

Mo's Montessori

Policies & Procedures

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1.INCLUSION POLICY

Mo's Montessori's mission is to value the ability, individuality and cultural background of all children by providing each child with the opportunities they need to reach their full potential as active learners within an inclusive culture.

At Mo's Montessori, we achieve care and inclusion in education by continually reviewing an anti-bias approach that is implemented by the early childhood service, and by working in partnership with families, children and the early childhood team, both individually through reflective practice, and in consultation with children and their families, so as to ensure that the education and care provided is fully inclusive of all children, families and agencies that attend and use our service.

The Ethos of Our Service

Mo's Montessori will ensure an inclusive culture, recognising that every child is an individual and has their own learning style.

Mo's Montessori believes that all children are unique, but share many similarities, thus promoting equality and diversity throughout the early childhood service.

Mo's Montessori will promote and nurture the identity of each child attending the service and ensure that their emotional and physical well-being is of paramount importance at all times.

Policy Statement

This policy represents the agreed principles and commitments for inclusion, in line with the Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Charter. Mo's Montessori early childhood service will implement this policy to support and develop an inclusive environment for children and adults within our early childhood service.

'Inclusion' refers to:

A process involving a programme, curriculum or education environment where each child is welcomed and included on equal terms, can feel they belong and can progress to his/her full potential in all areas of development (National Childcare Strategy 2006-2010).

Role of the Inclusion Co-ordinator

The Inclusion Co-ordinator within our service is Maureen Phelan.

Core Principles

Mo's Montessori actively seeks to support learning and participation that does not hinder or exclude children or groups of children. This means that equality of opportunity must be a

reality for all children attending the service. This is achieved by using a child-centred equality and diversity approach to create an inclusive learning environment.

Core principles of this strategy are:

- Work in partnership with parents.
- Support children's ability, identity, cultural background and sense of belonging.
- Support children to become respectful of difference.
- Foster each child's critical thinking in order to confront bias and discrimination.
- Implement a curriculum that meets the individual needs and emerging interests of the child under *Siolta: The National Quality Framework (2006)* and *Aistear: The National Curriculum Framework (2009)*.
- Respond to children's diverse and individual learning needs and styles through an emerging curriculum.
- Support continual development for all early childhood practitioners, so as to ensure that they are trained in an equality and diversity approach to providing care and education to all.

Early childhood practitioners work to ensure the following:

- Children feel secure and know that their contributions are valued.
- Children know they belong and are valued as unique individuals.
- All children's cultural backgrounds are respected and valued.
- Children feel strong and confident about their identity.
- Children are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success.
- Children use materials that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds.
- Children have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles.
- Children are encouraged to participate fully, having particular regard for and being cognisant of children with a variety of abilities.
- If a child uses an aid or assistive technology to communicate, that the device is used solely for this purpose.

Responsibilities of management and early childhood practitioners at Mo's Montessori.

All families and children are encouraged to participate, accessing learning experiences through the curriculum on offer.

At Mo's Montessori service, we promote children's individual learning according to their stage of development in line with the Child Care Act, 1991; Children Care (Pre-school Services) (No.2) Regulations 2016; Disability Act 2005; Equal Status Acts 2000-2012; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, with particular attention to Articles 29 and 30; and Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011.

Admissions Policy

Please see the Mo's Montessori Admissions Policy, included in your handbook for parents which contains all policies and procedures for the admissions to/enrolment in the service.

Working in partnership with parents

As children and families are the most knowledgeable about their background, culture, language and physical and developmental needs, Mo's Montessori will ensure that families are consulted when developing and implementing policy.

An effective diversity and equality approach will ensure that ability and diversity are recognised and celebrated, and that discrimination, inequality and exclusion are addressed.

Dealing with discriminatory incidents

- The first step in handling incidents involving discrimination is to recognise and acknowledge what is happening.
- All children need to know that name-calling or physically hurting someone is unacceptable.
- Discuss with the children in a democratic and sensitive manner that name-calling or physically hurting someone is unacceptable.
- When an incident occurs (hurtful remarks made by one child to another), both children learn from the incident. Refer back to the rules of the service where appropriate.
- Always determine the real reason for incidents involving exclusion or conflict. It may not be a discriminatory incident, so be careful not to make assumptions.
- Some issues may be brought into the early childhood service by the child, arising from comments made by adults outside the setting. Recognise when it is an adult issue, and identify appropriate actions for addressing the issue with the child's parent or guardians.
- An incident should be considered from the perspective of all individuals involved as well as those who witnessed it. Appropriate actions need to be taken, at circle time or in group discussion, in order to address incidents witnessed by children who were not involved. This does not mean singling out children in the group.
- By showing empathy and expressing our feeling, we can 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. Be mindful that early childhood practitioners are role models for the children and the early childhood service. Children will do as we do.

Actions to be followed if the policy is not implemented

If you, as a staff member or a parent, feel that this policy is not being implemented, you can follow the Mo's Montessori Complaints Policy and Procedure to make a complaint.

Monitoring and reviewing the policy

The above policy will be re-evaluated at regular intervals throughout the year. We at Mo's Montessori service value your input.

If you have any queries in relation to the policy, please contact the Inclusion Co-ordinator: Maureen Phelan.

2. CURRICULUM STATEMENT

Mo's Montessori aim is to provide a happy, secure, calm, friendly, enquiry-based learning environment where children, parents and Early Years Educators work in partnership; where each individual child is valued, encouraged and respected for his/her uniqueness and is allowed to develop to his/her full potential in an inclusive environment.

Our school uses an enquiry, play-based, emergent approach to learning underpinned by the Montessori Method. This means that children get to learn through play. Our curriculum approach provides the opportunities for each child's development by fostering a natural desire of learning through exploration and discovery. The Early Years Educators' scaffold the children's learning and help them to progress to the next level of development.

As well as teaching language, arithmetic and geography, our classroom nurtures vital social skills. The children learn kindness, courtesy and respect for the rights of others as well as learning independence and responsibility.

Our enquiry based curriculum approach empowers the child to learn by building their own understanding as they do things for themselves.

OUR CURRICULUM

Mo's Montessori follows the Maria Montessori Method of teaching. Through the prepared environment of the school the children will learn new skills, build independence, confidence, will and intellect. We are committed to supporting young children's learning, development and well-being. Our pre-school aims to offer the children a happy, fun place to be, where they can feel safe and at home in an environment that offers many wonderful things to learn about and do.

The Montessori Prepared Environment

- The equipment in the pre-school environment follows a clear progressive sequence and so of itself furnishes the curriculum of the class, setting objectives in a concrete way before each child and yet providing challenges adapted to his/her natural abilities.

- The prepared environment is adapted to suit the age group of two and a half to 6 year olds.
- The open shelves offer the child a range of equipment, providing him/her with incentives and opportunities for purposeful movement in key areas of his developmental and cultural needs.
- The equipment range remains basically the same from day to day, but the child is introduced to more and more activities as they develop and build their skills. The order of the equipment provides a framework of security, offering the possibility for the child to repeat activities, which builds concentration and meets the inner need of the child.
- The Montessori activities will encourage each child to develop self-reliance. They do things for themselves and learn to help others, teaching them respect for other people.
- The children will develop their initiative through the gradual increase in their ability to choose their own activity.
- As the equipment is generally self-corrective this allows the child to make independent progress at a pace suited to his abilities and without undue intervention from the teacher.
- The children will do grace and courtesy lessons throughout their day through examples and demonstrations shown by the teacher. For example they will learn how to greet a person, how to introduce themselves, how to walk around someone else's work, how to blow their nose, how to cough, how to walk not run in the class, how to ask to be part of an activity. These lessons support the children's self-reliance and are an aid to life. They are very enjoyable to partake in.

