

St. Clare's Nursery Unit

Policy for
Pastoral
Care/Parental
Involvement

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The staff of St. Clare's believe that Pastoral Care is an integral part of the Nursery Curriculum; it is all-encompassing and cannot be compartmentalised or separated from any aspect of Nursery life. We recognise that all children have rights and needs and we aim to address these needs on a daily basis in our planning and provision. We aspire to equip each child with skills and experiences necessary for daily living, as well as preparing them for the next stage of their education.

Our Vision

St. Clare's Nursery Unit aims to work in partnership with parents to promote the development of happy, confident and independent children in a secure and nurturing environment where they show respect for themselves and each other.

'Learning to Play... Playing to Learn'

Our Aims

We offer a carefully tailored programme of play in a secure, stimulating and nurturing environment.

We endeavour to provide an all-inclusive curriculum supporting a wide range of needs and abilities.

We promote Christian values of Caring, Sharing and Praying and of showing respect for ALL.

We work in close partnership with you, the parents and carers, our primary school and the local community.

Above all we value our children as unique, individual and special each with their own role to play in our school and wider community.

Our Objectives

To provide parents with information about the Nursery before their child begins their Nursery Year.

To work with parents in building up a profile of the child's development and needs when the child starts at the Nursery.

To provide opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress.

To provide guidance, advice and resources to support home learning.

To provide regular written reports to parents giving details of their child's progress.

Implementation

The core of Pastoral Care lies in the provision of a high-quality and effective teaching/learning environment which celebrates each child's individuality. The relationship between teacher and pupil is central to effective learning. Mrs Corrigan, head of Pastoral care in St. Clare's Nursery Unit liaises with Pastoral Care team in St. Clare's Primary school. Regular meetings are held and children of concern in the Nursery are discussed and support/strategies are put in place.

The Role of Parents

It is essential that parents and teachers work in partnership if the nursery experience is to be a happy and effective one. The children come to us having received a varied range of experiences. These experiences form the starting point from which will build and strive towards progression for the needs of the children.

Our parents are always welcome in St. Clare's - Your contribution is essential and your views and thoughts are valued. (As part of our Child Protection Policy, parent helpers will be vetted by the E.A. prior to participating in activities). Vetting is not required if parents are working under the supervision of a permanent member of staff at all times.

How you can help with your child's Nursery Education

Nursery Open Day:

A Nursery 'Open Day' is held in the December of each year and advertised prior to this in local churches/shops. This provides prospective parents and their children with an opportunity to meet the staff and find out about the life of 'St Clare's Nursery Unit'. This helps parents to make informed choices about their child's Nursery education before completing an admission 'Pre-school Application Form'. The pre-school admissions procedure/criteria are highlighted and the Nursery emphasise the importance of adhering to all important dates. St. Clare's nursery consists of two classrooms, each with a teacher and assistant. On occasions the nursery may operate an 'Open Plan' arrangement whereby the two classrooms will become one classroom. This arrangement is trialled every year after Halloween and according to how the children respond it is either continued or discontinued after Christmas time.

In theory it is good practice to offer the children as many play experiences as possible and so there is more space and greater opportunities to develop play at each area. Children may respond positively to this and therefore it will increase the learning potential for all children.

Sometimes this is not a positive experience and for various reasons open plan may not work. These reasons may include:

- Anxiety levels of children increasing
- Environment is too noisy for sensory sensitive children
- Staff may find it difficult to track children's progress
- Staff may find behaviour management much more difficult
- Classroom management is much more difficult
- Transitions can be hard to manage
- Routines are much more difficult to follow for children and staff

If staff feel that the open plan environment is not meeting our principles of nurture, inclusivity and early intervention then we will revert to two classrooms again.

Induction to Nursery:

Before the children begin Nursery, parents will be invited along to a Parent Information day in the Nursery and to see examples of 'Play'. We aim to work in partnership with you the parents to promote happy, confident, independent children in a secure learning environment where the children show respect for themselves and others. We reinforce the importance of providing a stimulating, happy, caring and safe environment where the children are given the opportunity to grow emotionally, spiritually, morally, physically and intellectually. The play is carefully structured and resourced to suit each Child's needs through the six Areas of Learning and to ensure that progression and the acquisition of new skills take place. Encompassing all the Areas of Learning is the promotion and nurturing of each child's spiritual and moral development.

It will also provide an opportunity for parents to meet the staff of St. Clare's Nursery Unit and a selection of guest speakers who are involved in some of our schemes ie: Parish Priest, Dental Health, Road Safety Awareness, School Health Nurse...

