Address: The Willow Tree Children’s Centre,

96 Carraigbeag,Clogher Faili, Tralee,Co. KerryV92Y510

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| A picture containing text, melon  Description automatically generatedParent Handbook 2021 | The Willow Tree Children’s Centre |

Telephone:066-7122765 or 085-2808034

Email: blennerville.playschool@gmail.com

Website: www.blennervilleplayschool.com

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Introduction

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre is a registered setting providing quality, affordable early education and afterschool services for children aged 12 months to 15 years serving the Blennerville/Tralee Community: ECCE Sessional and Full-Time Childcare Service; Afterschool for School-Age Children; Full-Time Childcare for School-Age Children outside of ECCE/School Term. We are open 8.15am to 5.30pm, 50 weeks of the year, and only close for Christmas holidays. We can cater for 16 children in the baby room with due consideration of their age, 33 ECCE children or 36 school age children in the room at any one time.

At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we are committed to providing a childcare service of the highest standard which provides the perfect environment for all children to develop their social, personal and education skills. We provide a loving home-from-home environment where each child is treated with respect and valued as individuals who will develop confidence in their knowledge, opinions and abilities. Our play-based curriculum addresses children’s well-being, identity and belonging, communication, exploring and thinking which follows Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework of Ireland and Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education. It is a broad-based, flexible, well-documented programme which emphasises hands-on activities, mental well-being and connection to nature.

Our team members are a hardworking, committed, highly qualified, professional team. Above all, the welfare, mental and emotional well-being of each child is of utmost importance to them. If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak with them. We would ask to remember that they are normally very busy at the beginning and during the day, but they will be happy to make time to talk to you at the end of the day or at a time convenient to both you and them.

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre is currently based in Clogher Fáilí, Tralee with access to a large outdoor area.

**Thank you for choosing The Willow Tree Children’s Centre.**

Our Mission

We aim to actively promote the holistic development and welfare of children attending our service by providing a safe, secure and developmentally appropriate environment at the most reasonable rate that this facility can offer.

Objectives

• To nurture the children's curious dispositions and creative skills through play-based, child-led, open-ended activities, thereby enabling them to become competent, confident learners. Every child is enabled to participate in, enjoy and benefit from a wide range of cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities, and to engage in activities that are freely chosen and independent of schoolwork.

• To encourage and develop children’s creativity, to respect other’s points of view and develop openness to new knowledge and active learning.

• To continue to develop, review and pursue excellent working practices.

• To promote recognition and respect for children’s cultural, social, ethnic, and religious beliefs, their physical and cognitive development and to promote equality.

• We aim to make The Willow Tree Children’s Centre accessible to all members of the community, regardless of race, gender, family status, age, disability, or religious belief.

• To encourage children to fully participate in consideration of their individual developmental ability, to aid children develop self-discipline and self-regulation, to look at personal goals and complete their chosen tasks.

• The environment is planned and well-organised in a way that suits the different needs of individual children, while keeping in mind the importance of Health, Safety and Hygiene.

• We aim to deliver a quality care and play based curriculum which addresses children’s well-being, identity and belonging, communication and exploring and thinking, which follows Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework of Ireland and Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education.Our afterschool programme provides the children with safe, challenging and fun environments that provide opportunities for children to engage in supervised recreational activities. We offer homework support, but our emphasis is on play, recreation and relaxation.

• We operate within the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Child Care Regulations (The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services)(Amendments) Regulations 2016 and The National Standards for Pre-Schools (2010)

• We follow the Children First Act: National Guidance on the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.Our full Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement is available on our website: www.blennervilleplayschool.com

 • Parents are actively welcome at The Willow Tree Children’s Centre at all times. We endeavour to share information and communicate with parents directly, in order to give feedback at the end of each day and to ensure that they are made aware of on-going developments in policies and procedures. We also post curriculum updates and notifications on Facebook and WhatsApp in line with our confidentiality policy and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

• To provide the highest quality service where staff are encouraged and supported to access training, update their knowledge and skills and keep up with best practice in childcare development and education both at national and international level. The team works co-operatively and collaboratively which filters down to the children, alongside the promotion of helpful behaviour which is fostered in a positive culture of mutual respect, co-operation and collaboration which enables the child's confidence and self-esteem.

