm to come to children while in our care, the context of this risk is in relation to abuse rather than general harm.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool risk assessment process enables our service to:

- Identify potential risks
- Develop policies and procedures to minimise risk by responding in a timely manner to potential risks
- Review whether adequate precautions have been taken to eliminate or reduce these risks

It is the understanding of Ardfinnan Community Playschool that it is not possible to eliminate risk completely, but risks can be significantly reduced when properly managed. Ardfinnan Community Playschool adheres to all policies, producers and laws governing Early Years Services and is a member of Early Childhood Ireland.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool will ensure that: -

- An assessment of any risks to a child is undertaken while the child is availing of its services in accordance with the Children First Act 2015.
- The 'Child Safeguarding Statement' is reviewed at least every 24 months, or after any material change in what it relates to, in accordance with the Children First Act 2015.
- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs, family status and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All persons working with children (paid/unpaid) working in or on behalf of Ardfinnan Community Playschool have a responsibility to report concerns to the designated liaison officer who shall liaise with Tusla
- A copy of this Child Safeguarding Statement will be available to read on our notice boards, and when requested, furnished to staff members, parents' guardians, TUSLA or members of the public

RISK ASSESSMENT

Step 1	Think about who or what might cause harm to children or young people using your service.	

Identify potential risks	Make sure all persons in the service, including children, are involved in this process. Different people will have different perceptions of what is a risk.	
Step 2 Rank each risk	Rank each risk in terms of low, medium and high risks. To help rank each risk, consider the likelihood of the risk occurring and how serious the consequences could be.	
Step 3 Control and manage risks	Who owns the risk? Assign risk owners. What current controls are in place to reduce the risk? What future actions must be done to reduce the risk? What else do you need to do about the risk?	
Step 4 Monitor and review all risks	Are the controls effective? Are the actions effective?	

CHILD SAFEGUARDING

Under the Children First Act 2015, Children First National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Guidance for Developing for a Child Safeguarding Statement for Early Years Services 2018 Ardfinnan Community Playschool have implemented the following safeguarding policies and procedures.

- Procedures are in place to maintain a list of mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015
- A Designated Liaison Person and Deputy have been appointed
- Child Protection Policy is reviewed regularly
- Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedures are in place
- Confidentiality Policy
- Documentation and Record Keeping Policies are in place and regularly updated in line with government guidelines
- Safe Recruitment Policy
- Induction Policy which includes procedures to inform new educators & staff about the Child Safeguarding Statement and all related policies and procedures
- Garda Vetting compulsory for all educators, staff, committee and board members
- All educators & staff have completed the Tusla eLearning module – Introduction to Children First and relevant staff have attended Always Children First Child Protection Training
- Complaints Policy
- Outings Policy
- Accident and Incidents policy
- Media and Communications Policy
- Risk Assessment Procedures

- Student and Volunteer Information Pack

Implementation and Review

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the accompanying Child Safeguarding policies and procedures. These policies and procedures support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child Safeguarding Statement is reviewed every 2 years or as soon as is practicable after there has been a change in guidelines which refer to our Child Safeguarding Policy

The statement is displayed in the service. It has also been provided to all educators, staff, volunteers, committee and board members and any other persons involved with our service. It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Statement will be made available to Tusla if requested.

CHILD WELFARE

CHILDREN FIRST

"Every child is born with fundamental human rights: the right to health care and education; the right to be treated equally, and to be protected from harm. These rights are outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which sets the context for our work with children". Early Childhood Ireland.

We at Ardfinnan Community Playschool endeavour to always put the needs of the children attending our service first and to meet these needs in a respectful manner and to the benefit of each child. To do this we have put together a series of policies to ensure the best interests of the child will take priority in all decisions.
The United Nation convention on the rights of the child 1992 four "general principles" state

- *that all the rights guaranteed by the UNCRC must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind (Article 2);*
- *that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3);*
- *that every child has the right to life, survival and development (Article 6);*
- *that the child's view must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting him or her (Article 12).*

www.childrensrights.ie

The convention stipulates the following substantive provisions; Civil rights and freedom

- *The right to a name and nationality*
- *The right to a sense of identity*
- *The right to freedom and expression*
- *The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*
- *The right to freedom and association*
- *The right to privacy*

- *No child shall be subject to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*

MISSION STATEMENT

Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to protecting and promoting the welfare of all children who attend the service. The service uses recommendations made in the Dept. of Health and Children publication "*Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*" and acknowledges the rights and welfare of all children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.

We will also adhere *to The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.*

Our policy is to co-operate with TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Siochana. We will share records should a child welfare or protection issue arise with the appropriate authorities. Our policy is to co-operate with the TUSLA Children and Family Services and we will share records should a child welfare or protection issue arise with the appropriate authorities.

Inclusion

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a detailed policy on Inclusion which states: Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a policy of equality of care, respect and value for all children. We welcome and support children with additional needs, and their families

Management of Educators, Staff and Volunteers

All educators, staff, students, volunteers are Garda Vetted prior to their start date

Induction

All staff and volunteers whether temporary or permanent will receive induction training and will be given an induction pack, which will include a Child Protection Policy and other relevant policies and procedures. Individuals will sign a declaration at the back page stating that they have read, understood and agree to all the policies and procedures.

Training

We here at Ardfinnan Community Playschool take our responsibilities for co-ordinating ongoing training for all staff with special emphasis on child protection and welfare very serious. We will avail of workshops run by Tusla and Tipperary County Childcare.

All new employees will sign a confidentiality statement.

Educators & Staff will be required to undertake training to enhance and update their childcare skills.

Supervision

At Ardfinnan Community Playschool we value working as a team and have regular team and one to one meetings to offer staff care, support and supervision. In the unlikely event of any difficulty that may arise we endeavour to resolve these constructively through staff supervision, alternatively through the grievance/disciplinary procedures

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CHILD WELFARE

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL
CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY & PROCEDURES

Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to protecting and promoting the welfare of all children who attend the Service. The Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures underpin and support the Safeguarding Statement and is a guidance document for staff in preventing, identifying and responding to child safeguarding concerns. Our Safeguarding Statement is displayed on our notice boards.

Tusla states that "Child Safeguarding is about protecting the child from harm, promoting their welfare and in doing so creating an environment which enables children and young people to grow, develop and achieve their full potential".

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The service uses recommendations made by **Tusla**, the **Children First National Guidance (2017)**, and other relevant authorities, including the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)**, the **Health Service Executive (HSE)**, **An Garda Síochána**, and the **National Vetting Bureau**, to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Our policies and procedures comply with the **Children First Act 2015**, the **Child Care Act 1991**, the **Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012**, and the **National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012–2016**, as well as national early years frameworks such as **Aistear** and **Síolta**. Staff are trained to recognise, report, and respond to concerns, and our policies are reviewed regularly to ensure children are safe and supported

Ardfinnan community Playschool believe that the welfare of the child is paramount, we create a safe environment where each child is valued, respected and encouraged.
We ensure that this is adhered to by all staff, committee members, Board of Management, volunteers and students on work placement through the following procedures: -

- Supporting all persons and children
- All staff, committee and board members are mandated to report reasonable concerns of harm about a child to Tusla
- A designated Liaison Officer is appointed who is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and they act as liaison person with other agencies
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool ensures Safe Recruitment and Garda Vetting of all staff
- Provision of child protection information, instruction and training of all staff
- All staff follow a Code of Behaviour
- Confidentiality Statement
- Supervision
- Management of Staff

We will review our child safeguarding procedures every two years or sooner, if necessary, due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy.

Our Designated Liaison Person is Erica Condon.
Our Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Breda Murphy.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Ardfinnan Community Playschool provide quality early years care and education to children in the local community.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring the safety and welfare of every child and young person in our service.
- Implementing safeguarding principles and procedures that reflect national legislation and policy, reviewed every two years.
- Respecting every child as an individual and supporting their development, regardless of background.
- Upholding children's rights to be safe, protected, listened to, and heard.

Ensuring these principles apply to all staff and volunteers, who are expected to act in accordance with them

DEALING WITH CHILD PROTECTION AND WELFARE CONCERNS

DESIGNATED LIASON PERSON

Children First requires that every organisation providing services to children appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for reporting neglect or abuse. The DLP is responsible for dealing with child protection and welfare concerns in accordance with Children First 2015. The DLP and Deputy DLP will be appointed by the board of management of Ardfinnan Community Playschool. The Deputy DLP will undertake the below duties when the DLP is on leave or is unavailable for a long period of time.

Designated Liaison Person

Ardfinnan Community Playschool's nominated Designated Liaison Person is ERICA CONDON and the Deputy Designated Liaison Persons is BREDA MURPHY.

Role of the Designated Liaison Person

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) has overall responsibility for ensuring that child safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented within the service.

The DLP will:

- Be familiar with statutory safeguarding duties, guiding principles, and procedures.
- Ensure child protection and welfare concerns are reported promptly to Tusla and consult with Tusla when required.
- Make formal reports to Tusla or An Garda Síochána on behalf of the service, using the appropriate reporting forms.
- Inform parents/guardians of reports where appropriate, unless doing so may place the child, the reporter, or an assessment at risk.
- Maintain accurate, confidential records of concerns and actions taken.
- Act as the main point of contact with Tusla and An Garda Síochána.
- Provide feedback to referrers where appropriate and jointly report with mandated persons when required.

MANDATED PERSONS

Under the Children First Act 2015, mandated persons are legally required to report child protection concerns that meet or exceed the defined threshold of harm and to cooperate with Tusla when requested. They must report any knowledge, belief, or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of harm, in line with this policy.

In Ardfinnan Community Playschool, mandated persons include all staff, volunteers and students on work placement, Board of Management and committee, as defined under Schedule 2.15(j) and 2.18 of the Children First Act 2015.

All staff and volunteers are informed of the Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Statement through induction and ongoing training and must sign their commitment to it. The service maintains a list of mandated persons, and those who have received Child Protection training and all staff and volunteers are aware of their obligations under the Act.

The Designated Liaison Person acts as a point of contact with external agencies and provides support to staff and volunteers, while mandated persons remain individually responsible for reporting concerns that meet the legal threshold to Tusla.

REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES, CONCERNS OR ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

Definitions Of Child Abuse

Child abuse can be difficult to identify and may present itself in many forms. It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than abuse. All signs must be considered in the child's social and family context.

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

In the ***Children First: National Guidance***, 'a child' means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married.

Definitions of abuse as outlined in the Children First Publication:

DEFINITION OF NEGLECT

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For example, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs met in terms of necessary supervision and safety. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding

- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

DEFINITION OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development
- use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures
- exposure to domestic violence
- exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology.

DEFINITION OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Female genital mutilation

*The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisemen*t in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
    - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]
    - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
    - Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology

- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

The definition of child sexual abuse used in this policy is for guidance purposes only and does not constitute a legal definition or a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

Children with Special Vulnerabilities

Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. These include children with disabilities and children who, for one reason or another, are separated from parents or other family members and who depend on others for their care and protection. The same categories of abuse - neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse - may be applicable, but may take a slightly different form

Reckless Endangerment is when a person having authority or control over a child or an abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by-

- Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or
- Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion.

Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices

HOW TO MAKE A REPORT

All educators, staff and volunteers (including Mandated Persons) at Ardfinnan Community Playschool will follow the procedures in this section when they have a concern that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused, harmed or neglected.

All staff have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child/young person. Regardless of how a concern comes to a staff members, committee members, Board of Management or volunteer's attention (in person, in writing (post or email) or by telephone), it should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person.

These procedures are also appropriate in the case of anonymous reports or reports from adults who experienced childhood abuse.

- When a staff member or volunteer (including a Mandated Person) has a child protection or welfare concern, they will speak to the Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection (DLP) without delay.

This includes concerns which reach the threshold for a mandated report under the Children First Act 2015

- The DLP will report the following child protection and welfare concerns using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (available on www.tusla.ie) to Tusla:
    - Child protection and welfare concerns that meet reasonable grounds for concern but do not meet the threshold for mandated reporting
    - child protection and welfare concerns that meet reasonable grounds for concern and have been passed to them by persons who are not Mandated Persons.
- If the DLP is unsure if a child protection concern meets the reasonable grounds for concern, they will contact Tusla Duty Social Work Office for advice and guidance using the informal consultation process.
- Under no circumstances will a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk pending intervention from Tusla. In the event of an emergency and the unavailability of a Tusla Duty Social Worker, the DLP will contact An Garda Síochána

Contact details if you need to report a concern about a child or need to discuss a concern

Tusla Duty Social Work	**Yellow House, Western Road, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. E91 PR83**	**052 617 7302**
Marie Kennedy	**Child and Family Agency, Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary, Community Services, James Green, Kilkenny**	**056 – 7784713 marieu.kennedy@tusla.ie**
An Garda Síochána	**Cahir Garda Station, Townspark, Cahir, Co. Tipperary, E21 D962**	**052 744 5630**
An Garda Síochána	**20 Emmet St, Burgagery-Lands West, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary**	**052 617 7640**

- In addition to a report to Tusla, if there is a criminal or suspected criminal aspect to the child protection concern, An Garda Síochána will be notified by the Mandated Person or DLP as appropriate.

- The board of management of Ardfinnan Community Playschool will be informed when a report is made to Tusla under this policy. In accordance with the Confidentiality Policy, identifying information about the child and family is only shared with them on a need-to-know basis

REPORTING PROCEDURES – MANDATED PERSONS

Under the Children First Act 2015, Mandated Persons are legally required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed to Tusla.

- Mandated Persons will bring any child protection concerns to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) without delay
- If the child protection concern reaches the threshold for harm as defined in the Children First Act 2015 it is a mandated report.
- The Mandated Person may seek advice and guidance from the DLP in relation to the child protection concern and the threshold of harm
- Mandated reports will be made jointly by the Mandated Person (who raised the concern) and the DLP, using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (available on www.tusla.ie & in the policy documents folder). The form must clearly indicate that the report is a Mandated Report
- If the child protection concern requires a more urgent intervention to make the child safe, the Children First Act 2015 allows Mandated Persons to alert Tusla of the concern, by telephone or in person, in advance of submitting a written report.
- The mandated report must then be submitted to Tusla using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form within 3 days.
- The statutory obligation of Mandated Persons to report under the Children First Act 2015 must be discharged by the Mandated Person and cannot be discharged by the DLP on their behalf. Mandated Persons can, however, report jointly with another person.
- Where the Mandated Person or DLP is unsure if the report meets the threshold of harm as outlined in the Children First Act 2015 advice and guidance will be sought through informal consultation with Tusla Duty Social Work.
- If a child protection concern does not meet the criteria for a mandated report, it may meet 'reasonable grounds for concern' for a report to Tusla and this possibility must be considered. If 'reasonable grounds for concern' exist a report to Tusla will made by the DLP.
- The Mandated Person may submit the report to Tusla solely, however, the DLP must be informed that the report has been made and be given a copy of the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.
- If a child protection concern has come to the attention of a number of Mandated Persons, the report may be submitted jointly by a number of Mandated Persons.
- Mandated Persons are not required to make a report to Tusla where the sole basis of their knowledge, belief or suspicion of harm is of a result of becoming aware that another Mandated Person has made a report to Tusla.

HOW TO HANDLE A REPORT OF ABUSE BY A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

In the event of a child / young person disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that this is dealt with sensitively and professionally by the staff member/ volunteer involved. In such circumstances, the staff member / volunteer will:

- React calmly
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the child/ young person seriously
- Reassure the child/young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you
- Do NOT promise to keep anything secret
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions, this is not an interview, but rather receiving a disclosure from a child/young person
- Check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Sign and date the record
- Ensure that the child/young person understands the procedures which will follow
- Pass the information to the Designated Liaison Person do not attempt to deal with the problem alone
- Treat the information confidentially.

RETROSPECTIVE DISCLOSURES BY ADULTS

Parents and staff who are working with children and young adults or who attend child protection training may disclose abuse which took place during their childhood. A disclosure of abuse by an adult which took place during their childhood must be noted or recorded.

In these cases, it is essential that consideration is given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact. If any risk is deemed to exist to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser, a report of the allegation will be made to Tusla without delay.

Investigation of disclosures by adult victims of past abuse frequently uncovers current incidents of abuse and is therefore an effective means of stopping the cycle of abuse.

An increasing number of adults are disclosing abuse that took place during their childhoods. Such disclosures often come to light when adults attend counselling. It is essential to establish whether there is any current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser revealed is such disclosures. If any risk is deemed to exist to a child who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, the Designated Liaison Person will report the allegation to Tusla without delay.

The HSE National Counselling Service is in place to listen to, value and understand those who have been abused in childhood. The service is a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service and is available free of charge in all regions of the country (see www.hse-ncs.ie/en). The service can be accessed either through healthcare professionals or by way of self-referral.

PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT, 1998

Ardfinnan Community Playschool wish to draw the attention of the staff and volunteers to this Act, The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to Tusla or An Garda Síochána. Section

3(1) of the Act states:

"A person who, apart from this section, would be so liable shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that—

- a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or
- a child's health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected, unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person".

This protection applies to childcare services and to individuals

INFORMING PARENTS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION AND WELFARE CONCERNS

Staff/volunteers may feel uncomfortable approaching a parent about a concern. You may have to discuss a concern about the welfare or protection of a child/young person or an issue which relates to the child/young person's developmental needs.

The following best practice tips may be useful:

- Make sure parents/guardians have prior awareness of your guiding principles, procedures and duties to safeguard children.
- Be straightforward and clearly explain the nature of the concern or issue, e.g. by using facts and records of observations made.
- Think about the time and place to have the conversation. Find a time when parents/guardians are not in a hurry.
- Find a place that is quiet and allows privacy.
- Consider arranging to meet parents/guardians.
- Consider who is the best person/who are the best people to have the conversation with the parents/guardians.
- Use a calm and gentle tone, consider the language used.
- Start with positive comments and observations about the child. Ensure that the parents/guardians know that you care about the welfare of their child and recognise their strengths.
- Refer to how the situation may be affecting the child.

- Start with positive comments and observations about the parents/guardians. Most parents/guardians are trying to do their best for their children and will appreciate your acknowledgement of how challenging parenting can be at times.
- Give the parents/guardians an opportunity to talk; ask them for an explanation and acknowledge their feelings.
- Take the approach that you are working together to address any issues in the best interests of the child.
- Don't blame, don't get defensive and don't take things personally.
- Ensure that you are supportive but also address the issue
- Refer to your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures for support.
- Offer possible solutions, where appropriate.
- Advise parents/guardians how you plan to follow up and keep them informed and involved, where appropriate. Where it is not possible to contact the parents/guardians to discuss a concern you may need to discuss the concern with the DLP or Tusla duty social worker.
- Remember if a report needs to be made to Tusla, do not delay

CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS THAT ARE NOT REPORTED TO TUSLA

If the Designated Liaison Person decides not to report a concern to Tusla, the following steps will be taken:

- The reasons for not reporting should be recorded
- Any actions taken as a result of the concern should be recorded
- The educator/staff member or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla
- The educator/staff member or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána. The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 will apply to any staff member who wishes to make a report to Tusla

CONFIDENTIALLY

In matters of child abuse, an educator/staff member/volunteer/Board of Management/committee member of Ardfinnan Community Playschool will never promise to keep secret any information which is divulged by a child/young person. It will be explained to the child/young person that this information cannot be kept secret but only those who need to know to safeguard the child/young person, will be told.

When reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse the principle of confidentiality applies. The information will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis which means sharing information with persons who have a need to know in order to safeguard a child/young person and is not a breach of confidentiality and the number of people that need to be informed will be kept to a minimum.

If an educator/staff member/volunteer/Board of Management/committee member at Ardfinnan Community Playschool has any doubt as to whether a report should be made, he/she will consult with the Designated Liaison Person.

Parents and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child at further risk. Parents will always be informed if a report is being made to Tusla unless doing so would further endanger the child, impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment or put the reporter at risk of harm

The provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.

Under the Children First Act, 2015, information shared by Tusla with a Mandated Person while carrying out an assessment, arising from a Mandated Report, shall not be disclosed to a third party unless Tusla has provided written authorisation to this effect

RECORD KEEPING

Written records will be kept of all child protection concerns (including those not reported to Tusla) and these will be managed by Ardfinnan Community Playschool's Designated Liaison Person.

Information will include details of the concern, who raised it, who was contacted, details about any informal consultation, any action taken, and details about informing parents. If a child has made a disclosure of abuse, a written record will be made. If there are other grounds for concern that the child has been abused or neglected, a written record will be made. Records relating to child protection and welfare issues will be kept indefinitely.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children states that if a Designated Liaison Person decides not to report a concern to Tusla, the following steps should be taken:

- The reasons for not reporting are to be recorded
- If any actions are taken as a result of the concern, these should be recorded
- The staff member or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla
- The employee or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána
- The staff member or volunteer who raised the concern should also be reassured that if they do choose to further pursue the matter, they are covered by the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Records should be factual and include details of contacts, consultations and any actions taken.

Key points when maintaining child protection records:

- All agencies dealing with children must cooperate in the sharing of records with Tusla where a child protection or welfare issue arises. An example of this could be information needed for a Child Protection Conference or Strategy Meeting or information important for the assessment of risk to a child
- Ensure that records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures are kept securely and safely within the organisation.
- Records should only be used for the purpose for which they are intended.
- Records should only be shared on a need-to-know basis in the best interests of the child/young person.
- Child protection records should be updated as required and reviewed regularly by the Designated Liaison Person.

RECRUITMENT AND CHILD PROTECTION

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a Recruitment Policy. All advertisements, screening and recruitment for vacant posts within the service will reflect our commitment to equality. We will ensure that interviewers conduct interviews in a non-discriminatory way. Interviews will be undertaken by a minimum of two representatives of Ardfinnan Community Playschool using an agreed set of questions.