Each parent will be given a Nursery Parent Information booklet which contains details of the 'Settling In' Policy, the Curriculum as well as other useful information relating to the Nursery. Parents will also receive information on current Vetting Procedures. Each parent will also receive a Child Protection Policy, and Free Dinner form if applicable. These will be updated when necessary to reflect any changes in Curriculum or Policy.

You can prepare your child for starting Nursery by:

- **Talking to him/her about the type of experience he/she will encounter.**
- **Sitting with him/her to look at books.**
- **Encouraging him/her to listen to stories.**
- **Playing together.**
- **Using the experience of shopping and unpacking afterwards.**
- **Baking together.**
- **Setting the table together.**

Teach your child to:

- Use the toilet and flush it .
- Wash and dry his/her hands.
- Use a knife and fork.
- Tidy away his/her toys.
- Take off his/her coat and hang it on a peg.
- Use a handkerchief.
- Become more independent by encouraging him/her to dress and undress himself/herself and become less reliant on soothers.

'Settling in' period

During the 'settling in' period we will talk to parents about their child gathering information which we will use to complete a profile. Any Special Needs, Health Problems, Dietary Requirements etc... will be noted at this time. The duration of the 'settling in' period will be flexible and will continue until the child feels happy and secure in the Nursery setting.

You can help your child during his/her time in Nursery by:

- **Attending meetings (pre-school included) which address aspects of your child's Nursery education.**
- **Spending time in the Nursery with your child particularly during the 'settling in' process and when leaving your child to school and collecting them.**
- **Familiarising yourself with the key points on the Curriculum & Parent Noticeboards, Monthly Activity Sheet, General Monthly Newsletter, Song Sheets and carrying out the suggested activities with your child. (You will receive a copy of each of these monthly).**

- Instilling in your child, the Christian values of **SHARING & CARING** through your example.
- Talking to your child each day about his/her activities.
- Participating in 'Parent Workshops/Courses' offered through the Nursery.
- Assisting with school trips/outings.
- Attending liturgical celebrations, school concerts, sports days...
- Providing essential materials for the Nursery eg; items for the colour/interest table, 'junk' modelling resources...
- Offering skills/talents/expertise/demonstrations which could enhance the children's learning experiences.
- Revising and supporting our school rules at home.

Sickness Procedures

The Nursery School environment is a small and intimate one - a place where germs and sickness can travel fast! If a child is/has been sick, parents are asked to be considerate and think of the other children in the Nursery.

Children who have been prescribed antibiotics should be kept at home until the course of treatment is finished.

Although Nursery Education is not compulsory, if a child is frequently absent with no explanation we do reserve the right to take the place for another child. Therefore if your child is ill, or unable to attend for personal reasons, please contact us as soon as possible.

Home/School Links

We aim to provide the richest experiences possible so that the children may develop as happy, confident and independent individuals where they

show respect for themselves and others. In order for us to do this, it is vital to maintain strong and effective lines of communication between home and school.

Through our 'Stay and Play' activities, we encourage parents to spend a short time in their child's classroom in the mornings and afternoons. This will allow them to become more actively involved in their child's learning experiences.

Nursery/Primary School Links

Most of the children will transfer at the end of their Nursery Education to Primary One in St. Clare's Primary School.

In order to ensure a smooth transition to Primary One Nursery teachers will meet with Primary One teachers to discuss the needs of all the children. The children have the opportunity to visit St. Clare's Primary school and to meet their new teachers. The Primary One teachers will in turn, visit the children in the Nursery to read the children a story. Parents will have the opportunity to participate in practical workshops/ play based activities. These links are vital in providing continuity in the children's education as well as developing and strengthening communication between the two settings.

'Primary One' Open Day

The parents of children who are in the Nursery are invited to attend an 'Open Day' in the Primary School. This also occurs in December, giving parents an opportunity to receive an application form, to meet the staff and find out further information about their child's transition to Primary School.

School/Community Links

At various times throughout the Nursery Year, we will employ the services of members of the community, professionals from other agencies and visitors associated with our Monthly Themes. Eg, Priests from St Paul's Church & Clonard Monastery, Dental Nurse, Ulster Wildlife Trust... They will contribute to the children's welfare and education. We invite children/parents from local Playgroups to visit St. Clare's and play with our toys and interact with Nursery staff. We also encourage the local Playgroups to forward reports on children who have accepted places in the Nursery.