• Information on our school age programme and preschool curriculum is available in child friendly format to children availing of the service through the use of visual schedules and choice boards.

Services and Opening Hours

Full-Time Childcare for Babies/ Toddlers 8.15am to 5.30pm

Pre-school ECCE session 9am to 12pm

Part-Time Option for Pre-schoolers from 8.15am to 1.30pm

Full-Time Option for Pre-schoolers from 8.15am to 5.30pm

Afterschool 1.30pm to 5.30pm

Calendar

The ECCE and NCS Calendars will be provided to all parents at the beginning of the school year, these are on display in the lobby and are available on our website. **Outside of the ECCE and school term, we are open as a full-time childcare service (8.15am to 5.30pm) for all children.** We also provide a variety of options for fun camps at Easter, Summer, and Midterm. Please pay attention to the calendar for closures and weeks not covered by free preschool scheme.

CCTV

The premises are protected by CCTV

Staff

We have a rigorous recruitment and selection policy and all staff are Garda vetted. Our staff will work to ensure a very high standard of care for your children and have relevant childcare qualifications and experience (see notices in lobby). We encourage ongoing professional development for our staff to ensure that they are up to date with current legislation and best quality practices.

Operational Matters

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre is operated by Blennerville Community Playgroup which is a not for profit company limited by guarantee. Jessica Hastings is the Registered Provider and a director of the committee which is made up of several volunteers.

Contact Details: thewillowtreechildrenscentre@gmail.com

Manager: Laura MacKenna.

Deputy Manager: Lisa Clifton

Playschool Curriculum Statement

Our service facilitates the holistic learning and development of each child in our setting. Our curriculum is a broad-based, flexible, well-documented programme which emphasises hands-on activities, mental well-being and connection to nature. Our name is based on the classic Aesop’s fable The Oak and The Willow which emphasizes the importance of establishing strong roots, a sense of belonging in our early environment and thereby nurturing resilience for life. Above all, the welfare, mental and emotional well-being of each child is of utmost importance to us. Our curriculum follows principles from Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework of Ireland, High Quality Outdoor Learning, Forest School Curriculum and Steiner Waldorf Education.

Observations of the children during free play, small group time, circle time and yoga become the starting points out of which the curriculum plan emerges. Their interests and areas for development are elicited and then the curriculum is planned, reviewed and evaluated based on these observations.

In our home-from-home environment, we engage in free play, small group time, creative open-ended projects, physical education with a focus on fundamental movement skills, mindfulness and children's yoga. We promote helpful behaviour which is fostered in a culture of co-operation and collaboration which enables the child's confidence and self esteem. Through play-based, child-led, open-ended activities, children's curious dispositions are nurtured enabling them to become competent, confident learners. If you have any queries or would like further information, please do not hesitate to ask a member of our team.

Settling In Period

Our school year starts on Thursday, September 2nd. We invite and welcome all new parents and children to visit the playschool for induction on Tuesday August 31st, you can meet the staff and familiarise your child with the room while it is quiet. We acknowledge that settling in can be difficult for both the children and parents so please be assured that we will work closely with you to ease the transition. We ask parents to settle their child into an activity and say goodbye promptly. We have noticed that the longer the parent stays in the room, the stronger the separation anxiety which can ensue. Please see our full settling in policy on our website.

**We ask that junior preschoolers in their first year of ECCE be collected at 12pm until 10th September 2021 to ease their settling in period.**

First Day Checklist:

* Change of clothes (label all items)
* Refillable drinks bottle
* Lunchbox that your child can open unaided.