All applicants will be provided with

- Details of Ardfinnan Community Playschool
- A Job Description and Person Specification
- An Application Form
- A minimum of two references (one from the most recent employer) will be taken up followed by a telephone reference check prior to any staff member/volunteer commencing in Ardfinnan Community Playschool.
- References will only be accepted in writing and no references from family or relatives will be accepted.
- Successful candidates will be offered a Contract of Employment in accordance with Employment legislation requirements, and each contract will include a probationary period.
- All staff contracts will include signing up to Ardfinnan Community Playschool's Child Protection Policy.
- Training in Child Protection and Children First will be sought for all staff members.

These guidelines will apply both to the recruitment of new employees and to the selection of internal candidates for promotion or job change.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool will not employ, contract or involve as a volunteer any person to work with children or young adults who has a criminal conviction for violent crime, sexual crime, drug related offences, or any other offences deemed inappropriate in relation to work with children.

All staff employed, contracted to work, or volunteering to work with children through Ardfinnan Community Playschool will be required to sign a declaration form outlining any previous criminal

convictions and granting permission for vetting from An Garda Síochána to be sought. Garda Vetting will be undertaken for all members of staff and volunteers prior to them taking up the post. Garda Vetting will also be sought for the Chairperson.

All references, qualifications, vetting, CVs and training information will be stored in a staff file, which will be retained as per Ardfinnan Community Playschool's Data Retention Policy.

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF STAFF

The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 require preschool services to have a supervision policy which outlines how employees, unpaid workers and contractors are supervised and supported in the service in relation to their work practices.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool engages in ongoing support and supervision for all staff members. The service has a detailed supervision policy which supports educators and staff to discuss work, reflect on current or emerging issues and plan for future development. Supervision sessions led by the lead educator provide an opportunity to monitor and ensure quality of practice as well as providing support to all staff, feedback is gained and any training issues needed discussed. (see supervision policy)

All staff undergo an induction process, which includes induction on this Child Protection Policy, and each staff member will confirm in writing that the induction process has taken place.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE/ VOLUNTEER

An allegation of abuse may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child/young person
- Possibly committed a criminal offence in relation to a child/young person
- Behaved towards a child/young person or children/young people in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to a child/young person
- Behaved in a way that is contrary to the organisation's code of behaviour for staff and volunteers
- Behaved in a way that is contrary to professional practice guidelines.

If an allegation is made against a staff member/volunteer in Ardfinnan Community Playschool, the Board of Management will ensure that everyone involved is dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the services guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, the rules of natural justice and any relevant employment lay.

The service has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and the staff member/ volunteer

There are two separate procedures to be followed:

1. The reporting procedure to Tusla in respect of the child/young person and the alleged abuser

2. The internal personnel/HR procedure for dealing with the staff member/volunteer.

The priority is to protect the child/young person while taking account of the staff members/volunteer's right to due process.

- It is recommended that the same person should not have responsibility for dealing with the child protection reporting procedure and the employment/contractual issues.
- The agreed reporting procedure should be followed by mandated persons and/or the DLP.
- The chairperson of the board will manage procedures relating to employment issues (including any internal investigation).
- Any action taken will consider the applicable employment contract and the rules of natural justice.
- When an allegation is made against a staff member /volunteer a quick resolution should be sought for the benefit of all concerned.
- The procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff members/volunteers should be objectively applied in a consistent manner.
- All stages of the process will be recorded.
- Care will be taken by the Board of Management to ensure that any actions or investigations do not prejudice or compromise the statutory investigation or assessment.
- Close liaison will be maintained between the Board of Management and Tusla and An Garda Síochána (where appropriate).

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE MADE AGAINST STAFF MEMBERS/VOLUNTEERS TO TUSLA

The agreed reporting procedure should always be followed by mandated persons and/or the DLP.

In addition:

- The Chairperson/Board of Management must be alerted to the allegation by the reporter, whether a mandated person or DLP
- The priority is for the safety of the child/young person; management must make sure no child, or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk
- Parents/guardians should be informed of any action planned while having regard to the confidentiality rights of others, such as the person against whom the allegation has been made. Tusla's National Policy and Procedure for Responding to Allegations of Abuse and Neglect will be applied by Tusla when assessing allegations of abuse made against staff or volunteers.

Internal personnel procedures for dealing with the staff member / volunteer

The service's disciplinary procedures will ensure that fair procedure is followed and take account of the employment contract as well as the rules of natural justice

- In making an immediate decision about the staff members/volunteer's presence in the service, the Board of Management will as a matter of urgency take any measures necessary

to protect the child/young person. These should be proportionate to the level of risk to the child/young person; 'protective measures' do not presume guilt.

- The Board of Management will privately inform the staff member/volunteer that an allegation has been made against him or her and the nature of the allegation.
- The staff member/volunteer will be afforded an opportunity to respond. The Board of Management will note the response and pass on this information if making a formal report to Tusla. The staff member/volunteer will be offered the option to have representation at this stage and will be informed that any response may be shared with Tusla.
- While Tusla will not provide advice on employment matters, advice and consultation with regard to risk to children/young people can be sought from the local Tusla social work office
- The Board of Management will ensure that actions taken by the service do not frustrate or undermine any investigations or assessments undertaken by Tusla or An Garda Síochána. The service will liaise closely with the investigating bodies to ensure this.
- The requirements of fair procedure and natural justice mean that Tusla usually will not share the detail of any assessment regarding allegations of abuse against a staff member /volunteer until the staff member/volunteer has had an opportunity to fully respond to the allegation and any findings and decisions of Tusla.
- Disciplinary procedures will be followed by the service

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

All staff members and volunteers of Ardfinnan Community Playschool will make themselves aware of the services ethos, vision and mission and will be familiar with the Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Statement and sign up to each of these

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has appointed a Designated Liaison Person to deal with any complaints or issues arising which concern the safety or welfare of any child / young person. This person is appropriately trained and familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation, concern or disclosure of child abuse

All Staff at Ardfinnan Community Playschool show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of the children in their care.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has put in place a complaints procedure, see the Complaints Policy.

All staff and volunteers will avoid working in isolation with children and favouritism.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool respects and promotes the principles of equality and diversity and works with all children in a culturally sensitive way within the context of the Irish Constitution and law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. All Staff adhere to the services Behaviour Management Policy.

All staff follow the below professional responsibilities in relation to children. Staff will:

1. Respect the rights of children as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and commit to endorsing these rights
2. Act in the best interests of children always
3. Take a holistic approach to the development and learning of each child
4. Ensure that each child's health, well-being, safety, welfare, creativity and education is protected and promoted daily within the service
5. Care for and educate children in positive emotional, social and inclusive environment that foster each child's holistic development and support his/her culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure
6. Respect the child's right to play, as both a process and a context for learning, development, health and well-being
7. Appreciate play, exploration and discovery (indoors and outdoors) as the most appropriate means of learning in early childhood
8. Plan for, support, and advocate for children's playful learning experiences in the ECEC setting
9. Respond to and act upon the rights of children and families with additional needs
10. Value the relationship between children and their families and enhance these relationships through our daily practice
11. Build positive individual relationships with each child, that are secure, responsive and respectful and which provide consistency and continuity over time
12. Listen to and respond appropriately to children
13. Consult with parents and families so that each child benefits from the curriculum
14. Respect children as capable and competent learners by including their voices and interests in planning, implementing and assessing the curriculum
15. Ensure that children are not discriminated against based on gender, sexuality, age, ability, economic status, family structure, lifestyle, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, or national origin
16. Involve other professionals and agencies as appropriate when seeking to respond to the needs of young children
17. In keeping with the requirements of the GDPR, and this code of professional behaviour, staff will
    - Ensure confidentiality of sensitive information about children, parents and families when working with other professionals and agencies
    - Safeguard the confidentiality of information about children, parents and families, particularly when sharing on digital platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Website)
18. Actively promote children's citizenship in their communities
19. Support children in their transitions to preschool and onwards to primary school
20. Be aware of and, safeguard the rights of the child
21. Ensure that no practices carried out are disrespectful, degrading, exploitative, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful in respect of any child

GARDA VETTING

Under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016, it is a crime to employ someone in certain work or activities without undertaking Garda Vetting.

The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 also require early years services to ensure satisfactory Garda vetting for every worker both paid and unpaid.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool ensures that all educators, staff members & volunteers have completed garda vetting before commencing work. All committee members with direct access to children will also hold garda vetting certificates. (see Garda Vetting Policy)

TRAINING ON CHILD SAFEGUARDING

Ardfinnan Community Playschool will provide employees with time to attend safeguarding courses. The DLP and Deputy DLP will attend Always Children First training, DLP training and other relevant training.

All educators, staff and volunteers will be encouraged during their induction process to attend child protection and other relevant training as identified. All members will be encouraged to engage with Tusla's eLearning course "Introduction to Children First" (available at www.tusla.ie) which provides introductory information on Children First.

HEALTH

ACCIDENTS & INCIDENTS

RATIONALE AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a duty of care to all children and their families and to the adults who work or visit the service, to prevent accidents and to respond effectively to accidents and emergencies that occur at the service or while in the care of the service, i.e. during planned outings.

Parents and guardians have a right to expect that any accidents, incidents or injuries to their child will be taken seriously and that a quick efficient response will be available. In the event of serious injuries, treatment will be accessed immediately. They are also entitled to expect serious investigation and if necessary, remedial action to be taken to prevent a similar accident from occurring again

The purpose of this policy is:

- To help prevent accidents and injuries
- To ensure that in the event of accident, incident or injury the necessary actions are taken to protect the safety, health and welfare of children, educators, staff and visitors
- To ensure that any accidents, incidents or injuries are managed in a controlled and precise way and that the children's welfare is a priority.
- To ensure the provision of a clear, structured procedure for educators & staff members to deal with emergency situations.
- To ensure that accidents and incidents are recorded in a consistent manner.
- To provide parents or guardians with appropriate information to make necessary decisions.

LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

The Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 Schedule 5.1 (j)

The Safety Health and Welfare at Work Acts 2005 & 2010 and the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007

The Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981

Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework

Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, Standard 2, Environments

Children's needs

Children need:

- To be as safe and protected as possible.
- The adults responsible for their care to respond as quickly and efficiently as possible in the event of an accident or incident.
- If they are injured to be kept under adult supervision and as comfortable and reassured as possible until their parents/guardians arrive or medical assistance is provided.

Parents'/Families' needs

Parents/guardians need to:

- Be confident that procedures are in place that ensure that the service is a safe place and their child's needs will be fully met in the event of an accident, incident or injury.
- Know that should an accident, incident or injury involving their child occur:
  - they will be contacted at the earliest possible time
  - they will be informed sensitively of the accident/incident
  - following any investigation, all relevant information about their own child will be shared with them.

Educators, Staff and Volunteers needs:

All staff members need:

- Absolute clarity on the service's approach to dealing with accidents, incidents or injuries involving any of the children, any educator, staff member, volunteer or any visitor to the service
- To know exactly what the procedure is immediately following any accident, incident or injury to ensure the protection of the children and each other as well as any visitors to the service.
- To be clear on what information must be recorded and who must be informed/notified of what, when and in what way.

Management needs:

Management needs to:

- Know that this policy provides the information and clarity that all educators, staff members and parents/guardians who use the service need, in order to help them to protect the safety,

health and welfare of the children, all educators, staff members, volunteers and visitors to the service.

- Ensure that any safety issues and/or notifications of any accidents/incidents are brought to their attention, that all required reporting and notifications are carried out appropriately and efficiently.

STATEMENT

Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to safeguarding children, staff, parents and all visitors to our service. All possible precautions are taken to prevent and avoid any accidents /incidents that could cause harm to children or adults (staff and visitors) in the service. This includes carrying out risk assessments and providing a safety statement as guided and in-formed by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), ensuring the environment is safe (while allowing for appropriate levels of risk and challenge) and always providing adequate and appropriate supervision of the children.

Should an incident occur, staff will immediately alert the lead educator or designated person. It is the responsibility of the lead educator to determine whether the incident is deemed to be a critical incident. In the case of a critical incident, the lead educator or designated person will lead the emergency response guided by our Critical Incident Plan.

Where there is an accident or an incident in which a child or an adult in the service is injured, staff members will ensure that the child or adult is attended to, proper treatment is given and appropriate measures are taken to avoid any worsening of the situation. The injury will be given immediate attention and be assessed by an educator or staff member with First Aid training to determine what type of medical attention, if any, is required.

The GP and/or the emergency services will be contacted immediately if there is any concern for a child's welfare. Steps to take in an emergency are detailed clearly on the notice boards of the playroom.

Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately if the accident, incident or injury involves a child and is serious enough to require attention from a qualified medical practitioner or the emergency services. In the case of an adult, their next of kin will be contacted immediately if the injured person requires an ambulance and/or hospitalisation.

At least one person working with the children will have up-to-date training in First Aid and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

At a minimum one person trained in First Aid for children will be on the premises at all times. At least one person with training in First Aid for children will always accompany the children on outings.

A written Incident Report will always be documented and kept on record in the event of any accident, incident or injury to any child or adult in the premises or while in the care of Ardfinnan Community Playschool.

PREVENTING ACCIDENTS, INCIDENTS AND INJURIES

In Ardfinnan Community Playschool, we have taken the following measures to prevent accidents and incidents.

- We have a designated First Aid Officer and Health & Safety Officer
- We have a Health & Safety Policy & procedure, a Risk Management policy and we carryout regular risk assessments both indoors and outdoors.

- All staff receives regular Support and Supervision and reflects on their practice.
- A Training schedule is provided for all staff to maintain their levels of qualifications and re-new training when it falls due as per regulations and legislation.
- Our building, equipment and materials are well maintained, and any defects are dealt with immediately.
- All educators & staff are familiar with the policies and procedures in our service and there are detailed induction policies and procedures for new staff.
- A fully stocked first aid box is provided with a content's checklist, easily identifiable and in a location which is known to all adults.
- At least one member of staff who holds an up to date First Aid Certificate is always on the premises
- Adult/ child ratios are maintained at all times.
- All educators have appropriate qualifications to ensure that they provide the required level of care and attention to safeguard all children in our setting.
- Records are accessible to all relevant staff in case of an emergency
- We have a detailed Critical Incident Policy, in case of emergencies, where a child, staff member or visitor has to be removed to a hospital by ambulance
- We have a list of all emergency numbers displayed in the office and notice board.
- We promote realistic play limits and behaviour limits that guide children's safety and security rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity.

Safety is ensured and injuries prevented by:

- Supervising children appropriately.
- Regularly checking both indoor and outdoor play areas for, and getting rid of, hazards.
- The environment is reviewed and assessed regularly and frequently to ensure that there are no hazards for young children.
- Using safety equipment for children, protective helmets when cycling and hi visible jackets when walking
- Providing appropriate soft fall surfaces under climbing equipment.
- Checking for and removing choking hazards in areas where children under the age of three years are present (or any older child who regularly puts items other than food in their mouth).
- Ensuring that no cords are accessible to children, in particular cords on blinds.
- Ensuring that all hazardous cleaning materials are stored in a locked cupboard out of reach of children.
- Keeping all electric cords out of reach of the children.
- Understanding what children can do at different stages of development. Children learn by testing their abilities. They should be allowed to participate in activities appropriate for their stage of development even though these activities may possibly result in some minor injuries, such as scrapes and bruises. Children should be prevented from taking part in activities or using equipment that is beyond their abilities and that may result in serious injury such as broken bones.
- Ensuring equipment, furniture and materials used by the children are appropriate for use and used in a safe manner.

Risky Play

Children are allowed to engage in risky play and explore the limits of their bodies. While injuries can happen during any type of play, the following help prevent injuries:

- Opportunities for children to release anger in acceptable ways are provided. Running outside, kicking balls, and other physical play allows children to let off steam. Outdoor play in general helps to keep children engaged and calm.
- Coping skills are taught and reinforced. (breathing techniques to reduce stress)
- Children are encouraged and supported to express feelings verbally.
- Clear limits are set for children's behaviour. The children are involved in deciding those limits so that they understand their purpose. Parents are made aware of the limits. (see Positive Behaviour Policy)
- It is explained to a child who is showing aggressive behaviour how the aggressive actions affect the other person.
- A child's aggressive behaviour will be redirected where possible by, for example, engaging the child in play or activity that interests the child.

Fire drills involving educators, staff and children are regularly practised randomly, without warning and at different times of the day (see policy on Fire Safety)

DEALING WITH ACCIDENTS/INJURIES

Children are often injured unintentionally during the normal course of a day. Many of these injuries, such as scrapes and bruises, are minor and only need simple First Aid. Other injuries may be serious and require medical attention beyond First Aid.

In the case of a minor accident or incident:

- The child or children will be attended to immediately and a staff member will alert the lead educator or First Aid Officer to access treatment if and as necessary. If it is a minor incident the staff member will reassure the child and administer First Aid (if required) as per First Aid Training.
- An incident report will be recorded in the Accident & Incident Book, signed by the Lead educator and shared with the child's parents on arrival. The lead educator will also contact the parents by phone to advise them of the incident
- A copy of the incident will be kept on the child's individual file as well as in the Accident & Incident Book

In the case of an accident which requires medical intervention the following procedure is in place:

- The lead educator and or first aid officer will be informed immediately
- Treatment will be assessed, while the child/children are comforted and attended to.
- The lead educator/first aid officer will telephone the local doctor on call or an ambulance.
- The lead educator/first aid officer will provide the emergency services with the child's name, contact numbers and any known allergies/ medical records.
- The lead educator/first aid officer or Administrator will contact the child's parents/ guardians by telephone.
- The exact time and date the call was made will be recorded.
- A member of staff (2 members where possible) will accompany the child to the GP/emergency room if the parents are not available.
- Remaining staff will reassure the other children and if necessary, explain the accident to other parents.
- Staff who witnessed the accident should fill in the accident report form.
- If the child has to go to hospital before the parent/carer arrives, an adult known to the child must accompany him/her to hospital and stay until the parent/carer arrives.
- The child's record card must be brought for reference.

A 112/999 call or a call to a local emergency number will be made in the case of any of the following:

- The first aid officer believes the injury is life threatening or there is a risk of permanent injury to the child/adult, for example –
    - Severe neck or head injury
    - Choking
    - Shock
    - Chemicals in the eyes, on the skin, or ingested in the mouth
    - Near-drowning.
- The child or adult are acting strangely, much less alert, or much more withdrawn than usual.
- They have difficulty breathing or are unable to speak.
- Their skin or lips look blue, purple or grey.
- They have rhythmic jerking of arms and legs and a loss of consciousness (seizure).
- They are unconscious.
- They become progressively less responsive.
- They have any of the following after a head injury: decrease in alertness, confusion, headache, vomiting, irritability or difficulty walking.
- They have increasing or severe pain anywhere.
- They have a cut or burn that is large, deep, to the head, chest or abdomen and/or won't stop bleeding.
- They have a suspected fracture.
- Severe or persistent vomiting.
- They are vomiting blood.
- Their stool contains blood.
- They have a severe stiff neck, headache and fever.
- They are significantly dehydrated: sunken eyes, lethargic, not making tears, not urinating.

If a child or adult is bitten by a child:

- First Aid must be administered.
- Where the bite causes bleeding, it is advisable to attend the GP as soon as possible.
- In the case of a child being bitten, the parents/guardians of both children are notified.

The staff member who witnessed the accident/incident/injury completes a report form on all accidents/incidents/injuries that occur in the service.

An accident/incident report includes:

- Name, date of birth and age of the child or adult affected.
- Name of person/s dealing with the accident/incident.
- Date and time of the accident/incident.
- Place of the accident/incident.
- Detailed description of the accident/incident.
- Circumstances surrounding the accident/incident, including any apparent illness or symptoms.
- Name of the parents/guardians contacted and the time they were contacted.
- Nature of the injury.

- Treatment provided – medication or First Aid administered.
- Medical personnel or emergency services contacted and time of contact.
- Details of any person(s) present.
- Details and signatures of any witness/es.
- Names of those to whom the accident was notified and date and time.
- When the child was collected and by whom or removed to hospital.
- Details of the accident area/layout including the number of adults and children present
- Details of all communications with parents or guardians in relation to the accident/incident.
- Signatures of parents or guardians.
- Details of any investigation completed in relation to the accident/incident.
- Details of all required corrective and preventative actions taken.
- Details of any changes made to policy and/or practice following the review of the accident or incident.
- Details of whether the incident/accident has been notified to Tusla.
- Details of notification of the accident/incident to other external party such as:
    - Tusla Social Work Services if there is a child protection concern.
    - Garda Síochána where there is a danger to staff or children, or a criminal of-fence.
    - Health and Safety Authority where the incident is dangerous, or a staff member has been injured as a result.
    - The Service's insurance, where appropriate.
    - Name and signature of the person writing the report.
    - Time and date of the report.
    - Review and close off of the report by the Registered Provider.

Registered providers of preschool services are required to notify the Early Years Inspectorate in writing within three working days of becoming aware of the following incidents, in accordance with Regulation 31 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 (SI 221 of 2016)

Notifications of Incident to Tusla are defined as;

- the death of a pre-school child while attending the service, including the death of a child in hospital following his or her transfer to hospital from the service.
- the diagnosis of a pre-school child attending the service, an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service as suffering from an infectious disease (for the current list of notifiable diseases, please see the Health Protection Surveillance Centre.
- an incident that occurs in the service and that results in the service being closed for any length of time.
- a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise.
- an incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service

Follow up contact with the child's parents/guardians

Out of concern for all of the children and families attending the service, in the case of an accident involving a child we would wish to contact the child's parent on the day following the accident/incident to know how the child is recovering.