Assessment/Reporting to Parents

Observation/Assessments of children to monitor their progress are regular and ongoing. Staff will report these observations both formally and informally throughout the Nursery year. Such reports will be used to provide advice for parents to support learning at home.

Parent Meetings will be held three times per year, towards the end of each term. They will provide an opportunity for parents to discuss their child's progress with staff.

Term 1: Observations on Settling In, Personal, Social, Emotional Development (Well - being & Involvement), Language Development and Physical Development.

Term 3: Progression in The Nursery Curriculum
'Standard Transition Form' - This form will be forwarded to the child's forthcoming Primary School.

Parent will meet regularly with the nursery class teachers if they have been placed on the S.E.N. Register - this will take the form of

- An initial meeting
- I.E.P. meeting
- I.E.P. reviews
- Any additional meetings requested by outside agencies

Notice-boards

Displayed in the Nursery Foyer are the following notice-boards:

Curriculum Boards
Information/Events Board
Theme Board - learning objectives

Each of these boards will be updated monthly. It is important that all parents familiarize themselves with the information on them. We encourage 'Parental Ownership' of the Parent's Board. This board provides parents with an opportunity to be actively involved in the life of the Nursery and to develop positive relationships/communication with others

Information/Consent Forms

Parents are required at the beginning of each year to complete the following information and consent forms.

Parent Vetting Form (new Access N.I.) - if applicable

Parental Responsibility Form

Checklist for Starting Nursery

Initial Pupil Information Form

Parental Agreement Form

Medical Information Form

Photograph/Video Consent Form

Tooth Brushing Consent Form

Monthly Newsletters/Programmes

Each month you will receive a Newsletter outlining information about important dates, visitors, fund raising etc. It is important that you hold onto this and refer to it throughout the month.

You will also receive information on the monthly themes, colours and shapes, songs & rhymes being covered and suggested activities for you and your child to do together at home.

The 'Making It Work' programme is designed to help the children to become familiar with their own emotions and to respect their peers and explore cultural differences. You may have seen some of the advertisements associated with this programme on television. The characters all live near a park. They include TOM who is quite shy, supports Celtic and wears a patch over his eye. JIM who always likes to be the leader and can be quite bossy at times, but some times he can become quite scared. He supports Rangers. JENNY who is very popular and has lots of friends. She becomes really sad when bullies destroy her painting. KIM who is Chinese and loves to celebrate her culture such as Chinese New Year. BUKOLA who is a black boy from Dublin. His grandparents still live in Africa and he goes on a big plane to visit them. Finally there is Kathleen who is a traveller and she lives with her family in a trailer beside the park. She is a very kind girl and finds it hard to make friends because she is always moving from place to place. All of the characters become pupils in St. Clare's Nursery at different times throughout the year.

Towards the end of the school year we will also have a teddy called Adventure Ted who loves to go on adventures. There is the opportunity for him to stay over in your house one weekend. You can imagine the excitement of the children the following week when we discover Ted has been shopping in the Park Centre or was in Newcastle for the weekend. Parents are invited to record what Ted did on his adventures that weekend and the children are encouraged to draw a picture of the experience.

And finally we use an ICT programme called 'Early HeartSmarts'. Both of these programmes help young children to further explore and help to regulate their emotions. All of the programmes are outlined in further detail in your Parent Information booklet.

Parent Helpers/Volunteers

It is vital that we have parental help and support in fulfilling the role of Parent Helpers/Volunteers. This role involves:

- ❖ assisting teachers with play activities in the classroom
- ❖ assisting with 'lending library' rota
- ❖ fund-raising activities
- ❖ accompanying/supervising children on school trips

Learning outcomes/Volunteer's role in each activity/event will be highlighted and explained in advance, by the class teacher.

School Funds

A contribution of £25 per term (£30 term one) is requested from parents. This is a voluntary contribution but helps with the cost of

- snack
- resources
- visitors to the school (e.g. Debbie DooLittle)
- shows / performances (e.g. Fairy Twinkle, Mr Hullabaloo)
- parties for Christmas - with Santa / for Easter with the Easter Bunny
- presents for the children
- end of year celebrations

❖ 'End of Year' Celebration

To celebrate the children completing their year at nursery we host an end of year celebration. It consists of

- Address by Mrs Corrigan
- Short concert of favourite songs for parents
- Presentation of work (pupil profiles) from each child to their parents
- Garden party with strawberries and cream

We aim to encourage parents to become actively involved in all aspects of fund-raising in the Nursery. We welcome any new suggestions which may further increase parental involvement.

"You are a vital part of our team and we value your contribution!"