

## Equipment Policy

It is the policy of Askea Community Childcare Centre that all equipment (including play equipment) available for the children is suitable, safe, age appropriate and linked to the curriculum or programme planning while providing new challenges and experiences for the developmental needs of the children.

## Principles of Equipment 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; Fire Safety in Preschools 1999; The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

### Rationale

The purpose of the Equipment Policy is to ensure that:

- Management and staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities relating to the availability, use, management and safety of the furniture, equipment for play, rest and work and the materials utilised in the service.
- Management, staff, parents/guardians and contractors understand the importance of providing safe equipment for use by all persons in Askea Community Childcare Centre.
- All persons understand the importance of reporting and removing equipment that can no longer serve its function in a safe manner.

## Policy Statement

At Askea Community Childcare Centre all children have access to a sufficient quantity of safe, well-maintained, high-quality materials and equipment, toys and furniture.

Equipment and materials facilitate all types of play and learning. The aim is to engage all children and keep them active and involved whilst supporting, encouraging and positively challenging each child to experiment and explore.

Assistive furnishings, equipment and materials, where required, allow children with additional needs to participate fully in the service and to see themselves represented.

A wide variety of age and developmentally appropriate equipment is available indoors and outdoors for children throughout the day.

The provision, use and safe storage of natural and open-ended materials is encouraged to support curriculums and provide a variety of sensory learning opportunities for children. The use of open-ended materials has a positive impact on children's physical and mental wellbeing by providing opportunities for children to explore, discover and develop an understanding of the natural environment around them with unique opportunities for:

- sensory experiences;
- physical activities;
- observations;

- constructive play with sand, water and mud;
- socio-dramatic play;
- art;
- early science,
- mathematics,
- environmental learning and many others.

The following are examples of natural materials:

- Sand
- Twigs
- Wood
- Leaves
- Stones
- Shells

These can also be described as 'open-ended' materials along with:

- Boxes
- Tyres
- Pipes
- Cloth
- Buttons
- Paint

Outdoor play equipment and materials offer learning and engagement for children in small and large groups. They are accessible to each child and are of suitable design and size for age and stage of development. The choice and provision of equipment and materials will facilitate children engaging in outdoor risky play opportunities to promote problem solving, social interactions, independence and resilience.

Equipment for rest/sleep will be:

- in good condition
- of good design
- solid and stable
- have a recognised safety standard
- positioned away from hazards

Equipment for cooking and serving of food will be in used in line with our Health and Safety Policy and Risk Management Policy.

The equipment, materials and toys provided within the service are inclusive in order to support and reflect the identity of children who attend the service, their families and also the wider community. They provide a rich and varied environment with regard to gender, race, culture, ethnicity, additional needs and children's interests in order to encourage respect for diversity, equality and inclusion.

## Procedures

To implement the policy the following procedures are in place:

### **Purchasing Equipment:**

1. All equipment purchased by or on behalf of Askea Community Childcare Centre must be **sturdy and safe** for the person/child or purpose for which it is intended with no safety hazards.

2. When purchasing equipment staff must have a thorough understanding of the developmental benefits children will gain from the equipment and all purchases of equipment are based on this understanding.
3. Equipment must be age appropriate and suitable to the different stages of child development for all the different age groups within the Centre
4. Ride-on toys (such as tricycles) and wheeled equipment (such as scooters) used in the service are assembled and maintained in line with the manufacturers' instructions and be :
  - o capable of being steered
  - o of a suitable size for the child;
  - o have a low centre of gravity – that is, that the balance point is near the ground to make it stable and less likely to topple
5. When providing natural materials for children, staff must have regard for health and safety requirements when facilitating their use, while understanding the developmental benefits children gain from the materials and equipment.

The room plans must ensure that all equipment is accessible to the children to promote choice and a sense of independence in accordance with the implementation of Síolta and Aistear Frameworks.

#### **Cleaning and Maintenance:**

1. Play equipment is installed and maintained in line with the manufacturer's instructions and specifications
2. Staff are responsible for ensuring that all equipment is clean, safe and well maintained at all times. Cleaning schedules and risk assessment forms are completed and displayed and any concerns are communicated between staff and the Manager.
3. Equipment is checked regularly for wear and tear or broken parts and is replaced, or repaired, whichever is appropriate.
4. Equipment that can no longer serve its function in a safe manner is removed as soon as this is identified.

#### **Health and Safety:**

1. Equipment for adult use only is managed safely by staff to ensure that it is not accessible to children e.g. laundry machines.
2. Use of domestic equipment for learning purposes by children to enable them to develop independent life skills is always adequately supervised by staff.

#### **Communication Plan For staff & families**

All staff members will receive training and this policy will also be reviewed with staff at induction and annual staff training.

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**

- Risk Management Policy
- Policy on Accidents and Incidents
- Health and Safety Policy

- Records and Record Keeping Policy
- Communication Policy

#### **References/Supporting Documents/Related Legislation**

- Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016
- Safety Health and Welfare at Work Acts 2005 and 2010 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007
- Fire Safety in Pre-Schools Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 1999
- Fire Safety Information from The Health and Safety Authority
- Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education

#### **This policy must be observed by:**

- Managers
- All staff members
- Contractors