

 “The best possible start!”

**Parents Handbook**

**Of**

**Policy and Procedures**

**(Last revised September 2024)**

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**Important information**

*(Throughout this document the use of the word* ***‘you’*** *refers to the parent/guardian of the child attending the service)*

# 1. OUR PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of this service is to provide affordable, accessible, high quality early education and care to young children in our community in an inviting warm environment.

Bambi’s Land Montessori & ASD Play School is a private Early Intervention Setting for children with Autism and Sessional Childcare (ECCE) facility owned and managed by Claudia Fitzpatrick. We are open from 8.30 am – 4:30 pm Monday to Friday. We offer in the morning from 9.00 am-12.00 am ECCE Montessori Session/Room 2 and from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm Home Tuition Program for children with ASD/ Room 1/2, for 38 weeks per year. We cater for 28 children aged between 2 ½ and 6 years of age which are required to be toilet trained.

Bambi’s Land Montessori & ASD Play School supports each child to reach their full learning potential, in a safe, secure, and stimulating environment. Our aim is to support and encourage the overall development and wellbeing of the child at this stage of their life and development. We aim to offer and help facilitate joyful and rich opportunities using the core principles of Aistear and the pedagogy of Maria Montessori, Autism Programme/PECS, VB- MAPP, TEACCH. We aim to prepare the child for the challenges of primary school and the outside world through a quality curriculum. Our core values are to respect ourselves, others and the environment alongside responsibility, security, happiness, equality, and nurture.

We offer an open-door policy which means we pride ourselves in sustaining open lines of communication between parents, carers, the child, and ourselves. We always take into consideration the needs and opinions of parents/carers as a paramount part in maintaining a happy healthy environment and relationships for all involved in the child’s welfare.

We run a **part time and sessional service** in accordance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

# 2. CURRICULUM

Children will follow a comprehensive play-based and Montessori curriculum combined with other good practice methods such ABA, BCBA PECS & TEEACH for our children with

Autism. The curriculum is based on the principle, aims and learning goals of Aistear (National curriculum framework).

*“Encouraging each child’s holistic development and learning requires the implantation of a verifiable, broad-based, documented and flexible curriculum or programme”. (Siolta, 2009)*

*“Active learning, relationships, play, language, and meaningful experiences are priorities for supporting children’s early learning and development”*. (Aistear,2009)

This Curriculum aims to encourage active learning, problem solving, effective communication, creativity, and socialization. It aims to give children a good start that will benefit their long-term success in life. Our service recognises the diversity of experiences and relationships that shape children’s lives.

**Children learn best when they:**

* Participate in making decisions as much as possible.
* Make choices and contribute to learning experiences.
* Share their opinions and diverse experiences and discuss their learning.
* Have positive role models within the staff team.
* Learn in a responsive and supportive social environment.
* Learn through multi-sensory experiences.
* Participate actively in experiences that engage them emotionally, physically, cognitively, and socially.
* Supportive well-equipped learning environment.

**Montessori Approach**

The classrooms are called “prepared environments” where children a given an array of stimulating learning and purposeful activities. The children follow a set programme of tasks or exercises. They learn everyday life skills such as dressing themselves, washing themselves etc. They learn social graces and manners but also cover a wide range of subjects including Mathematics, Reading, and Writing, History and Geography, Science, Sensorial, Music, Art, Drama.

The 5 defined Montessori areas we focus on are:

* Practical life
* Maths
* Cultural
* Language
* Sensorial

# 3. STAFFING

We will ensure enough suitable and competent members of staff are working directly with the pre-school children in the Pre-School at all times.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SERVICE**  | **AGE**  | **ADULT/CHILD RATIO**  |
| **SESSIONAL** **ECCE PLACES** **ASD CLASSROOM**  | 1. **½ – 5 ½ YEARS OLD**

1. **– 6 YEARS OLD**
 | **1:11** **4: 6**  |

**We are 7staff with following qualifications:**

* Masters in ABA- Teaching Council Registered
* Masters in clinical psychology
* Postgraduates Diplomas in ABA & Autism- Teaching Council Registered
* BA Honours in Early Years Education- Teaching Council Registered
* BA Honours in Education- Teaching Council Registered
* Montessori Diploma
* FETAC Level 6 In Early Childhood Study
* Children First child protection
* Paediatric First Aid
* Appointed fire safety officer: A staff member with up-to-date fire safety training
* Appointed staff member for FAR: A staff member with up to date First Aid Responder
* Fire and safety training

All staff, including students and volunteers, are required to have **Garda vetting** (and international Police vetting if required) prior to commencement of work.

All staff fully aware of the code of ethics and behaviour that we follow in this establishment and are always expected to adhere to these. It is always the responsibility of staff to ensure the safeguard and wellbeing of the child’s best interests.

