**The Willow Tree Children’s Centre**

**Use of Internet, Photographic and Recording Devices Policy**

*At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we* use the internet, photographic and recording devices to support the provision of a quality service for children and families.

Parents/guardians are fully informed where technology is used as part of the curriculum or programme and how the internet is used as a learning tool within the service.

A Parent/Guardian Consent Formis provided by the service in the handbook and must be completed and signed before any child can access the internet or has their photo or video taken or posted anywhere.

Photography and recording of children will only take place

* When at least one other adult is present
* When the child or group of children agrees to be photographed.

Digital equipment remains in the service at all times and is stored securely when not in use.

Images in hard copy are returned to parents and images are deleted from digital records when children leave the service in accordance with GDPR requirements.

Photography and recording of children while they are in the service by any parent must only be with the consent of management and other parents.

All use of the internet, photographic and recording devices will be considered within our risk assessment process.

We do our best to ensure that all parents have the same level of access to information shared about their child’s learning and development while in the service.

Images and recordings are stored safely and appropriately returned to parents and/or disposed of/deleted when no longer needed for the purpose for which they were taken.

We request that photos or images taken of children while attending the setting are not posted elsewhere by others without the consent of parents/guardians.

Non-staff photographers are never allowed to have unsupervised access to children.

Procedures & Practices

Access to the internet by children

*Preschool children have access to the internet alongside an adult for learning purposes.*

*School-age children may be allowed access to internet on the ipad or smart tv but are always supervised, please see our Safeguarding Statement for further information. The purpose of this access should be either educational or recreational.*

*Please see Safeguarding Statement for suitability of software, online filters, online safety etc.*

**Use of photographic and recording devices in the service**

The Willow Tree Children’s Centre recognise 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. We occasionally take photographs or recordings as 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.**

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.

If you do not want your child’s photo to be taken please let us know. The photo consent form will be forwarded to you at the beginning of the year. The completed Parent/Guardian Consent Forms must be retained on the child’s individual file.

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

Typically we use photographic or recording devices:

* *To document children’s learning and development.*
* *To communicate with families.*
* *To record evidence in the event of an accident/incident involving a child.*
* *For security, for example, closed circuit television monitoring of the service (CCTV).*
* *For safety, for example, group photograph on outings for speedy identification of individuals in the case of any incident.*
* *To support quality assurance, for example, in the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme.*
* *Local news or online social media, for example, local newspaper, Facebook etc].*

**Children’s agreement**

Where possible, in addition to parents’ consent, children’s verbal agreement is obtained to:

* Take their photograph.
* Record or use their voice and/or activity.
* Display or share their photos or recordings.

#### Use of personal devices in the service

* Personal ‘smart’ devices, such as phones or tablets, will not be used in the presence of children and will be switched off during working hours, except at break time in designated areas. The work phone and ipad are exceptions to this.
* Staff members will not take any images, video/audio recording of children or families at the service, on their personal devices.
* Children are not allowed to bring personal ‘smart’ devices, such as phones or tablets to the service.
* When visiting the service, parents or other visitors may not use personal ‘smart’ devices, such as phones or tablets, to take photos or videos or engage with children other than their own child.

**Additional safeguards**

* Appropriate filters are applied to all equipment used by children.
* Computers used by children are located in an open space with the monitor clearly visible.
* Children’s names must not be used in photograph captions.
* Photography and recording including, closed circuit television is not undertaken in areas where children change their clothes, toilet, or have their clothes and/or nappy changed.
* Only images of children in suitable clothing are to be taken to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. (Some activities, for example swimming and drama, present a much greater risk of potential misuse.)

**Use of CCTV**

* That CCTV use will be in compliance with Data Protection requirements.

**Storing images and recordings securely**

* Images or video recordings of children must be kept securely. Hard copies of images must be kept in the locked cabinet in the classroom and electronic images stored in a protected folder with restricted/password protected access.
* Images and recordings will be retained with the child’s individual file.
* Images must not be stored on unencrypted portable equipment such as laptops, memory sticks and mobile phones.
* Personal equipment must not be used to store photos and recordings of children, and only cameras or devices belonging to the service should be used.
* Digital equipment must remain within the service at all times (this includes appropriate use on outings) and be stored securely when not in use.

**Communication Plan [For staff & families]**

All parents/guardians are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding the use of Internet, Photographic and Recording Devices on enrolment. 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. When a complaint is received, the person making the complaint will be given a copy of this Policy and Procedures.

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 must be observed by management and all staff members.

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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