Key Montessori Points

- Each child is unique but shares with all other children universally common developmental interests.
- The child under six years is gifted with a mind capable of absorbing and learning without effort. It is vital that they be exposed to as many worthwhile areas of learning and culture as possible during this time. *The Montessori Method applies the fundamental principles of nature to the education of the children.* Children's periods of readiness to learn should be recognised and utilised to the fullness of their potential.
- A child's most important instrument of learning is movement especially that of the hands. At all times and particularly in the classroom a child must be given the opportunity for meaningful activity. Through repeated exercises that demand a mental effort a child's will is strengthened leading to self-discipline and preparing him for intellectual achievement.
- The Montessori Teacher prepares the classroom environment. It must be very orderly and homely rather than academic. The teacher must observe the children closely in order to understand their stage of development so they she can demonstrate the appropriate activities.

- The liberty of the child in the classrooms is one of the fundamental principles of the Montessori Method. It is a freedom with limits. Once the child has been shown activities they are then free to choose what they want to work with. The small ones in the beginning are less free as they must be shown everything and helped a great deal. The activities encourage movement about the classroom. The freedom to choose one's own work quickly leads to order, harmony, self-development and therefore to self-discipline.

The 4 main themes of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework; well-being, identity & belonging, communication and exploring & thinking, harmonise with the aims of Montessori teaching.

3. ADMISSIONS/FEES POLICY

Mo's Montessori is committed to offering inclusion and access to the group and its facilities, to all adults and children, inclusive of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, membership of the Travelling community and religious belief. Our service operates an 'open door' policy (a welcome at all times for all parent/guardian/carers). This is especially relevant during the settling-in period.

Booking Procedure

It is a requirement of Mo's Montessori for parents/carers registering their child to meet with the Early Childhood Manager, have a tour of the school and learn about the Montessori curriculum being offered in the classroom. They must then complete a registration form in order to enrol their child or place their child on the waiting list. The form contains the following detailed information:

- The name, date of birth of the child.
- The date on which the child commenced attending the service.
- The date on which the child ceased to attend the service.
- The name and address of the parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where the parent or guardian or relative or friend of such child can be contacted during the hours of operation.
- Authorisation for the collection of the child other than parents.
- Details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of a pre-school child, together with all the notes relevant to the provision of special care or attention.
- The name and telephone number of the child's family doctor.
- Record of immunisations, if any, received by the child.
- Written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment in the event of an emergency.
- Permission to change clothes should the need arise.
- Permission to apply sun cream.

- Permission to be photographed under the supervision of the childcare manager. Photos may be used for displays or promotional material for the service.

A completed registration form must be given to the Childcare Manager prior to a child starting. A registration fee must be paid prior to a child starting at Mo's Montessori. The registration fee is €80.

Mo's Montessori can accommodate up to 32 children at any one time with 4 teachers at all times for this amount of children.

The age range we cater for is two and a half to 6 years of age.

Places are given firstly to siblings, then to past pupils and thirdly to other people. Our service operates a waiting list in the event of no places being available.

Staff/Child Ratios

The ratio is 1:11 for children on the ECCE scheme aged 2.5 to 6. Mo's Montessori fully complies with the Childcare Regulations (S.I. No. of 2016) staff/child ratios.

Opening hours

Our school offers a morning sessional service for 3 hours a day, 9.30am to 12.30pm 5 days per week for 38 weeks amounting to 183 open days.

Mo's Montessori operates an optional additional extra 30 minutes each day for all children attending the service from 9am to 9.30pm.

Fees

Fees are to be paid weekly or monthly in advance with the exception of children eligible for the free pre-school year (see below) by banking online/cheque or cash. Fees are to be paid regardless of Bank Holidays or if your child is absent for any reason. Two week's notice is required for change of an agreed registration contract.

The optional additional 30 minutes am/pm can be paid weekly or monthly in advance by electronic banking online, cheque or cash, as per each individual's agreement with the Early Childcare Manager.

9.00-9.30am = €15 per week/€60 per month
12.30-1.00pm = €15 per week/€120 per month

The fee (for non-ECCE children) per child per week is €80 euro for 3 hours a day of pre-school Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year. All weeks must be paid for.

If your fee has not been paid for two consecutive weeks and you have not made arrangement with the Early Childcare Manager, you may risk losing the place.

Registration fee

It will be necessary for parents/carers to pay a registration fee of €80 to secure their child's place at Mo's Montessori. This fee will be returned at the end of October for ECCE children as long as the Parent Declaration form is completed early in September, the child is verified as eligible for this programme and Mo's Montessori is paid under the ECCE programme for the first four weeks. Otherwise the registration fee is lost. For families not on the ECCE scheme, the registration fee of €80 is non-refundable. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Free pre-school year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Our school operates the free pre-school year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). This began in September 2010.

The ECCE scheme is open to all children aged between 3 years on the 1st of September each year.

If your child is eligible for the ECCE scheme they will be automatically included on it. The school's contact for the scheme is through the local County Childcare Committee (Fingal) 01-8077660.

Collecting Children

It is the policy of our childcare service that children can only be collected by the person or persons named on the registration form.

The Parent/guardian/carer must notify the staff in advance if an alternative named person is to collect the child.

Children must always be collected on time.

Open Door

We operate an open door policy with children, parents/guardians/carers and Tusla/Pobal. We are delighted to see you at any time, however we ask you to understand that sometimes we may be very busy with the children, so it may not be possible to come directly to a knock at the door or answer the phone. We ask you for your understanding and patience in this.

For personal matters we will be able to meet with you following a pre-arranged appointment.

Parents and carers must accompany their child to the door and make sure that their child is left in the care of a staff member before leaving. We ask you not to drop and go.

If your child is collected by anyone other than a parent or authorized person, we must be informed in advance.

If you have a change of address and/or telephone number, parents/guardians must inform the Early Childcare Manager immediately. This is extremely important for any emergency that may arise.

All parents/guardians with children starting in September 2016 will be emailed a copy of the Policies & Procedures.

The settling-in process has no time limits and may need to be repeated at a later stage if a child becomes unsettled or following prolonged absences from the service e.g. serious illness, family bereavement etc.

4.Settling in

Mo's Montessori is committed to the smooth transition of the children and the parent/guardian/careers into our childcare service. Settling-in should be a positive experience as it influences children's self-confidence, attitude to relationships and socialising. Settling-in is a collaborative process between parents/guardians/carers, staff and children.

When first meeting with parents/guardians/carers and child, it is our policy to discuss the settling-in period. Once the appropriate forms are completed after parents have met with the Early Childcare Manager and the registration fee is paid a start date will then be arranged.

As all children are different and individual, the settling in period will be different for each child. The starting days and time may be staggered for new children needing time to settle.

For children needing extra time to settle in, we encourage parents/guardians/carers and children to drop-in at the appointed time to familiarise the children and themselves with the routine, the classroom and the teachers.

Parents/guardians/carers will be encouraged to drop their child and say goodbye cheerfully. Some children may not be ready for a full session and the teachers will advise parent/guardian/carer on this matter.

Parents/guardians/carers should never leave the premises without saying goodbye to their child. It is important to understand also that extended goodbyes can distress the **children**. Say goodbye cheerfully and tell your child you will be back to collect them soon and to have lots of fun and then go.

New children will be invited to spend an hour during the early summer (June) to visit the school and be introduced to the other children and the environment they will work and play in.

An example of how the settling-in period may operate:

The children might come in for an hour each morning for one week, then two hours each morning for the second week. After that they can come for the full 3 hours Monday to Friday. Obviously less time may be required settling-in, depending on the individual. The settling-in process has no time limits and may need to be repeated at a later stage if a child becomes unsettled or following prolonged absences from the service.

6.CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Mo's Montessori respects children as individuals with their own interests and strengths, and respects their right to experience childhood fully. Mo's Montessori is committed to treating all children equally in line with the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012.

