

An Scoil Bheag Montessori Preschool

Parents Handbook

Updated June 2024

**An Scoil Bheag
Montessori Preschool
"Cluain Phadraig"
Dublin Road
Clane
Co Kildare
Ph 045 892462
085 1515114**

Opening Hours

Term period: September to June
Monday to Friday
Morning Class 8.45am- 11.45am
Afternoon Class 12.30pm - 3.30pm

- ***Fully Qualified, Vetted and Experienced Staff***
- ***Fully Insured***
- ***H.S.E. Approved***
- ***Irish Preschool Playgroup Association registered***
- ***Bright, spacious and fully equipped premises***
- ***Access to garden at rear of premises***
- ***Comprehensive programme of educational activities***
- ***Member of Early Childhood Ireland***

Staff Members

Morning Session
Emma Haren, Manager
Nimah Gavin (Assistant)
Fiona Whelan (AIM support)
Sam Carpenter (AIM support)

Afternoon Session
Emma Haren, Manager
Fiona Whelan, Assistant
Niamh Gavin (AIM support)
Sam Carpenter (AIM support)

Mission Statement

It is our aim at An Scoil Bheag Montessori Preschool to ensure that all children are given the opportunity and support they need to reach their full potential. We adapt a holistic approach to the development of the children in our care. Ensuring through our extensive play-based and emergent curriculum programme of activities that each child's learning and development, well-being, identity and belonging, emotional and social needs are catered for. We provide an inclusive, caring, nurturing, supportive, encouraging environment in which the children are guided in their learning and all-round development.

Welcome to An Scoil Bheag Montessori Pre-school

We would like to welcome you and your child to An Scoil Bheag Montessori Pre-School and we hope that together we will make the transition from home to the pre-school environment a pleasant and rewarding experience for all, but especially for your child.

At An Scoil Bheag we endeavour to provide a comprehensive learning and development programme for the children, which is designed to promote confidence, self-esteem and independence in each child through play. The children work at their own pace, choosing equipment for themselves and being guided in its successful completion by our highly trained Staff.

We promote a happy, relaxed, caring atmosphere in which the children feel secure and are reassured that support is at hand at all times if they need it, while being afforded the opportunity to enjoy experiences independently. This independence enhances the child's self-belief and self image as a valued member of our group.

Our premises is bright and airy and the children have daily access to the garden at the rear.

Our curriculum is a play based, child led emergent and enquiry-based curriculum. It also covers such areas as free play (both large and small groups), practical life exercises, sensorial experiences, maths, language, science and nature activities. Also included are Art, Colouring, Play Dough, Songs and Poems, Story Time, Music, outdoor free play and much more.

Our Parent Booklet has been designed to give you an insight into our structure and curriculum and to help answer any questions you might have.

We hope your child will be very happy in An Scoil Bheag and we look forward to being part of this special journey with them.

*Mari Glynn
Proprietor*

Admissions & Enrolment Procedures

An Scoil Bheag Montessori Pre-school serves children aged **between 2 years and 8 months-5 years and 6 months**. Parental liaison is encouraged at every level in the Pre-school.

An Scoil Bheag Montessori Pre-school does not discriminate on grounds of race, colour, nationality, special needs, age, sex or religion.

ENROLMENT FORMS

Before a child starts in An Scoil Bheag Montessori Pre-school, the provider must receive all required paperwork, signed by parent/s and/or Guardians.

- **Child Record Card**
- **PPS Number Request Form**
- **Photo Permission Form**

All information will be kept confidential and is for our records only

Government Sponsored place under ECCE:

If your child is aged between 3 years before 31st December 2024, then they qualify for a free pre-school place under the early childhood education scheme commencing in September 2024.

The Early Childhood Care & Education Scheme (ECCE) provides free Pre-school education to every child in Ireland when they reach 2 years and 8 months and continues until they transfer to primary school (provided that they are not older than 5 years and 6 months at the end of the pre-school year). Children will be able to enrol in pre-school at only one entry point from September 2024 in order to access the scheme.

The pre-school year is from September to June and follows in line with the school holidays set by the local primary schools.

RESERVATIONS

First Year ECCE: Parents wishing to reserve a place for their child are required to pay €100 deposit which is refunded when the child starts.

Second Year ECCE: Parents wishing to reserve a place for their child are required to pay €50 deposit which is refunded when the child starts.

Families who have attended the preschool previously are required to pay €50 for their second and subsequent children.

STAFF RATIO AND QUALIFICATIONS

The ratio of staff to children is 1:11 which is in accordance with Tusla regulations for Sessional care. The maximum number of children in any one Session is 14.