Reporting to Tusla Early Years Inspectorate

In addition, a Notification of Incident Form is completed and submitted to Tusla Early Years Inspectorate where any of the incidents warrant reporting. The form used is available at

https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-providers/notifications-of-incident/

Retention of records

Records are retained for a period of two years from the date on which the child to whom the record relates ceased to attend the service. Accident and Incident records are retained until the child reaches the age of 21 years. It is essential that clear records and any supporting documentary, CCTV or photographic evidence is kept.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Lead Educator is responsible for ensuring that:

- Risk assessments are carried out and a safety statement is provided
- All educators & staff members are aware of their responsibility to help prevent accidents and incidents
- All educators & staff members know exactly what to do in the event of an accident, incident or injury.

The written procedures, agreed by the management committee, are made accessible and each staff member is made aware of their responsibility to follow the outlined procedure in the event of an accident/incident.

It is the responsibility of the lead educator to ensure that each staff member reads and understands the agreed written procedures.

It is the lead educator's responsibility to:

- Ensure that contact details for emergency services are displayed clearly in a readily accessible location close to an easily accessible telephone.
- Ensure that contact details for the local GP are always immediately accessible.
- Ensure that least one member of staff on duty has completed a recognised First Aid course for children (First Aid Response- FAR).
- Provide a properly stocked First Aid box in each section of the service. The First Aid box must be accompanied by a list of essential contents.
- Assign a member of staff to restock the First Aid box after every use and to do a monthly check to ensure that the contents match the essential contents list and supplies are in date.
- Contact the emergency services in the event of a serious injury.
- Contact the parents/guardians as soon as possible.
- In the absence of the parent/guardian being available arrange for a staff member to accompany a child in an ambulance or to a GP if necessary.
- Arrange for relief staff, if required.
- Assess whether an incident is to be deemed a Critical Incident.
- Assess whether an accident/incident is one which is to be notified to Tusla and/or other appropriate outside authorities and to ensure that this is done effectively and efficiently.

HEALTH

ADMINSTRATION OF MEDICATION

Statement

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that parents have the prime responsibility for their child's health and should provide our service with information about their child's medical needs

including information on medicines their child needs as well as contact information for their child's GP. As we are a sessional preschool and children attend for a maximum of 3 hours per day Ardfinnan Community Playschool advises parents/guardians to ensure medicines are administered to children before arrival at the centre and after they have left.

Upon Enrolment the parents will meet with the Lead Educator to discuss and agree with the parents/guardians on what is to be the service's role in relation to meeting the child's medication needs, in accordance with this policy.

Principle
This policy is underpinned by The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 Regulation 10 and Regulation 16 and the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Acts 2005 and 2010 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007

PARENTS'/GUARDIANS' ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The parent/guardian must provide the following details on the child's enrolment to the service:

- Details of any medical condition
- Emergency contact numbers
- GP details – name, address and phone number
- Written details of any medication required
- Information on any allergies
- Special dietary needs

Parents/guardians must make every possible effort to ensure that the child's medication needs are met before arriving at the service and after returning home.
Where this is not possible, Parents are to meet with the lead educator to implement an Individual Care Plan to support their child during their time at our service. Parents/guardians must complete in full the Consent Form for Administration of Medication and provide all of the information the service will need to:

- safely store medicines
- administer the necessary medication to their child
- deal with any issues or incidents arising relating to their child's condition or the administration of the medication
- Medication must be provided by parents/guardians in its original labelled container as dispensed by a pharmacist, include the child's full name, prescriber's instructions for administration, clear storage instructions, the date it was dispensed and the expiry date.
- Medicines must never be transferred from their original container as dispensed by a pharmacist which includes the prescriber's instructions for administration.
- Where a recipient needs two or more prescribed medicines, each should be in its own separate container and clearly labelled as above
- Parents must sign the completed medication administration form to acknowledge notification for each day that medication is required.

EDUCATORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents must be informed of the policy and procedures on the administration of medications in the service.
Where informed consent has been obtained for the administration of medicines from at least one of the child's parents/guardians then the following will apply:

- The child must have received the medication for at least 24 hours prior to it being given in the service.
- All medications will be administered by an educator who is competent to do so.
- Educators will receive training where required if they are expected to administer medication and they must be made aware of how the medication reacts with food, fluids or other medication. Training will also be provided on the proper use of equipment such as inhalers & epipens
- All medications will be stored safely away from children's reach and according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Educators can only administer medication to the child it has been prescribed for
- All educators who have received training can administer medicine

Administering Medication
General points of note:

- Only educators authorised by the lead educator to do so, and appropriately trained for the specific medications, are to administer medication.
- Medication must not be added to the child's bottle or food unless the registered prescriber has directed that this is how it should be administered.
- Instructions which state that a prescribed medication may be used whenever needed must be reviewed with the parent at least at the beginning of each term.
- 'As needed' medications for example an inhaler must be labelled with the child's name and in their original container labelled with the required information
- Medication must not be used beyond the date of expiration on the container or beyond any expiration of the instructions provided by the health care professional.
- All educators & staff members should follow hygiene procedures for example hand washing and drying before and after administering medication.

Before administration of medication
A second educator must be present when medications are administered. Both educators must confirm:

- That appropriate consent has been given
- That the child's identification is in accordance with the medication to be administered
- The date and time the medication was last given
- Recipient's name
- Prescribed dose
- Expiry date
- Written instructions provided by the prescriber on the label/container as dispensed by the pharmacist
- Any possible side effects

- If there is any doubt about any of the procedures, the authorised educator should check with parents/guardians and/or a health professional before taking further action.
- It must be checked that the medicine has previously been administered without adverse effect to the child and that parents have confirmed this is the case – a note to this effect should be recorded in the written parental agreement for the setting to administer medicine.

On administration of medication

Both educators must confirm:

- The correct medication
- Medication is given to the correct child.
- The medication is given at the correct time and date.
- The correct dose is given.
- The correct route of administration.
- Appropriate equipment is used to administer the medication dose – for liquids the correct measuring tool provided with the medication.
- The dignity and privacy of the child is ensured as appropriate – for example when medication is required to be administered by a route other than the oral route.

After administration of medication

- Observe child for any possible side effects.
- Where appropriate observe their response to medication – for example where an anti-febrile agent is administered.
- Medication returned to appropriate storage.
- Appropriate management or disposal of any equipment used in administration.

Accidents and Incidents Involving Medications

Where a child refuses to take the medication prescribed for them, they must not be forced to do so but parents/guardians must be informed as a matter of urgency. If the child not taking the medication leads to an emergency situation, the emergency services and the parents must be called.

- Failure to administer medication at the time prescribed as requested by a health care professional or parent/guardian should be noted on the Medication Administration Form with a written explanation of why the medication was not given.
- If a child is mistakenly given another child's medication, a doctor must be called immediately, and their advice must be followed. The parents of the child who mistakenly received the medication must be called as soon as possible.
- The poisons information line number, GP, Pharmacist, and other emergency numbers must always be readily available

Dealing with Emergencies

If an emergency happens with a child who has an Individual Care Plan, please follow instructions on plan.

Where medication is administered in the case of an anaphylaxis or asthma emergency, both the emergency services and the child's parents/guardians must be notified as soon as possible.

- All relevant educators need to know where to obtain First Aid and how to summon the emergency services.

- Where a child is taken to hospital by ambulance, they must be accompanied by a member of staff who is to remain with them until a parent/guardian arrives (emergency relief cover will be arranged to ensure adult child ratios are adhered to)
- All required information is shared with the emergency services and the child's parents/guardians.
- Educators & staff supports are essential following any such incident.

Medications Records

Educators involved must keep records each time they administer medication using the Record of Medication Administration Form

- A medication record must be created and kept for each child to whom medication is, or is to be, administered.

The record for both prescription and non-prescription medications must include:

- The name of the child
- A consent signed by the parents/guardians to administer each medication
- A medication administration log detailing the checks completed prior to administration of medication to the child including:
    - Check of the child's identification
    - Whether consent was received
    - When the medication was last administered (either at home or in the service)
    - Check of the administration instructions, including the name of the medication, the method and times for administration and the required dose
    - Check to ensure the medication is within expiry date
    - The time and date the medication was administered
    - The route and dose of medication administrated
    - The signature of the person who administered the medication and the signature of the witness
    - The time and date, or the circumstances under which, the medication is scheduled to be next administered
    - Any side-effects noted after the medication was given or if the dose was not retained because of the child vomiting or spitting out the medication.
    - The number of attempts to give medications that were refused by the child is also documented

Storage of Medications

All medications brought into the setting are stored according to the manufacturers' instructions paying particular note to temperature, sources of moisture, light and sources of contamination and safely out of the reach of children.

- Medicines are stored safely in a secure container, accessible to authorised persons.
- Emergency medication such as asthma inhalers and adrenaline pens must be readily accessible to authorised educators in case of an emergency when time is of the essence. A copy of the consent form for administration of medication and clear, precise details of the action to be taken should be immediately accessible.

- Medications requiring refrigeration should be clearly marked and separated from food in an airtight container marked 'Medications'. Access to the fridge should be restricted.
- Medications that are applied to skin should be kept separate from medications that are injected into the body or taken by mouth.
- Medicines must never be transferred from their original container as dispensed by a pharmacist which includes the prescriber's instructions for administration.
- Non-prescription medications should be labelled with the child's full name, and the expiry date must be visible and monitored.

Educators & staff members should only bring their own medication to work when it is absolutely necessary (either prescribed or over the counter). They must ensure that these medications are stored securely so that others (including children and adult service users) do not have access to these medications. This includes for example medications held on the person, held at desks, in their bags, coats or in vehicles.

Disposal of Medications

Medication should be returned to the child's parents whenever:

- The course of treatment is complete
- Labels become detached or unreadable
- Instructions are changed by a health care professional
- The expiry date has been reached
- When the child ceases to attend in the service

To ensure a complete record all medication returned, even empty bottles, should be recorded.

- If a parent has not picked up unused medication by 14 days after the required use or it is not possible to return a medicine to the parent, then it should be taken to a community pharmacy for disposal. No medicine should be disposed of into the sewerage system or in the refuse.

UNPRESCRIBED MEDICINES

Ardfinnan Community Playschool does not administer unprescribed medicines to children. If a child requires an unprescribed medicine, parents/guardians are advised to keep the child at home until the medicine is no longer required, or to administer the medicine at home before the child attends preschool and after the child leaves the service. Parents/guardians are asked to inform educators if any medicine has been administered to their child before attending preschool. As children attend for a three-hour session only, the service is unable to support the administration of unprescribed medication during this time.

Examples of unprescribed medicines may include:

- Over-the-counter cough and cold medicines
- Fever or pain relief medicines (e.g., children's paracetamol/ibuprofen) unless prescribed or authorised under the service's medication policy
- Teething gels or remedies
- Vitamins or supplements
- Herbal or natural remedies
- Antihistamines used for allergies unless prescribed or approved for that child
- Creams, ointments, or lotions used for minor issues

SUN CREAM

Ardfinnan Community Playschool's sun protection policy has been developed to ensure that all children are protected from damaging levels of UVR from the sun. (see Sun Protection Policy)

Applying suncream

The service follows current public health guidance regarding sun protection and the safe application of suncream. Parents/guardians are encouraged to apply suncream to their child before they attend preschool and to provide their child's suncream in their school bag, clearly labelled with the child's name. Educators will support children to re-apply their suncream when required or after a period of 2 to 3 hours (as recommended by the Health Service of Ireland) during the preschool session, in line with the child's age, ability, and the service's procedures.

Where suncream is supplied by the service, written parental/guardian consent must be obtained prior to application. Suncream will only be applied in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and best practice guidance

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HEALTH

INFECTION CONTROL

Policy Statement

It is the priority of Ardfinnan Community Playschool to protect all children attending our service and all staff 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. This policy is communicated to all educators; staff & volunteers and a version of this policy is available to all parents on request

Principle

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Child Care Regulations (The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendments) Regulations 2016 and the Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework and Tusla's Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Biological Agents) Regulations 2013 (S.I. No. 572 of 2013)

Rational

Infection can lead to serious ill-health for young children. Infection control procedures seek to reduce the risk of children and staff contracting an illness in Ardfinnan Community Playschool by ensuring good hygiene is followed at all times, 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 Assessments

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

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are included in our team approach to infection control. A co-operative approach between parents and the service helps to ensure a healthy environment for the children

Parents/guardians who feel their child is too ill or unwell to participate fully in all activities both in-doors and outdoors are advised to keep them home to ensure a complete recovery and notify the service of such.

Parents/guardians must inform the service of any known infectious illness in their child. This is of par-ticular importance if the illness might affect others in the service, for example, if a child develops chicken pox or measles or other such contagious illnesses.

Parents/guardians are informed if there are any outbreaks of infection in the service

Parents/guardians of children with any chronic (persistent or long-term) infectious conditions will be encouraged to share this information with the service.

Educators & staff

All educators, staff & volunteers will be familiar with the infection control policy

All female staff members need to know if they are immune to Rubella

INFECTION CONTROL POLICY

Policy Statement

It is the priority of Ardfinnan Community Playschool to protect all children attending the service, together with educators, staff, volunteers and visitors, from the transmission of infection.

The health, safety and well-being of all children, staff and visitors to the service is paramount. The aim of this policy is to prevent, reduce and appropriately manage the spread of infection through effective hygiene practices, appropriate exclusion of unwell children and staff, cleaning and disinfection, good respiratory hygiene, safe management of bodily fluids, appropriate communication and effective outbreak management.

Principle

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Child Care Regulations (The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendments) Regulations 2016 and the Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework and Tusla's Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Biological Agents) Regulations 2013 (S.I. No. 572 of 2013)

The service will ensure that infection-control practices are reviewed and updated when relevant legislation, public health guidance or service procedures change.

Rationale: - Preventing The Spread of Infections

Infections can lead to serious illness, particularly in young children. Children may be more vulnerable to infection because of their developing immune systems and their close contact with other children and adults.

Effective infection-control procedures reduce the risk of children, educators, staff and visitors contracting and spreading infectious illnesses within Ardfinnan Community Playschool.

The service aims to:

- Reduce the spread of infectious diseases.
- Promote effective hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene.
- Maintain a clean and hygienic environment.
- Ensure appropriate exclusion of children and staff who are unwell.
- Manage bodily fluids safely.
- Identify and respond appropriately to outbreaks of infection.
- Promote good hygiene practices that children can use at home.
- Provide staff with appropriate training, information and support.

Responsibilities

The Lead Educator is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented and followed.
- Ensuring educators, staff and volunteers are familiar with infection-control procedures.
- Ensuring appropriate handwashing facilities, cleaning products and PPE are available.
- Ensuring cleaning schedules are completed and records maintained.
- Monitoring reported illnesses and infectious diseases.
- Ensuring appropriate exclusion procedures are followed.
- Coordinating the response to suspected or confirmed outbreaks.
- Seeking appropriate public health or medical advice when required.
- Ensuring appropriate communication with parents/guardians.
- Ensuring educators and staff receive appropriate infection-control information, training, support and supervision.
- Ensuring infection-control risk assessments are reviewed where necessary.
- Reviewing this policy regularly and following any changes in legislation or public health guidance.

All educators, staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Following this Infection Control Policy.
- Practising and modelling good hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Supporting children to develop good hygiene practices.
- Following cleaning and disinfection procedures.
- Following safe procedures for handling bodily fluids and contaminated materials.
- Reporting infectious illness to the Manager/Person in Charge.
- Reporting infection-control hazards or concerns promptly.
- Completing cleaning and other required records.

- Maintaining confidentiality regarding children's and staff members' health information.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Informing the service when their child has an infectious illness.
- Keeping their child at home when they are too unwell to participate comfortably in the normal activities of the service.
- Following the service's exclusion procedures.
- Providing relevant information regarding infectious illnesses that may affect other children or staff.
- Collecting their child promptly when requested because the child has become unwell.

Infection Control Risk Assessments

Risk assessments are undertaken by educators to identify activities, actions, equipment or environments that may present infection-control risks to children, staff or visitors.

Where an infection-control risk is identified, appropriate measures will be implemented to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Risk assessments will be reviewed:

- At regular intervals.
- Following an infectious disease outbreak.
- Following an incident or identified infection-control concern.
- Following significant changes to the service.
- When relevant legislation or public health guidance changes.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are an important part of the service's approach to infection prevention and control.

A cooperative approach between families and the service helps maintain a healthy environment for all children.

Parents/guardians are asked to:

- Keep children at home when they are too unwell to participate fully in the normal activities of the service.
- Notify the service if their child has been diagnosed with an infectious illness.
- Notify the service particularly where an illness may affect other children or staff, for example chickenpox, measles or another contagious illness.
- Follow the exclusion guidance provided by the service and relevant public health guidance.
- Inform the service of any chronic or persistent infectious condition where this information is relevant to the safe care of the child.

Parents/guardians will be informed when there is an infectious disease outbreak or where public health advice recommends that information should be shared.

The privacy and confidentiality of individual children and families will be respected when communicating information about infectious illnesses.

Educators And Staff

All educators, staff and volunteers will be familiar with this policy and will receive appropriate information, training and supervision in infection prevention and control.

Educators & Staff are expected to:

- Follow good hand hygiene practices.
- Follow respiratory hygiene practices.
- Follow cleaning and disinfection procedures.
- Use PPE appropriately.
- Follow procedures for bodily-fluid spillages.
- Report infectious illnesses to management.
- Stay away from work when unwell where their illness presents an infection risk.
- Support children to follow appropriate hygiene practices.

All educators, staff & volunteers will be familiar with the infection control policy. All female staff members need to know if they are immune to Rubella

The Three Principles of Infection Prevention

Ardfinnan Community Playschool follow the three basic principles of infection prevention outlined in the Management of Infectious Disease in Childcare Facilities and Other Childcare Settings Preschool and Childcare Facility Sub-committee Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC). These guidelines are:

1. **Hand washing;** it is the single most effective way of preventing the spread of infection and should be used at every opportunity
2. **Immunisation;** all children, educators and staff should be appropriately immunised in accordance with current national immunisation recommendations.
3. **Exclusion**; children and staff who are unwell and may pose an infection risk, or who are unable to participate fully in the normal activities of the service, should be excluded in accordance with current HPSC guidance.

Hand Hygiene

Handwashing is one of the most effective ways of preventing the spread of infection. Its purpose is to remove germs from the hands and prevent them from being transferred to other people, surfaces or objects.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a handwashing procedure which all staff follow and model for children.

All Staff will wash their hands:

- After using the toilet.
- Before preparing or handling food.
- Before eating.
- After wiping a child's nose.
- After coughing or sneezing where appropriate.
- After waste disposal.
- After cleaning or mopping spills.
- After assisting children with toileting.
- After caring for a sick child.
- After handling soiled clothing.
- After dealing with bodily fluids.

- After removing disposable gloves.
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty.
- At other appropriate times to prevent the spread of infection.

Children will be encouraged and supported to wash their hands:

- After using the toilet.
- Before eating.
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose.
- After handling animals.
- After touching a cut or sore.
- After outdoor play and activities.
- Whenever their hands are visibly dirty.
- At other appropriate times as directed by educators.

Educators will supervise and assist children to encourage effective handwashing.
Wash-hand basins are provided with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels.
Handwashing facilities are accessible in the bathrooms and appropriate areas of the service.

Animals and pets

- Hand washing and drying procedures are followed before and after handling any animals and pets that are present in Ardfinnan Community Playschool or that we meet on outings.
- Children are supervised with animals at all times.
- All animals visiting Ardfinnan Community Playschool are regularly checked with vets

Respiratory Hygiene

Ardfinnan Community Playschool promotes good respiratory hygiene among children, educators, staff and visitors.
Children will be encouraged and supported to:

- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Dispose of used tissues immediately in an appropriate bin.
- Wash their hands after coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth where possible.

Educators will model good respiratory hygiene and provide children with age-appropriate reminders and guidance.
Where a child or staff member develops significant respiratory symptoms or becomes too unwell to participate comfortably in the normal activities of the service, the exclusion procedures will be followed.

Toileting

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recommends that children are **fully toilet trained prior to commencing preschool where possible**. However, children who require assistance with toileting will be supported in a respectful and appropriate manner.

- Children will be encouraged to wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.
- There are two wash basins with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towel dispensers.
- Educators assisting children with toileting will use appropriate disposable, powder-free gloves and other PPE where required.

- Gloves will be removed safely after use and hands will always be washed thoroughly afterwards.
- Toileting areas will be cleaned regularly and immediately if visibly contaminated.

Cleaning And Disinfection

Ardfinnan Community Playschool maintains a clean, safe and hygienic environment through regular cleaning and appropriate disinfection.

- All staff are aware of their role in maintaining high standards of hygiene.
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool encourages 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 im-mediately and with priority. Mops are not 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 in each room.
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a contract with a bin removal company for the removal and disposal of all waste.
- Our premises are free from pests and rodents and we have a contract with an external agent who checks our premises on a quarterly basis.
- We maintain a good stock of cleaning products and tools to ensure that hygiene practices can be carried out at all times. Adequate supplies for cleaning are provided to be used, like clean cloths, gloves, aprons, mops, buckets and detergents. Cleaning products and supplies are stored in a locked press that is not accessible to children.
- Toys and play materials are cleaned daily, with attention placed on especially soiled items. Toys are not brought into toilet areas.
- 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 schedules.
- Any soiled clothes are placed in a plastic bag, sealed and sent home with par-ents/guardians, parents and guardians are informed at collection if clothes being sent home are soiled.
- At least once a day, even in winter, all rooms in the service are aired out.
- All staff receive regular support & supervision in relation to infection control and training is provided

Management of Blood and Other Bodily Fluids

Blood, vomit, urine, faeces and other bodily fluids can contain infectious organisms and will be dealt with promptly and safely.

When a bodily-fluid spillage occurs:

1. Children will be kept away from the contaminated area.
2. The staff member dealing with the spillage will wear appropriate PPE, including disposable gloves and an apron where appropriate.
3. The spillage will be removed using suitable disposable materials.
4. The affected area will be cleaned and disinfected using an appropriate product and method.

