**The Willow Tree Children’s Centre**

**Outings Policy**

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.

Part of our planning process involves ensuring that outings are appropriate for the age and level of development of participating children.

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.

Parent/guardian or carer support on the day of the outing or excursion is welcomed but volunteers will not be allowed to supervise any children (other than their own children) unless accompanied by at least one member of staff.

The ratio of children to adults will be based on the risk assessment.

Different types of outings take place. Each may require slightly different preparations and staffing levels.

These include:

* + Trips on foot, for example - visits to the beach, the park, the canal, bird hide or the local shop.
  + Trips requiring transport to places like museums, open farms, and so on.

When transport is needed, all necessary steps are taken to ensure that children will be transported safely with appropriate use of car seats and seat belts.

Parents and guardians can decline any offer for their children to be involved in any planned outings. If this happens, alternative arrangements are made for their child. Children who do not have parent or guardian consent to go on an outing will be supported to make sure they do not feel excluded.

Procedures & Practices

**Consent**

Parents or guardians must have given written authorisation for their child to be involved in an outing. Parents will be notified through WhatsApp notifications providing full details of the date, proposed destination, method of transport and planned activities.

Parents or guardians must also be notified in advance about what type of clothing will be suitable for their child to wear, and also whether they will need to provide items such as spare clothing, sunscreen, a packed lunch and drinks.

Staff can only plan outings with the knowledge and consent of management.

Written plans of the outing, including the risk assessment, must be presented to managementin advance of the proposed outing.

**Insurance**

Organised outings are covered under our Insurance policy as long as ratio guidelines are adhered to.

**Safety considerations and risk assessment**

The person in charge of the outing must have the ability to implement safety procedures – this includes taking all appropriate steps to ensure that children are transported safely.

In all cases, a risk assessment must be done to assess how many members of staff are needed to accompany children on outings.

An exploratory visit is to be carried out by appropriately qualified staff members, to assess the suitability of the destination/venue. A risk assessment must be carried out before an outing takes place.

The risk assessment must identify and assess the risks a particular outing may pose to the safety, health or wellbeing of any child being taken on the outing and specify how the identified risks will be managed and minimised.

It is important to be aware of any possible risks and any necessary precautions involved for a particular location and for particular types of weather.

Consider:

* The route and destination
* The type of activities
* The weather forecast – consider the need for sunscreen and/or raingear and wellies, suitable footwear (not sandals)
* The proposed duration
* The transport to and from the proposed destination for the outing
* The number of adults and children involved in the outing
* The number of staff and other responsible adults needed to provide supervision and any specialised skills are required
* The items that should be taken
* Safety notices at the destination, such as signs and flags
* Hand washing requirements
* Children’s allergies, including food hypersensitivities
* Additional needs of any child
* Water hazards
* Any risks associated with water-based activities.

Age-appropriate guidance, rules, advice of boundaries and warnings should be given to the children. We encourage risk management as an important skill to develop so we encourage the children to watch out for hazards and take care of each other.

Discuss hygiene issues with all children and volunteer helpers (especially on farm visits).

**Supervision of children**

The childrenmust, at all times, be appropriately supervised to ensure no child gets lost and that there is no unauthorised access to children.

Particular care must be taken when supervising children at pick up and drop off.

**Prior to any outing**, staff members should decide who will help to search, how the search will be carried out and who will take charge of the rest of the group of children should a child go missing.

**It is essential to call or mark names in a roll call**, with a name-to-face check rather than count heads. To ensure that all children are accounted for, this procedure should be followed:

* On leaving the service
* On arrival at the destination
* At regular intervals while at the destination
* When moving from area to area – including going indoors or outdoors
* Leaving the destination
* On return to the service.

**Items to be taken, by the person in charge, on the outing:**

* The service’s fully charged mobile phone (with easily accessible emergency contact numbers) must be taken by the person in charge of the outing on all outings.
* Personal Mobile phone fully charged.
* The First Aid kit and medications for the children who need them on the day must also be taken (see Medications Policy for more detail). Emergency medications or supplies as specified in any of the children’s Individual Care Plans. All medications must be in their proper original container with pharmacist’s instructions included. Medications that normally require refrigeration must be carried in a cool pack.
* The Record of Attendance and the children’s next of kin emergency contact information (i.e. parent(s)/guardian(s) home, work and mobile numbers).
* Individual Care Plans for children who have them.
* A list of emergency service contacts.
* A Critical Incident Plan, where appropriate.
* Some spare clothes if necessary.

There must be at least one holder of a current First Aid certificate present at all times.

**Food and drinks**

Where food and drinks are brought on the outing, food safety guidelines must be followed.

Children must have their hands cleaned before eating.

Children must have access to drinking water and be kept well hydrated during all outings.

**Transport**

When transport is needed for any outing, the staff member in charge of the outing must ensure that:

* Car seats are provided and are appropriate to the age and height of each child being transported, in line with S.I. No. 240 of 2006, European Communities.
* Drivers are appropriately vetted by the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána where applicable.
* There is safe supervision of children during transport, and getting in and out of vehicles.
* Children are never left alone inside a vehicle, even when the engine is turned off.
* Car keys are never left in the ignition when getting out of the car and car keys are kept in a safe place, out of reach of children.
* Where required, a vehicle is equipped with a ramp or hydraulic lift to allow entry and exit.
* Records are kept of the vehicles used to transport children, with named drivers and appropriate insurance cover in accordance with data protection requirements.

Clear detailed contingency plans must be made in advance for an unavoidable late return.

**Accidents, incidents or injuries**

If there is an accident involving a child, a member of staff, or an accompanying adult or a child goes missing on the outing or is left behind, the staff member in charge of the outing must make sure that:

* The previously agreed search procedure is followed if necessary.
* The pre-assigned members of staff take the other children back to the service.
* The member of staff with up to date First Aid training administers First Aid if necessary.
* They take charge of all necessary communications with emergency services and with the parents/guardians of the child/children concerned.
* The registered provider or service manager is contacted immediately.
* On return the occurrence is recorded as an incident on the Incident Report Form.

**Communication of Policy**

This policy must be observed by all managers and all staff members. All staff members will receive induction training on this Outings policy.

All parents/guardians are to be informed of this policy. Staff members will check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy will be included in the Parent/Guardian Handbook and the full policy is available on the website www.blennerville.playschool.com

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/guardians upon request.

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

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

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of Pre-school and school-age Services) Regulations 2018.

This policy was reviewed and adopted by The Willow Tree Children’s Centre on 1st January 2024.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of Management

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