# 4. COLLECTIONS AND ARRIVALS

It is essential, for the efficient running of the service, that parents/guardians inform the Manager if their child is unable to attend the service via a telephone call or text and to inform the Manager when the child will be returning.

**Arrivals:**

* The child will be greeted and signed in by a **designated staff member.**
* The premises are secured by a locked door which only opens from the inside.
* Parents must ring the doorbell to gain access to the service.

**Collection Policy:**

* Parents/guardians must collect their child promptly by the agreed collection time. Names of at least two other people who are authorised to collect the child.
* We ask whoever is collecting the child to patiently wait at the gate keeping social distance in a respectful manner to all other people there and each child will be called out in due course as safely as possible.
* Children will not be released into the care of a person under the age of 16 years or to a person who appears to be incapable of caring for the child.
* We ask that parents/guardians do not collect their child from the service while under the influence of alcohol.
* We **MUST** be informed, if anybody, other than the persons named on the collection details, are to collect the child. A child will **NOT** be allowed leave without written permission from a parent/guardian or at a very minimum verbal permission if parent needs to be rang for confirmation of who has come to collect the child and parental permission is granted over the phone.
* Parents/guardians are asked to park safely and not to cause an obstruction, even for a very short time. **We ask parents to do not park anymore on Colman Crescent or in front of the gate/house.** Parking is allowed only on the lateral road (Scholar Walk) and around the corner where are plenty public carpark spaces. Please arrive at the gate 1-2 minutes before starting time and try to keep children quiet on the line taking in consideration our neighbours. Please, do not enter under the next-door neighbour’s carport or to let children running around people’s doors.
* In the event of a parent/guardian collecting another child, a prior arrangement must be made.

**Separated and Divorced Parents:**

Married parents are automatically joint guardians of their children. Neither separation nor divorce changes this. Some unmarried fathers also have automatic guardianship.

* 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.

(Further information on this matter refers to full set of policies and procedures).

**Change in collection or drop off Children:**

We understand that sometimes a parent/guardian is unavoidably delayed when coming to collect their child. We will ensure that the child receives a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible due Covid – 19 regulation and social distancing.

* The manager must be contacted to make new arrangements.
* Persistent lateness can result in a €5 for every fifteen minutes of lateness.
* Inform staff of early pick up or late drop off so that we can have the child ready and to minimise disruption.

# 5. HEALTHY EATING POLICY

Our Service promotes healthy nutritional choices for our children. We feel it is important at this young age to introduce and educate our children about good nutrition and the health benefits of eating well.

**Policy and Procedures:**

* Children bring in their own healthy lunch that is **clearly labelled** and easy for them to open – to aid independence and to keep hygiene and minimise the staff/child direct contact. All the food must be on plastic bags, tin foil, or clean film due Covit-19. No lunch boxes and school bags are allowed in the premises.
* Please avoid snacks that could be a choking hazard, grapes should be cut in half length ways etc.
* Lunch will be kept in the fridge upon arrival each morning.
* Children with allergies and special diets will be carefully supervised.
* We do NOT allow yoghourts/ froubiss, fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolate, nuts, or nut spreads (due to allergies).
* Healthy eating is promoted with treats provided by staff on special occasions will be kept to a minimal.
* On birthdays and other special occasions, a shop bought cake will be provided by the service.
* Drinking water and small snacks are available throughout the day if needed.
* Snack times are used as an opportunity to encourage good social habits.
* Children will be encouraged to sit down when eating and/or drinking.

# 6. SAFEGUARDING THE CHILDREN & CHILD PROTECTION

The welfare of the child is paramount, to ensure the safety of all children who attend our service we have certain measures in place to do our utmost to protect the child from any form of harm wither in our care or outside. All staff are to be aware of possibilities of abuse of any kind and have moral and legal obligation to make a conscious effort to always be alert and responsive to any reasonable grounds for concern of each child’s safety and overall wellbeing.

**Procedures put in place:**

* A designated liaison officer is appointed.
* A deputy designated liaison officer is appointed.
* Staff and students are carefully selected, trained, and supervised.
* All staff are Garda vetted/ (International Police vetted where applicable) and have children first training (child protection and reporting concerns training)
* All staff are aware of their legal obligations for reporting concerns for a child.
* Open door policies for parents/carers to inform the DLP of any concerns they may have for any children in the service.
* Confidentiality of all staff is a requirement in this area.
* A list of contact info for important government bodies (TUSLA & Gardaí) in this area is available.
* Reporting of reasonable concerns of a child’s wellbeing and safety to TUSLA.

# 7. SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

We believe children are competent and confident learners. *We believe that children should be supported to make choices and accept responsibility for their actions and behaviour.*  We acknowledge children are continually learning about their emotions, feelings and how to manage same.

 In our Pre-School positive behaviour is encouraged from all children.