There are two members of staff in classroom for the maximum number of children. Therefore, the maximum adult child ratio is 1:7.

Our team are highly trained and qualified in early years' education and care. They are experienced, qualified, and vetted and have participated in child protection training and paediatric first aid and first aid responder training.

Our manager, Emma has a Level 8 BA in Early Childhood Teaching and Learning (Hons) from Maynooth University. Emma is a qualified Leader for Inclusion in Early years.

Fiona Whelan has a Level 8 BA in Early Childhood Teaching and Learning (Hons) from Maynooth University. Fiona also is a qualified Leader for Inclusion in Early Years.

Niamh Gavin has Level 6 qualification in Montessori and Early Years Education and Care.

Sam Carpenter has a Level 6 Qualification in Early Years Education and Care.

THE SCHOOL YEAR

The school year at An Scoil Bheag runs in tandem with Clane Primary Schools i.e. it will be open and closed on the same dates apart from days that the Primary School closes to allow for staff training. An Scoil Bheag will remain open on such days. Altogether An Scoil Bheag will

open for 38 weeks each year. We will issue you with a calendar outlining the holidays throughout the school year.

DROPPING OFF AND COLLECTING YOUR CHILD

We request that you park in Tesco car park across the road and use the pedestrian crossing to safely cross.

Please accompany your child to the door of the classroom seeing them safely inside when the door has been opened to you.

You can use the preschool car park if you have a baby/young child in your car. Staff and owners cars will be parked in the main preschool car park and therefore parking can be limited on occasions.

Occasionally you may wish to have someone other than yourself dropping off or collecting your child on your behalf. Make sure they know the procedure for so doing (as outlined above). **Always notify the staff in advance if there will be someone other than you dropping-off or collecting your child.**

Once the child has left the classroom under the supervision of the pre-school staff the children are always then under parental/childminder supervision in the car park. We would request that the children do not wander around the premises (either side of the house or where the staff cars are parked as it is also a private residence, and these areas are not part of the pre-school).

The names and phone numbers of anyone designated by you for dropping off or collecting your child should be entered on the Child Record Form under “**Persons authorised to collect my child**”. **If they are not listed, a written authorisation from you is required. An Scoil Bheag staff will not release your child without your prior approval. This is both for the protection of your child and our staff. All persons must carry photo ID. A phone call will be made to you if we have any doubt.**

Communication:

We have an Open Door policy in An Scoil Bheag pre-school and welcome any questions or concerns you may have about your child at any time. We can chat to you at drop off and pick up times. We may ask you to wait a moment until your child’s key worker is free. We can also be contacted by phone and email.

Settling In Procedure

We welcome parents and children to come into the preschool when dropping off the first couple of days. We find it helpful if parents stay a short time and we can assist if your child is having difficulties separating from you.

It may be helpful for a child that is finding the separation difficult to build up the time that they are in the setting. They may start off just attending for one hour a day. If your child gets very upset while in the setting we will always phone you and ask you to come and pick up your child. Over the next few days parents/guardians/carers will be encouraged to extend the separation period at the child's own pace until such a time is reached that the child feels comfortable to attend the full session (this may take a number of weeks and is completely normal and acceptable) Always let your child know when you are leaving and offer a reassurance that when preschool is finished you will be there to collect them.

If a child finds the settling in process and separation from a main caregiver very distressful, a further plan of action can be discussed with staff.

Families are encouraged to share:

- Information about their child's temperament and dispositions.
- Information about what upsets their child and what comforts them.
- How their child reacts to strangers, familiar adults and other children.
- How they handle routines such as eating, toileting and sleeping.
- Relevant information about themselves and their culture.
- Information about their child's previous experiences.
- A brief developmental and medical history of their child – from birth to the present – that includes social, emotional, physical and language development information.
- How parents/guardians prefer to communicate different types of information (for example, in person, by telephone, by notice board or individually in writing).
- How they wish to be involved in the *service/programme*.
- How they would like to see the transition period happen.
- Their hopes for their child.

Staff members can share with families:

- How we support children to transition into the *service/programme*.
- Information about the programme's composition, philosophy, schedules and activities (curriculum).
- How we generally communicate information to families.
- How families can get involved in the *service/programme*.
- How planning and individualised routines are handled.
- How we observe and report learning and developmental progress.
- How we handle transitions within the programme.
- How we help prepare for transitions out of the *service/programme*.

Guidance on saying good-bye and leaving your child in preschool.