Early Years Educators Key Points for Code of Behaviour

When communicating with children Early Childhood Educators should:

- Listen to children.
- Speak kindly and warmly to children.
- Encourage and praise children.
- Treat children with dignity and respect.
- Use age appropriate language.
- Talk to children at their level.
- Make eye contact.
- Be conscious of your body language.
- Know how to deal with a concern about a colleague's behaviour.

Early Years Educators must never:

- Shout at children.
- Ignore children.
- Use sarcasm.
- Make jokes about children.
- Use put downs.
- Use inappropriate language.

When Managing and Supervising Activities Early Years Educators should:

- Allow for Child-centred activities.

Have contingency plans when an activity needs to be changed or moved on.
Ensure high quality resources are available.
Ensure that all staff have the appropriate skills for working with children.
Adequate staff – child ratios.
Involve children in decision making and planning as appropriate.
Ensure all children can participate in an inclusive manner.
Observe children in order to plan for future learning.
Review and record key learning for next time.

When Managing and Supervising Activities Early Years Educators must never:

Do an activity only because staff like it.
Do not try new activities without adequate planning.
Do not leave children unattended.
Do not allow rough play.
Do not show favouritism towards any one child and become overly involved with one child.

About the Use of Technology and images (photographs/video) in the school:

Always ensure written parent permission to take and use images of children.
At Mo's Montessori images of children are only used for curriculum reporting for parents.
Images of children must never be exploitative or demeaning in any way (suitable dress).
It is the Early Years Educators' duty to report use of inappropriate images.
At Mo's Montessori Early Years Educators' use a camera for taking photographs of the children for their take home development reports.
Never use a child's name and image together.
Do not use mobile phones in the workplace unless an emergency.
Do not contact children or parents on social networking sites

About one to one work or situations:

Be clear about the purpose of the work, ensure there is written agreement with parent in place as to the details: time, duration, etc. line management support and supervision, regular review within supervision and with child/parent.

An Early Years Educator must never take a child alone on a car journey or take a child into a locked room.

What is considered appropriate touch:

There must be respect for children's privacy and dignity at all times.
Age and developmentally appropriate contact (for example, infants and toddlers being held, sitting on laps, cuddling), if a child is seeking it and it is developmentally appropriate, in an open environment.
Intimate care (washing, changing, dressing, feeding, safety, first aid, comforting).

An Early Years Educator must never inappropriately touch a child.

An Early Years Educator must never hit, slap or spank a child at any time.

Key Points in Relation to Positive behaviour management for children:

Children are always encouraged to behave in a caring, kind and respectful way towards others.

The children become a part of the community of the pre-school and through this community are shown and encouraged to take turns at exercises, to wait and to share with others.

Children are encouraged to be independent and are taught to help each other. The Montessori method works with the idea of limited freedom, where the children choose the work they wish to do once they have been shown it but where there are consistent, set boundaries to help guide them.

Children at Mo's Montessori are educated in peace throughout their time at the school. We focus on using respectful communication skills to solve conflicts. We closely observe and monitor the behaviours of students to ensure that hurtful behaviour does not occur and to take swift action to deal with any incident. We also work together to ensure that conflict resolution skills are taught and practiced, giving children the necessary tools to deal with peer conflict.

Our school's focus, based on Montessori pedagogy, is on preventative measures for such behaviours by teaching children how to:

- Be caring and courteous of others
- To co-operate with others
- To learn to be empathetic to others and their feelings
- Learn to deal with negative feelings (anger, jealousy, etc.)
- To learn to stand up for themselves in a peaceful way
- Engage in discussions to resolve differences, express feelings and show empathy
- To respect and celebrate the unique qualities of every person

Positive Behaviour Management for Children

- Parents/carers may be consulted in relation to their child's behaviour in order that any difficulties can be worked out together. This may involve parents being called into the school to meet the Early Childcare Manager and Educators.
- Difficult behaviour is dealt with through distraction or by changing the activity/environment. Skilful interaction with children at stressful moments is an objective in our behaviour management.

- We understand how important it is to acknowledge children's effort, achievements and feelings by sincere encouragement, which will lead to the growth of self-esteem and self-discipline.
- Through observation of the group we will encourage children to problem solve.
- Explanations for challenging unwanted behaviours and attitudes will be made clear immediately to the child/children.
- It is our policy to always make clear to the child in question that it is the behaviour and not the child that is unacceptable.
- Recurring problems will be dealt with in an inclusive manner following observations and involving the child's parent/guardian/carers, and other appropriate adults to assist in understanding the cause and agreeing a strategy for an appropriate response.

Inappropriate Behaviour/language

- This policy applies to all children, staff and visitors of Mo's Montessori. We teach the children the importance of respect for each other and therefore will not tolerate any disrespectful words or actions towards children, parents or staff.
- Inappropriate, disruptive behaviour will be dealt with through intervention in as positive a manner as possible.
- The teacher will redirect the child to an activity chosen by the teacher. If the child is still unable to settle down, the teacher will intervene and may keep the child beside them until they have calmed down and can make respectful choices.
- When an incident occurs in the school, then the teacher will submit a summary of the incident in the Incident report book.
- Teachers help children develop positive conflict resolution skills to deal with peer conflict.

7.PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Parents as Partners Policy Statement

Mo's Montessori affirms the crucial role of parents as primary educators of their children. Our service is committed to working together with parents to ensure quality care and learning for their child. It is policy of the service to be open, inclusive, welcoming, accepting, and respectful of all parent/guardian/carers using the service. Our aim as Early years educators is to plan, implement and evaluate all children's learning in partnership

with children, parents/carers and relevant other and to involving them in the planning and development of this service.

- The admissions and settling in policy (Admissions Policy 1, page 3). Parents will be supplied with information on the type of care and programme provided by our service and our interest in their input as partners in learning.
- Our pre-school will hold open days during the month of June.
- We will facilitate meeting parents/guardians/carers at mutually agreed times and venues.
- We will aim to ensure a brief daily exchange of information with each parent/guardian/carer.
- There is a notice board inside the main door for current information, ECCE payments policy and ECCE calendar, Tusla Information, contact numbers and other relevant information.
- We value the children's input and allow for their involvement in every aspect of their learning at our school.
- We value parent/guardian/carers input and aim to ensure opportunities for them to contribute to their child's learning and to the services' activities.
- We will encourage parents/guardians/carers input to the service, i.e. rota, committee, fund raising and drawing up policies and procedures.
- Our service will facilitate opportunities for observation of play that will increase understanding of child behaviour and development.
- Mo's Montessori will provide parent/guardian/carers with information about relevant conferences, workshops and training.
- Mo's Montessori allows time to listen, talk, exchange ideas amongst children, teachers, parents/carers and relevant others.
- We will make parent/guardian/carers aware of our group's comments/complaints procedure.

8.CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the policy of Mo's Montessori to keep confidential any information about the health and family circumstances of children, families, staff and volunteers. Knowledge or observation of children's behaviour will be treated in a strictly confidential manner, except in terms of legal obligation, i.e. child protection.

- Parents/guardians/carers will be made aware of the necessity of keeping records in relation to the children in order to comply with the Child Care (Childcare Services) Regulations, (S.O No. 2016).
- Parents will have access to records kept in the service only in relation to their own child. These records will be kept in a locked file.

- It is the policy of our school, when discussing any issues concerning a child in our care, to speak only to its parents or guardians about those issues.
- In child protection situations, observations/records in relation to children may have to be made available to Tusla unless it would put children further at risk. (See Child Protection Policy No. 7).
- The service provider with all staff, volunteers and/or trainees should raise the principles of confidentiality, and it will be impressed upon them that it is not acceptable to discuss matters relating to the children, the staff or the service outside the setting.
- Breaches of confidentiality will be dealt with under the complaints procedure or under the terms of employment as appropriate. (See Comments and Complaints Policy No. 12).

9.EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

It is the policy of Mo's Montessori to recognise and respect the rights of all adults and children associated with the service, to develop an effective programme of action to promote equality of access and participation and eliminate discrimination on grounds of culture, race, membership of the Traveller Community, gender, disability and social background in all of its procedure and practices.

The childcare service will comply with all relevant legislation, including:

- The Employment Equality Acts, 1998 and 2004**
- The Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004**

We strive to ensure that all aspects of equality are implemented. This includes children, staff and parents/carers. We are committed to providing an environment free from direct or indirect discrimination. This includes:

- Gender
- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Marital status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religious belief

We aim to remove any barriers preventing a child from thriving or an adult from using their skills/experience to their full potential. At Mo's Montessori we value diversity and differences and encourage staff and children alike. All staff is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of our Equal Opportunity Policy are followed and that discrimination of any type

does not occur. Failure to do so will result in failure of staff to fulfil the responsibilities of their position.

10.HEALTH AND SAFETY

Our school's aim is to promote the health, safety, welfare and well being of all the children in the pre-school. We also consider it our duty to promote the health and safety of all the staff caring for the children.

Mo's Montessori fully complies with current legislation regarding registration and training:

- The Child Care Act 1991**
- The Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 2016**

All staff is required to have current first aid training, which is updated when required. In-house training is given to new staff to ensure and maintain safe practice in the school.

Suitable and secure storage facilities are provided for cleaning chemicals and unsafe toxic, dangerous or hazardous materials, substances or equipment.

We have in place the following to ensure best safety of children, staff and visitors:

- Smoke alarm powered though the electricity source
- Fire exits and monthly fire drills
- Fire safety equipment
- Thermostatically controlled water at the children's wash hand basins
- Thermostatically controlled valves on radiators
- Electrical socket covers
- Adequate insurance cover
- Telephone land line
- Visible procedures to follow in the event of a medical emergency

Accidents

It is our policy to keep an Accident/Injury Book, which we will show, to all new parents showing the way in which we record any accidents or injuries while the child is in our care. Our aim is to reassure parents that the children's safety and welfare is our greatest priority.

It is the responsibility of staff members to immediately report any accident, incident or potential hazards to the management and who will inform parents/carers of children. Any such accident, incident or potential hazard will be recorded on the Accident/Injury book which must be signed by the child's parent.

If a staff member has been allocated a specific job such as phoning the fire brigade, this must be clearly defined and a second chain of command in case of absence.

Medical Emergency

It is our policy to keep a list of each child in the service and their own personal doctor's details and contact number. In the event of a child becoming ill the child's parents/guardians/carers will be called, if they cannot be reached their doctor will be contacted.

In the event of a child becoming seriously ill, the doctor will be contacted immediately or an ambulance will be called and the child taken to hospital.

It is a requirement that all staff is trained in First Aid. In an emergency the protocol is to call for help either by summoning the doctor or dialling 112 or 999, to remain calm and to follow first aid procedures until medical help arrives.

We keep a **medical emergency procedure list** on the wall by the telephone to aid an immediate response. A record of actions taken in an emergency are signed by relevant parties and kept on the premises.

There are two suitably equipped first-aid boxes for the children kept on the premises.

Medication Administration

- 1.1 We keep a medicine consent and administration record for prescribed medication, which will only be administered to the child, whom it is prescribed for with the permission of their parent/guardian/carer.
- 1.2 The child's name, current date and dosage must be clearly printed on the label of the medication.
- 1.3 All relevant forms must be completed with parent's signatures prior to prescribing medication to a child.
- 1.4 A second person, the deputy designated person in charge, must check any plan to administer medication and countersign.
- 1.5 Non-prescribed medication will be administered upon verbal permission via telephone, if unable to sign the relevant forms at the time. We will not administer medication to any child without parental consent.
- 1.6 The first deputy in charge, Maureen Phelan, will administer medicine. Pamela Halton will check and countersign the administration of medicine. In the absence of the first deputy in charge, Pamela Halton, the second deputy in charge will administer medication following the above protocol. Grainne Broaders will check and countersign the administration of medicine.

Protocol for emergency medical treatment

All medicines are relevantly stored, outside of the classroom in the medicine area, out of reach of all the children.

Parents of all children must sign a consent form upon registering their child at our school which will give permission/not give permission for the staff at Mo's Montessori to apply sunscreen.

Healthy Eating

Children at our pre-school will bring a small snack each morning. We would ask parents/guardians/carers to include a piece of fruit or vegetable along with a healthy snack and a drink. We have a fridge in the kitchen where children can put their lunchboxes when they come in the morning.

Crisps, sweets or fizzy drinks are not allowed in the lunchbox. We would like to save these treats for special occasions such as birthday parties or Christmas.

Reduce, reuse and recycle is very important at our pre-school. The children will become familiar with the food waste bin, the paper bin and the plastic bin. We will encourage parents not to wrap their children's food in plastic if possible and to reuse drink bottles.

Mealtimes are a positive and relaxed time. We believe that eating together provides encouraging experiences and is a great way to teach good social behaviour.

Procedures to Prevent the Spread of Infection

For the protection of children and staff, any child/staff member presenting with the following illness/symptoms will not return to the service:

- Infectious diseases/illnesses
- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Temperature of 101 degree F/38 degree C
- Headlice
- Chickenpox
- Measles
- Meningitis
- Hepatitis
- Impetigo
- Earache
- Complaining of sore head or stiffness in the neck
- Persistent cough
- Whooping cough
- Severe congestion

- Contagious illness

The exclusion extends to the first 24 hours of anti-biotics. Children and/or staff suffering from vomiting and or diarrhoeal illness shall not attend the service while they are ill and shall not return to the service until they are 48 hours well.

If a child becomes ill during the morning the parent/carer will be contacted and arrangements must be made to collect the child as soon as possible. In the event of the child becoming seriously ill the doctor will be contacted immediately or an ambulance will be called and the child taken to hospital. A record of actions is signed by relevant parties and kept on the premises.

Hand washing

Hand hygiene is the single most important intervention to prevent transmission of infection and is a quality standard in Mo's Montessori as advised by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre www.hpsc.ie.

Hand washing saves lives. One of the activities the children will learn in our pre-school is hand washing. We have a separate table with basin, soap and paper towels, used as an exercise to teach children how to wash their hands properly. The children will learn to wash their hands and dry them but will learn it as a fun activity. Children will wash their hands before snack time. Children with runny noses will be encouraged and taught to wash their hands after they have blown their noses. Children will be taught to wash their hands in the bathroom hand basins after going to the toilet.

Cleaning routine for premises and fixtures

The premises of the pre-school and all of the fixtures will be cleaned daily after school hours. Details of cleaning will be recorded on the daily cleaning programme sheets with a separate sheet for each day. The toilets will be cleaned each day at the end of the morning and at the end of the afternoon session. The floors and kitchen area will be cleaned and washed daily. The equipment and shelves will be cleaned and polished once a week and as required and the tables will be cleaned every day; before lunch (am & pm) and after the children have gone home.

11.MANAGING DAY TRIPS & OUTINGS

This service aims to provide children with a varied and wide experience and from time to time the service may organise day trips and outings. It is our policy to ensure the safety and well-being of children during these activities through planning, risk assessment, management and supervision of the activity.

Managing Routine Outings

Mo's Montessori may plan to use local facilities, for example, the beach when weather permits, the Baldoyle Forum Hall and the Baldoyle Library. In managing and planning any outing we will:

1.1 Inform parents at enrolment of the proposed activity, method of travel and supervision in place.

1.2 Seek written consent from the parents; children will not be able to participate in this activity unless this has been obtained.