5. Contaminated disposable materials will be disposed of safely.
6. Reusable cleaning equipment will be appropriately cleaned and disinfected after use.
7. Any contaminated toys or equipment will be removed from use until appropriately cleaned.
8. Contaminated clothing will be placed in a plastic bag, sealed and send home with the child, parents will be informed
9. PPE will be removed safely.
10. Hands will be washed thoroughly with liquid soap and warm running water after the procedure.

Mops will not be used to clean blood, faeces, urine, vomit or other bodily-fluid spillages.
Spillages will be dealt with immediately and given priority.

Exclusion Of Children and Staff

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that excluding people who are unwell is an important measure in preventing the spread of infection.
Children, educators and staff who are unwell and unable to participate fully in the normal activities of the service, including indoor and outdoor activities, should remain at home until they have recovered sufficiently to return.
The service follows current HPSC guidance regarding exclusion periods for specific infectious illnesses.
Where there is uncertainty regarding exclusion, the lead educator will seek appropriate public health or medical advice.

If a child becomes unwell during the session:

- The child will be comforted and supervised.
- Where reasonably practicable, the child will be cared for separately from other children while awaiting collection.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted and asked to collect the child as soon as possible. If a parent cannot be contacted the emergence contact will be called.
- If educators 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.
- The child will remain supervised until collected.
- The child's condition will be monitored.
- Appropriate infection-control precautions will be followed.
- Any contaminated areas or equipment will be cleaned and disinfected.
- Where a child appears seriously unwell or requires urgent medical attention, appropriate emergency medical assistance will be sought.
- Children must remain at home for at least 48 hours following the last episode of infectious diarrhoea/vomiting.

Educators and staff members who become unwell during work will inform the lead educator and will leave the service where their illness presents an infection risk or prevents them from carrying out their duties safely. A relief worker will be appointed where necessary to ensure compliance.

Illness:

Any child ill with fever, headache and vomiting must be sent home as soon as their parents/guardians can be contacted. Parents will be advised to contact their doctor immediately.

If there is any significant delay in contacting parents/guardians or emergency contact of the child with fever, headache and vomiting, Ardfinnan Community Playschool will CALL AN AMBULANCE and then continue to try to contact the child's parents/guardians. A child with fever, headache and vomiting must 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.

Notifiable Diseases

- Educators are aware of diseases classified as notifiable diseases by the Department of Public Health; a list is available from the HSE.
- When Ardfinnan Community Playschool is informed by the Department of Public Health of a diagnosis of a child attending the service or an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service, as suffering from an infectious disease, the service will notify the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate by filling out the Notification of Incidents Form.
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool will contact the Department of Public Health if there is a concern about a communicable disease or infection or if there is an outbreak of infectious disease in the service. The Department of Public Health will also be contacted before sending letters to parents/guardians about an infectious disease. The advice of the Department of Public Health will be always followed in regard to the management of infectious diseases.
- Parents will be informed verbally and in writing if an outbreak has occurred – all reasonable information on the outbreak will be provided to them.

Outbreak Management

Ardfinnan Community Playschool will take appropriate action where there is an increased occurrence of an infectious illness among children or staff.

An outbreak may be suspected where there are two or more linked cases of an infectious illness or where public health authorities advise that an outbreak exists.

Management of an outbreak

The lead educator will:

- Monitor reports of illness.
- Maintain appropriate records of infectious illnesses.
- Seek advice from the HSE/HPSC or other appropriate health professional where required.
- Notify Tusla or other relevant authorities where required.
- Inform parents/guardians appropriately.

- Provide staff with relevant information and guidance.
- Reinforce hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene.
- Increase cleaning and disinfection where appropriate.
- Pay particular attention to frequently touched surfaces and shared equipment.
- Ensure appropriate ventilation.
- Ensure children and staff who are unwell are excluded in accordance with current HPSC guidance.
- Monitor for additional cases.
- Follow all additional public health advice provided.

The identity of individual children or staff members will remain confidential.
The service will continue to monitor the situation until the outbreak is considered resolved in accordance with appropriate public health advice.

Training And Support

All educators, staff and volunteers will receive information regarding this policy.
Staff will receive appropriate training and regular support and supervision in relation to infection prevention and control.
Training and support will include, where relevant:

- Effective handwashing.
- Respiratory hygiene.
- Cleaning and disinfection.
- Safe use of cleaning products.
- Use of PPE.
- Management of bodily fluids.
- Exclusion procedures.
- Outbreak management.
- Safe waste handling.

Training needs will be identified through supervision, risk assessment and changes in legislation or public health guidance.
Records of relevant staff training will be maintained.

Record Keeping

The service will maintain appropriate records relating to infection control, including:

- Cleaning schedules and records.
- Infection-control risk assessments.
- Relevant illness/exclusion records.
- Outbreak records where applicable.
- Staff training records.
- Relevant incident records.
- Records of actions taken following identified infection-control concerns.

All records will be stored securely and handled in accordance with the service's confidentiality and data-protection procedures.

Communication

Information regarding infection prevention and control will be communicated to:

- Educators.
- Staff.
- Volunteers.
- Parents/guardians.
- Children in an age-appropriate manner.

Parents/guardians may request access to a copy of this policy.
Where an outbreak or significant infection-control issue occurs, appropriate information will be communicated to families while maintaining confidentiality.

Immunisation

The keeping immunisation record for all children attending the service is a legal requirement (Childcare Act 1991, Early Years Services, 2016)

- Ardfinnan Community Playschool request that all children attending be fully vaccinated prior to starting playschool
- Our Vaccination policy is followed at all times with all children and staff.
- On enrolment, parents are asked for their child's vaccination record, this information is recorded on the child's registration form, and a copy of record is available to Tusla for inspection.
- Parents/guardians of children who are not vaccinated are made aware of the dangers of infectious diseases. Parents are encouraged to keep to up to date with current vaccination requirements and to ensure that the service is kept informed and the child's record updated when re-quired.
- Parents/guardians are not required to have their children vaccinated to gain admission to the service, but where a child's immunisation record is not up-to-date parents/guardians are encouraged to have their child vaccinated. Where a child is not vaccinated parents/guardians will be asked to sign a form stating their child is not vaccinated and this will be available to Tusla on inspection.
- If a child is not vaccinated, parents/guardians are advised that their children will be excluded from the service during outbreaks of some vaccine preventable diseases such as Measles, Whooping Cough etc., even if their child is well. This is to protect their non-vaccinated child.
- We provide information leaflets on infectious diseases, for parents

(All information regarding a child's vaccination is recorded in confidence and only made available to parents/guardians of the child, on a need-to-know basis for staff and for inspection purposes only)
DISTRUBITED TO PARENTS WHO WISH NOT TO VACINATE THEIR CHILD:

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL
VACCINATION

Principle

It is the policy of Ardfinnan Community Playschool that eligibility of a child to attend playschool is subject to he/she having received the Health Service recommended immunizations as outlined in the National Childhood Immunization Programme.

This includes the MMR Vaccine.

Parents' choice

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that parents have a choice to vaccinate their child with this in mind if a child is not vaccinated parents are obliged to inform the service prior to enrolling their child. Before starting playschool parents of children who are not vaccinated are asked to sing our vaccination policy and infectious disease policy to show they are aware of our procedures; this is held in the child's file and a copy is given to the parents.

If a child is not vaccinated parents/guardians are advised that their children will be excused from the service during outbreaks of some vaccine preventable diseases such as Measles, Whooping Cough etc., even if their child is well. This is to protect their non-vaccinated child.

Information on vaccinations are available on https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/vaccines-your-child/

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Parents, please sign the following:

I/We understand that Ardfinnan Community Playschool may exclude my child from the service during outbreaks of some vaccine preventable diseases to protect my child.

I/We have received a copy of Ardfinnan Community Playschool policy on Infection Control and their Immunisation Policy.

I/We understand the risks associated with my child not being vaccinated

Please state what vaccines your child HAS, if any, received…….

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Child's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed regularly and whenever there is:

- A change in legislation.
- A change in HPSC/HSE or Tusla guidance.
- An infectious disease outbreak.
- A significant incident.
- A change in the service's premises, activities or procedures.
- An identified need for amendment following risk assessment or staff/parent feedback.

The lead educator is responsible for ensuring that the policy remains current and is communicated to all educators & relevant staff.

Related Policies/Procedures

- Handwashing Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Medication Policy
- Food Safety/Food Hygiene Policy
- Cleaning Schedule
- Risk Management Policy
- Accident and Incident Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Emergency Procedures
- Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy

HEALTH

ILLNESS

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool prioritises the health and wellbeing of the children in the service and believes a child needs to be fit and well to benefit from attending the service. If a child is sick at home or becomes ill throughout their day, the service believes the best place for them is at home where they can rest fully and recover.

Principle
This policy is underpinned by the Preschool Regulations 2006 and the services Infectious Control Policy

Ardfinnan Community Playschool believes that children or adults who are sick or who may be a source of infection should not attend the service, this is in the interest of others attending our service.

High Temperature

- If a child has a suspected temperature, staff take a temperature reading. A temperature of 38 degrees or higher is considered high.
- A number of measures will be used to try reduce the temperature
    - ♦ Firstly, loosen and remove clothing as necessary

- Check that the temperature of the room is not too warm
- Give tepid sponging and comfort to the child along with reassurance

- the parent will be contacted by means of a phone call, if the child is still unwell after 10 minutes, the parent is asked to collect the child
- The child will be monitored and made comfortable allowing them to rest while waiting for their parent to arrive

Vomiting/ Diarrhoea

If a child is vomiting or has diarrhoea, he/she is considered too unwell to attend the service. Parents are asked to keep their child at home until 48 hours clear of the vomiting or diarrhoea

Illness Policy for Children

- Children or adults who are sick or who may be a source of infection should not attend the service.
- Parents are advised that a child who has been sick during the night should not attend the service the next day.
- A child with a communicable illness should not attend the service
- All parents are informed if a child attending the service has a communicable illness, (confidentiality is paramount and when informing parents, the identity of the sick child/adult will not be divulged)

Illness Policy for Staff

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a detailed employment policy which includes a section on Staff Illness. The service recommends that:

- Staff with a communicable illness should not attend the service
- All parents are informed if a member of staff has a communicable illness

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HEALTH

ALLERGIES

Statement

Ardfinnan Community Playschool prioritises the health and wellbeing of the children attending our playschool and pays particular attention to any child with severe allergies. This policy outlines the management of the special care required by such children and the role of parents in ensuring the safety of their child

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that preschool allergies are serious and we, as early childhood educators, take them seriously.

Principle

This policy is underpinned by the Preschool Regulations 2006, LINC, & Schedule 5 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

Procedures for Children with Allergies

Enrolment

When parents enrol their children at Ardfinnan Community Playschool they are asked if their child suffers from any known allergies. This is recorded on the registration form. The parents then meet with our Lead Educator to discuss the steps needed to support their child while attending our playschool, and how we can make our playschool an allergy free place for their child.

Risk Assessment

If a child has an allergy, a risk assessment is completed by the Lead Educator, in consultation with parents 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 with parental permission.
- Parents train staff in how to administer special medication in the event of an allergic reaction. In some instances, it may be necessary for staff to have specialist training for the administration of medication, this will be provided for by management.

Life Saving Medication and Invasive Treatments

In the case of, 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 following applies;

The Lead Educator 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 child's GP, a district nurse, children's' nurse specialist or a community paediatric nurse or official training programme
- A copy of such proof may be required by our insurance provider for appraisal so that our insurance can be extended if necessary

Confidentiality

Only those persons who provide care to the child will be informed of the child's allergy. Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that each family has a right to confidentiality; the lead educator will inform parents on enrolment of our confidentiality policy.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool understands that in some instances e.g., food allergy, dog allergy, it is necessary to inform all parents to ensure that the allergen can be eliminated from our preschool and their help in doing this is vital to the safety of the child.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool will inform ALL parents if there are allergies in our preschool but we will NOT let parents know who has allergies.

Symptoms

If ANY symptoms of allergies are present, contact the family immediately.
If any of the symptoms are severe (affecting breathing, causing pain, or numbness/swelling, itchiness in face), call 911 and then the family.

Environmental Allergies: Symptoms can vary depending on the child and on the allergy**.**
The most common symptoms of environmental allergies are sneezing; coughing; runny nose and/or congestion; itchy eyes, throat and/or nose; wheezing and shortness of breath (for those who also have asthma).
Food Allergies: Symptoms vary from child to child and food allergy to food allergy and range from mild to severe. Symptoms can include some or all of the symptoms listed above for environmental allergies; hives, itchy rashes; stomach problems such as vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach (abdominal) pain, nausea. Some severe symptoms include itchy, swelling of lips (and tongue and throat) --signs of anaphylaxis

Birthday Parties

Birthdays are an important milestone for all children and at Ardfinnan Community Playschool we always mark the occasion with a small party. If parents wish to bring in any food items such as a birthday cake or sweets, they are welcome to do so but must ensure that food items are wrapped in original store packaging noting expiry dates and all ingredients. Parents must also comply with any allergy restrictions that are in place at that time, e.g., no nuts, eggs or gluten procedure.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool is also very mindful of different faiths and their recognition and celebration of birthdays and will always contact parents prior to celebrating any occasion.

HEALTH

SAFE REST AND SLEEP POLICY

Principle
This policy is underwritten by Regulation 10 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016; Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of the Child; Regulation 20 Facilities for Rest and Play; Regulation 23 Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child; Regulation 27 Supervision and Regulation 29 Premises.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognise the importance of sleep and rest for all children, ensuring that each child's comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet a child's needs should he/she require some rest and relaxation. The service also provides space within its playroom for a child who may want to sleep.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool will ensure that the safety and comfort of the child is always paramount.

Children need:

- Access to appropriate, safe and comfortable rest and/or sleep area within the playroom.
- To be able to rest or sleep safely and comfortably whenever they need to.

- Children have a quiet space to enjoy unstructured, quiet activities of their choice (example, read a book, listen to music) or have a rest with soft seating and matting areas to sit or lie down.
- Children will be offered a pillow/cushion if they want to rest or sleep
- Children can sleep on mats or sofas in the playroom where they are normally accommodated once the needs of all children in the room are met.
- Quiet activities are organised in another section of the room for children who are not sleeping or resting

Parents/guardians need to:

- Know that their child will be able to rest in a safe and comfortable environment according to their individual needs.
- To be assured that their child will have access to a clean, safe and appropriately supervised relaxation area that is free of risks and hazards.
- Be assured that if any incident arises in relation to the wellbeing of their child while they are resting or sleeping, all appropriate measures will be taken by the service to protect their child and to notify them at the earliest possible time.

All staff members need:

- To know and understand clearly their roles and responsibilities in relation to providing appropriately for children's individual needs for safe sleep and/or rest in an area that is clean and free of risks and hazards.
- Absolute clarity on their roles and responsibilities in relation to supervising and ensuring children's safety while they rest or sleep and on what they must do should any child be found to be unresponsive or not breathing.
- Children are always supervised when sleeping.

Management needs to:

- Ensure that the legal requirement to have an appropriate safe sleep and rest policy is met.
- To know that all staff team members know their roles and responsibilities and have the clarity that they need to ensure that all children's needs for safe and comfortable rest and/or sleep are met according to best practice guidelines.
- To ensure that all necessary and appropriate safety measures and procedures are clearly outlined in the policy and procedures.

Procedure for managing an emergency if a sleeping child is unresponsive:

1. First aid is administered, and the emergency services are contacted.
2. The Lead Educator or the person who is in charge at that time notifies the child's parents/guardians as soon as possible of the current situation.
3. The person who found the child and has been resuscitating the child gives a detailed account of events to the paramedics on their arrival.
4. Staff follow the direction of the paramedical staff.
5. The scene is to be left as it is. An Garda Síochána may need to investigate.
6. Families of the other children attending the childcare service may need to be notified of the incident by the lead educator and or chairperson.
7. Staff support is essential following any such incident

HEALTH

TRANSITIONS POLICY

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all transitions experienced by children are planned, positive, respectful and responsive to each child's individual needs, promoting continuity of learning, wellbeing and development

This policy is informed by:
Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016
Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (updated 2024)
Síolta: The National Quality Framework (Standard 13)
NCCA Mo Scéal Transition Templates

Definition
Transitions are the processes of moving between different daily activities, environments, or life stages. They involve daily shifts like moving from free play to tidy-up time, as well as broader milestones such as starting preschool or moving on to primary school.
Transitions include:

- Multiple daily changes in routines and experiences and separations from familiar people and settings.
- Changes from one early years' service to another
- Entry into and transition from the current childcare setting into another childcare setting or school

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises 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 the child's development.
Our educators support and facilitate successful transitions through responsive relationships that are secure, consistent and continuous. All transitions will be planned with sensitivity to each child's needs. Educators work to develop strong family relationships through frequent sharing of information and goals, building strong connections between each child's home and the preschool to help ease transitions into new routines.
We will maintain continuity of relationships and carefully plan all new routines and experiences for children to help ease any anxiety they may have associated with change. We will do our best to ensure that we provide a secure base that supports the children's focused attention, their curiosity about exploring their world and emerging independence.
In conjunction with our Settling In policy, we aim to provide relationships and routines that are consistent, predictable and responsive to support each child's sense of trust, security, and identity. We consider it essential that educators can read and respond to each child's cues.

We will:

- Consider transitions from the perspective of the developmental needs of each child and their family.
- Build partnerships with families to support the development of responsive, respectful relationships among children and staff.
- Individualise routines and practices to support each child's needs, temperament, family preferences, culture and language.
- Use routines and transitions as opportunities to promote children's development.
- Plan for transitions and placements that provide consistency and continuity for children and their families.

We regularly review and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of transitions to ensure each child has a positive experience and engages fully in all activities.

Routines and transitions within the daily programme of activities

- Children will be allowed to perform personal routines, such as going to the bathroom, according to their individual body schedules.
- Transitions will be planned so that children who are ready before others have something to do
- Children will be given appropriate advance notice of changes to routines or planned changes within the schedule of activities that will affect them.
- Educators understand that some children need more time and adult assistance to cope with changes than others.
- Routines and transitions will be handled consistently so that children can learn trust and security.
- While balancing the range of activities (active/quiet, small group/large group/individual etc.), the daily plan will be kept as simple as possible to keep transitions to a minimum.
- If the furniture is going to be changed around this will be discussed with children and explained in advance so that they understand why the change is happening.
- Children will be allowed to participate in routines as much as possible (e.g. helping to set up activities, cleaning up etc.).

Planning transitions

The following will be considered during preparation for an upcoming transition:

Environment/physical space

- Will the next setting be a different area or at a different location? How will the child react?
- Will materials and equipment be different or familiar to the child? How accessible will they be?
- What choices will the child be able to make?

Routines

- What will daily activities be like, and how might the child react to these experiences?
- How are the routines handled (outdoor/indoor activities, clean up time, lunch time)?

Educators

- How do educators with the children and when do they intervene?

- How do educators relate to each other? Are they friendly and respectful?
- How can educators begin preparing the child for each transition?
- What partnerships need to be formed to build continuity and ease transitions for each child?
- Educators understand and honor each family's identity, culture and beliefs, and take these into consideration during all transitions

Social interactions

- What opportunities will the child have to interact with each other?
- What is the family role?
- What are the opportunities for family interaction?

Fostering each family's identity, culture and beliefs

Ardfinnan Community Playschool will try as far as possible to

- Provide harmony with each child's home culture.
- Use the child's home language.
- Provide a culturally relevant environment that is familiar and homelike to the child.
- Understand and respect each family's cultural beliefs and child-rearing values.
- Provide consistency of care by understanding the home routines of each child.
- Discuss each family's expectations for their child's development and transition. For example, ask if the family expects the child to develop independence skills and how the family expects the child to adjust to a new setting, new people, and new languages.

Families are encouraged to

- Share their cultural values and child-rearing practices with educators before and during their child's transition and describe what they expect from our preschool.
- Communicate frequently with educators about the child's routines, temperament, reactions, likes, dislikes, and ability to adapt to differences and change.
- Provide educators with ongoing feedback and negotiate differences.

Settling Into Preschool

Principle
The Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and The Department of Education and Skills: NCCA national template for transition from preschool to school and Síolta Standard 13

Ardfinnan Community Playschool Settling in policy means that procedures are in place to support each child's emotional wellbeing and transition from home to playschool when they first attend our service and to continue that support as they progress from playschool to primary. It ensures that there is sensitive planning and management between our playschool and parents to ensure positive experiences as a child begins their educational journey.

Statement
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 work to develop strong relationships between the family and the service through frequent communication and sharing of information and goals.

We aim to provide relationships and routines that are consistent, predictable, and responsive to support each child's sense of trust, security, and identity.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool believes that children need to feel safe, stimulated and happy to develop and grow socially emotionally and physically, they need to feel secure and comfortable with their educators. Parents also need to have confidence in both their children' wellbeing and play an active part in their child's settling at our playschool by saying goodbye and telling their child when and who is collecting them.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool 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.
- Individualise 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.
- 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, including observations of the children and feedback from their families.
- Support parents in being or becoming advocates as they transition with their children both into this service from home or other settings [such as a child-minder] and from this service to other settings, especially primary school.
- Ensure the most appropriate transition to other environments and services from participation in this service by beginning transition planning as early as possible prior to the child's move.
- 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 this service to primary school.

We use the NCCA Mo Scéal resources to support the transition of children from preschool to primary school.

Open Evening

Prior to starting their journey at Ardfinnan Community Playschool each child is invited to our open evening, where they can spend some time with their parents in our service. For children joining the service midyear, they are invited in to meet with staff at any time so their child can see our playschool and familiarise themselves with our playroom.

Parents are encouraged to point to the child sized furniture, explaining that it is just for children and emphasising that only the child will have great fun playing with all the toys.

Parents are given the opportunity to meet all staff members, to chat about the routine of our playschool day, to have any questions answered, to view our curriculum and to fill in our Enrolment Form.

First Day of Playschool

Parents are encouraged to leave their child as quickly as possible as the children usually find it distressing if too many unexpected strangers (and other children's parents are unexpected strangers to a small child) hang around.

Parents are of course welcome to stay for the first 30 minutes if their child is unsettled. They may also wait in the garden for a time to ensure their child is settling well. Parents are welcome to phone at any time during the session and staff will contact parents if a child becomes unduly upset.

There are a number of strategies to help your child settle in our playschool these can be discussed with staff to ensure best care for your child and their time with us. These may include:

a) Visiting the playschool prior to your child starting school, explaining to him/her what their day at playschool will include focusing on fun and friendship
b) Gradually building up the time your child attends playschool
c) Using the educators' names when speaking about playschool to your child so as they are familiar with staff when they arrive at playschool
d) Encourage your child's confidence and independence by praising them when dropping and collecting them

Please be assured many of the staff are parents too and understand parent's apprehension on this big occasion. We will strive to ensure that your child is as happy and as nurtured as possible while in our care.

Families are encouraged to share:

- Information about their child's temperament.
- Information about what upsets their child and what comforts them.
- How their child reacts to strangers, familiar adults and other children.
- How they handle routines such as eating and toileting.
- Information about themselves and their culture.
- Information about their child's previous experiences.
- A brief developmental and medical history of their child – from birth to the present – that includes social, emotional, motor skills and language development information.
- How they prefer to communicate (e.g., in person, by telephone, or in writing).
- How they wish to be involved in playschool.
- Their hopes for their child.

Transitioning to Primary School

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that transitioning to Primary School can be a little scary for children, with this in mind our educators have built a relationship with our local primary schools, inviting teachers and principals to visit our playschool to meet with the children, pictures of the schools, their uniforms are posted on our walls for the children. There are information sheets available for parents to help them through the process and staff are available to talk with parents about their child's needs going forward to primary school.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool also uses Mo Scéal the national template (NCCA, 2018) for transfer of information from this setting to primary school. Educators also liaise with teachers and other specialists e.g., speech therapist, occupational therapist, to ensure the smooth transition from playschool to primary for all children.

Supporting Children Through the Transition to Primary School

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that positive relationships are central to children's emotional wellbeing and development. As children prepare to move from preschool to primary school, they may experience a range of emotions, including excitement, uncertainty, sadness, or anxiety about leaving familiar teachers, friends, and routines. While children may not always be able to express or fully understand these feelings, it is important that they are acknowledged and supported.

Educators follow strategies help children manage this important transition in a positive and supportive way:

Prepare children in advance. Talk with children about starting primary school well before the transition takes place. Educators discuss with children what they can expect, including new teachers, classmates, routines, and learning experiences, helping them feel more confident about the change.

Acknowledge and name emotions. Encourage children to talk about how they are feeling and help them identify emotions such as excitement, nervousness, sadness, or worry. Educators reassure them that these feelings are a normal part of change.

Celebrate positive memories. Encourage children to reflect on the friendships, experiences, and achievements they have enjoyed in playschool. Educators remind them that although they are moving on, these memories and relationships remain an important part of their lives.

Provide opportunities for meaningful goodbyes. Support children in expressing their appreciation for their friends and educators by making farewell cards, drawing pictures, creating artwork, or sharing kind messages. These activities help children recognise the value of their relationships and provide a sense of closure.

Focus on new opportunities. Emphasis the exciting aspects of starting primary school, such as making new friends, learning new skills, exploring new environments, and becoming more independent. Educators reinforce that change is a natural part of growing and learning.

Share positive experiences. Educators and families can support children by talking about their own experiences of starting a new school or adapting to change, highlighting how they managed their feelings and settled into new environments.

Create lasting memories. Children bring home their special book which contains lots of memories such as artwork, photos and achievements of their time in playschool.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool works in partnership with families and local primary schools to ensure each child experiences a positive, respectful, and well-supported transition. By recognising children's emotional needs and celebrating this important milestone, we help lay the foundation for a confident and successful start to primary school.

HEALTH

SUN PROTECTION

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool's sun protection policy has been developed to ensure that all children are protected from damaging levels of UVR from the sun. We recognise that children's skin is extremely sensitive at this young age and this policy must be carefully considered throughout the whole year but especially during the warmer months of April, May, June and September.

Sun Protection Procedure

- Children are required to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears from the sun. Parents are expected to provide hats.
- It is recommended that water resistant SPF 50+, broad spectrum sunscreen is applied before the child attends playschool
- Parents must provide sunscreen for their child; the sunscreen must be clearly labelled if the child needs to top up their sun cream before going outside. Educators encourage the children to be independent putting on their own sun cream with their help
- Children in direct sunlight should use shade whenever possible.
- Children are provided with regular fluid, their drinks bottles are stored in the playroom where the children have access to throughout the day,
- Educators and staff adhere to the Hand Hygiene Policy between each child's sunscreen applications and encourage each child to wash after applying cream where necessary.

HEALTH

HEAD LICE PREVENTION

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises that it is always possible to catch head lice, no matter how careful we are. Children can pick up head lice just by coming into close contact with someone who is infected. This policy states the importance of how to recognise the problem early and to know how to deal with it.

Principle
This policy is underpinned by Child Care Act 1991, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook 2011

Procedures

- Educators will be given training on how to recognise Head Lice
- The lead educator will inform other parents verbally or in writing in the event of an outbreak of Head Lice, keeping confidentiality.
- Parents will be asked to check their child's hair carefully and regularly, and to use the treatment recommended by the public health nurse, chemist, doctor or local health clinic.
- Educators will talk to the children on the importance of not sharing other people's combs, hats etc. this is also stressed to parents.
- A child with a confirmed case of Head Lice is advised to remain at home until the infection is brought under control

- Parents are asked to contact the playschool and inform them if their child has Head Lice (this information is shared with other parents, but names are kept confidential)
-

If more advice is needed, the service will contact the public health nurse.

SAFETY

SAFETY STATEMENT

ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL --HEALTH AND SAFETY STATEMENT

We at ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children, employees and all those affected by its activities and in compliance with the Safety, Health and Welfare Work Act, 2005 and the associated General Application Regulations 2007, which set out how the prevention of ill-health and accidents at work is to be achieved.

We understand that we have the ultimate responsibility for the workplace and a direct influence on health and safety in our business. The health and safety policy outlines our commitment to ensuring that the workplace is as safe and healthy as reasonably practicable and that all relevant health and safety legislation is complied with.

SAFETY POLICY

We are committed to fulfilling our statutory obligations to manage and co-ordinate workplace safety and health and ensuring, so as far as is reasonably practicable, that:

- Work activities are managed to ensure the safety, health and welfare of our employees
- The safety statement is maintained and updated; risk assessments are carried out and reviewed as required and brought to the attention of all employees at least annually
- Identified protective and preventive measures are implemented and maintained
- Improper conduct likely to put an employee's safety and health at risk is prevented
- A safe place of work is provided, which is adequately designed and maintained
- A safe means of access and egress is provided
- Safe equipment is provided
- Safe systems of work are provided
- Risks to health from any article or substance are prevented
- Appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision are provided
- Where hazards cannot be eliminated, adequate arrangements, including the provision of suitable protective clothing and equipment, will be put in place to reduce the risk of injury
- Emergency plans are prepared and revised
- Welfare facilities are provided and adequately maintained
- Competent personnel to advise and assist in securing the safety, health and welfare of our employees are employed when required.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool considers that it is the strict duty of all staff to conform to child care safety policies and practices and to carry out their responsibilities as detailed in this document and in accordance with any other relevant legislation.
Ardfinnan Community Playschool welcomes feedback from staff or service users regarding any aspect of this document or any other health and safety concerns. Feedback in this regard should be directed to management and Lead Educator (named below).
Signed: _____ (Lead Educator) Date: _____

SAFETY

RISK MANAGEMENT

Principle
The Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 Regulation 10, Regulation 14 and Regulation 23: Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005

This policy applies to all staff members and all service activities.
Regular risk assessments are carried out to identify risks to any child attending the service; their parents while accessing the service; any adult working in the service; or any visitors to the service in relation to:

- The governance of the service
- The health, safety and welfare of each individual
- The safety of the service
- The premises being safe, suitable and appropriate for care and education of children.

Statement
At Ardfinnan Community Playschool, we are committed to safeguarding children, staff, parents and all visitors to our Early Years' Service. We have policies and procedures in place to ensure that we are providing a safe place for children, staff, parents, and visitors to be.

Risk is part of everyday life in every Early Years' Service and is something that our staff are well accustomed to responding to. All staff members ensure they have considered all potential hazards that may occur during a session, on an outing or during children's play activities.
At Ardfinnan Community Playschool we provide the children with a risk rich environment which enables them to access and take risks in their play. We allow them to make choices, test their limits, meet challenges, explore boundaries and learn from the risks they take. We follow the guidelines of Aistear and Síolta in providing the children with opportunities to challenge themselves with hands on experiences. These experiences are guided by mindful staff who have previously observed the children and are aware of their abilities.

Responsibility
All staff members have a duty of care in detecting and dealing with potential risks while the Lead Educator has ultimate responsibility for ensuring proper risk management and procedure. All staff

and volunteers will be aware of our Risk Management Policy and will act accordingly with procedures to ensure a safe environment for all.

Procedures
Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a 5-step procedure when accessing and dealing with hazards and risks
Step 1: identify the hazard-- Walk around the playschool each morning prior to opening; ensure all staff are involved in risk assessment.
Step 2: identify who is at risk and how-- Can children, staff, visitors be harmed or injured
Step 3: what procedures are already in existence -- What measures can we put in place to reduce the risk of harm or injury
Step 4: what further action is needed to ensure we have reduced the risk as far as is reasonably practical -- Having identified the hazards or risks you are required to protect the children from harm by identifying measures to reduce or eliminate hazard or risk.
Step 5: what action will/was taken -- Prioritise hazards and deal with high-risk first, all findings should be written down and recorded, showing that you have identified the hazards, decided who could be harmed and how and also show how you plan to eliminate the risk or hazard. Whomever has identified the risk and dealt with it must document it.

Records Management and Review
All risk assessments completed are documented, recorded and reviewed annually or more frequently if warranted.
Risk management records are kept in line with our Record Keeping Policy, and our Risk Management system is reviewed as part of our annual review.

SAFETY

FIRE SAFETY

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool places the highest priority on the health, safety and protection of all children, staff and families using the service.
All reasonable measures are undertaken to guard against the outbreak of fire. In the case of fire outbreak, educators are trained to implement the evacuation procedures according to the Fire Safety in Preschools Guidelines 1999. We have a nominated Fire Safety Officer who is assigned responsibility for the implementation and overseeing fire safety in the service. All staff are familiar with location of any firefighting equipment and trained in the use of such equipment.

Principle
This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016, Tulsa's Quality and Regulatory Framework and Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services., the Fire Services Act 1981 and 2003, the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005, the Building Control Act 1990 and the Fire Safety in Pre-

Schools Guidelines 1999 and Tulsa's Guide to Building Safety- Fire and Planning Requirements

Prevention

The guidelines for a fire safety programme, as presented in Fire Safety in Pre-schools (1999) are adhered to:

- preventing outbreaks of fire
- instruction and training of staff on fire prevention and fire safety procedures
- emergency procedures and evacuation drills
- maintenance of fire protection equipment
- maintenance of building services
- providing appropriate furnishings and fittings including bedding
- availability of escape routes
- keeping of fire safety records
- All fire drill practices will be recorded in the Fire Register.

Fire Drills

Fire evacuation drills are carried out to simulate fire conditions. They will be carried out monthly while changing the time and day to ensure all children experience a fire drill.

When carrying out an unannounced fire drill, Ardfinnan Community Playschool adheres to the following procedure:

- The alarm will be set off manually.
- Educators will walk with the children from the building to the assembly point in the garden.
- The fire officer will collect the attendance record.
- The fire officer will check each room to ensure no person is left in the building.
- At the assembly point, all children, educators and staff will be accounted for using the attendance records.
- A record of the fire drill will be maintained, including the date, person/section taking part, the evacuation time, any details of deficiencies and actions to be taken.

Training

- The Lead Educator has been appointed Ardfinnan Community Playschool's Fire Warden and receives training from a registered provider every 3 years or as recommended.
- All educators and staff will receive training in Fire Safety and Evacuation procedures and understand their responsibilities
- Fire Safety training is renewed, at a minimum, every 3 years.
- Our induction training programme includes Fire Safety procedural training
- All educators and staff are familiar with the location of any firefighting equipment and trained in the use of such equipment.
- Staff will support children to understand the procedures to follow when they hear the fire alarm.

Evacuation Procedures

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a 4-step approach to Emergency Evacuations, all staff are asked to familiarise themselves with these procedures

Raising the Alarm

- Anyone discovering an outbreak of fire must, without hesitation, sound the alarm by operating the nearest fire alarm call point.

On hearing the fire alarm

The evacuation procedure will be initiated once the fire alarm has been sounded, all children, educators and staff must walk calmly to Assembly Point 1 located in the playground behind the slide. All visitors must follow educators and staff's lead. Attention must be given to children with special needs by their key worker or AIM support educator

Roll Call

- Attendance registers and visitors' books are held at a central point and will be brought to the assembly point when the alarm sounds.
- The fire officer has been nominated to have overall responsibility to ensure that a roll call is conducted in the event of evacuation of the premises
- When everyone has assembled at the assembly point, a roll or count will be made immediately to ascertain that no one has remained in the premises
- Any visitors or contractors on the premises at that time will be included
- The count at the assembly point will be checked using the attendance records and visitors' book to verify that everyone is out of the building

Calling the Fire Brigade

- All outbreaks of fire or any suspected fire, however small, must be reported immediately to the Fire Brigade by the quickest means available. This task will be the responsibility of the Fire Officer.
- When calling the Fire Brigade, the following information is given, including:
  - Name of the building
  - Address of the building
  - Eircode
  - Directions to the building
  - Type of fire situation (if available), for example, fire location, fire size, materials involved, and persons missing/ injured

FIRE ASSEMBLY POINT 1

Located in the playground behind the slide

Upon hearing the fire alarm, please follows these directions

1. On hearing the alarm, educators and staff will calmly line up children to leave by appointed exit.
2. All children to be lead from building by educators who immediately checks the attendance record to see that all children are accounted for
3. Children with special needs will be helped to exit the building by educators
4. The Lead Educator to leave last, ensuring that all rooms are empty and closing all doors and windows if it is safe to do so.
5. The Lead Educator to bring Emergency Pack which contains all parents contact details

6. The Fire Service is contacted as promptly as possible, phone 999 or 112. The Fire Safety Officer will provide Fire Brigade service with necessary information on arrival.
7. A decision is made if it is safe to stay at Fire Assembly Point 1 or is there relevant danger to move to another Assembly Point.
8. In the event of fire, staff will inform an officer of Ardfinnan Childcare committee as soon as practicable

The fire officer will decide if it is necessary to move to a different assembly area, this is done in conjunction with the fire brigade.

Fire Assembly Points

- **Assembly Point 1** -- Located in the playground behind the slide
- **Assembly Point 2** -- Located at the front gate of the playschool. In the event of a fire or evacuation of the building and parents are called to collect their child, Assembly Point 2 will be the designated collection point unless otherwise stated by the fire officer
- **Assembly Point 3** – Located in the green area in front of the playschool. In the event of a full-scale evacuation of Playschool premises, the fire officer will use the contents of the Emergence Pack to ensure the safety of each child and adult in the Service, handing out hi-visual jackets to all once it is safe to do so
- **Assembly Point 4** -- Located in the village church, Main Street Ardfinnan. This is used in extreme cases such as gas leak, violent treats or severe weather where having the children outside is not safe. It is the decision of the Safety Officer to evacuate all children and adults to Assembly Point 4.

If a decision is made to evacuate the premises, then the Lead Educator issues each child and adult with a hi-vis jacket from the emergency pack and follows procedures to evacuate to Assembly Point 3 or 4. Upon arrival at a new Assembly Point a role call is made ensuring all children, educators and staff are present.

In the event of a fire or evacuation of the building and parents are called to collect their child, the Assembly Point 1 will be the designated collection point unless otherwise stated by the fire officer.

Emergence Pack

Ardfinnan Community Playschool will use this emergence pack in line with our Fire Safety and with all other relevant Health and Safety guidelines.

CONTENTS

- 25 high visual jackets child size
- 5 high visual jackets adult size
- Rope
- Portable Fire Assembly Point sign
- Up to date list of all children and their contact details including emergency contact details
- Up to date list of all staff and their contact details including emergency contact details
- Up to date name and contact details of relevant committee members

- First Aid Kit which include any specific medication which may be needed in times of emergencies for some children i.e., EpiPen

The Emergency Pack will be checked by staff each term to ensure it is up to date and ready for any incident.

SAFETY

OUTINGS

Principle

In accordance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, Regulation 10 and Schedule 5, Ardfinnan Community Playschool has developed this Outings Policy to ensure the safety and welfare of children attending the service when participating in outings away from the service premises.

Outings are an important part of the Ardfinnan Community Playschool preschool curriculum providing children with opportunities to experience different environments and play experiences. The welfare and safety of participating children is paramount, and a risk assessment will be completed before each outing.

Planning An Outing

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment will be completed by the Lead Educator or competent person before every outing. The assessment will consider the age, number and individual needs of the children, the destination, planned activities, transport arrangements and the number of adults attending.

The risk assessment will consider, where relevant:

- Traffic, roads and road crossings.
- Transport arrangements and vehicle safety.
- Water hazards, including rivers, lakes and swimming pools.
- Slips, trips, falls and uneven surfaces.
- Toilets and changing facilities.
- Public spaces, crowds and unfamiliar people.
- Weather conditions, including heat, cold, rain and strong winds.
- Children's allergies, medical needs and medication.
- The risk of a child becoming separated from the group.
- Accessibility and any additional needs of individual children.
- Emergency exits, evacuation procedures and assembly points.
- Any hazards specific to the venue or activities planned.

Appropriate control measures will be put in place to reduce identified risks. Where a risk cannot be adequately controlled, the route, activity or venue will be changed, or the outing postponed or cancelled.

The risk assessment will be reviewed if circumstances change during the outing, and all educators and accompanying adults will be made aware of relevant safety measures before departure.

Consent

- Have Parents given written consent before every outing?
- Have the forms been signed and returned to the service before the outing date?
- Has each parent been informed of the destination, method of travel, times of departure and expected time of arrival back?
- Has consent been obtained for a group photo?

Does the Consent form state the following:

- The number of children going on the outing.
- The number of staff, Parents and other adults going on the outing.

Responsibilities

- Is every educator and staff member aware of their responsibilities for e.g., roll call, head counts, dealing with accidents/incidents and co-coordinating responses to any critical incident that may arise on the outing e.g., search and stay on site if a child goes missing?
- Is each educator and staff member clearly aware of their role/responsibilities during the outing?
- If parents are attending, are they aware of their role/responsibilities during the outing?
- Has a check list been compiled for the outing?
- Are children prepared for the outing destination? E.g., have appropriate clothing, sunscreen, or provided with any other item deemed necessary.
- Are educators and staff aware of Ardfinnan Community Playschools Missing Child policy
- Are educators and staff familiar with procedures to deal with any critical incidents e.g., choking, drowning etc.

Insurance

- Is there adequate insurance for each child going on the outing?

Adult/Child ratio

Ardfinnan Community Playschool always adheres to proper adult/child ratio.

- Adult/Child ratio will be increased where necessary, recommending parents fill out this role
- All additional adults will be always supervised by educators

Management of outing

- The children will always be supervised
- Each adult will be briefed of their role prior to going on the outing
- Frequent head counts/roll calls will be carried out during the course of the outing
- Children will be easily identified by their hi-vis jackets

First Aid

The lead educator or designated first aid officer will carry a first aid bag, relevant phone numbers of emergency contacts of children attending the outing, a charged mobile phone always in case of an emergence

All educators hold an up to date first aid certificate

Details of a child/children who have medical issues including allergies are known to educators in charge of the outing

Other

Parents and children are informed prior to the outing as to what suitable clothing is required, sun cream, hats and coats, etc.
Parents and children are also informed if the children need to bring their lunch
Parents are also reminded of our Social Media policy on sharing photos

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SAFETY

MISSING CHILD POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Statement of intent
At Ardfinnan Community Playschool, it is our intention to always maintain children's safety as the highest priority both on & off the premises

Our Aim
We aim to ensure that every attempt is made, through carrying out the outing's procedure & the arrival and collection procedure, to ensure the security of children is always maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Method
If a child goes missing from our Early Years' Service

- The lead educator will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The lead educator talks to educators and staff to establish when & where the child was last seen & records this.
- If the child is not found the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the Gardaí.
- The lead educator contacts an officer from Ardfinnan Community Playschool committee and reports the incident.

If a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not attending and responsible for their own child, the setting ensures that there is a procedure that is followed.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, educators and staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- One educator will remain with the other children while the remaining available educators/adults conduct an immediate and systematic search of the agreed areas. The search will be coordinated by the lead educator or person in charge. Gardaí and venue personnel will be involved as appropriate
- The lead educator is informed, if they are not on the outing, and makes their way to the venue to aid the search and be the point of contact for the Gardaí as well as support educator and staff.
- The Gardaí are contacted and the child reported as missing.

- The lead educator contacts the child's parent who makes their way to the Playschool or outing venue as agreed with the lead educator.
- The remaining children will be kept together in a safe, supervised location. The lead educator will decide, based on the circumstances, whether they should remain at the venue or return to the service
- The lead educator contacts the chairperson of the board of management who comes down to the Playschool as soon as possible.