Relationships are very important to children. Although children may not always express or understand their feelings, these feelings do exist and are sometimes expressed in ways that make it difficult for parents and other adults to deal with them. The following suggestions can help children accept changes and deal with them in appropriate ways.

- Prepare the child by giving them some notice when a relationship is about to change. (For example, tell them, "*Sam is going to be moving soon, and he won't be able to come and play every day*").
- Help the child understand their feelings by using words like lonely, worried, sad or unhappy to describe how they might be feeling if they are showing signs of such feelings.
- Put things in perspective (For example, "*We won't see Ava as much now but you will still have Sophie and Joe to play with*").
- Help the child express the meaning of the relationship by encouraging them to make a card, draw a picture or make a small gift. Let them know that relationships are very important by creating an opportunity to express affection and validate their feelings.
- Focus on the positives associated with change. When people grow and move forward, there will always be changes in relationships. New teachers, new friends, and changes in activities are part of life.

- Share with the child some of your own experiences in leaving valued relationships. Tell them how you felt at that time.
- Create a memento. Children are concrete thinkers and having a physical reminder reassures them that the relationship was shared and is an important part of their lives.
- A nice idea to help your child cope with the separation from you can be: to draw a love heart on the inside of their wrist and do the same with your wrist. Tell you child they can touch it to feel close to you and you can do the same.

Parents and Early Years Practitioners Working in Partnership

Open communication is key to our approach to settling in children into our preschool. It is crucial to share information that will benefit your child and enable us the practitioners to support you and your child through this process. You are your child's safe base which they can branch out and explore their surrounding world from which in turn enables your child to grow and learn confidently. The staff here at An Scoil Bheag Pre-school are your support system that will help foster and nurture this natural process.

The above guidelines aim to help children and their families settle into our preschool setting to ensure that each child reaches their full potential while being part of a positive and supportive away from home environment that nurtures their overall holistic development.

We have a large outdoor area with many activities for the children to avail of. We spend a large portion of the class outside playing so when dressing your child, please take into consideration they may get slightly wet or dirty.

COVID-19

Currently we have no protocols or restrictions to follow from the HSE. However, we will maintain our handwashing procedures and our clean classroom procedure. If there are any changes we will implement them fully.

Illness

All children are welcome back to pre-school however we would remind parents that where children are displaying

runny noses, coughs, a temperature or flu like symptoms, they should not be sent to pre-school.

We follow HSE guidelines and request that parents are **not** to present their children to the preschool if the child has symptoms of a viral respiratory infection.

Symptoms	Coronavirus	Flu	Cold
	Symptoms range from mild to severe	Abrupt onset of symptoms	Gradual onset of symptoms
Fever or chills	Common	Common	Rare
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common (usually dry)	Mild
Shortness of breath	Common	No	No
Lost or changed sense of smell or taste	Common	Rare	Rare
Fatigue	Common	Common	Sometimes
Aches and pains	Common	Common	Common
Sore throat	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Headaches	Sometimes	Common	Rare
Runny or Stuffy Nose	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
Feeling sick or vomiting	Rare	Sometimes	No
Diarrhoea	Rare	Sometimes in children	No
Sneezing	No	No	Common

If a Child is in the Preschool and they begin to feel unwell and develop symptoms of infection. (This information is taken from our Infection Control Policy).

- If a child develops any symptoms of acute respiratory infection including cough, fever, or shortness of breath while in the care facility and a phone call will be made to their parent or guardian and ask them to collect their child as soon as possible.

Handwashing and sneezing


Please see enclosed two documents that highlight handwashing and sneezing procedures.

Washing your hands

Hand washing is important:


- ◆ If hands are not clean they can spread germs.
- ◆ **You should wash your hands thoroughly and often** with soap and warm water and **especially:**
 - * When hands look dirty
 - * Before and after preparing, serving or eating food
 - * Before and after dealing with sick people
 - * Before and after changing the baby's nappy
 - * Before and after treating a cut or a wound
 - * After handling raw meat
 - * After going to the toilet or bringing someone to the toilet
 - * After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
 - * After handling rubbish or bins
 - * After handling an animal or animal litter/droppings
 - * After contact with flood water
- ◆ A quick rinse will not work – your hands will still have germs. To wash hands properly:
 - ~ Rub all parts of the hands and wrists with soap and water for **at least 15 seconds** (or as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday to you" song two times!)
 - ~ Don't miss out on washing your finger tips, between your fingers, the back of your hands and the bottom of your thumbs – the pictures here will help.

Getting ready to wash your hands:




1

- ◆ Remove hand & wrist jewellery - rings, watch, bracelets



2


- ◆ Wet hands thoroughly under warm running water



3


- ◆ Apply a squirt of liquid soap to cupped hand

Washing your hands - take at least 15 seconds/the time it takes to sing the "Happy birthday to you" song twice!




4

- ◆ Rub palm to palm 5 times making a lather/suds




5

- ◆ Rub your right palm over the back of your left hand and up to your wrist 5 times
- ◆ Repeat on the other hand




6

- ◆ With right hand over the back of left hand, rub fingers 5 times
- ◆ Repeat on the other hand




7

- ◆ Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced



8


- ◆ Wash both thumbs using rotating movement



9


- ◆ Wash nail beds—rub the tips of your fingers against the opposite palm

Rinsing and drying your hands:



10


- ◆ Rinse hands well making sure all the soap is gone



11

- ◆ Dry hands fully using a clean hand towel or a fresh paper towel
- ◆ Bin paper towel after use

Remember -
Clean hands save lives &
stop the spread of many infections



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Compiled by Dept of Public Health, Midlands.
January 2016

Adapted from [Handwashing technique poster HSE Strategy for Antimicrobial Resistance in Ireland](#); additional image: [Dreamstime.com](#); *Putting some soap on hands* © Adamgregor

Respiratory Hygiene (coughing and sneezing)

Coughing and Sneezing

- Turn your head away from others
- Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth



- Drop your tissue into a waste bin



- No tissues? Use your sleeve



- Clean your hands after discarding tissue using soap and water or alcohol gel for at least 15 seconds



- **Hand Washing**

When children enter the preschool we will ask them to wash their hands. If the children have been outside we will ask them to wash hands as they re-enter the class. Hands will also be washed /sanitized before snack time.

- **Sun Protection**

On days when sun protection is required we would ask if you could apply this to your child before they come into the service.

Again, for the safety of your child and all the other children and staff, please inform us if your child is sick due to illness. If they are unwell, please keep them at home. If unsure, please do not hesitate to speak to us.

Safety

Please ensure that your child is under your supervision during drop-off and pick-up times. Make sure your child does not leave the building at pick-up time until you accompany him/her. Children are not permitted to go outside unattended. Please do not leave keys in vehicles or the engine running while parked outside the Montessori Pre-school.

SNACKS

An Scoil Bheag Montessori Pre-school does not provide any food for snack times. Instead, children should bring along a small healthy lunch and a drink. Snack time is a great time for social interaction and chat and is an important part of the session. We operate a rolling snack time which means that children are free to choose when they would like to eat their snack. So at any time in the classroom children can be seen eating their snack with others children and is supervised. Having their snack is a lovely way to connect home to pre-school and can help settle and reassure children. We would request that no products containing nuts are included in the lunchboxes. We would also request that no chocolate (biscuits or bars), crisps or sweets be brought to preschool. If you need any advice on what snacks should be included, please do not hesitate to ask.

FOOD ALLERGIES AND OTHER MEDICAL ISSUES

Please make sure to fill in all relevant medical history and issues on your child's Registration Form. If a child suffers from a food allergy, this will be carefully noted by all Staff and every reasonable precaution will be taken to make sure he/she does not come in contact with the allergen/irritant as outlined by you on the form.

Toileting and Nappy Changing

Please send a change of clothes (socks, pants and trousers, leggings, skirt etc) in your child's bag as the occasional 'accident' may occur. We store these in individual sealed bags in the classroom and are used when required. If a child is toilet training, we will work with you to keep the training the same as home, so it is familiar to the child. If a child has not started toilet training, we will ask that you bring in nappies and wipes for your child. We have a full changing facility in the bathroom and staff use PPE equipment such as gloves and aprons when changing your child.

At the end of the session we will inform you if your child has had an accident and we will place the clothes in a small plastic bag in the child's school bag.

TOYS FROM HOME

In order to help your child's transition from home to pre-school we would encourage your child to bring in a small toy that they use for comfort. It can be kept in their school bag and taken out if needed. We would request that other toys (not used for comfort remain at home as it can cause upset when sharing or not sharing!).

BEHAVIOUR

'Behaviour is communication'

Staff always encourage positive and respectful behaviour. This is done through providing a kind, caring and helpful environment in which the child can grow independently and build up his self-esteem. Children learn by exploring, experimenting and testing the limits on their environment. By accentuating positive behaviour patterns and eliminating negative ones we will lead the children towards respect for themselves, their companions and their environment. Children strive

from the moment they are born to become independent. We assist them in this quest by providing a broad range of exercises that challenge them and lead them in their learning to master self-discipline. A sense of achievement fosters positive behaviour in the child. They also thrive on praise and encouragement.