1.3 Ensure an adequate number of personnel are present and that the children are supervised at all times.

1.4 Ensure that the person in charge will have access to the service mobile phone in case of emergency.

1.5 A risk assessment of the venue/facility will be carried out and reviewed annually.

1.6 Ensure that adequate insurance is in place for the outing

1.7 Ensure staff are familiar with emergency procedures.

We have a secure outdoor play area at Mo's Montessori where the children will get to play, have fun, do outdoor gardening activities, nature studies, play with sand, and get lots of fresh air as it is directly beside the sea.

Managing and Planning Day Trips/Outings

Mo's Montessori aims to provide children with a varied and wide experience and from time to time the service may organize Day Trips. The following will be considered in planning these activities:

2.1 All trips and outings will be planned in advance and a **risk assessment** will be carried out with regard to the following issues:

- safety in regard to method of transport,
- facilities,
- activities,
- accessibility for children with additional needs and emergencies.

2.2 We will ensure that the method of transport complies with relevant safety requirements and insurance.

2.3 We will ensure that adequate insurance is in place and that appropriate staff/child ratios are maintained in line with the pre-school regulations and the risk assessment.

2.4 An outline of the details of the trip and related activities will be supplied in writing to parents and written consent by a parent specifically for each trip will be obtained. Parents will be asked to provide information about any allergies that their child has.

2.5 Where appropriate, parents may be invited to accompany their children on trips.

2.6 If all staff are leaving the service, emergency contacts for all children will be brought on the trip. A roll call will be made before leaving for and upon arrival at destination.

2.7 Children will be appropriately supervised at all times and the relevant adult/ child ratios maintained.

2.8 Safety measures such as frequent head counts/roll calls at key stages, name tags, hats, armbands may be used as appropriate.

Managing Emergencies and Critical Incidents

A first aid box will be brought on any outings and a qualified first aider must be on the trip.

The person in charge will have access to the service charged mobile phone in case of emergency

Mo's Montessori does its utmost to minimize risk and ensure the safety of all children at all times. However, it is important that staff are prepared for any emergencies that may arise and in this regard, an individual plan to deal with emergencies (such as critical incidents or an incident involving a missing child) will be developed for each outing based on the school policies. Staff will be reminded of any relevant policies and procedures prior to the day trip.

Responsibilities

- Each adult including the extra adult will be made aware of their responsibilities before setting off on the trip, 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 in the event that a child goes missing.

- • Compile a check list for the outing.
- • Ensure the children are prepared for the outing destination. E.g. have appropriate clothing, sunscreen, or provided with any other item deemed necessary.
- • There is a written policy/procedure available which is to be followed in the event of a child going missing. Please see below.
- • Ensure staff are familiar with procedures to deal with any critical incidents e.g. choking, drowning etc. See Mo's Montessori policy for critical incidents or missing child below.

POLICY FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT OR AN INCIDENT THAT INVOLVES A MISSING CHILD

If a child goes missing on an outing or if there is critical incident, the designated person in charge will contact the necessary security/personnel/garda/ambulance to alert them that a child is missing/injured or hurt. They will remain on site to search or care for the child.

In the case of a missing child, it may be that the garda/law enforcement will need to direct a search effort in order to make sure that the search is performed properly and a full search and recovery effort process happens. They can quickly obtain the necessary equipment and mobilise additional personnel by bringing in outside forces should they be required.

The deputy designated person will return to the pre-school with the group on the trip, along with any adults that accompanied the children.

A specially designated person (third teacher) will contact the child's parents to inform them of the search and recovery effort.

12.SAFETY AND FIRE PREVENTION

It is the policy of Mo's Montessori to:

- **Ensure the health, well-being and personal safety of all users on the premises.**
- **Have proper accident prevention and emergency procedures agreed and shared with all users of the facility.**
- **Ensure all safety procedures are reviewed regularly and followed consistently.**
- **Comply with all legislation in force in the area of safety and fire prevention.**

It is our policy to educate the staff and children in how to vacate the premises quickly and safely. A copy of the procedure to follow in the event of fire is kept in a visible place on the premises.

Fire drills are carried out monthly to familiarise all with the procedures. Dates, times and comments for each evacuation practice are recorded, dated and signed. Appointed persons are responsible for checking the classroom and toilets using attendance register and contacting the fire brigade in the event of a fire.

All fire equipment is maintained and recorded in our fire file and serviced regularly by an independent company.

We make clear provision for the safe arrival and departure of children.

Children do not have access to any areas that may be a safety risk.

Children are supervised at all times and are never left on their own.

Garda Clearance

Mo's Montessori shall ensure appropriate Garda Vetting of all staff, students and volunteers who have access to a child:

- By reference to past employer references in particular the most recent employer reference, in respect of all staff.
- By reference to references from reputable sources, in respect of all students and volunteers.

Our service shall ensure that such vetting procedures shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed or assigned or being allowed access to a child in the pre-school service in accordance with Regulation 8(3) of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006.

First Aid

Staff at Mo's Montessori must hold a current First Aid Certificate or be currently in training. At all times there will be at least one member of staff on the premises that can administer first aid.

There is a fully stocked first aid box on the premises that is checked on a monthly basis with relevant forms checked and signed. The First Aid box is kept in a designated area.

13.SAFE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES FOR WORKERS

Mo's Montessori is committed to ensuring that the principles and practices of equality of opportunity and inclusion in terms of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, membership of the Travelling Community and religious belief shall apply to all conditions of service of our employees, including recruitment, selection, promotion, career development, pensions, training and special leave entitlements.

Our pre-school will hire new staff through an interview process where relevant qualification, experience and a minimum of two appropriate references will be required.

We encourage and support all staff in on-going professional development.

Recruitment

1. Available positions will be advertised internally and externally as widely as possible to ensure recruitment from the widest possible field, and in accordance with current Equal Opportunities legislation.
2. Selection for employment will be on the basis of suitability for the advertised post.
3. Our service will provide short-listed candidates with full information including person specification, job and role description.
4. All employees will be issued with written terms and conditions of employment and a contract of employment. Potential employees must sign compliance with our organisation's child protection and welfare policies.
5. Confirmation of all appointments will be subject to satisfactory completion of a period of probation of one month.
6. Mo's Montessori will conform to its legal obligations as an employer in relation to registration, taxation, trade union membership, and retention of all records relating to the recruitment for one year.
7. All potential candidates for a job at Mo's Montessori must have Garda vetting and police clearance for other jurisdictions they may have lived in.
8. New staff must provide proof of identity, proof of address, 2 written references which will be checked by the management.

Training

It is our policy that all staff will have access to ongoing in-service training, to keep them up to date and to develop their childcare and education skills.

Staff Induction Training Procedures

- Induction training: All newly appointed staff/students/volunteers are provided with the basic information they need to settle into the job, this includes: health and safety, child protection procedures, conditions of employment, policies and procedures and codes of behaviour.

- External training and attendance at conferences/workshops/seminars is encouraged and supported.
- At staff meetings, staff members are given the opportunity to feed back the information from the conference/workshop/seminar they attended.

General

- Special leave arrangements will be made with the management on an 'at need' individual basis.
- Termination of employment requires minimum statutory notice on either side.
- Our service will bear the Health & Safety at Work Act in mind in all dealings with employees.

Students /Volunteers

We accept volunteers and students:

- Over the age of sixteen years old
- Advance agreement between management and participant has been clearly stated in regards to duration and timing.
- Garda Vetting procedures are carried out prior to any person being appointed or assigned or being allowed access to a child in the pre-school service. (8(3) Child care [Pre-School Services] Regulations 2006).
- By reference to past employer in particular the most recent employer reference, in respect of all staff.
- By reference to references from reputable sources, in respect of all students and volunteers.
- All policies and procedures are read and understood.
- Signature is required to confirm understanding of policies and procedures.
- Volunteers and students are not to work with the children/parents unsupervised.
- Regular, usually daily feedback sessions with the management.

Data Protection

Information regarding children, their families and staff is confidential. This information is kept in a locked private cabinet.

Management and Staffing

It is the policy of Mo's Montessori to keep a record in writing of the following information in relation to the service:

The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other person, including volunteers and students working in the service. All staff information is kept in the staff records folder.

It is the policy of Mo's Montessori to provide induction training to all staff.

Mo's Montessori's designated person in charge is Maureen Phelan.

The deputy person in charge is Pamela Halton.

Mo's Montessori's policy in the event of a staff absence, Lorna O'Neill will cover. Our second back-up person who will cover in case of staff absence is Pat Phelan.

14. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMME (ECCE)

The ECCE programme will be running at our school for the 2017-2018 year. If your child is the correct age to avail of the ECCE programme they will automatically be included in it. Parents will be asked to fill out a pre-registration form for their child. Our school will then register their child using the PIP platform for the ECCE programme.

Parents will also receive a fees list letter and a service calendar. The fees letter must be signed and initialled by parents and a copy of this must be kept at the school for inspection by the Pobal team responsible for administering the ECCE programme.

The school will provide parents with all the information for the ECCE programme within the first few weeks of September.

(Insert an age calculator for parents here. See www.dcy.gov.ie)

The age criteria for the current and coming pre-school year is as follows in relation to the ECCE Programme:



To check when your child is eligible for an ECCE place, please enter your child's date of birth

-Month-

January
February
March

April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

-Year-

201220132014201520162017201820192020

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15.COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Mo's Montessori welcomes children and parent/guardian/carers' views in the development of the service. It is the policy of this service to give careful attention and a prompt and courteous response to any suggestions, comments or complaints, thereby ensuring the development of a high-quality childcare service that meets the needs of children and parent/guardian/carers. Information on these procedures will be made available to all staff and parent/guardian/carers.

Comments Procedure

- A comment can be made verbally to the Early Childcare Manager.
- The Early Childcare Manager will make a note of these in the Comments Book, along with any action taken.

Complaints Procedure

- If you wish to make a complaint you should contact the Early Childcare Manager.
- Should you still feel that the matter is unresolved then the complaint must be put in writing to the Early Childcare Manager.
- A written acknowledgement of the complaint will be made as soon as possible.
- If the complaint is related to the behaviour of a member of staff, the staff member must be informed that a formal complaint has been made and be given the full details and the right to reply.
- Parents/guardians/carers will be made aware that staff has to be informed of complaints made relating to their behaviour so that the procedure can be implemented.
- In instances where the complaint involves the welfare of a child/children, the information should be made known to the relevant local Duty Social Worker in the Health Service Executive.
- Confidentiality is of the utmost importance when dealing with complaints and comments. (See Confidentiality Policy).

5.CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT OF MO’S MONTESSORI

The welfare of children is of paramount importance. Mo’s Montessori undertakes to promote the general welfare, health and full development of children and protect them from harm of all kinds, in line with articles 19 and 34 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (See Appendix I). In Mo’s Montessori the rights of children are protected. Children are treated with respect, listened to, and have their views considered throughout their time at our school.

Mo’s Montessori intention is to keep children safe:

We undertake to protect the personal integrity, safety and well-being of each child in the service in line with the provisions of the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011 Department of Children & Youth Affairs). Mo’s Montessori shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of any child.

Who this Child Protection Policy is for:

This policy is for staff, the children, families and stakeholders using the facilities of Mo’s Montessori. All stakeholders are obliged to comply with our Child Protection Policy.

The aim and purpose of our Child Protection Policy:

The aim of our Child Protection Policy is to keep children safe. The purpose of this policy is to guide all those working with children in relation how to keep children safe.

Mo’s Montessori has and will continue to develop policies for:

- Recruitment, selection and employment of staff
- Child Protection Procedures

This service is committed to ensuring that staff is trained in the recognition of signs of abuse and on how to report these signs.

All staff is to be informed of current and updated childcare protection procedures. It will be essential for the staff to attend Children First Child Protection Training (Dates last attended by Maureen Phelan and Pamela Halton – 2nd & 4th December 2014) to ensure their absolute understanding and awareness of the current child protection guidelines.

This child protection policy will be reviewed by the designated liaison person for child protection, Maureen Phelan and the deputy designated liaison person, Pamela Halton annually or more regularly to keep up with legislation. (Last review: Dec 2016).

Taken from *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children Chapters 2 & 3* (2011 Department of Children & Youth Affairs).

Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse

2.2 Definition of 'neglect'

1. 2.2.1 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.
2. 2.2.2 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.
3. 2.2.3 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.
4. 2.2.4 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.

2.3 Definition of 'emotional abuse'

2.3.1 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. Examples may include:

1. the imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
2. conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
3. emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
4. unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
5. premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
6. unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
7. under- or over-protection of the child;
8. failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;

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9. (ix) use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
10. (x) exposure to domestic violence;

11. (xi) exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology.

2.3.2 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.

2.4 Definition of 'physical abuse'

2.4.1 Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Physical abuse can involve:

1. (i) severe physical punishment;
2. (ii) beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
3. (iii) pushing, shaking or throwing;
4. (iv) pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
5. (v) terrorising with threats;
6. (vi) observing violence;
7. (vii) use of excessive force in handling;
8. (viii) deliberate poisoning;
9. (ix) suffocation;
10. (x) fabricated/induced illness (*see Appendix 1 for details*);
11. (xi) allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

2.5 Definition of 'sexual abuse'

2.5.1 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:

1. (i) exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
2. (ii) intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
3. (iii) masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
4. (iv) sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
5. (v) sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in,

prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modeling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;

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6. (vi) 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.

2.5.2 It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

For further guidance on signs & symptoms of abuse please see Appendix II of this document.

2.6 Recognising child neglect or abuse

2.6.1 Child neglect or abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. A list of indicators of child abuse is contained in Appendix 1. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It may indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

2.7 Guidelines for recognition

1. 2.7.1 The ability to recognise child abuse can depend as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child neglect or abuse:
 1. (i) considering the possibility;
 2. (ii) looking out for signs of neglect or abuse;
 3. (iii) recording of information.

Stage 1: Considering the possibility

2. 2.7.2 The possibility of child abuse should be considered if a child appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It

should also be considered if the child seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems. The possibility of child abuse should also be considered if the child displays unusual or fearful responses to parents/carers or older children. A pattern of ongoing neglect should also be considered even when there are short periods of improvement.

Stage 2: Looking out for signs of neglect or abuse

3. 2.7.3 Signs of neglect or abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. They can exist in the relationships between children and parents/carers or between children and other family members/other persons. A cluster or pattern of signs is more likely to be indicative of neglect or abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make direct disclosures. Disclosures should always be taken very seriously and should be acted upon, for example, by informing the HSE Children and Family Services. The child should not be interviewed in detail about the alleged abuse without first consulting with the HSE Children and Family Services. This may be more appropriately carried out by a social worker or An Garda Síochána. Less obvious signs could be gently explored with the child, *without direct questioning*. Play situations, such as drawing or story-telling, may reveal information.
4. 2.7.4 Some signs are more indicative of abuse than others. These include:
 1. (i) disclosure of abuse by a child or young person;
 2. (ii) age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge;
 3. (iii) specific injuries or patterns of injuries;
 4. (iv) absconding from home or a care situation;
 5. (v) attempted suicide;

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6. (vi) underage pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease;
 7. (vii) signs in one or more categories at the same time. For example, signs of developmental delay, physical injury and behavioural signs may together indicate a pattern of abuse.
5. 2.7.5 Many signs of abuse are non-specific and must be considered in the child's social and family context. It is important to be open to alternative explanations for physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

Stage 3: Recording of information

6. 2.7.6 If neglect or abuse is suspected and acted upon, for example, by informing the HSE Children and Family Services, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other

information that may be relevant. Care should be taken as to how such information is stored and to whom it is made available.

2.8 Children with additional vulnerabilities

2.8.1 Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. Such children include those with disabilities, children who are homeless and those who, for one reason or another, are separated from their 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 and sexual abuse – are applicable, but may take a slightly different form. For example, abuse may take the form of deprivation of basic rights, harsh disciplinary regimes or the inappropriate use of medications or physical restraints (*see also Chapter 8*).

2.9 Fatal child abuse

1. 2.9.1 In the tragic circumstances where a child dies as a result of abuse or neglect, there are four important aspects to be considered: criminal, child protection, bereavement and notification.
2. 2.9.2 Criminal aspects: This is the responsibility of An Garda Síochána and they must be notified immediately. The Coroner must also be notified and his or her instructions complied with in relation to post-mortems and other relevant matters.
3. 2.9.3 Child protection aspects: These will be particularly relevant if there are other children in the family/ in the same situation, and will therefore require immediate intervention by the HSE Children and Family Services to assess risk.
4. 2.9.4 Bereavement aspects: The bereavement needs of the family must be respected and provided for and all family members should be given an opportunity to grieve and say goodbye to the deceased child.
5. 2.9.5 Notification aspects: The HSE should notify the death of a child to the National Review Panel and to the Health Information and Quality Authority in accordance with the HIQA's *Guidance for the Health Service Executive for the Review of Serious Incidents, including deaths of children in care* (HIQA, 2010):
 - all deaths of children in care, including natural causes;
 - all deaths of children known to the child protection system;
 - serious incidents involving a child in care or known to the child protection services.

Managers and staff should cooperate fully with any review undertaken to establish the facts of the case and any actions that should be taken, to identify learning that will improve services in the future and to provide assurance to the public (*see Chapter 5, Section 5.20*).

2.10 Points to remember

1. 2.10.1 The severity of a sign does not necessarily equate with the severity of the abuse. Severe and potentially fatal injuries are not always visible. Neglect and emotional and/or psychological abuse tend to be cumulative and effects may only be observable in the longer term. Explanations that are inconsistent with the signs should constitute a cause for concern.
2. 2.10.2 Neglect is as potentially fatal as physical abuse. It can cause delayed physical, psychological and emotional development, chronic ill-health and significant long-term damage. It may place children at serious risk of harm. It may also precede, or co-exist with, other forms of abuse and must be acted upon.
3. 2.10.3 Experiencing recurring low-level abuse may cause serious and long-term harm. Cumulative harm refers to the effects of multiple adverse circumstances and events in a child's life. The unremitting daily impact of these circumstances on the child can be profound and exponential, and diminish a child's sense of safety and well-being.
4. 2.10.4 Child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. All signs must be considered in the wider social and family context. Serious deficits in child safety and welfare transcend cultural, social and ethnic norms, and must elicit a response.
5. 2.10.5 Challenging behaviour by a child or young person should not render them liable to abuse. Children in certain circumstances may present management problems. This should not leave them vulnerable to harsh disciplinary measures or neglect of care.
6. 2.10.6 Exposure to domestic violence is detrimental to children's physical, emotional and psychological well-being. The adverse effects of domestic violence have been well established.
7. 2.10.7 While the impact of neglect is most profound on young children, it also adversely affects adolescents. Neglect renders young people liable to risk-taking behaviors, such as running away, early school leaving, anti-social behavior, mental health and addiction problems, including the risk of suicide.
8. 2.10.8 It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between indicators of child abuse and other adversities suffered by children and families. Deprivation, stress, addiction or mental health problems should not be used as a justification for omissions of care or commissions of harm by parents/carers. The child's welfare must be the primary consideration.
9. 2.10.9 Neglectful families may be difficult to engage. Research shows that families may be reluctant to seek help in response to experiencing the factors associated with neglect.
10. 2.10.10 Families where neglect and abuse are prevalent may go to considerable lengths to deceive professionals. It is important for professionals to approach cases with a wary trustfulness, seek evidence to substantiate claims of improvement and

Speak with the children concerned individually.

2.10.11 Social workers need good observation and analytical skills in order to be able to understand the nature of the relationship between a parent and child, to understand signs of non-compliance, to work alongside a family and to come to safe and evidence-based judgements about the best course of action.

2.10.12 Working in the area of child abuse and neglect is dealing with uncertainty. Social workers and other professionals should adopt a 'respectful uncertainty' on parental reporting of improvement until supported by clear evidence.

3. Basis for reporting concerns and Standard Reporting Procedure

3.1 Purpose

3.1.1 This chapter offers guidance to the general public and to all people, both professional and voluntary, working with or in direct contact with children who may be concerned or who suspect that children are being abused or neglected or at risk of abuse or neglect. It outlines the standard reporting procedure to be used in passing information to the statutory authorities about child protection concerns.

3.2 Responsibility to report child abuse or neglect

1. 3.2.1 Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be suffering from abuse or neglect. This responsibility is particularly relevant for professionals such as teachers, child care workers, health professionals and those working with adults with serious parenting difficulties. It is also an important responsibility for staff and people involved in sports clubs, community activities, youth clubs, religious/faith sector and other organisations catering for children.
2. 3.2.2 The HSE Children and Family Services should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected.
3. 3.2.3 Child protection concerns should be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect.
4. 3.2.4 A concern about *a potential risk* to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to the HSE Children and Family Services.
5. 3.2.5 The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:
 1. (i) the safety and well-being of the child must take priority;
 2. (ii) reports should be made without delay to the HSE Children and Family Services.
6. 3.2.6 Any reasonable concern or suspicion of abuse or neglect must elicit a

response. Ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in ongoing or further harm to the child.

7. 3.2.7 Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of reckless endangerment of children. It states:

‘A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by –

1. (a) 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
2. (b) 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.’

The penalty for a person found guilty of this offence is a fine (no upper limit) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

8. 3.2.8 The HSE has a statutory obligation to identify children who are not receiving adequate care and protection, to provide family support services and, where necessary, to take children into the care of the HSE. People who report concerns need to be assured that their information will be carefully considered with any other information available, and a child protection assessment will only proceed where sufficient risk is identified.

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9. 3.2.9 Any professional who suspects child abuse or neglect should inform the parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the HSE Children and Family Services or to An Garda Síochána, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.
10. 3.2.10 The HSE will respect the wishes of non-professionals reporting concerns in good faith who ask to remain anonymous in as much as possible, but cannot give a guarantee that the information would not be sought and given within judicial proceedings. (The Data Protection Acts offer protection under privacy, but should the information be sought directly within legal proceedings, there is no guarantee.)

3.3 Designated Liaison Persons for reporting neglect or abuse

3.3.1 Every organisation, both public and private, that is providing services for children or that is in regular direct contact with children should:

1. (i) Identify a designated liaison person to act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns.
2. (ii) The designated liaison person is responsible for ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed, so that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the designated person in the HSE Children and Family Services or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the HSE, to An Garda Síochána.
3. (iii) The designated liaison person should ensure that they are knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training considered necessary to keep themselves updated on new developments.

(Note: Maureen Phelan is the designated liaison person for Mo's Montessori. Job title is Early Years Childcare Manager. Contact details are 085-735 0158 or 01-8324947. The deputy designated liaison person is Pamela Halton. Job title Montessori teacher. Contact number 087-902 4171).

3.4 Standard Reporting Procedure

1. 3.4.1 Any person reporting a child abuse or neglect concern should do so without delay to the Tusla Children and Family Services. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. Contact numbers for the Duty Social Work Department, Health Centre, Cromcastle Rd, Coolock, Dublin 5 are 01-8164200 or 01-8160314.
2. 3.4.2 Before deciding whether or not to make a formal report, you may wish to discuss your concerns with a health professional or directly with the Tusla Children and Family Services.
3. 3.4.3 Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or to risk of harm pending Tusla intervention. In the event of an emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot get in contact with the Tusla, you should contact the Gardaí. This may be done through any Garda station.
4. 3.4.4 The Standard Report Form for reporting child welfare and protection concerns to Tusla (*see Appendix 3*) should be used by professionals, staff and volunteers in organisations working with or in contact with children, or providing services to children when reporting child protection and welfare concerns to Tusla Children and Family Services. If a report is made by telephone, this form should be completed and forwarded subsequently to Tusla.
5. 3.4.5 Tusla will follow up on all referrals, even if the Standard Report Form has not been used. Reports should be made without delay to Tusla.

(Note: Consult with the Duty Social Worker in Tusla when unsure if a formal report should be made 01-8164200 or 01-8160314).

3.5 Information to be included when making a report

3.5.1 The ability of Tusla Children and Family Services or An Garda Síochána to assess and investigate suspicions or allegations of child abuse or neglect will depend on the amount and quality of information conveyed to them by the people reporting concerns. As much as possible of the following detail should be provided:

(Note: It is good practice that parents be informed that a report is to be made to Tusla, unless doing so would put the child at further risk).

Basis for reporting concerns and Standard Reporting Procedure

1. (i) the name, address and age of the child (or children) for whom the report is being made;
2. (ii) the name of the child's school;
3. (iii) the name and contact details of the person reporting concerns;
4. (iv) whether the person reporting is a professional, a person working with children or a member of the public;
5. (v) the relationship to the child of the person making the report;
6. (vi) a full account of what constitutes the grounds for concern in relation to the protection and welfare of the child or children, e.g. details of the allegation, incident, dates, description of any injuries, etc;
7. (vii) the names and addresses of the parents/carers of the child or children;
8. (viii) the names of other children in the household;
9. (ix) the name, address and details of the person allegedly causing concern in relation to the child or children;
10. (x) the child's and/or parents/carers' own views, if known and relevant;
11. (xi) the names and addresses of other personnel or agencies involved with the child or children, e.g. GP, social worker, public health nurse, Gardaí, etc;
12. (xii) any other relevant information.

(Note: All concerns / disclosures should be recorded).

3.6 Retrospective disclosures by adults

1. 3.6.1 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 in such disclosures.
2. 3.6.2 If any risk is deemed to exist to a child who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, the counsellor/ health professional should report the allegation to Tusla Children and Family Services without delay.
3. 3.6.3 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 (Freephone 1800 477477).

3.7 Deciding to share child protection concerns

3.7.1 The belief that parents/carers or other persons in charge of children would actually harm or neglect them is not easy to sustain. There may be a tendency, therefore, to deny, minimise or explain away any signs that a child is being harmed, even when evidence exists. At times, it is hard to distinguish between abusive situations and those where other problems are present, such as unemployment, poverty, poor housing, addiction, mental illness or isolation. Sympathy for families in difficult circumstances can sometimes dilute personal or professional concerns about the safety and welfare of children. However, the protection and welfare of the child must always be the paramount concern.

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2. 3.7.2 Reluctance to act on suspicions about child abuse or neglect can often stem from uncertainty and fear. Members of the public or professionals may be afraid of repercussions, afraid of being thought insensitive, afraid of breaking a confidence or afraid of being disloyal. Knowledge and information about child abuse will help to overcome reluctance to take action. So too will confidence in the child protection and welfare services.
3. 3.7.3 It is the responsibility of all agencies working with children and for the public to recognise child protection concerns and share these with the agencies responsible for assessing or investigating them, not to determine whether the child protection concerns are evidenced or not.

3.8 Cases not reported to the HSE or An Garda Síochána

3.8.1 In those cases where an organisation decides not to report concerns to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, the individual employee or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the organisation is not taking such action. The employee or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free as individuals to consult with, or report to, Tusla or An Garda Síochána. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply once they communicate 'reasonably and in good faith' (*see Paragraph 3.10.1*).

3.9 Confidentiality

1. 3.9.1 The effective protection of a child often depends on the willingness of the staff in statutory and voluntary organisations involved with children to share and exchange relevant information. It is therefore critical that there is a clear

understanding of professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information.

2. 3.9.2 All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse or neglect should be shared on 'a need to know' basis in the interests of the child with the relevant statutory authorities.
3. 3.9.3 No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with a child and family should make this clear to all parties involved, although they can be assured that all information will be handled taking full account of legal requirements.
4. 3.9.4 Ethical and statutory codes concerned with confidentiality and data protection provide general guidance. They are not intended to limit or prevent the exchange of information between different professional staff with a responsibility for ensuring the protection and welfare of children. The provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.
5. 3.9.5 It must be clearly understood that information gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.
6. 3.9.6 The issue of confidentiality should be part of the training necessary for staff who work in the area of child protection and welfare and the general training of staff in organisations that work with children. Each organisation should have a written policy in this regard.

3.10 Legal protection

3.10.1 The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the HSE (*see Appendix 10*) or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

Basis for reporting concerns and Standard Reporting Procedure

3.10.2 A person who makes a report in good faith and in the child's best interests may also be protected under common law by the defence of qualified privilege.

3.11 Freedom of information

1. 3.11.1 Notwithstanding the requirement of all professionals involved in child protection and welfare cases to share relevant information, records are nevertheless confidential. They do not belong to individuals (except for independent practitioners) and are the property of the organisations that keep them. Under the

Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003, members of the public have a right of access to records concerning them held by any public body and a right to have official information about themselves amended where it is incorrect, incomplete or misleading. Members of the public also have a right to be given reasons for decisions made concerning themselves. Requests to see records are processed in the first instance through the public body that holds the records. In the event of refusal of access, the decision may be appealed and the ultimate arbiter is the Information Commissioner. At present, these Acts apply to the HSE, but not to An Garda Síochána.

2. 3.11.2 The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 afford similar rights to individuals to access personal data held about them by any entity whether in the public or private sector. The right to access applies to records held by Tusla and An Garda Síochána. However, the right to access does not apply in a range of circumstances that may be relevant in a child welfare context. Equally, the right of access does not extend to any information that identifies a third party where that third party had an expectation of confidence. Accordingly, it would not be necessary to provide any information that would identify a person making a child welfare report in response to a request under the Data Protection Acts.

The Designated Person, Maureen Phelan, is responsible for dealing with suspected or actual child abuse. Any concerns about a child within the school should be brought to the Designated Person.

The Deputy Designated Person is Pamela Halton. The role of the Deputy is to fill in for the Designated Person during annual or sick leave, and in cases of allegations against staff, to follow the reporting procedure in relation to the child.

Reporting Procedure in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff

The Designated Person, Maureen Phelan, will follow the reporting procedure. In the event of an allegation the Deputy Designated Person, Pamela Halton, shall follow the reporting procedure.

When the employer (Maureen Phelan) becomes aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by an employee during the execution of that employee's duties, the employer will privately inform the employee of the following:

- (1) the fact that an allegation has been made against him or her;
- (2) the nature of the allegation.

The employee will be afforded an opportunity to respond. The employer will note the response and pass on this information if making a formal report to Tusla.

All stages of the process will be recorded.

Notification to Tusla or An Garda Siochana will take place where there are reasonable grounds for concern.

The protective action taken will be proportionate to the level of risk to the child, following the school's procedures.

Parents will be informed of actions planned and taken with regard to the rights of others.

The employer/manager will liaise closely with investigating bodies (Tusla/An Garda Siochana) to ensure that actions taken by the organisation do not undermine or frustrate any investigations.

Appendix I The Rights of the Child

MO'S MONTESSORI SUPPORTS THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AS OUTLINED IN ARTICLES 19 AND 34 OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The U.N. General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in November 1989.

ARTICLE 19

9. State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent/guardian/carer(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.
10. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide the necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

ARTICLE 34

State Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, State Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multinational measures to prevent:

- (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to any unlawful sexual activity;
- (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.