* The staff will ensure expectations on behaviour are fair and consistent to all children depending on their age and stage of development.
* We ensure all children are treated with respect, by adults and other children alike to allow children to develop and sustain a positive sense of self. As a result, children will feel valued, respected, empowered, cared for, and included. The children’s wellbeing is crucial.
* The staff are role models for the children and should treat one another with respect, use appropriate tone of voice and body language to one another and the children.
* We encourage children to respect themselves, others and the environment. We facilitate children to make positive decisions and choices about their own learning and development to develop a positive sense of self.
* We aim to facilitate a happy, caring environment with stimulating activities for all children. In the case of a particular incident, or persistent unacceptable behaviour, we will *always* discuss ways to move forward with your child.

# 8. ILLNESS & EXCLUSION

Your children’s welfare is the first and most important consideration. In the event of sudden illness or temperature the child will be separated from the other children, and we will contact you immediately. We aim to provide a healthy environment as much is possible and to protect everybody with different illnesses contamination. We will endeavour to minimise your child’s exposure to infection by excluding sick children/adults. We encourage parent’s uptake of children’s childhood vaccinations and inform you and the Health Service Executive where necessary of any infections in the service. Record of vaccinations are required upon completion of the registration form.

**Policy and Procedure:**

* For the administration of any medicines, e.g., inhalers, antihistamine, rash cream etc, the parent is required a medical consent prior to administration, unless situation deems unable then verbal permission will be sought followed by written documentation.
* Trained parent/s of the child that requires lifesaving medicine, such as an EpiPen or inhalers, must show appropriate staff the step-by-step procedure followed when administrating the medicine.
* You will be informed of our concerns and procedures we are taking.
* If you cannot be reached, the next name on the emergency list will be contacted.
* The child’s temperature will be monitored and recorded. If a child has temperature, you will be asked to collect your child immediately.
* You will be required to take your child home immediately in the case of temperature vomiting or diarrhoea and inform your GP for further action.
* We request that you inform us asap about GP diagnoses.
* We advise that sick children must be kept at home (see exclusions appendix)/ (different illnesses then **Covid-19**).
* We advise all persons to inform the manager if they have met an infectious, contagious disease **or Covid-19.**

**Exclusion:**

**To ensure the safety and health of all our children and staff, those who have any of the following conditions will be excluded from the service**:

* **Temperature over 37 degrees.**
* **Hacking cough.**
* **Running nose**
* **Severe congestion.**
* **Difficulty breathing or untreated wheezing.**
* **An unexplained rash (see exclusion list also).**
* **Vomiting.**
* **Acute symptoms of food poisoning/gastro-enteritis**
* **Diarrhoea.**
* **Lice or nits - see Head Lice Policy and Procedure.**
* **An infectious /contagious condition.**
* **A child who is on an antibiotic for less than 48 hours.**
* **A child that complains of a stiff neck and headache with one or more of the above symptoms.**

**Any child or adult with symptoms of an infectious illnesses will be asked not to attend The Pre-School until they are no longer ill. The management of Pre-school will ensure all areas of the premises are always thoroughly clean and disinfected, including play areas, toilets, toys, and all equipment.**

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| **Diarrhoea:**  | 48 hours from last episode.  |
| **Chickenpox:**  | 7 days from appearance of the rash.  |
| **Gastroenteritis, Food poisoning,** **Salmonellas & Dysentery**  | Until authorised by GP  |
| **Hand, Foot and Mouth**  | Until child well/seek managers advice  |
| **Infective hepatitis:**  | 7 days from onset of jaundice.  |
| **Measles:**  | 7 days from appearance of the rash  |
| **Meningococcal** (infection mumps)  | Until recovered from illness Exclude child for five days after onset of swelling.  |
| **Pertussis** (Whooping cough)   | 21 days from the onset of paroxysmal cough or 5 days from the commencement of antibiotics  |
| **Poliomyelitis**  | Until declared free from infection by GP  |
| **Rubella** (German measles) | 7 days from appearance of the rash  |
| **Streptococcal** (infectionof the throat) | Until appropriate medical treatment  |
| **Scarlet fever**  | Child can return 48 hours after commencing appropriate antibiotic treatment.  |
| **Impetigo:**  | 3 days from the start of treatment Until the skin is healed  |
| **Pediculosis (lice)**  | Until appropriate treatment has been given  |
| **Temperature**  | Over 37.5 degrees  |
| **Vomiting** **Conjunctivitis:**  | 48 hours from last episode of vomiting  Kept at home for two days; thereafter until eyes are no longer weeping.   |

# 9. INTERNET & SOCIAL MEDIA

**Principle:**

We recognise that, to children, a variety of multimedia can provide entertainment and education to children, provided that the material listened to, watched, or played is age appropriate and supervised. All use of multimedia is in moderation and for educational purposes as interlinked with the planned curriculum such as themed music rhymes, brief videos of seasonal or cultural events etc.