The investigation

- Educators and staff keep calm & do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The chairperson will ensure that the incident is fully documented, reviewed and followed up carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all educators and staff present at the time, or who were on the outing.
- The lead educator writes an incident report detailing
    - the date and time of the report;
    - what educators/staff/ children were in the group/outing;
    - when the child was last seen in the group/outing;
    - what has taken place in the group/outing since then; and
    - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
    - A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a Garda investigation all educators and staff co-operate fully. In this case, the Gardaí will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing all staff members.
- **Tusla Notification**: Any incident where a child goes missing while attending the service will be notified to Tusla Early Years Inspectorate in accordance with Regulation 31 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. The notification will be made in writing within the required timeframe.
- The Insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

Part of managing the incident is to try and keep everyone as calm as possible.

- Educators and staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves & their feelings of anxiety & distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Educators or staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Management needs to ensure that all staff under investigation are not only treated fairly but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry & fraught. They may want to blame educators or staff & may single out one educator or staff member over others. When dealing with a distraught parent, there should always be 2 staff members. Aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated & the Gardaí should be called.

- The other children may too be worried. The remaining educators and staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs & must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the outcome, educators may need counselling & support.

Following any missing-child incident, the service will review the circumstances, identify any lessons learned and update relevant policies, procedures or risk assessments where necessary

Educators or staff members must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

SAFETY

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of children and staff attending our service. This policy addresses the situation where employees are unable to work, or the service must close due to weather-related circumstances outside of our control. At all times safety considerations will be paramount

Procedures
Measures to be taken to ensure the safety and welfare of children

- Detailed checks are regularly carried out 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, and 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 educators, staff and parents are kept informed as events unfold and to ensure there is no unnecessary travel or risk taken
- We have a procedure in place to contact parents at short notice
- Where severe weather develops during the session, children will remain safely indoors or in another designated safe area. Parents will be contacted where early collection is considered necessary. The service will ensure that children remain supervised until collected by an authorised person."

Communication to parents
Once a decision has been taken to close the service, parents will be informed as soon as possible so they can make alternative arrangements. Parents educators and staff will be kept informed as events unfold to ensure there is no unnecessary travel. Educators and staff will be informed by phone call and/or the playschool WhatsApp account. Parents will be informed by phone call and/or through our parent Facebook messenger or WhatsApp account.

Parents will be informed that this decision was taken considering our risk assessment on the health and safety of children and our ability to comply with Regulations.

Tusla Notification

Where an incident occurs that results in the service being closed, the management will consider whether notification to Tusla Early Years Inspectorate is required in accordance with Regulation 31.

Management of staff absences due to inclement weather

- If the decision was taken to close the service a communication plan will be implemented to ensure that all educators and staff are aware of the implications of this decision.
- As the service will be closed educators and staff are advised to stay at home
- The policy set out in the employee contracts will be applied and communicated to staff
- The management will act as reasonable as possible given the circumstances
- Where the service closes due to inclement weather, the management will communicate with educators and staff regarding pay and attendance arrangements in accordance with their contracts of employment and applicable employment legislation.

Where an educator or staff member is unable to attend work because their child's school or childcare facility is closed due to inclement weather, the circumstances will be discussed with management and appropriate leave arrangements will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with employment legislation and their contract of employment.

Unexcused Absence

Where an employee fails to attend for work and does not notify the manager then this will be dealt with as an unexplained absence and will be dealt with under the service's policy on staff absence.

Review and Evaluation -After each event

The Management and staff of Ardfinnan Community Playschool 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

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SAFETY

CRITICAL INCIDENT PREPARDNESS PLAN

Definition of Critical Incident

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the playschool

Statement

Emergency situations usually come with little or no warning and can lead to confusion and devastation. The purpose of this plan is to address basic emergency planning and response for a range of emergencies which may occur at our Service.

Aim

The aim of this plan is to provide guidance to our educators and staff on the prevention of and effective response to a critical incident. Its purpose is to facilitate our service to

- minimize the risks of a critical incident occurring;
- have an effective approach in responding to critical incidents as they occur;
- identify appropriate support and counselling structures in the event of an incident;
- Identify and implement appropriate training and information resources for staff.

Principle
Ardfinnan Community Playschool's Critical Incident Preparedness Plan is written in accordance with the Child Care (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency preparedness is the preparation and planning necessary to effectively handle a critical incident. The goal of these preparedness activities is to make sure that Ardfinnan Community Playschool is ready and able to respond quickly and effectively in the event of a critical incident. All educators, staff, committee members will understand and be able to activate the Critical Incident Preparedness Plan, parents will also be made aware of it. The following are sample emergency situations where our Critical Incident Preparedness Plan will be implemented:

- Medical Emergencies,
- Missing Child, (see missing child policy and procedures)
- Natural Disasters: storms, icy weather
- Utility Disruption, water, electricity, heating
- Fire/smoke Emergencies
- Hazardous Material; chemical spills
- Disgruntled or Impaired Parent/Guardian
- Pandemic Flu or other Pandemic Episodes
- Evacuation Process and Procedure for Sheltering Off-site

Tusla Notification

Where a critical incident falls within the notification requirements of Regulation 31 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, the board of management will notify Tusla Early Years Inspectorate in writing within the required timeframe.

Immediate response – first 24 hours

CRICITAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT)	COMMUNICATION PLAN
Designated team leader Erica Condon – Lead Educator **Educators** Elaine Cowan	1. Identify emergency/incident 2. Implement appropriate emergency preparedness plan 3. Contact emergency services, **999** or **122** 4. Evacuation of children, educators and staff if necessary

Christine O Connor **Designated officers of Ardfinnan Community Playschool committee** Elaine Bowe Breda Murphy Louise Boyle Mary MacNamara Helen Nugent	5. Delegate immediate first aid 6. Ensure safety and welfare of children and staff 7. Notify officer from Ardfinnan Community Playschool Committee 8. Notify parents 9. Identify children, educators and staff members most closely involved and at risk 10. Manage media (Chairperson - Elaine Bowe) 11. Maintain Emergency Operational Procedure & Time Log

Secondary Response [24–72 hours]

1. Assess the need for support and counselling for those directly and indirectly involved.
2. Provide parents and wider community with information as appropriate.
3. Arrange debriefing for all parents, children most closely involved and at risk.
4. Restore playschool to regular routine, program delivery, and community life as soon as practicable.
5. Complete critical incident report.

On-going Follow-up Response

1. Identify any other persons who may be affected by the critical incident and provide information to support services for community members.
2. Provide accurate information to parents.
3. Arrange a memorial service and occasional worship as appropriate.
4. Maintain contact with any injured and affected parties to provide support and to monitor progress.
5. Monitor all staff and children for signs of delayed stress and the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder; providing information on treatment as necessary.
6. Evaluate critical incident and Emergency management plan.
7. Be sensitive to anniversaries.
8. Manage any possible longer-term disturbances e.g., inquests, legal proceedings.

Guidance on providing information may be found in ….

"Responding to Critical Incidents, Resource Materials for Schools", Department of Education and Science, 2007;

General Information

PART VIII of the Child Care Preschool Services Act 2016 states:

Notification of incidents 31: A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(a) The death of a pre-school child while attending the service, including the death of a child in hospital following his or her transfer to hospital from the service;

(b) The diagnosis of a pre-school child attending the service, an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service as suffering from an infectious disease within the meaning of the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 (S.I. No. 390 of 1981);
(c) An incident that occurs in the service and that results in the service being closed for any length of time;
(d) A serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;
(e) An incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service.

Immediate response – first 24 hours

CRICITAL INCIDENT TEAM	COMMUNICATION PLAN
Designated team leader Erica Condon **All staff** Elaine Cowan Jenn Baker Edel Meaney **Designated committee liaison person** Elaine Bowe Breda Murphy Louise Boyle Mary MacNamara Helen Nugent	1. Identify emergency/incident 2. Implement appropriate emergency preparedness plan 3. Contact emergency services, 999 or 112 4. Evacuation of children and staff if necessary 5. Delegate immediate first aid 6. Ensure safety and welfare of children and staff 7. Notify committee members 8. Notify parents 9. Identify children and staff members most closely involved and at risk 10. Manage media (Elaine Bowe) 11. Maintain Emergency Operational Procedure & Time Log

*****Emergency Contact List Is Available in The Office and the Emergence Pack***

Life-threatening or time-critical emergency

SERVICE	PHONE NUMBER	999	112
Local Garda Station Cahir	**052 744 5630**	**999**	**112**
Local Garda Station Clonmel	**052 612 2222**	**999**	**112**

Fire Brigade		**999**	**112**
Ambulance		**999**	**112**
Tipperary University Hospital	**052 617 7000**		
Ardfinnan Health Centre	**052 744 1364**		
Market Yard Surgery Cahir	**052 744 1364**		
Electricity	**1850 372 999**		
Gas	**1850 20 50 50**		
Water	**1890 278 278**		
Tipperary County Council	**0818 06 5003**		
Priest	**052 746 4408**		
Tusla	**01 7718500**		
Health & Safety Authority	**01 614 7000**		

Emergency Evacuation Bag Checklist

CONTENTS	√
Child data	
Children and staff with special needs list, including median needed	
Child release forms… sign in/out sheet	
Staff data	
Emergency contact list	
Traffic safety vests	
Keys	
Standard portable first aid kit	
A charged mobile phone	

EMERGENCY OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE & TIME LOG

Emergency _____ date _____

Time of initiation _____ time of stand down_____

Issues to be addressed	Time	Comments
Designated person informed		
Critical incident management team contacted		
Initiation of plan		
Assess of children and staff safety		
Outside sources to be contacted e.g.		
Fire/Ambulance/Garda contacted		
Do children need to be moved Safety point 1 Safety point 2 Safety point 3		

Safety point 4 Safety point 5		
Delegation of duties to Staff • First aid • Segregation of children • Services need to be isolated, e.g., electric's, water, gas, • Are all entrances secure • Front door • Emergency exits • Assistance required for evacuation • Secure Site		
Have all staff off duty been contacted, contact committee		
Do parents need to be contacted		
Do services need to be cancelled		

Organise children to be collected		
Is there risk of infection		
Emergency lead calls stand down		
All parties informed of stand down		

Designators/Co-ordinator Signature: _____Date: _____

Copies of report to: Board of Management and CIMT members

Contacting Emergency Services – What to Expect

What happens when you call 112 or 999

When you dial 112 (or 999), your emergency call is answered at a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). The specially trained call-taker will request you to state which service you require (i.e. An Garda Siochana, Fire Service, Ambulance Service or Coast Guard) and will also check your location with you. The call is then transferred to the Emergency Service Control Centre you requested based on your location and handled accordingly.

Most importantly if the line is busy, please do not hang up. The call will be answered as quickly as possible.

You will be asked the following:

- Depending on which emergency service you request, you will need to clearly communicate the following information:
- Where the emergency is: Give the exact address of the incident or emergency and/or any noticeable landmarks nearby.
- Try to give clear directions to the scene of the emergency
- Contact details: The telephone number you are calling from
- What has occurred: Details on the incident itself, when it occurred and whether it will require more than one of the services e.g. ambulance and fire services
- Who is involved: The number of persons involved, the description of any visible injuries and knowledge of any pre-existing medical conditions

Remember, it is important to wait for the call-takers instructions, try and stay calm and don't hang up until they tell you to.

Placing the facility address with accompanying directions near the telephone can help staff, children, or even visitors, should they have to dial 112 (or 999).

ALL CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team) PERSONS NEED TO BE FAMILUAR WITH ABOVE PROCESS.

EVUACTION POINTS
ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL

SAFETY POINT 1	**LOCATED IN THE GARDEN BEHIND THE SLIDE ON THE SOFT PLAY AREA**
SAFETY POINT 2	**LOCATED IN THE MAIN CAR PARK OF THE PLAYSCHOOL, ON THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF MAIN DOOR ON THE RAILING FACING THE FOOTPATH. the designated collection point for parents unless otherwise stated by the person in charge**
SAFETY POINT 3	**LOCATED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GREEN AREA ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE PLAYSCHOOL used in the event of a full-scale evacuation of Playschool premises**
SAFETY POINT 4	**LOCATED IN THE CHURCH ON THE MAIN STREET OF ARDFINNAN VILLAGE. This is used in extreme cases such as gas leak, violent treats or severe weather where having the children outside is not safe**
SAFETY POINT 5	**LOCATED IN THE PRESCHOOL IN A PREDESIGNATED ROOM -- Where evacuation would present a greater risk, the Person in Charge may instruct educators, staff and children to remain indoors in a secure area. External doors and windows will be secured where possible, children will be kept away from windows and entrances, and Gardaí will be contacted where necessary. Parents will be informed when it is safe and appropriate to do so**

EVUACTION

The Critical Incident Management Team Leader or Person in Charge will determine the safest evacuation or shelter location based on the nature of the emergency. Educators and Staff will bring the attendance record, emergency contact information and emergency evacuation bag where it is safe to do so. Children will remain supervised and a headcount will be completed at the designated location

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SAFETY

CLEANING

Statement
We at Ardfinnan Community Playschool implement good practice and work effectively to ensure our service is maintained to a very high standard. All employees are required to follow the cleanliness and hygiene procedures.

Procedure
Ardfinnan Community Playschool will be maintained in a clean, hygienic state throughout the day, and a cleaning record is kept. Our educators and staff are responsible for the materials and equipment used. They ensure that such items are clean, hygienic and safe at all times. The following measures are taken to encourage a clean hygienic playschool:

General

- Children will be encouraged to care for their environment.
- Cleaning routines and procedures are in place and are closely monitored and recorded.
- Hand washing is the most important defence against the spread of infection; our children, educators and staff will be aware of the importance and the need to wash our hands several times a day.
- educators should ensure children wash their hands after playing outside, before eating, after using the toilet and after any messy play with sand, paint, shaving foam etc.
- Educators and staff should ensure they wash their hands before and after handling or preparing any food, after handling bins, after helping a child in the toilet, before and after changing a child who has soiled themselves and after cleaning bodily fluids (blowing noses, cleaning up vomit, urine etc.)
- Children will be encouraged to develop their own personal hygiene routine, self-care and independence will be taught.
- In the event of a spillage (e.g.) blood, vomit, urine (etc.) it will be cleaned up very promptly (see infection control policy)
- Cloths are colour coded to be used in a particular room; they are washed on a regular basis and replaced when needed.

All cleaning products are stored safely and out of children's reach.

Playroom

- Educators and staff are responsible for keeping the playroom clean and tidy.

- Cleaning schedules are posted in each room and must be filled in by staff members as cleaning tasks are completed.
- At the end of each session tabletops must be cleaned, floors swept and bins emptied. These tasks must be recorded on the cleaning schedule.
- Educators and staff are responsible for cleaning and monitoring all equipment in the playroom.
- Educators and staff should draw up a rota between themselves to share the cleaning tasks
- Hard surface equipment will be washed in warm soapy water and dried with towels. Soft toys can be machine washed and toys or equipment not suited to being immersed in water can be wiped clean with a cloth and anti-bacterial spray.
- Any damaged or broken toys or equipment must be disposed of.
- Children's Toilet area must be monitored throughout the session and cleaned if necessary.
- The sink must also be cleaned regularly.

Kitchen

- Kitchen must be always kept spotlessly clean.
- Surfaces should be wiped down regularly throughout the day with anti-bacterial spray and clean cloth.
- Press doors and handles should be washed weekly
- Inside presses should be cleaned once a month
- Fridge should be washed inside and out monthly
- All staff are responsible for washing up any utensils used by them for lunch.
- Dishwasher should be washed inside and out monthly

Toilets

- Toilets will always be maintained in a clean and hygienic state.
- All staff members have a responsibility to check the toilets throughout the day.
- Any toilet tissue on the floor must be removed.
- Educators should ensure all toilets are flushed by children after use.
- Any spillages or accidents must be cleaned up immediately.
- If children use sinks in toilet area to wash their hands after painting, sinks must be checked by staff and any paint in sink or on tiles must be cleaned.

Equipment and Facilities

In planning the layout of the room, emphasis is given to minimising safety risks and allowing clear space whilst ensuring that activities are carefully monitored.

- All areas to be checked daily upon arrival into rooms, and routinely during the day.
- External exits always kept clear and unobstructed. In the classroom always keep doorway clear and accessible.
- Check all equipment and work areas to ensure it is safe to use prior to using it. Where a defect or safety concern is identified do not use the equipment until it has been cleared for use by the lead educator.
- There is always a phone in the building.

- All water in the children's wash basins is thermostatically controlled, if you suspect that the water is too hot for the children; please report to this to the lead educator.
- Ensure all sockets not in use have safety finger guards in place.
- All equipment should be turned off every evening on locking up, windows and doors secured, and all waste material disposed of.
- Toys are to be picked up/tidied away when not in use. Encourage children to pick up any toys that fall on the floor. Do not allow equipment to be left on the floor as it is a tripping hazard.
- All broken toys/equipment are to be discarded.
- Special attention must be paid to the outdoor environment. Any broken or dangerous equipment is to be taken out of use until it can be repaired or otherwise discarded

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SAFETY

VISITORS POLICY

Statement: Ardfinnan Community Playschool aims to ensure the safety of all who work, attend, and visit our playschool. We aim to give a warm welcome to all visitors with legitimate business in our service while ensuring that no unauthorized person gains entry. This policy is underpinned by Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

Visitors Procedures
All visitors are asked to state their business with the service prior to entering the building.
All visitors must sign in and out in the visitors' book. The sign in book needs the following information: - date, company name, signature, time in and out.
A member of staff will always accompany visitors in the service whilst in the building; at no time will a visitor be left alone with a child/children
Visitors must look after their own and others health and safety
The service will under no circumstances tolerate any form of harassment from third parties including visitors towards others, including children, educators, staff, and parents.

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HUMAN RESOURSE

RECUITMENT POLICY

Principle
This policy is underpinned by the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2011, the General Data Protection Regulations 2016 (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, and the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited (ACCCL) is committed to ensuring that recruitment procedures are fair, open and transparent and comply with the relevant employment legislation. Personal information received is dealt with in the strictest confidence and is held in line with General data Protection Regulations 2018. All recruitment and selection will be made from the widest possible field, and positions will be advertised internally and externally.

Statement
ACCCL will ensure that there is no bias on the grounds of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, family status, marital status, race, religion, membership of the traveling community, (as pertaining to the Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2004). ACCCL is an equal opportunities employer.
All necessary steps are taken to ensure that children are protected, as far as possible, in the recruitment and selection processes, and that ACCCL fulfils its duty of care in relation to the safe recruitment and selection of all those who will have access to the children. This includes requiring appropriate Garda/Police Vetting and written references in accordance with Children First.

The goals of this policy are:

- To recruit the best possible people to Ardfinnan Community Playschool and provide clear guidelines to management and employees on the recruitment and selection process.
- To ensure, through the recruitment and selection process, that children are protected and Ardfinnan Community Playschool fulfils its duty of care relating to safe recruitment and selection practice.
- To ensure the process is managed fairly without either direct or indirect discrimination towards any individual or group.
- To ensure that Ardfinnan Community Playschool is compliant with all relevant legislation and quality practice in this area.

Recruitment procedures

- Detailed job description is prepared, which includes
    - Job title
    - Location of the position
    - Who the employee will report to
    - Overall purpose of the job
    - Key area of work
    - Duties and responsibilities
    - Conditions of employment
- Personal specifications; clear criteria are agreed against which all applicants are assessed. These outline;
    - Qualifications – specifying QQI Level 5, 6, 7 or equivalent, all educators working with children must hold at minimum a QQI Level 5 in Childcare
    - Skills
    - Experience
    - Other attributes required to carry out the job satisfactory (e.g., current First Aid Certificate)

Advertising

All posts are publicly advertised and state clearly that Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee (ACCCL) is an equal opportunities employer.

All advertisements include the following:

- Name and role of the company – Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited
- Job title
- Brief description of the job
- Location of position
- Qualifications and experience which are essential and which are desirable
- Whether the position is full time or part time, temporary or permanent
- How to apply – job application form, CV
- How to get further information
- Closing date for application
- Equal opportunities statement
- Relevant logos

Short listing

A short-listing panel with a minimum of three people is set up to review all applications. This should include a member from an external organisation, and both sexes should be represented if possible.

- The selection criteria are based on the information in the advertisement and the job description. Assessment of applications is based only on information provided by the applicant
- All applicants who meet the selection criteria are invited to attend and interview
- A letter of regret is sent to all applicants who do not meet the selection criteria
- A complete report of the short-listing process is prepared by the short-listing panel

Interviews

An interview panel with a minimum of three people is selected by the Management Committee and always includes at least one member of the short-listing panel. The panel also includes a representative from an external organisation. Where possible both sexes are represented on the interview panel.

- Each member of the panel is supplied with the applications and CVs in advance
- A list of interview questions based on the job description is prepared in advance of the interviews. The panel decides in advance who will cover each area, questions must not reflect discrimination in any way
- Each candidate is asked the same questions
- At the end of each interview the candidate is invited to ask questions or to give any additional information
- Candidates' answers are scored and the totalling of scores gives the order on which candidates are panelled and job offers are made
- When the interviews are completed the interview panel prepares a full report of the interview process. The report is signed by each member of the panel and is **kept on file for at least one year** together with the short-listing report and the interview score sheet
- Any candidate who wishes to have feedback on their interview is entitled to this feedback in a timely fashion by writing to ACCCL

- A person may claim discrimination at interview up to six months post interview and a further six months should exceptional circumstances apply. This claim must be made in writing.
- A claim of discrimination or appeal of the interview outcome will be investigated by ACCCL immediately and their findings communicated in writing to the claimant. Should the claim be upheld ACCCL must find a suitable remedy
- The claimant retains the right to have their complaint investigated by the appropriate mechanism of the state, should they be unhappy with ACCCL's investigation and findings.

Selection Process

Subject to satisfactory references, Garda vetting, qualification verification and all other pre-employment checks, the position will normally be offered to the candidate who demonstrates the highest level of suitability against the published selection criteria

- A reference from the current or most recent employer
- Both referees are contacted verbally by telephone, they are asked to fill out a written reference form. The details of all references will be recorded and retained confidentially.
- Failure of a referee to provide a reference should not disqualify a candidate; other sources of reference should be pursued
- Garda Vetting will be completed in accordance with ACCCL's Garda Vetting and Child Safeguarding procedures before the successful candidate commences work or has access to children.
- Documentation confirming identity is required for all employees, such as a passport, driving licence or public services card

Letters of regret are sent to all unsuccessful candidates within one week of the interviews.