Family Involvement

Parental participation and community involvement are integral in our service as they facilitate stability and consistency for the child and provides them with a strong sense of belonging. We believe that children benefit most from early years education and care when parents and settings work together in partnership. Our aim is to support parents as their children’s first and most important educators by involving them in their children’s education. We use a software system called Child Paths to share the children’s learning experiences with families and to facilitate two way communication. Please fee full policy for practices and procedures.

Key Worker System for Preschoolers

Your child will be assigned a key person when they begin preschool in September. When children experience a warm, responsive, nurturing relationship with their key worker, this enables them to become more confident and competent. The key worker will be responsible for assessing, documenting and planning for the child's learning and development and therefore, act as a link between the setting and home. You are welcome to arrange to speak with your child’s key worker. The children make their own learning stories with their key worker and these will be sent home at the end of the year to inform you of your child’s learning and progression. We may require that you complete a story/ drawing with your child at home to add to their learning stories.

Clothes / Appropriate Dress

**We ask parents to clearly mark their child’s belongings as we cannot be liable for any lost items.**

Parents are requested to provide a change of clothes. If spare clothes are provided by the playschool please can you return them washed, within a reasonable timeframe.

Comfortable clothes are best for play or a tracksuit is ideal; please do not let your child wear tight jeans; belts/braces; playsuits or costumes as these are awkward at toilet time. Outdoor play is a major feature of the curriculum throughout the year so warm clothing, and rain wear are essential every day in winter. Please be aware that children can get messy and dirty at times, and this is very important for their development.

Please ensure that children can easily manage putting on and off their shoes. Velcro closures are ideal for this age group. Hi top/ converse shoes can be difficult and time consuming to put on/ take off.

Afterschool Service

Children will be supported by staff while completing their school homework but we do not take responsibility for homework completion and parents are encouraged to check with staff what homework needs to be completed. We always strongly encourage that parents take the time to review homework to keep up with their progress and to engage in reading one-to-one with their child. We acknowledge that parents play a key role in their child’s learning and in fostering a love of reading.

A hot meal is available as an optional extra at a cost of €3 per day and is served at approximately 3.00pm. A healthy snack is served around 4.30pm.

Our Afterschool service is flexible and once the homework is done, the children are enabled to engage in safe, positive, creative, child-led activities. Activities include art and craft, cooking, outdoor play, role play, board games, music and dance, organised outings, group projects and free play. Strengthening relationships is paramount amongst children and staff, so that children are empowered to express their own needs, ideas and develop a sense of ownership over their actions and learning.

Parental Involvement

Here at The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we encourage and value parental participation and community involvement as an integral part of our ethos. It facilitates stability and consistency for the child and provides them with a strong sense of belonging. We endeavour to foster clear two-way channels of communication between staff members and families on an on-going basis.

Policies and Procedures

To help us provide a quality, safe and happy environment we have developed a comprehensive range of policies and procedures. All staff are required to adhere to these policies and they are available to parents on request or on our website [www.blennervilleplayschool.com](http://www.blennervilleplayschool.com).

Enrolment Policy

It is the policy of The Willow Tree Children’s Centre that our service is open to all families in our community.

Admission Procedures:

Each child must be at least 12 months old when starting at the service.

When starting playschool in the acorns room, a child must be 2.5 years old and be toilet trained.

Parents seeking to secure a place for their child must complete an enrolment form.

For playschool: A completed enrolment form with a 50 euro deposit must be lodged with the service prior to the child attending the service. Deposits are refunded in November only when the child’s registration has been approved on the Hive.

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre’s enrolment policy prioritises the following, depending on ages and spaces available:

* The children of teachers and staff
* Siblings of current children \*
* Children attending full time hours on a 5-day basis.
* Date of application
* Children who live locally
* Children who have needs that the service is well placed to meet.