At the service, we value music because it is a powerful and unique form of communication that can change the way children feel, think and act. It also increases self-discipline and creativity, aesthetic sensitivity, and fulfilment.

Below is a list of ways we carefully monitor this area:

* Computers and gaming machines are not available to children in the service.
* Children do not have access to phones in school and staff are required to limit phone usage during work hours and to only use in relation to work issues.
* Children do not have access to the internet.
* Television/YouTube viewing is supervised and minimal in the service. It is used for educational purposes when deemed appropriate.
* Music forums (Spotify, YouTube) listened to are appropriate for young children and will contain no offensive or inappropriate language.

**Social Media:**

Social media is an important element to promote our service. It is also an important method of ongoing communication and updates to our parents. The use of all social media is monitored closely by the manager and deputy manager.

Social Media forums used are:

* Teach Kloud
* Facebook
* WhatsApp
* Instagram

It is ensured the confidentiality of the child or parents is compromised by:

* Limiting the personal information posted (no second names or specific details).
* All pictures uploaded do not have the child’s face clearly identifiable (unless prior consent from parents).
* All information shared on a professional basis.
* Each forum is accessible to only people with invested interest in the school.

# 10.GENERAL INFORMATION ON ENROLMENT AND ADMISSIONS

It is the policy of this service to offer equal access to children and their parents/guardians inclusive of additional needs, cultural, financial status and religious orientation. We provide a service for ECCE eligible and non-ECCE children. The lowest age is 2 ½ years. Priority for ECCE full-time children come before that of part time non-ECCE places which be prioritise to siblings of children already attending. Places are then allocated on a first come, first served basis with no deposit.

The following information applies to both ECCE and Non-ECCE children and children with Autism:

* **4 weeks-notice will be required for any changes or cancellation of the original agreement.**
* The main point of contact for parents/guardians is the manager and child’s room leader.
* Within the classroom setting, each child is allocated a keyworker who will carry out observations on your child.
* Children will be asked to wear tracksuit bottoms and hoodies. Velcro shoes are preferable.
* All long hair must be tied up. No hoop or long earrings, jewellery, or watches. Shoes appropriate to outdoor play should be worn.
* A parent information evening will usually be arranged prior to your child starting.
* Children **must be toilet trained** before starting in the service.
* The following are required with the **child’s name clearly labelled** on all items: o Healthy snacks o Spare change of clothes o School Bags o Jackets

*Note: Parents/guardians should apply sun cream before their child arrives in the service on days where sun cream is necessary*

**ECCE Scheme**

Applies to children eligible under DCYA terms, for two years, generally starting age 2 years

8 months from September until the end of June of the year they will be starting in Primary School, child will not be older than 5½ years.

**Criteria for Enrolment:**

* Children’s date of birth must fit the eligibility for the scheme as directed by DCEDIY.
* Full-time places (5 days) will be given as a priority.
* Part-time places will be offered if not all full-time places are filled.

* Each year of the two-year scheme is treated completely separately by our service with enrolment required for each year. If your child attends Year 1, you will be required to follow the enrolment criteria again for Year 2.
* All details regarding a child’s Application Form must be completed and any relevant important information or specific diet or health requirements must be noted.
* We reserve the right to terminate our services.
* Parents/guardians should familiarise themselves with our policies and procedures.

**Attendance:**

It is essential, to the efficient running of the service, that you inform the Manager if your child is unable to attend the service and follow up with a telephone call to inform the Manager when the child will be returning, a written and signed letter stating reason for the child’s absences may be required from the parent and to be kept on file for inspection purposes.

It should be noted that the income received by the service from the DCYA is based on the regular basis. A register of the times and days that children attend is kept. Continued failure to attend may result in your child’s place being withdrawn.

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

**Children with allergies medical conditions and additional needs:**

It is important this recorded on the Registration Form. Management will meet with the parent to discuss individual needs and how the child can be supported in the setting. Parent/guardian may be required to complete an additional Medical Emergency Form if their child has a medical condition that could result in a medical emergency.

#  12. FEES POLICY

We endeavour to be open and transparent about all fees charged. This policy applies to all parents/guardians who use the services for their children.

* We operate the Free Pre-School (ECCE) under the Department for Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).
* For all children with Autism, we operate under DES/ Home Tuition Scheme.

**Parents/guardians must give one months’ notice if they wish to withdraw their child from the ASD Unit or Pre-School/ECCE.**

**(Refer to full set of policies and procedures for more info on medical issues or any other matters, if required.**

**our web site:**  [**www.bambislandluskvillage.ie**](http://www.bambislandluskvillage.ie/)



Parents/Guardians Signature:

Date: