

Settling in Policy

Askea Community Childcare Centre is committed to ensuring that every child has a pleasant experience during their settling in period. Staff will ensure that this transition period is as easy as possible for children and parents/guardians.

Principle of Settling In Policy

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016; The Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services)(Amendment) Regulations 2016; (Registration of School - Age Services) Regulations 2018; Our Duty to Care 2002 and Children First National Guidelines for the Protection & Welfare of Children

Rationale

Askea Community Childcare Centre has the procedures in place to facilitate the integration into the service of a child when they first attend the service, their progression within the service and their transition to primary school.

Transitions occur as children move **within** the service from one room or area to another or from one type of activity to another (for example, active play to tidy up time to eating time). They also occur as children move **between** settings (for example, from home to the early years setting or from the early years setting to school).

Changes can be stressful at any stage in life, but for young children they can be particularly challenging and major changes can have a lifelong impact. The time from birth until six years of age is a very significant time in a child's life.

Research shows that the early years of childhood are critically important for brain development. The brain develops more rapidly during these years than at any other later period and we know that this development is significantly affected by the child's early environment and experiences. Moving on to different surroundings makes demands on young children, as they must learn to cope with a new situation.

Parents/guardians also need support to cope with change and new situations. The sensitive care and attention given to planning and ensuring smooth transitions and settling in is extremely important. **Young children learn from every experience**, including routines and transitions and can develop skills through well-managed routines and transitions.

Many young children are experiencing a wide range of transitions each and every day. Because of the many different experiences they have, it is especially important that there is some continuity and similarity of approach in the ways in which the important adults in their lives behave and interact, not only with the children themselves but also with the other adults who are involved with them.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is sensitive planning and management of transitions, consistency in key relationships, liaison within and between settings and the close involvement of parents to ensure positive experiences and continuity for children (Sólta Standard 13).

It is essential that relationships and routines are consistent, predictable and responsive to support each child's attachments, their sense of trust, security, competency, identity and belonging, their social skills and sense of independence.

Children experiencing social and economic disadvantage, children with English as an additional language (EAL) and children with special educational needs (SEN) require particular supports at the time of transition to primary school (NCCA, 2016).

Children need:

- Consistent key relationships and carefully planned introductions to all new settings, routines and experiences to help ease any anxiety associated with change that they may feel.
- Continuity and similarity of approach in the ways in which the important adults in their lives behave and interact, not only with them but also with the other adults who are involved with them.
- Individualised routines and practices to support their particular needs
- The focus to be on developing their social and emotional skills, communication and language skills, positive learning dispositions like independence and curiosity, and self-help skills, and less focus placed on academic skills to support their transition to school. (NCCA, 2016)

Parents/guardians need:

- To know that their child will have their transitions made as easy and comfortable for them as possible.
- To have their own involvement in easing transitions for their child welcomed, supported and facilitated. This is currently restricted to bringing your child to their room on the first day of attendance due to Covid-19 health and safety measures.
- Frequent sharing of information and goals and strong connections between them and the service to help ease transitions and settling in for their child.

Staff members:

- Will be very clear on the service’s expectations in relation to ensuring smooth transitions and positive settling in experiences for the children.
- Will be aware of the need for parents to be supported, facilitated and involved with them in easing transitions for their children and ensuring that they settle in well.
- Will engage in frequent communication with parents about the child’s communications, routines, temperament, responses, reactions, likes, dislikes, culture and ability to adapt to change.

Management needs:

- Will ensure that sensitive care and attention is given by all staff team members to planning and ensuring smooth transitions and positive settling-in experiences in the interests of all of the children and their families in the service. This includes partnering with parents and liaising appropriately with schools and any other settings that children either come to the service from or move to from the service

Definitions

Transitions	<p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning for the first time at the early years setting from home or other early years setting. • Daily arriving to the setting from home and leaving for home. • Daily changes within routines and from one type of activity to another. • Separations from familiar people and/or changes in programmes or rooms within the setting. • Significant changes in children’s home or family circumstances. • Final moving out of the early years setting into another early years setting or to school.
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Settling in	In this policy this refers to settling in to the setting when the child first comes to the service; settling in each day; adjusting to different routines or activities; settling in to new rooms/programmes within the setting; settling in to the move to primary school as well as coping with significant changes in their family circumstances.
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Policy Statement

In Askea Community Childcare Centre we recognise that successful experiences during early transitions can increase a child's ability to adapt to changes in the future and can provide a more secure base for their learning and development.

We work to develop strong relationships between the family and the service through frequent communication and sharing of information and goals.

Strong connections between each child's home and the service will help ease transitions into new or different settings, routines and/or relationships. We maintain continuity of relationships as far as possible and carefully plan all introductions to new settings, routines and experiences for the children to help ease any anxiety associated with change.

We will do our best to ensure that we provide a secure base that supports the children's focused attention, curiosity about exploring their world and their emerging independence.

Major transitions are not one-off events. These transitions go on over a period of time and everything that a young child experiences prepares them for other transitions to come. We consider it essential to enable parents and our staff to jointly support and facilitate successful transitions through responsive relationships that are secure, consistent and continuous.

All predictable transitions are planned with sensitivity to each child's individual needs and interests, and children are supported to develop the dispositions and skills needed to make major transitions successful.

We aim to provide relationships and routines that are consistent, predictable, and responsive to support each child's sense of trust, security, and identity. We consider it essential that the staff member assigned to their care (their Key Person) can read and respond to each child's cues.

We will always:

- Consider transitions from the perspective of the wellbeing, learning and development needs of each child.
- Assign a Key Worker to each child (See Key Worker Policy)
- Consider particular health and development needs of each child.
- Build partnerships with families to support the development of responsive, respectful relationships among children and staff.
- Individualize routines and practices to support each child's needs, interests, temperament, their own and their family's circumstances and their preferences, their culture and first language.
- Use routines and transitions as opportunities to promote children's learning and development.
- Plan for transitions and placements that provide consistency and continuity for children and their families.

- Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of transitions using various means, including observations of the children and feedback from their families.
- Support parents in being or becoming advocates as they transition with their children both into this service, within the service, from home or other settings [*such as a childminder*] and from this service to other settings, especially school.
- Ensure the most appropriate transition to other environments and services from participation in this service by beginning transition planning as early as possible prior to the child's move.
- Liaise with other settings appropriately and provide any relevant information (via parents or with parents' consent) that is helpful in ensuring a successful transition from this service to other settings such as school.
- Use the national template (NCCA, 2018) for transfer of information from this setting to primary school.

Procedure

- Staff will encourage parents/guardians to visit the Centre for short periods before start date to introduce their child to the setting. This procedure is currently reduced to one visit due to Covid-19 health and safety measures.
- Parents/guardians are invited to stay until they feel their child is comfortable in their new environment while adhering to current guidelines on social distancing by HPSC.
- There is no set time on the settling in period for children
- Staff will gently encourage the child to join in activities at his/her own pace during this period
- Staff will discuss with parents their children's likes, dislikes, interests, favourite toys and comforting key words to help with the settling in process
- Parents will receive a report on their child's progress during their attendance in Askea Community Childcare Centre.

On entry to the service we will:

- Encourage parents/guardians to visit Askea Community Childcare Centre before and after their child is enrolled.
- Include the Key Worker in the admission meeting and make plans with parents at that time to ease the child's transition and settling in to the service.
- Introduce each child and their parents to the environment, the adults and the other children who will be in their room and the daily routines.
- Invite parents to take an active role in settling their child into the service (If parents/guardians can help their child, they will also ease their own feelings of separation.)
- Request information from parents which will help us to get to know their child such as the child's likes and dislikes; their particular needs; who the important people in their lives are; their interests; their ability to communicate; their temperament and their dispositions and importantly, whether they have a special transitional object (such as a 'blankie'). (See checklist for exchanging information below.)
- Encourage parents to spend as much time as they can at the service when their child first starts, while adhering to current guidelines on social distancing by HPSC and help them to work out an individualised schedule for a gradual withdrawal.
- Post a sign welcoming the child and the parents by name and include photos where possible.
- Empathize with parents' concerns about leaving their child in our care.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Share information about their child that will help us to get to know them.
- Bring their child to the service for a visit before they start fully.
- Tell their child when they are going to begin at the service. A very young child can be told “..... will take care of you this morning.” A toddler can be encouraged to look forward to playing with other children a few days in advance and can then be reminded on the day itself.
- Spend as much time as they can at the service at first and gradually shorten the time as the child becomes more comfortable.
- Develop a goodbye routine or ritual that they can use with their child each day such as giving the child a kiss or a big hug, waving good-bye from the door, or whatever they and their child feel comfortable doing. This way, both the parents and the child will know how to handle the parting.
- Talk with their child’s Key Worker about bringing items from home that are important to their child, for example, a favourite soft toy or blanket, photos of family members, or a recording of themselves reading a favourite story or singing a familiar song.

(See Drop-Off & Collection Policy also, in relation to Authorisation to Collect Children.)