**\*The cut off point for sibling priority is the 17th of March prior to the September entry.**

The remaining places are given on a first come first serve basis.

If there are no remaining places a waiting list will be drawn up.

Drop Off Policy

We ask that you use the front entrance for entry/ exit to the playschool. Upon arrival there will be clear markers laid out on the ground which will allow for social distancing. Please use these markers accordingly until it is your turn to enter the lobby. There is always only one family to be in the lobby at one time. Once inside the door the parents/ guardians are asked to sanitize their hands straight away. There is an intercom inside the door to the left, when you press the button on the bottom device, you will be greeted at the door by a member of staff for the handover of your child. At this point your child’s temperature will be taken using an infrared temporal thermometer. Parents/ guardians or any other individual who is not attending or working in the service cannot come further than the lobby. This system ensures the safety and security of all children. Both parents and staff should use this time to discuss any significant occurrences in the child’s life or relevant information. Please inform staff if someone else is going to be dropping your child to the playschool or afterschool. Children must not be left in the foyer at any time or left outside the service prior to the opening hours of the service. We ask all parents to shut any doors behind them and to make sure that the entrance door closes firmly behind them to ensure the safety of all children and staff. We ask parents to adhere to drop off and collection times: 8.15am to 9.00am and either 12.00pm or 1.30pm. If a child needs to be collected outside of these times, please make prior arrangements with staff.

School age children who are coming to the afterschool directly from school via a bus service will be met by one/two members of staff. The staff will have a list of the children who are due to come to afterschool on that given day and will ensure that all children are accounted for. We ask that we are carefully informed of children who will be attending our service by Wednesday for the following week and of cancellations as we need to ensure the safety of all children. Upon entering the bus the children will sanitise their hands using a child friendly product. When the children return to the premises a member of staff will check their temperature , sign in their attendance and welcome them into the room.

Collecting Children Policy

Children must always be collected on time. The service closes at 5.30pm sharp, parents are asked to be here by this time. Parents are asked to adhere to the one way system which is marked by the Willow Tree Children’s Centre. We advise parents to use the parking provided at the front entrance when dropping/ collecting their child from the service. There is assigned parking for staff members, we ask you to please not use these spaces. As we are based in a busy residential area please be mindful of oncoming traffic when walking from your car to the service.

Late Collection of Children

Where a parent knows they will be late collecting their child after the agreed time, they are required to consult with the service to make alternative arrangements. When a parent is late and does not telephone the service, then a further fee will be charged after 15 minutes. If a child is not collected by a parent 30 minutes after the agreed time the service will attempt to contact the parents or the emergency contact persons.

Non-Collection of Children

If a child is not collected at the end of the session/day and the service is unable to contact both the parent and the emergency contacts, the following procedures apply:

A child will stay at the service in the care of two fully-vetted staff members until thepremises close, or staff are no longer available to care for the child. Staff will follow procedures outlined in the Child Protection Policy. Contact Health Service Executive, Child Protection and Social Work Services on (071) 91 23770. A full written report of the incident is recorded.

Safety

Can you please watch your children in the car park/ front entrance at **ALL** times as the car park/ front entrance can be very busy. Children must **NOT** climb/play on windowsills / railings.

Fee Payment Policy

Our fees list is reviewed annually in consideration of the affordability for parents and of the sustainability of the service. It is displayed on the NOTICEBOARD in the lobby. Please feel free to speak to staff if you have any questions.

Fees must be paid weekly in advance or by arrangement with the Service Manager. Bank Details are available upon request to arrange bank transfer or if you wish to pay by Direct Debit.

Other arrangements agreed by the Service Manager must be approved by the Management Committee.

Discounts are given for siblings and there are significant discounts available to parents who are in receipt of the National Childcare Scheme, details available at [www.ncs.gov.ie](http://www.ncs.gov.ie). Please enquire with staff for more information.

Fees must be paid even when the child is absent due to illness, except in special circumstances and with the agreement of the management committee /manager.