Garda Vetting

The lead educator and all employees of the service who have access to or work directly with children will be appropriately Garda Vetted. Garda Vetting will be renewed every three years, or in accordance with the current requirements applicable to Early Learning and Care services.

All employees will have two appropriate references taken up as part of the recruitment and selection process.

All other persons who work in or provide services to the setting, including contractors, students and volunteers, will be appropriately Garda Vetted where their role requires access to or contact with children, in accordance with current Garda Vetting requirements.

Management Committee Members and Directors have a governance and oversight role within the organisation and do not have contact with, or access to, children in the service. They are therefore not included in the service's Garda Vetting arrangements on the basis of their committee/director role. They will continue to be subject to the organisation's appropriate governance, reference and suitability requirements.

Parents/guardians who participate in occasional outings or provide a supportive role within the service are not required to be Garda Vetted where they do not have unsupervised access to children other than their own. Such participation will always be subject to appropriate supervision and the arrangements of the service.

All applicants must submit a properly completed Garda Vetting Form when an offer of position has been made.

Garda vetting must be submitted when an offer of a position has been made and where a person has worked in a state or country outside of Ireland for 6 consecutive months where it is practicable to do so.

Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee reserves the right not to appoint an applicant if any unacceptable previous criminal conviction/s record, prosecution/s (successful or not, pending or completed), or a query related to their identity comes to light and/or was not disclosed at application stage.

Assessing a Disclosure

If someone has a criminal record it doesn't automatically mean they will be unsuitable.

ACCCL will consider:

- The nature of the offence
- How long ago it took place
- Its relevance to the job
- The risk to children if it were to be repeated

…. For example, motoring offences, may not need to be a prohibition to an offer of employment

Where a vetting disclosure is received which causes concern regarding a candidate, ACCCL will undertake a comprehensive risk assessment to determine the suitability of the candidate for employment.

It is essential that all adults who work with the children in the service are suitable, therefore those who are recruited through employment schemes such as the Community Employment Childcare Training and Development Programme (CE) are required to undergo a thorough selection and assessment process in the same way as other employees.

Validation

- Candidates must produce their original certificate of qualifications including QQI qualifications and First Aid and any other relevant certifications
- A copy of the qualifications will be kept in their personal file

Verification of Certificates and Reference Checks

All applicants must provide the names and contact details of two appropriate referees. Where the applicant is currently employed, one referee should be their current employer. Where the applicant is not currently employed, one referee should normally be their most recent employer.

Where an applicant has previously been employed in the Early Learning and Care sector, an appropriate reference from that employment will be sought where practicable.

In the case of an internal applicant who has been employed by ACCCL for five years or more, ACCCL, as the registered provider and employer, may provide an appropriate employment reference.

Where an appropriate employer reference cannot be obtained, the Board of Management will consider whether an alternative professional reference from a suitable and reputable person can be accepted. Character references will not normally be accepted as a substitute for an appropriate employer reference where an employer reference is reasonably available.

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management of ACCCL to obtain and verify references and to ensure that the candidate's character, suitability and relevant experience have been appropriately considered before the candidate is appointed or permitted access to children.

- All referees will be contacted by telephone or other appropriate means by a member of the Board of Management. Where a written reference is provided, the referee will be asked to confirm that they completed or authorised the reference.

The details of each reference check will be recorded, including the date of contact, the name and position of the referee, the method of contact and relevant information provided. The Board member conducting the reference check will sign and date the reference-check record. All reference information will be treated confidentially and retained in accordance with ACCCL's data protection and record-retention procedures.

References will only be obtained from a current employer with the candidate's knowledge and permission and, where practicable, after other references have been obtained.

Verification of Qualifications

All qualifications and mandatory certificates relevant to the position will be verified by the Board of Management before employment commences.

The Board of Management will verify that the qualification is recognised for the relevant role by checking it against the current Early Years (EY) Qualifications Database and/or the relevant official qualification recognition guidance applicable to Early Learning and Care services

The Board of Management will document that the relevant qualification or certificate has been verified and will retain a copy where this is necessary and appropriate for the employee's personnel record.

Where a qualification is required for work directly with children, the qualification must meet the current requirements applicable to Early Learning and Care services.

Contract of Employment

A written contract of employment is prepared for each new employee of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee**. It is a legal requirement to provide employees with a contract of Employment.** A signed copy of the contract is maintained on the employees personnel file and the employee is provided with a copy form their own retention

All contracts include:

- The full name of employer and employee
- Commencement date of employment
- Duration of the contract
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Reporting procedures
- Salary and method of payment
- Working hours
- Annual leave
- Details of sick pay
- Information on grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Information on codes of conduct
- Duration of probationary period
- The period of notice expected to be given to receive on termination of job

General Terms and Conditions of Employment are detailed in the Staff Handbook which every member of staff receives upon employment.

Induction

An induction period is provided for all new employees. This helps new staff to settle-in quickly and gain all the information necessary to do his/her job effectively.

Employees are provided with

- A copy of the staff handbook once read and understood the new employee must sign it, and it is kept in their file
- Confidentiality statement to be read and signed and held in employee's file
- Policies and procedures including Health, Safety, Fire Drills, Positive Behaviour and Child Protection must be read and signed by employee
- Information about the employee's new role
- Information on the role of other employees
- Introduction to key personnel and agencies

The induction period should allow for an assessment of the new employee's knowledge and skills. A plan should be agreed between the employee and the employer to address any gaps identified.

Probation

All new contracts should be subject to the satisfactory completion of a probationary period. During the period of probation, the management will ensure that the employee is fully assisted in understanding the demands of his/her post. Any problems or difficulties should be fully explored, and the employee should be advised of his/her progress

During the period of probation, the contract can be terminated by either party in accordance with the provisions of the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Act 1973-2001

The period of probation can be extended for a specific period if management is not fully satisfied that the employee is suitable for the post. The employee will be informed through supervision and in writing of the reasons for this decision

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HUMAN RESOURSE

Sample Job Descriptions

Administrator

Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee

Job Description

Administrator In Ardfinnan Community Playschool Lady's Abbey Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

NAME OF EMLOYER: Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG

JOB TITLE: Administrator

ROLE: Administrator in Ardfinnan Community Playschool, Lady's Abbey, Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

REPORTS TO: Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG chairperson or it's delegated officer

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Administrator will have the following responsibilities:
Reception

- Meeting & greeting visitors
- Dealing with visitor queries, drop offs and collections
- Keeping a record log of all visitors in/out of the building
- Answering incoming calls promptly in a friendly and professional manner and directing calls to the relevant member of staff
- Maintaining a neat and tidy reception area
- Assisting with external suppliers of products and services to the office
- Logging, sorting and distributing the daily post as appropriate
- Ensuring meeting rooms are prepared in advance of all meetings

Administration

- Day to day ad hoc administration and secretarial tasks to support the operations of the service
- To administer the service in line with policies and procedures set out by Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG, and meeting the requirements of relevant funding organisations
- To provide the operational management of the service
- To coordinate enrolment of new children in consultation with Room Leader
- To liaise with parents/guardians regarding attendance at playschool and payment of fees
- To administer applications for relevant government schemes e.g. ECCE
- To collaborate with Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG and the Room Leader in developing policies and procedures pertinent to the service.
- Garda Vetting of all staff members
- Supporting members with Garda Vetting queries
- To help staff in facilitating training and good practice by liaising with other facilities e.g. County Childcare Committee, Pobal and Early Childhood Ireland
- To devise staff roster in collaboration with Room Leader
- To maintain Personnel Files including records of training provided
- To maintain financial records and submit accounts to Ardfinnan Childcare Committee ALG Accountants
- Attend and report to committee meetings
- To carry out any other reasonable duties as requested by Ardfinnan Childcare Committee ALG

Other

- At all times undertake the role in a professional manner, maintaining a high-quality standard of work, in accordance with the aims, values and ethos of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee.

Person Specification

- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Demonstrated ability to work independently as well as part of a team
- Multi-tasking and time management skills, with the ability to prioritise tasks
- Excellent organizational and interpersonal skills are vital
- Strong administrative skills
- Effective time management skills

Essential Requirements

- Administrative and budget management skills
- Strong Microsoft Office skills (Word, Excel, PowerPoint)
- Clear understanding of what good customer service looks like
- Knowledge and understanding of all aspects of Playschool service
- Commitment to quality
- Willingness to be flexible in work

Personal Attributes and Qualities

- Dependable
- Organised
- Professional and hardworking

HUMAN RESOURSE

Sample Job Descriptions

Early Years Educator, Room Assistant

Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee

Job Description

Early Years Educator Room Assistant in Ardfinnan Community Playschool Lady's Abbey Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

NAME OF EMLOYER: Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG
JOB TITLE: Early Years Educator, Room Assistant
ROLE: Early Years Educator in Ardfinnan Community Playschool, Lady's Abbey, Ardfinnan, Clonmel,

Co. Tipperary

REPORTS TO: Lead Educator in Ardfinnan Community Playschool and/or Ardfinnan Childcare Committee or its delegated officer.

DUTY:

At all times undertake the role of Early Years Educator in a professional manner, maintaining a high-quality standard of work, in accordance with the aims, values and ethos of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To assist the lead educator in providing a pre-school service to all children who attend the service in a professional manner
- To aid the planning and implementation of an age-appropriate, stimulating curriculum based on Síolta and Aistear alongside the lead educator.
- Always respect the principle of confidentiality regarding the children, their families and other staff.
- To guide observe, stimulate and supervise children in a safe and caring environment
- To provide a safe hygienic environment where children can access play opportunities.
- To set up and assist in clearing away and deciding upon play activities for the day and becoming part responsible for the care and maintenance of all equipment ensuring it meets Health and Safety Standards
- To provide opportunities for the children that will aid a child's physical, emotional, linguistic and intellectual development.
- To communicate respectfully with children at their level.
- To continually observe children and record all observations.
- To play an active role in the day to day running of the service and become involved in programme planning to ensure the continued growth of the service.
- To familiarise yourself and adhere to all policies and procedures of Ardfinnan Community Playschool and familiarise yourself with the Early Years Inspectorate Quality and Regulatory Framework
- To adopt the principles of positive behaviour management approach to discipline
- To encourage parental involvement and communicate with parents/guardians on a daily basis
- Help in all record keeping on a daily and weekly basis in association with the lead educator.
- To attend and participate in all staff meetings and attend Committee meetings where it is deemed necessary by the lead educator.
- To participate in relevant training as requested by lead educator and/or management and also from your own initiative, ensure that all necessary certificates are kept up to date.
- To support students on placement
- Familiarise yourself with and follow the procedures outlined in the Children First Act 2015 and report any child protection concerns to lead educator/designated child protection officer.

- Identify and bring to the attention of the lead educator any health and safety concerns you have.
- Attend regular fire drills
- Any other duties that may be assigned by the lead educator or Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG.

PERSONAL SPECIFICATIONS:

- Minimum FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Childcare or equivalent
- Experience in a childcare setting
- Good communication skills
- Respect for confidentiality of all stakeholders
- Sense of humour
- Completed Garda Vetting
- First Aid
- Manual Handling
- Fire Safety
- Excellent oral and written English
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and as part of a team

Personal Attributes and Qualities

- Dependable
- Organised
- Professional and hardworking

HUMAN RESOURSE

Sample Job Description

Early Years Educator, AIM Support

Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee

Job Description

Early Years Educator AIM Support in Ardfinnan Community Playschool Lady's Abbey Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

NAME OF EMLOYER:	Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG
JOB TITLE:	Early Years Educator, AIM Support
ROLE:	AIM Support Worker in Ardfinnan Community Playschool, Lady's Abbey, Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

REPORTS TO: Lead Educator in Ardfinnan Community Playschool and/or Ardfinnan Childcare Committee or its delegated officer.

DUTY:

At all times undertake the role of AIM Support Worker in a professional manner, maintaining a high-quality standard of work, in accordance with the aims, values and ethos of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee.

This role is specifically tailored to meet the needs and requirements of the child in question and will vary and adjust to these needs on an ongoing basis. The role is a support role, providing guidance, support and assistance to the child in question or to the room when and as needed.

Duties are subject to weekly review and refinement with the lead educator and Parents, to ensure that the child remains supported in the most effective manner. Duties may include the list below however this will depend on the educational plan and guidance from the Lead Educator. It may be a case that you act as an overall EYE within the playroom and only occasionally getting involved with the AIM child.

- Supervision of the child at all times where required
- Weekly feedback and planning meetings with Lead Educator
- Monthly feedback meetings with parents of child, or more frequently if requested or required
- Support given to increase child's access and inclusion into daily activities, routines and group play
- Support to help the child in daily self-care (e.g. changing, toileting, eating, cleaning face and hands)
- Additional support in all forms of child's development where required, in partnership with all staff
- Support to encourage positive peer interactions and to foster positive social and emotional development in the child
- Planning, preparation and implementation of activities tailored to the specific child's needs, to help engage and encourage positive peer interactions, in collaboration with all staff
- Participation in all preschool activities where appropriate (e.g. participation in group games/activities to support child's inclusion; assistance with conflict resolution involving child etc
- Promotion of the child's sense of independence is paramount

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To assist the Lead Educator in providing a pre-school service to all children who attend the service in a professional manner
- To aid the planning and implementation of an age-appropriate, stimulating curriculum based on Síolta and Aistear alongside the Lead Educator.
- Always respect the principle of confidentiality regarding the children, their families and other staff.
- To guide observe, stimulate and supervise children in a safe and caring environment
- To provide a safe hygienic environment where children can access play opportunities.

- To set up and assist in clearing away and deciding upon play activities for the day and becoming part responsible for the care and maintenance of all equipment ensuring it meets Health and Safety Standards
- To provide opportunities for the children that will aid a child's physical, emotional, linguistic and intellectual development.
- To communicate respectfully with children at their level.
- To continually observe children and record all observations.
- To play an active role in the day to day running of the service and become involved in programme planning to ensure the continued growth of the service.
- To familiarise yourself and adhere to all policies and procedures of Ardfinnan Community Playschool and familiarise yourself with the Early Years Inspectorate Quality and Regulatory Framework
- To adopt the principles of positive behaviour management approach to discipline
- To encourage parental involvement and communicate with parents/guardians on a daily basis
- Help in all record keeping on a daily and weekly basis in association with the Lead Educator.
- To attend and participate in all staff meetings and attend Committee meetings where it is deemed necessary by the Lead Educator.
- To participate in relevant training as requested by lead educator and/or management and also from your own initiative, ensure that all necessary certificates are kept up to date.
- To support students on placement
- Familiarise yourself with and follow the procedures outlined in the Children First Act 2015 and report any child protection concerns to Lead Educator/designated child protection officer.
- Identify and bring to the attention of the lead educator any health and safety concerns you have.
- Attend regular fire drills
- Any other duties that may be assigned by the Lead Educator or Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG.

PERSONAL SPECIFICATIONS:

- Minimum FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Childcare or equivalent
- Experience in a childcare setting
- Good communication skills
- Respect for confidentiality of all stakeholders
- Sense of humour
- Completed Garda Vetting
- First Aid
- Manual Handling
- Fire Safety
- Excellent oral and written English
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and as part of a team

Personal Attributes and Qualities

- Dependable
- Organised
- Professional and hardworking

HUMAN RESOURSE

Sample Job Description

Early Years Educator, Lead Educator

Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee

Job Description

Early Years Educator Room Leader In Ardfinnan Community Playschool Lady's Abbey Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

NAME OF EMLOYER:	Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG
JOB TITLE:	Early Years Educator, Room Leader
ROLE:	Room Leader in Ardfinnan Community Playschool, Lady's Abbey, Ardfinnan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
REPORTS TO:	Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG chairperson or it's delegated officer

DUTIES:

The room leader is responsible for the day-to-day running and management of Ardfinnan Community Playschool, ensuring the provision of a safe, welcoming and active learning environment for all children and their families as well as the staff. He/she is responsible for the supervision of staff working in the playschool and will delegate tasks accordingly.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Main Job Description:

- To lead the planning and implementation of an age –appropriate, stimulating programme of activities which will enhance the child's natural growth and development based on Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Aistear the National Curriculum Framework
- To guide, observe, stimulate and supervise children in a safe and caring environment
- To manage and work in close co-operation with the all staff
- To ensure the safety, security and the wellbeing of all the children in the service

- To ensure all quality and safety standards are maintained in the service at all times: including ensuring a good standard of hygiene, organising and conducting regular fire drills, ensuring that equipment is well maintained and safe to use
- To update the committee on a regular basis and to bring to the attention of the committee any matter for which it is responsible.

Care of Children:

- To be attentive to the children in the service
- To deal with issues as they arise in relation to the wellbeing of children and to bring any child protection concerns to the attention of the relevant authorities through following the service's Child Protection Policy
- To communicate respectfully with children at their level
- To keep completely confidential information regarding the children, their families and other staff, which he/she learns as part of the job. If the practitioner needs advice on such matters, he/she should discuss the issue with the Board of Management. In the interest of the child, confidentiality is crucial.

Training and Meetings:

- To undertake relevant or required training including first aid training, fire safety and manual handling and Children First
- To undertake training if requested by the Directors
- To attend and participate at meetings as required

Parents:

- To liaise with parents, who are the prime carers of the children, to keep them informed of the children's progress and wellbeing and build a partnership with parents to enhance the learning and development of each child

Food

- To encourage good eating habits and personal hygiene
- To use mealtime as a social occasion with the children

Curriculum

- To lead in the planning and implementation of daily appropriate developmental activities for children
- To provide opportunities for children to learn in a holistic way
- To introduce children to the play equipment based on their individual needs
- To provide opportunities for self-directed play
- To ensure that the curriculum and activities are linked to Aistear
- To allow children to learn through fun
- To maintain written planning records

Health and Safety

- To report any safety hazards/ risks to the Administrator and or the Committee and Directors immediately
- To refrain from engaging in any activity that poses a risk to you, other members of staff or children
- To have a good knowledge of fire and safety procedures within the service
- To maintain a safe, clean and healthy environment
- To participate in cleaning duties as required under the services policies and procedures
- To use equipment according to instructions
- To maintain a safe and clean outside environment
- To ensure the safety, security and the wellbeing of all the children in your care
- To ensure all quality and safety standards are maintained in the centre at all times
- To carry out daily/weekly risk assessments

Administration

- To maintain appropriate records and documentation in compliance with the childcare Act, 1991 and the childcare (Pre School-Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulation, 2006.

Communications

- To communicate frequently with all staff members, Administrator, Committee members, Directors and parents as appropriate
- To communicate in a straightforward, accurate, and professional manner

Other Duties

- To be familiar with all the policies and procedures of the childcare centre and adhere to them
- To train students' workers and to assist new staff with induction
- To adhere to the childcare (Pre School-Services) Regulations and the childcare act and all other relevant legislation and regulation
- To understand that the Board of Directors is his/her employer and should discuss any problems regarding his/her employment with the Board.

At all times undertake the role in a professional manner, maintaining a high-quality standard of work, in accordance with the aims, values and ethos of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee.

Essential Requirements

- Minimum FETAC Level 6 in Childcare
- Kindness, warmth and responsiveness to the needs of children
- Good Communication and Relating Skills with children, staff and parents
- Have a sense of humour
- Knowledge of relevant legislation and regulations

- Complete Garda Vetting
- Up to date First Aid, Manual Handling and Fire Safety
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Demonstrated ability to work independently as well as part of a team
- Multi-tasking and time management skills, with the ability to prioritise tasks
- Excellent organizational and interpersonal skills are vital
- Effective time management skills

Personal Attributes and Qualities

- Dependable
- Organised
- Professional and hardworking

HUMAN RESOURSE

EQUAL OPPURTUNITIES

Principle
This policy is underpinned by the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2011, as amended, the Equal Status Acts 2000–2015, as amended, the Disability Act 2005 where applicable, the National Disability Authority Act 1999, and the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, as amended. The policy will also have regard to relevant current national equality, inclusion and early years guidance.

Statement

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises and respects the rights of all adults and children in our service. We aim to actively promote equality of access and participation and eliminate discrimination on grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age (not applicable to under 16's), disability, race and membership of the Traveling Community.

Children

At Ardfinnan Community Playschool all children are valued, supported and nurtured as individuals. This is achieved through our play curriculum and our policies

- A wide range of activities and play equipment is provided in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination.
- Children whose first language is not English will be facilitated by using key words from their mother tongue and visual images to assist them in integrating into our playschool
- Children are always encouraged to appreciate similarities and value differences
- A range of materials are chosen to reflect cultures, gender and ability difference
- Collaboration and cooperation among children, educators and staff are supported.

Families

All families will be encouraged to be involved in their children's early education, in whatever way is possible for them. Ardfinnan Community Playschool value the input of all families into decision making on an equal basis

- Parents will be encouraged to participate based on their interests, abilities and cultures
- Parents whose first language is not English will be facilitated by using key words from their home language and visual images to assist them in integrating into the service
- The time, place and tone of meetings will ensure that all families have an equal opportunity to attend and be involved, if they so wish

Additional Needs

Ardfinnan Community Playschool recognises the importance of providing an inclusive environment where all children and families are supported according to their individual needs. The service will take reasonable and proportionate steps to support the participation and inclusion of children with disabilities and additional needs.

Where appropriate, the service will consider:

- Reasonable accommodation to support participation and access.
- Individual support based on the child's identified needs.
- Communication needs, including appropriate visual, verbal or alternative communication supports.
- Accessibility, including consideration of the physical environment, activities, resources and equipment.
- Consultation with parents/guardians to understand the child's needs and agree appropriate supports.
- Appropriate professional advice, where required and with appropriate consent.
- Access to AIM supports, where applicable and where the child meets the relevant criteria.
- Individual plans or support plans, where required, to help ensure that appropriate supports are identified, implemented and reviewed.