On an ongoing basis parents/guardians will be encouraged to:

- Continue to spend time when they bring their child in the morning and when they return at the end of the day. Play with them, talk with staff [ideally their child’s Key Worker] about what happened that day and express any concerns.
- Be sure to say good-bye each day so their child knows that they can trust them and that they won’t leave without warning.
- Collect their child on time every day so their child can be confident they won’t be left at the service when the other children have gone home.
- Keep their child’s Key Worker up to date with relevant information on any big changes in the child’s home life or circumstances and small changes, such as when their child masters new skills or helps out with tasks and routines at home. Knowing this information, staff can provide individualized support for the child where needed and recognise and build on the child’s skills.

Staff members will:

- Welcome each child and their parents by name each morning.
- Help parents to recognise a child’s need to feel connected to their parents when they are apart.
- Help parents appreciate the importance of goodbye rituals.
- Support both parents and child in their ritual for saying good-bye.
- Continue to make parents welcome. Encourage them to spend time when they bring their child in the morning and when they return at the end of the day when it does not impact on the admittance/exit of other children into/from the service during current Covid-19 health and safety measures.
- Give parents information about their child’s experiences each day and invite them to share information about their experiences with their child at home (see sample Daily Routines Communication Forms below and further information in the Key Worker Policy.)
- Display interesting items for people to talk about, such as photos of the previous day’s/week’s experiences.
- Invite parents to bring special items from home that will help their child feel connected.
- Help the child express their feelings about their parents leaving. Talk with them about their home and family later in the day. Suggest that they call their parents on a real or toy telephone.
- Invite the child to paint, dance, sing or tell a story using toys as characters.

- Give the child opportunities to use the skills they know. Sharing tasks like preparing for meals or putting toys away can also reinforce their feelings of competence.
- Play games of hiding and reappearing.
- Read stories of good-byes and returns.

Routines and transitions within the daily programme of activities

- Children can attend to personal routines, such as going to the toilet, according to their individual body schedules.
- Children have easy access to their transitional objects when they want or need them and are given time and understanding to help them to become more able to manage longer periods without them.
- While balancing the range of activities (active/quiet, small group/large group/individual, indoors/outdoors), routines and transitions are kept to a minimum and managed consistently so that children can develop trust and a sense of security.
- Transitions within the daily routine, although managed consistently, are as flexible as possible to allow for children to follow their interests where possible.
- Transitions that must happen, involving moving from one type of activity to another, are planned so that children who are ready before others have something to do while they wait.
- Children are given advance notice visually [for example with an interactive visual routine and or large egg timers] of changes to routines or planned changes within the schedule of activities that will affect them.
- It is considered important to recognise that some children need to be given more time, support and assistance to cope with changes in activity levels and/or types of activities, than others.
- If the furniture is going to be changed around or major changes made to the environment, this is discussed with the children and explained in advance so that they can be involved and understand why the change is happening.
- Children can participate in helping with routines as much as they are able (for example helping to set the table or cleaning up)

Transition to school

Throughout the years before children move to school they are supported to develop the skills and dispositions they will need to transition and settle in well to the school setting.

These skills and dispositions are developed through our quality curriculum, which is informed by Aistear the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. The curriculum we provide supports children's learning and development under the themes of Wellbeing, Exploring and Thinking, Communication and Identity and Belonging. (See the Curriculum Policy.)

At Askea Community Childcare Centre we liaise with the local schools and Early Intervention Teams to help and support children's transitions to settle into primary school.

Parents will be invited to provide consent and participate in providing information to schools about their child using the national template (NCCA, 2018) for transfer of information from this setting to primary school.

*The full report can be accessed at: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2018) [Preschool to Primary School Transition Initiative Final Report](https://ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/mo-sc%C3%A9al/mo-sc%C3%A9al-reporting-templates), Dublin: NCCA by the following link:
<https://ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/mo-sc%C3%A9al/mo-sc%C3%A9al-reporting-templates>*

Planning transitions

The following are some of the considerations in preparation for any upcoming transition:

Preparation

- What can be done early to begin preparing the child for this transition?
- What partnerships need to be formed to ensure continuity and ease the transition?
- What items/resources are available to help ease this child's transition?

Environment/physical space

- Will the new/next setting be a different room at a different location? How is the child likely to react?
- What choices will the child be able to make?
- Will materials and equipment be very different or familiar to the child? How accessible will they be?

Routines

- What will daily activities be like, and how might the child react to these experiences?
- How are the routines going to be handled?