**If a child will not be attending, we require one week’s notice or you will be charged in full. Last minute cancellations will be charged in full.**

**Regarding the afterschool, please notify staff by Wednesday of the week before, which days your child will be attending and whether meals are required**. We will do all we can to accommodate parents and remain flexible but we ask parents to understand that places are limited and are assigned on a first come, first served basis. We adhere strictly to ratio guidelines set down by Child Care Act 1991, Regulations and Amendments.

Fee paying arrangements for holidays, bank holidays etc. will be agreed with parents at the time of enrolment.

If fees are not paid for four consecutive weeks a written notice will be sent out to parent/ guardian. After five weeks of non-payment we cannot guarantee your child’s place in the playschool. The Willow Tree Children’s Centre will refuse admission to any family who had a child previous in the pre-school who left an outstanding bill and are wishing to enrol a sibling. Should you anticipate any difficulty adhering to the Fee Payment Policy, we would encourage you to contact the Service Manager at the earliest opportunity to set up a meeting to discuss.

Accident or Injury

Upon registration, the playschool will require two emergency contact numbers, addresses and phone numbers. It is vital that these are kept updated. Parents will need to inform the playschool of any revised contact details.

We also require the parent/guardian or carer to sign an agreement on the application form to allow The Willow Tree Children’s Centre provide emergency treatment or hospitalisation of your child if necessary.

All preventative measures are taken to avoid accidents but in the unfortunate event of an accident occurring, minor injuries will be dealt with by a First Aider. Parents will be informed on collection and asked to sign an incident report form if necessary.

Recording of accident and injuries All accidents will be recorded however minor. (Please see Policy).

Child Protection and Safeguarding

Our Service is committed to safeguarding the children in our care and to providing a safe environment in which they can play, learn and develop. Our service believes that the welfare of the children attending our service is paramount. We are committed to child-centred practice in all our work with children. We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our service, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to, and heard.

Our policy and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and are underpinned by *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*,DCYA, 2017, *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Practice and Procedure*, Tusla, 2018, the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016; Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of Pre-school and school-age Services) Regulations 2018and the *Children First Act 2015*.

**Designated Liaison Person**(DLP) for Child Protection: Laura MacKenna

**Deputy DLP:** Lisa Clifton

Positive Behaviour Management

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre recognise all children are individual with unique needs and abilities. We endeavour to manage behaviour through a positive, supportive model. We encourage pre-school and school-age children to develop the skills of self-regulation (regulating their emotions according to the situational demands), problem-solving, conflict resolution and decision-making skills.

All staff will support pre-school and school-age children with their individual needs and adjust the supports as required. Staff will implement clear and consistent expectations for all children. Staff will follow clear strategies to support children as detailed in the full policy. Please see full policy for updated code of behaviour. The Willow Tree Children’s Centre will work collaboratively with parents/guardians to implement the managing behaviour policy. Through this partnership, we place each child’s emotional well-being, and individual needs and rights at the centre ofour practice.

Healthy Eating

At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we ensure that all children are provided with suitable, sufficient, healthy, nutritious and safe food and drinks. We are committed to promoting children’s healthy lifestyles through the prevention of illness, encouragement and establishment of healthy eating habits. The Deputy Person in Charge Lisa Clifton, and Early Years Assistant Danielle Berry trained as Healthy Ireland Smart Start Practitioners and our service has received the Healthy Ireland Smart Start Award.

If a child needs a special diet, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian(s) to inform staff of this, so that arrangements can be made to accommodate the child’s requirements. There is space for these details on the application form.

Parents are asked to provide one morning snack if their child attends the ECCE session until 12.00pm, or two snacks if the child attends part-time until 1.30 pm. We have a fridge in the classroom to store perishables and we store the child’s second snack in here until 12.45. Sweets, chocolate, crisps and fizzy drinks are **not** to be brought into the playschool.