The service will work in partnership with parents/guardians and relevant professionals, where appropriate, to promote the child's inclusion, participation, wellbeing and development.

Food and Festivals

- Children will be introduced to a range of cultures, traditions and festivals in an age-appropriate and inclusive manner
- Appropriate advice and input will be sought from people who celebrate the festival.
- Dietary and cultural needs of children and adults will be met.

Training

Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Limited by Guarantee is an equal opportunities employer.

- The recruitment and selection policy will reflect the ethos of the service in relation to equal opportunities for all
- Ardfinnan Childcare Committee CLG will deal with all job applicants in a fair manner and follow correct procedures as set out in current Employment and Equality Legislation
- In-service training will be provided for all staff on their rights and responsibilities
- Educators, staff and children will be helped to understand that discriminatory actions and behaviour will not be accepted

Complaints

Any person who believes they have experienced discrimination, harassment or unfair treatment in connection with the service is encouraged to raise the matter with the Board of Management. All concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly, fairly and confidentially in accordance with the service's complaints, grievance and relevant disciplinary procedures

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HUMAN RESOURSE

EDUCATOR AND STAFF TRAINING

Principle
This policy is underpinned by Regulation 9 and Regulation 10 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee is committed to achieving a high standard of quality in the provision of its early childhood care and education service. This requires that the professional development, performance evaluation, training needs of employees are identified and addressed and acted on

The aims of this policy are:

- To outline this service's commitment to full induction for new educators and staff members and on-going all staff development and training thereafter.
- To ensure that educators and staff development and training needs are identified and are well-planned for, well-resourced and organised efficiently and effectively with appropriate staff ratios maintained at all times.
- To ensure that all staff members are aware of the service's procedures for applying for training, that all requirements are met and that all staff members have equal access to appropriate training and development opportunities.
- To link the performance and all staff development to the achievement of the service's operational and strategic goals and objectives, and its commitment to continuous improvement and quality service provision.

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool aims to be a learning environment, which supports both individual and team development. Access to quality induction and on-going training and development opportunities prepares educators and staff members for both existing and future roles and responsibilities, and helps them to reach their full potential thereby enhancing the quality of their practice

Procedure
Ardfinnan Community Playschool take a structured approach to the induction of new staff members to ensure consistent and accurate communication about the service's policies, procedures, statements and regulatory requirements.

Students and volunteers are also inducted to the service's policies, procedures, statements and operations. Students who work with the children will always be under the supervision of appropriately qualified and experienced educators.

All new management committee members/directors are provided with an appropriate induction on joining the committee.

Educators and staff members regardless of age, grade, gender, ability/disability or ethnic background or the nature of their contract of employment are expected to undertake staff development and training, which is viewed as a continuous process throughout their time in the service.

Where specific policies are updated or amended, or a new policy is added, educators and staff members will be provided with training to ensure familiarity with the most up to date service policies.

This policy demonstrates Ardfinnan Community Playschools commitment to the development of all staff members' awareness, knowledge and competencies through allowing time off for, and/or meeting the expenses of, relevant training courses, conferences, external meetings, participation in the local provider network or other such relevant educational events.

All applications for study leave shall be considered by the Management Committee and may only be approved after considering both service needs and budgetary commitments.

This policy applies to all staff and has been developed to ensure that there is equality of access and opportunity to attend learning and development events for all staff.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool encourages its educators and staff members to undertake any other training or activities which aid their personal or professional development. Due to funding limitations, it may not always be possible for the service to provide funding to educators or staff members to undertake such training.

All staff members also have regular supervision meetings and an annual appraisal within which to formally review their practice and training needs (see Staff Supervision Policy).

Records are kept on each educator and staff member's personnel file of all training events attended and courses completed while employed in this service.

Induction for new educators and staff members

The main purposes of the induction process for new educators and staff members are:

- To introduce them to children, families and colleagues prior to commencing work.
- To make them aware of any specific needs of any child who will be in their care.
- To clarify Ardfinnan Community Playschools Statement of Purpose and Function.
- The legislative requirements and guidance documentation applicable to the service, including:
    1. Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)
    2. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.
    3. Child welfare and protection legislation and national policies
    4. Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, and relevant Tusla child safeguarding guidance and procedures.
- To familiarise them with the service's Safety Statement.
- To familiarise them with the service's Child Safeguarding Statement and Child Protection Policy.

- To familiarise them with the service's essential policies, procedures, routines and approach to quality and to the service's organisational structure.
- To explain the curriculum approach used in the service and how play and learning experiences at Ardfinnan Community Playschool are planned, implemented and evaluated.
- To clarify their roles and responsibilities (including record management) and those of others in the service.

The lead educator is responsible for assessing each new educator and staff member's learning outcomes from the induction process through observation, feedback and reflection. The induction programme will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is still meeting the needs of new educator and staff members and the service overall and will be amended if needed.

On-going training and professional development for educators and staff members

On an on-going basis all educators and staff members, including the lead educator, are required to undertake certain training which is considered necessary for the efficient and effective operation of the service.

All educators and staff members are also required to assume responsibility for their own development and training, which includes both participation in planned activities and making use of opportunities to learn when they are presented.

Continuous development and training of educators and staff is an obligation for the lead educator who is responsible for identifying individual training and development needs and supporting and encouraging the staff members.

Formal processes – induction, supervision, appraisal and training needs analyses – are used at the individual level and planning for staff development and training is carried out by the management in consultation with staff members at both individual and team levels.

Overall accountability for staff development and training rests with the manager

Staff development and training provision will be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure that it is of good quality, relevant, effective and provides value for money.

It is the responsibility of the board of management to ensure that trainers are competent (have the knowledge, skills, abilities and relevant qualifications where required) to give the training required and external trainers have the appropriate accreditation/certification to provide the required training.

Supervision of students

Students/Trainees who work with the children are always under the supervision of an appropriately qualified educator. They are supported and supervised by appropriately experienced educator to assist them to carry out their duties to promote and protect the wellbeing; learning and development of the children (see Supervision Policy).

Access to training for educators and staff members

Staff development and training priorities will be reviewed by the board of management who have responsibility for staff development and training policy and practice. Training and development plans will be reviewed and approved annually

Training priorities will be decided based on the current and evolving needs of the children and families who use the service, the agreed plans and aims of the service, and on-going developments in the early year's sector related to legislation and quality practice.

Existing qualifications, skills and competencies of the educators and staff members and planned developments at the service will also be considered when prioritising training needs.

Finance for training and staff development

The budget for staff development and training is administered by the management Committee. These funds are allocated to support the service in the achievement of its agreed objectives.

Records and Record Keeping

Training records for educators and staff members will be maintained by the service subject to General Data Protection (GDPR) requirements.

Records of Certified/Accredited training are held on each staff members file.

The educators and staff of Ardfinnan Community Playschool undertake on-going professional development, which is recorded and retained in their personnel files.

Communication Plan

Educators and staff will be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Staff Development and Training on commencement in the service. The Lead educator ensures staff members have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed. This policy will be reviewed with all staff members at induction and annual staff training.

Parents/guardians are informed that there is An Educator and Staff Training Policy and may see it and/or receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

HUMAN RESOURSE

SUPERVISION POLICY

Policy Statement

Ardfinnan Community Playschool is committed to providing staff supervision to maintain and promote its high standards. This policy forms part of our overall performance management structure which includes recruitment, induction and training.

Principal

This policy is in line with guidelines set down in the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Supervision is a process for educators, staff and management to discuss work, reflect on current or emerging issues and plan for future development. Supervision sessions provide an opportunity to monitor and ensure quality of practice as well as providing support to all staff, feedback is gained and any training issues needed discussed.

Educators and staff are encouraged to put forward new ideas, make suggestions for changes or to request additional training. Staff supervision is provided by the lead educator; it follows a planned and agreed structure and takes place regularly, depending on the needs of our service

All staff members will have a regular, consistent and uninterrupted supervision meeting with their supervisor in order to:

- Support them in their work.
- Ensure that they are clear about their role and responsibilities.
- Ensure competent and accountable performance.
- Ensure that, in their respective roles, they meet Ardfinnan Community Playschool's standards and objectives.
- Ensure a positive atmosphere for practice.
- Support their professional development.
- Help keep stress to a minimum.
- Increase awareness of new areas of professional knowledge.
- Ensure that they are given the resources to do their job.
- Provide an opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns.
- Ensure the quality of service provided to children and families.

Educators and staff members are encouraged to reflect on the quality of their practice, continually update their knowledge base and raise any safeguarding concerns.

Procedure

- A programme of support and supervision will be agreed between management and each staff member and volunteer. We recommend that this is arranged prior to commencing employment or volunteer work
- Meetings will be held by the Lead Educator and or Administrator
- A support and supervision template will be completed during the meeting and will be used as a basis for discussion
- The template will consider specific areas of work, issues emerging, work with children in their care, training needs and personal development
- The Lead Educator and/or Office Administrator will keep a written record of these regular meetings on this template for inclusion in the personnel file of each staff member, these notes will be dated and signed by both parties.
- Actions arising from Support and Supervision meetings will be reviewed at the next meeting
- All staff will participate in team supervision meetings to be held at intervals during the school year. These meetings will be documented, and all views and contributions will be welcomed, considered and recorded where appropriate

All educators and staff members are entitled to:

- Respect as a person and in their role.
- Clarity in relation to their role and responsibilities.
- Clarity about the boundaries of confidentiality – where it is necessary to inform others of something that arises during supervision, the supervisor and supervisee should discuss how this can be done.
- Clarity about expectations.
- Have their experience and contribution acknowledged.
- Be briefed about changes in the service.
- Participate in planning and problem solving and not just be told what to do.
- Access to continuing professional development/training relevant to their job.

- Clarification about the service's policies and procedures.
- Be allocated an appropriate and manageable workload.
- Clarity about the basis of decisions that impact on them either directly or indirectly.
- Regular and uninterrupted supervision.
- Formal appraisal.

Appraisals

- A review will take place at the end of each staff member's probationary period and thereafter annually
- The annual review or appraisal is carried out for the purpose of giving the employee feedback of the work of the year, provide support for educators and staff in their role, provide opportunities to discuss ideas and concerns and plan objectives for the year ahead
- The appraisal will include a review of the job description which may be updated as necessary by agreement of both parties
- Both parties will sign a record of the appraisal meeting
- Records of the appraisal will be kept confidential to the Room Leader and Office Manger except in cases of formal disciplinary or grievances or with the joint agreement of both parties
- All staff personnel files will be retained for six years after the person has ceased employment

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HUMAN RESOURSE

STUDENT AND VOLUNTEERS

Statement
Ardfinnan Community Playschool believes that a placement in our service is a valuable opportunity where a student or volunteer will learn and experience hands-on the importance of early childhood care and education. Equally we appreciate the energy and enthusiasm new people bring to the environment

We at Ardfinnan Community Playschool believe that the welfare of the child is paramount and it is with this in mind we carefully select all students and volunteers to work in our Early Years' Service.

Principle
This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, as amended, the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012–2016, relevant Tusla guidance, Children First legislation and guidance

Students and volunteers are required to comply with all applicable service policies and procedures, including the Child Safeguarding Statement, Child Protection Policy, Confidentiality Policy, Mobile

Phone Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Complaints Policy and any other relevant policies

Policy

- All volunteers and students will be over the age of sixteen.
- Validated References and Garda vetting will be obtained for all students by Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee
- The duration and timing of placement will be agreed in advance of the placement with the Administrator
- Students/volunteers will be required to read all policies and procedures of the service as part of their induction.
- Students/volunteers will be required to 'sign-off' that they had read and understood the policies and procedures of the service.
- Students/volunteers will not work unsupervised with either individuals or groups of children.
- The Lead Educator, or another designated member of appropriately qualified staff, will be responsible for the day-to-day supervision and support of students and volunteers
- Students/volunteers should have a clear defined role, i.e., duties and responsibilities of the student.
- Students/volunteers should have a clear defined role and will sign a declaration of confidentiality.
- Students and volunteers should not provide information about children's care, development, attendance or individual circumstances to parents/guardians. Parents/guardians seeking information or wishing to raise a concern will be referred to the Lead Educator, or another designated educator
- Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee is aware of their responsibility to provide a 'real and rich' learning environment for the student.

Prior to Placement of Students

- Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee will ensure that there are appropriate links with colleges.
- Colleges should, in writing, introduce the student, giving the service a profile of the student, highlighting any additional needs and an outline of the course content.
- All students must attend an interview with the Lead Educator and or Office Administrator
- Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee will ensure that they receive confirmation (copy of insurance certificate) from the college confirming that students are insured by the college while on placement.
- All students must attend an induction programme to enable them to develop an awareness of the service.
- A file will be maintained on all students containing such information pertaining to the college placement, college, tutor etc.

Meeting before start date

Each student or volunteer will meet with the lead educator before they begin in the service. This is an opportunity to talk about the needs of the student/ volunteer and how the service may be able to accommodate them.

Agreement of role

A description of the role of the student/ volunteer will be developed, helping educators understand the expectations of the student/ volunteer. This may also be used as a reference when giving support and supervision

Garda Vetting

Students: All students must be Garda Vetted. Students will be required to complete a Garda Vetting Application Form before they commence their placement Ardfinnan Childcare Company Limited by Guarantee. Students are required to complete Garda Vetting Application Forms in accordance with the guidelines issued by the National Vetting Bureau.

Garda Vetting Forms will be held on site and are not transferable to other services or organisations.

Garda vetting is carried out by the service for all staff, students and volunteers. This is a requirement under the Pre-school Regulations 2006.

Reference

Two verified references from reputable sources are required for all students and volunteers where possible.

During Placement

- Lead educator is responsible for assessing the training needs of students on placement and ensuring that they are given the opportunities to build on existing skills and to develop new skills.
- Lead educator will monitor the student's progress and liaise with the student's assessor at regular intervals throughout the period of the placement.
- Students must adhere to the service's policies and procedures.
- Students who are required to conduct child studies or work with children must obtain written permission from the parents of that child. Parents will have access to any written study. Students will consult with lead educator on all written records.
- Any photographs, recordings, observations or other information collected as part of a student's course assignment must comply with the service's consent, confidentiality, data protection and child safeguarding procedures
- Students and volunteers will not be counted as qualified staff for the purposes of maintaining required staffing ratios and will not be left unsupervised with children

While on placement Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee will support students by:

- Providing on-going support to make the placement as useful and beneficial as possible for students.
- Providing the information and support necessary for students to carry out any written assignments and prepare for assessment visits by the placement supervisor.

Dress Code

Clothing must be clean, neat, appropriate for working with young children and suitable for active play and the duties of the role. Footwear must be safe, secure and appropriate for working indoors and outdoors
Chewing gum is not permitted

Volunteers

The hours that volunteers work will be arranged according to the hours the volunteer is available and the needs of the service in consultation with the Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee. There will be no minimum or maximum hours or any guarantee of voluntary work.
Working as a Volunteer in Ardfinnan Community Playschool does not preclude you from employment elsewhere.
All voluntary work is unpaid. Volunteers may be reimbursed for agreed expenses in consultation with the Board of Management of Ardfinnan Childcare Committee Company Limited by Guarantee.
Volunteers should be present in the service and ready to commence their voluntary work at the arranged and agreed times.
Volunteers unable to attend at the arranged and agreed times should inform the office administrator by telephone as soon as possible in advance.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF ARDFINNAN COMMUNITY PLAYSCHOOL

- To ensure that each child is safe and happy
- To treat each child as an individual and appreciate the uniqueness of each child
- To provide a quality community based Childcare facility
- To guide the child in the development of his/her senses, which are an integral part of the learning/development process
- To provide a safe and quality environment and service to facilitate each child's development.
- To ensure all staff receive appropriate training and support and maintain high levels of practice.
- To encourage partnership with parents, to provide an integrated, balanced broad, stimulating program
- To encourage, by means of outings and visits, an interaction with the wider community of Ardfinnan and the surrounding area.

All staff students and volunteers are asked to view and sign the Child Welfare Policy prior to beginning their work at Ardfinnan Community Playschool.

Confidentiality

Students on work placements and any volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement prior to starting work in Ardfinnan Community Playschool.

Child Safeguarding

In the event of a suspicion of child abuse, the designated Person in the service will contact the Health Service Executive, Social Work Duty Room or if "out of hours" the Garda Station Directly.

Parents/guardians cannot be guaranteed confidentiality in the event of a suspected abuse necessitating reporting.

Ardfinnan Community Playschool has a detailed Student and Volunteer pack available to each student and volunteers to read prior to beginning their placement at our playschool.

HUMAN RESOURSE

SICK POLICY

Purpose
To provide guidelines for Management in implementing the Ardfinnan Community Playschool policy and on sick leave procedures. It runs in conjunction with the services Infectious control & Illness policy and covers all employees at our service.

Principle
The law on sick leave and sick pay is set out in the Sick Leave Act 2022, the Commencement Order for the Sick Leave Act 2022 and the Sick Leave Act 2022 (Prescribed daily rate of payment) Regulations 2022

Ardfinnan Community Playschool supports a healthy working environment and is concerned for the health and wellbeing of its entire employees. It recognises the need for individual employees to absent themselves from work when they are ill, and the following regulations and procedures apply in such circumstances.

Procedures for Employees on Sick Leave

*The procedures apply during the probation period also:

- If you are absent due to illness, you should notify the lead educator by telephone as soon as possible on the evening before if possible or at least one hour before if you are due to be on duty. You are required thereafter to contact the lead educator on a day-to-day basis to confirm your absence, unless you are in receipt of a medical certificate for a specific period. Full reasons must be given at the time with an indication of the likely return date.
- When speaking with the lead educator you should indicate the nature of your illness, the possible duration and when you will return to work. It is also required of you to speak with the lead educator either on the day of absenteeism or the day before you are due to return to work before 4.00 p.m. to confirm that you will in fact be returning to work. This will give the playschool sufficient time to arrange cover if you are not fully recovered and are unable to return to work due to this fact.
- Failure to contact the service by the specified time is a serious breach of the sick leave rules and may be subject to the disciplinary policy being invoked.
- Text messages, emails or voicemails alone are not considered an appropriate way to convey this information.

- Calls from relatives will not be accepted except in extreme circumstances. If a call is made by the employee's partner/relative on behalf of an employee, the employee should contact the lead educator at the earliest possible opportunity
- After 3 days of continuous absence, a medical certificate must be furnished on the 4th day of absence at the latest, further medical certificates must be furnished at weekly intervals so long as the absence continues.

All employees are entitled to the benefit of the Statutory Sick Pay scheme:

Employees who meet the qualifying conditions are entitled to statutory sick leave in accordance with the Sick Leave Act 2022 and current legislation. The statutory sick leave entitlement will be applied in accordance with the legislation in force at the relevant time

Employees who have completed at least 13 weeks' continuous service with the employer may be entitled to up to 5 days of statutory sick leave per calendar year, subject to the statutory requirements.

Statutory sick leave is paid at 70% of the employee's usual daily earnings, subject to the statutory maximum of €110 per day.

Statutory sick leave must be medically certified by a registered medical practitioner, and the employee must be certified as unfit for work due to illness or injury

Employees are required to ensure the medical certificate supporting the illness should include: -

a) Is given by a registered medical practitioner.
b) Bears your name
c) Signed by General Practitioner
d) Gives the nature of the illness.
e) The expected duration of the illness or incapacity
f) Medical Certificate is furnished to the Administrator
g) Medical Certificates details are treated confidentially

A medical certificate not containing the above information or certificates that are undated, illegible or otherwise dubious will not be accepted by the Company.

To apply for Disability Benefit, an employee should obtain a Social Welfare claim form from their doctor or hospital and submit it to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. In the case of long-term illness, a medical certificate, signed by a medical practitioner (details as above) must be provided every week unless an alternative agreement has been approved by the service. Ardfinnan Community Playschool reserves the right to refer an employee to a medical adviser.

Illness during Annual Leave

If an employee falls sick during a period of annual leave, and produces a doctor's medical certificate, the period of this sickness will be treated as sick leave and not annual leave.

Abuse of Sick Leave

Abuse of sick leave can lead to disciplinary action.

Accrual of Annual Leave on Certified Sick Leave

Employees on long term certified sick leave are entitled to retain annual leave they could not take due to illness. The employee has up to 15 months to take the leave after the end of the leave year in which the leave has accrued. Where statutory annual leave has accrued during certified sick leave and cannot be taken within the normal statutory period because of illness, the employee will be permitted to carry the leave forward in accordance with the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. Payment in lieu of statutory annual leave will only be made where permitted by law, including on termination of employment

Employees who leave the company within the 15 months are entitled to take payment in lieu of the accrued leave untaken during illness. In the event this is relevant to a staff member the

administrator will calculate, as per legislative requirements, and inform the employee of the annual leave due.

Significant Sick Absences

Where an employee has a pattern of absence or prolonged absence, the service may need to review the situation in accordance with its absence management procedures. Any review will take account of the circumstances of the absence, the employee's rights and any applicable employment equality or disability considerations.

Return to Work

When the employee is fit to resume duty s/he must contact the Administrator on the day prior to return to work however where the employee has been out long-term additional notice must be given to allow the service to terminate whatever interim arrangements need to be put in place. A return-to-work meeting will take place with the Administrator following a long absence.
On the morning of their return to work or the previous day an employee will meet with the Administrator to discuss their return to work.

At this meeting they shall discuss

- The reason for the absence from work
- Identify any possible underlying causes of absence that may be important for the employee.
- Identify if there are any health and safety or environmental issues in the workplace causing absenteeism.
- Bring the employee up to date on relevant workplace matters.

The Administrator shall keep a record of the fact the discussion took place where appropriate

Recording of Sick Leave

All sick leave is recorded and stored confidentially