Examples:

(1) Eating

(2) Napping

(3) Nappy changing/toileting

(4) Outdoor activities

(5) Indoor activities

(6) Tidy up time

Staffing

- Will the child be assigned a new Key Person? If so, how might they react?
- How do the adults generally interact with the children?
- How do the adults relate to each other?

Social interactions

- What kinds of opportunities will the child have to interact with other children?
- Will any of the children be familiar to the child?
- What is the family's role in this change?
- What are the opportunities for family interaction?

Considering culture in transition practices

Providing culturally competent care and education supports a developing child's sense of security, identity, competence, confidence, and connectedness. Staff members will understand and honour family childrearing practices and preferences, as long as it is legal to do so, and provide very young children, with consistency and familiarity, which are especially important during transitions.

It is always important to ensure that all practices are legal and are in the child's best interests.

As far as possible we will:

- Provide harmony with each child's home culture, for example:
 - Ensure that we use some of the child's home language if it is not English and encourage parents to continue to use the child's first language at home.
 - Provide a culturally relevant environment that is familiar and homelike to the child where items familiar to the child are included.
- Understand and respect each family's cultural beliefs and childrearing values (as long as these are in the child's best interests).

- Provide consistency by understanding the home routines of each child.
- Discuss each family's expectations for their child's learning and development and the transition. *[For example, ask if the family expects the child to develop independence skills and how the family expects the child to adjust to a new setting, new people or a new language.]*
- Be aware of our own cultural values, beliefs, and expectations. Acknowledge how these match or differ from the family's expectations and consider differences or potential conflicts.

We encourage families to foster cultural consistency and continuity during transitions by:

- Sharing their cultural values and childrearing practices with staff [ideally their child's Key Worker] before and during their child's transition and saying what they expect from the staff
- Communicating frequently with about their child's routines, temperament, reactions, likes, dislikes, and ability to adapt to differences and change.
- Providing staff with ongoing feedback and discussing/negotiating differences.

Checklist for exchanging information

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

Guidance on saying 'good-bye' and moving on

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.

Communication Plan For staff & families

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

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

Parents and the staff team will receive written notification of any updates.

Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

- Drop-Off & Collection Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Personal Belongings Policy
- Partnership With Parents Policy
- Key Worker Policy
- Interactions Policy
- Communication Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Infection Control and Management Policy
- Daily Routines Communication Sheet: Staff Information (See Appendix 1)
- NCCA Preschool to Primary School Transfer of Information

References

- Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework
- Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education
- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- Aistear Síolta Practice Guide
- Early Years Education Inspection (EYEI) Framework
- Preschool to Primary School Transition Initiative Final Report, NCCA 2018,

- Transition from preschool to primary school: Learning from research, policy and practice NCCA, 2016
- Birth to Three: supporting our youngest children (2005) Learning and Teaching Scotland
- Supporting Transitions: Using Child Development as a Guide, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Return to Work Safely Protocol, Covid-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers (2020)
- Covid-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic (HPSC, 2020)
- First 5, Guidance for Reopening, Government of Ireland (2020)
- Guidance for Early Years Services managing COVID-19, (Tusla, 2020)

This policy must be observed by:

- Managers
- All staff members
- Parents/Guardians

Contact Information

If you need more information about this policy, contact:

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Phone number or email	0599135206 askeacm@gmail.com

Date this policy was created	September 2016
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Date this policy was reviewed	May 2020; June 2020
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Date this policy will be reviewed	June 2022
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Appendix 1

Sample Daily Routines Communication Sheet for Wobblers: Staff Information

Daily Report

Name: _____ Date: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

<p>Breakfast _____</p> <p>Snack _____</p> <p>Dinner _____</p> <p>Tea _____</p> <p>–</p> <p>Snack _____</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W BM</td> <td>W BM</td> <td>W BM</td> <td>W BM</td> <td>W BM</td> </tr> </table> <p>Sleep _____ : _____ to _____ : _____</p> <p>I need <input type="checkbox"/> Nappies <input type="checkbox"/> Wipes <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____</p>	:	:	:	:	:	W BM	W BM	W BM	W BM	W BM	<p>Breakfast _____</p> <p>Snack _____</p> <p>Dinner _____</p> <p>Tea _____</p> <p>–</p> <p>Snack _____</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> <td style="width: 20%;">:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W BM</td> <td>W BM</td> <td>W BM</td> <td>W BM</td> <td>W BM</td> </tr> </table> <p>Sleep _____ : _____ to _____ : _____</p> <p>I need <input type="checkbox"/> Nappies <input type="checkbox"/> Wipes <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____</p>	:	:	:	:	:	W BM	W BM	W BM	W BM	W BM
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