Menus and lists of ingredients are on display on the classroom door for the Afterschooler’s evening meal. These are sourced from Caraway Catering in Killarney. We also provide an evening snack which typically includes fruit and granola bars/yoghurt bars/pancakes/wholewheat bread/ricecakes.

Birthdays

We try and promote healthy eating at the playschool at all times. We do allow a **small** cake for birthdays only. Please do not send in any extra treats for birthdays as we will have to send them home. As you can appreciate there are a lot of birthdays. We will take photos of the party and forward them to parents through WhatsApp.

Illness Prevention and Infectious Disease Control

At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, it is our aim to minimise the spread of infection for staff and pre-school and school-age children through the implementation of controls which reduce the transmission and spread of germs. We aim to promote and maintain the health of children and staff through the control of infectious illnesses.

**Aims**

We aim to control infection by providing on- going infection control training for staff (handwashing, food hygiene, cleaning).

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents/guardians upon request and are available on our website.

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

A notification will be posted via whatsapp or on the door to the classroom should staff, children or visitors to the centre report the presence of any contagious condition to the centre.

The spread of COVID- 19 infection is minimised by organising the children and staff into groups or “play pods” to the extent that is practical.

While adhering to public health advice to minimise the spread of COVID- 19, we aim to ensure a child centred service and the safety and wellbeing of children is prioritised.

**Exclusion from the Service:**

Children with the following cannot be admitted to the service:

• Acute symptoms of food poisoning/gastro-enteritis.

• A tympanic temperature over 38 degrees C.

• An earache

 •A deep, dry or hacking cough.

•Sore throat/ runny nose

•Severe congestion.

•Difficulty breathing or untreated wheezing.

• An unexplained rash.

• Vomiting (in last 24hours).

•Diarrhoea (in last 24 hours).

•Complaints of a stiff neck and headache with one or more of the above symptoms

•Untreated Lice or nits

• An infectious /contagious condition.

•A child who is on an antibiotic for less than 48 hours

•A child who has recently travelled into Ireland from another state: Your child needs to self isolate/quarantine at home for 14 days, however they can end self isolation/quarantine early, if the COVID 19 test they take on day 5 has a “not detected’’ result. (Note: Quarantine is a legal term which is used by the government to describe the obligation for persons who have returned to Ireland, to either (a) stay at home and self-isolate from others if they have returned from a non-designated state, or (b) to isolate in a mandatory quarantine hotel if they have returned from a designated state.) Parents will not be required to pay fees for this isolation period.

If a child becomes ill at the service parents will be contacted so that the child can be taken home. If, for some reason, the parent cannot collect they should organise an authorised adult to collect their child.

A doctor’s certificate may be required for certain conditions to ensure they are no longer contagious before children return to the service.

Children should remain at home if they are suffering from general diarrhoea or vomiting until 48 hours after being symptom free.

Exclusion guidelines as recommended by the Health Service Executive apply in the case of all suspected infectious conditions which are available in the full policy on the website

Head Lice

It is always possible to catch head lice no matter how careful we are. Children can pick up head lice just by coming in close contact with a child who is infected. It is the policy of The Willow Tree Children’s Centre to notify our parents so you can take responsibility to treat it immediately. If your child is infected you will be asked to refrain from bringing your child to the service until it is cleared.

***TIP****: mix a few drops of tee tree oil in water and spray into hair daily to prevent catching them!!*

Immunisations

We respect parent’s right to choose immunisation for their child and understand that not all children will be immunised who attend the service. However, children in groups are prone to picking up infections and it can spread quickly, therefore, we encourage parents to immunise to give their child protection from disease as well as protecting others around them. The service is legally obliged to keep a record of all children’s immunisations and asks parents to note all immunisations before the child starts: • Name, date of birth; • Age at which immunisation is due and date given; • Date vaccination record was sighted; • Where/ by whom it was given; • Whether the child is up to date with immunisations; • If the child has not been immunised, the reasons why, e.g. parental choice/ underlying medical condition. The service will keep a record of children who have not received immunisation. Should there be an infectious outbreak all parents and staff will be notified in writing and, where necessary, verbally. It is the responsibility of the family to keep the service up to date with the child’s immunisations. All staff members should be fully immunised.