The safety of everyone in the service is paramount. It may be necessary to discuss behaviour issues with you so that we can work together to help your child to enhance their positive behaviour which will ensure consistency between pre-school and home. Behaviours such as co-operating, helping, negotiating and problem solving are always encouraged.

When children start to explore and experiment with ways of interacting with other children (social situations) in the setting it is not unusual for incidences of aggression to sometimes occur. Children at this stage of their development may sometimes express themselves by hitting another child, grabbing toys or biting. When these incidences occur parents of the children involved are informed. We will work together with you to help your child to express himself verbally and help him to achieve positive interactions with other children.

Complaints Procedure

An Scoil Bheag Montessori is committed to providing a quality service to children and their parents/guardians and we regularly evaluate our services in order to ensure this and to monitor the standard of our performance.

While this is always our aim, we accept that sometimes things do not always go to plan. In such circumstances, we want to know, so that we can put things right and learn from our mistakes.

We welcome all comments on our services, positive or negative. Complaints will be accepted and investigated irrespective of the nature of the complaint or who the person making the complaint is.

An Scoil Bheag Montessori gives a commitment to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, sensitively and appropriately to ensure that the standard of service provided by An

Scoil Bheag Montessori is maintained at a high level. The quality of the service provided to any child and family will never be adversely affected because a complaint has been made.

Details of our full Complaints policy is available from our Policies and Procedures document which is available to you.

PLAY BASED PROGRAMME/CURRICULUM

We incorporate Aistear (the early childhood curriculum framework) and Siolta (the national quality framework) into our curriculum planning. We also follow the child's lead and emergent interests when planning our weekly themes. This allows us to follow the children's interests and experiences.

Aistear states "Children's early learning and development takes place through play and hands on experiences. Through these experiences children explore social, physical and imaginary worlds. These experiences help them to manage their feelings, develop as thinkers and language users, develop socially, be creative and imaginative and start the foundations for becoming effective communicators and learners."

Our equipment and materials in the classroom are designed to promote independence, exploration and problem solving. The children have access to all equipment and are encouraged to try out new equipment.

Information if your child is attending the pre-school and does not yet qualify for the ECCE Scheme.

Childcare fees are due in advance and payable one month in advance on the 1st day of the month. Clients should keep in mind that they are contracting for days and times to reserve for their child and this time must be paid for whether or not it is used. **No deductions or refunds will be made for days your child is sick or absent.** Fees are spread evenly throughout the year.

Payments may be made in cash, online transfer or by cheque.

Make cheques payable to:

An Scoil Bheag Pre-school

RATE INCREASES

An Scoil Bheag Montessori Pre-school reserves the right to review childcare rates annually and to raise them to accommodate increasing business costs. We will provide one month's notice to Parents/Guardians in the event of rate increases. It is our policy that any increases will only commence from the start of the pre-school year i.e. September.

PARENT/CHILD HOLIDAYS

Please notify An Scoil Bheag Montessori Pre-school at least two weeks in advance if your child will be absent due to family holiday. Full payment is required for any days your child is absent and must be made prior to the scheduled leave, (If you do not qualify for the free place under the ECCE). Remember, you are paying to reserve your child's childcare slot.

If your child does not turn 3 years until the following calendar year, they will not qualify under the ECCE Scheme until that September. However, they will qualify for Affordable Childcare. See below.

National Childcare Scheme

The National Childcare Scheme is our pathway to truly accessible, affordable, quality childcare.

The Scheme will open in October 2019. It will replace all previous targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and user-friendly Scheme to help parents meet the cost of quality childcare.

Subsidies will be available for families with children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years who are attending any participating Túsla registered childcare service, including any Túsla registered childminder.

There are two types of subsidies:

Universal Subsidies are available to all families with children under three years old. **They are also available to families with children over three years who have not yet qualified for the free preschool programme (ECCE).** This subsidy is **not means tested** and provides 50c per hour towards the cost of a registered childcare place for up to a maximum of 40 hours per week.

Income Assessed Subsidies are available to families with children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years. This subsidy is **means tested** and will be calculated based on your individual circumstances. Your rate will vary depending on **your level of family income, your child's age and educational stage, and the number of children in your family.** The subsidy can be used towards the cost of a registered childcare place for up to a maximum of 40 hours if you are working, studying or training, or in circumstances where you are unavailable for childcare, and a maximum of 15 hours if you are not working, studying or training.

Further information can be accessed at: www.ncs.gov.ie.