Medication

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre is committed to supporting each pre-school and school aged child’s health and well-being. The Willow Tree Children’s Centre will work in consultation with parents/guardians to ensure the safe storage and administration of medication if:

• a child is taking prescribed medication, with the prior written permission of their parent(s) or guardian(s)

• a child is taking non-prescribed medication, with the prior written permission of their parent(s) or guardian (s)

• a child becomes unwell while attending the setting and, only with the prior written permission of their parent(s) or guardian(s), is given pain relief or temperature reducing medication.

It is the duty of parents to inform The Willow Tree Children’s Centre of any medical needs that their pre-school or school aged child has. The medical history of each child will be sought when a child begins in the service. This will be updated as needed.

Medications that need to be administered while the child is attending The Willow Tree Children’s Centre are only administered (or the self-administration of the school aged child as supervised), with the consent of parents.

Parents must complete a specific written consent on application form to authorise The Willow Tree Children’s Centre to administer medication to their child. These forms are available from the office and medication can only be administered once these forms are completed and returned.

Written parental permission for temperature reducing/anti-febrile medication administration in the event of a school aged child’s high temperature will be obtained on enrolment.

If a school aged child is permitted to self-administer their own medication, the parent must provide written details of the medication, what it is for and how often/when it is required.

**Please read our full Policy on Administration of Medication available on our website.**

Sunscreen

We provide Garnier Ambre Solaire Kids SPF 50. If your child has special sun cream, we do not require consent, we ask that you provide us with the cream which will be labelled with the child’s name and is only used for that child.

Outings

Outings are planned to provide new, varied, exciting and interesting learning and development experiences for the children.

Thorough risk assessments are carried out prior to all outings/excursions and adequate insurance cover for the outing, including transportation, is provided for. Adequate and appropriate precautions are taken to prevent accidents, incidents or infection.

The safety and welfare of the child will always be the first consideration if a child is injured or an accident or incident occurs, and parents and guardians will always be kept fully informed.

Parents/guardians will be provided with advance notice of each outing with details of the date, destination, leaving and return times, cost and transport arrangements.

Only a parent or legal guardian can give consent for their child. Signed consent forms will be retained in the service in accordance with data protection requirements. For a regular outing, the written consent will be obtained once at the beginning of the year on the application form.

All children will be safely and appropriately supervised while on the outing.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we provide a high quality service which ensures that all children, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, disability and social circumstances, feels safe, welcomed, respected and valued. We recognise and respect the rights of all adults and children in our service. We 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 learner within an inclusive ethos/culture (as far as resources allow within the context of the service provided). We aim to actively promote equality of access and participation and eliminate discrimination. Our full policy represents the agreed principles and commitment for inclusion, in line with Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Charter, the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2012, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 29 & 30), the Disability Act 2005 and the EPSEN Act 2004.

Observation / Record Keeping and Assessment

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre recognises that observation is a useful tool, which enables the assessment of a number of aspects of the early years setting that are directly relevant to the planning of the curriculum. In order to plan, prepare and organise for good quality care, adults need to observe children, review and evaluate the curriculum regularly and maintain systematic records.

By observing how children respond to activities, staff will be able to evaluate if the activities and resources they have provided meet the needs of all the children and helps them to plan a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum. Observations also enable staff to provide challenges and extensions so that each child is able to progress. All observations / records / assessments will be treated with confidentiality. Sharing observations with parents/carers strengthens the partnership between the home and the service, giving understanding and information and allowing staff and parents/carers to do their best for each child. Your children’s records are available to view upon request.

The Early Years (Preschool) Inspectorate has access to files for inspection purposes.

Records are stored in compliance with 2016 Child Care Regulations and all records are managed in line with the service Data Protection Policy.

Where there are child protection or welfare concerns, observations/records will be kept on an ongoing basis and information shared with the Child and Family Agency as appropriate. It is important to note where these will be recorded and stored.

Use of Photographs and Recordings

We occasionally take photographs or recordings as a means of assessment of the children and these may be displayed within the service or sent privately to parents through WhatsApp. **Please Note: Photographs and videos with identifying features of children will NOT be posted on social networking sites.**

We ask you to sign the photo consent form alongside this handbook. If you do not want your child’s photo to be taken, please let us know.

 Parents are only permitted to take photos or video record their own child at the discretion of the Manager

Social Media

Parents and children must **not** post any photos or videos containing other children, parents or staff of the playschool onto social networking sites as it may cause offence. We use WhatsApp, ChildPaths and Facebook to share notifications with parents. Please sign permission at the back of the handbook and return to us.

At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre we use social media – Facebook as an additional tool for communication with parents and families. Social media is only used to provide generic updates on camp enrolments; ecce places; awards. In accordance with our safeguarding statement, access to social networking sites is **not** permitted such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter; gaming sites and virtual worlds such as Club Penguin, Moshi Monsters and the Sims; video sharing sites such as YouTube; and blogging sites such as Tumblr.

Outdoor Play

At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we balance adult-led structured, child-led and unstructured activities. A strong emphasis is placed on the importance of children's play as a critical factor in children’s wellbeing, learning and development. We value outdoor play and connection to nature in this curriculum, which is also linked to spiritual development, natural places instil a sense of timelessness in humans and feelings of connectedness to community. We utilise place-based education as a large part of our everyday rhythm where the local environment is utilised as a rich resource for learning and intellectual development - engaging children’s interests, planning and teaching core subjects such as languages, mathematics, social studies, science and appreciation of nature. There is an emphasis on hands-on, real-life experience, stewardship and engaging as active, contributing citizens. This is evident through the nature art, festivals and expeditions to the village, canal and beach. This is intricately woven into their identity, their understanding of their heritage and their sense of belonging to their community, again echoing the principles of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.

Fundraising

We are registered as Blennerville Community Playgroup Limited by Guarantee. This means we are a not-for-profit organisation with all monies going directly back into the service for the benefit of the children. As you may know, we are working towards building a second premises back in Blennerville village. We are in urgent need of a **fundraising committee**, as fundraising is vital to our survival so we would greatly appreciate any support in this and if you have any ideas, we would love to hear from you.

Work Placement

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre is a supporter of education and training. We will endeavour to facilitate trainee childcare providers where possible. All trainees/ work placement students will be Garda vetted, referenced and covered by insurance.

Complaints Policy

At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we are committed to providing a playschool and afterschool service of the highest standard which provides the perfect environment for all children to develop their social, personal and education skills. We regularly evaluate our services in order to ensure this and to monitor the standard of our performance.

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.

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre are committed 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 The Willow Tree Children’s Centre 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.

The complaints procedure is kept as simple as possible. Anyone making a complaint will be supported through the process as needed and given a copy of the ‘Complaints Policy and Procedures’.

**Please read our full Complaints Policy with attached Complaints Form available on our website.**

Withdrawal from the Service

We require you to give at least one months' notice if withdrawing your child from the service. This notice must be given in writing. Parents who are in a position to give longer notice this is greatly appreciated. We retain the right to receive full payment during the notice period whether the child attends or not.

Policies

All our full policies are available on our website, [www.blennervilleplayschool.com](http://www.blennervilleplayschool.com), for you to read. Please sign the attached consent form to adhere to the policies and procedures of The Willow Tree Children’s Centre service before your child starts at our service. Thank you for your co-operation.