

BALLYGAWLEY EARLY YEARS
PARENT HANDBOOK
2026 - 2027

Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup, Fairfield House, Playing Fields, Ballygawley,
County Tyrone BT70 2HD.

Tel: 028 85567411 Email: ballygawleyearlyyears@hotmail.com

www.ballygawleyearlyyears.co.uk

Aim of Playgroup

We aim to provide a safe, happy and stimulating environment, which promotes a child's physical, intellectual, linguistic, emotional and social development.

Visiting the Playgroup

You and your child will be invited to the Playgroup on Monday 2nd June for an open evening. They will get the opportunity to meet all the staff and other children; and have time to explore all of the play areas.

Starting Playgroup

The First Days

A child who is tense or unhappy will not be able to play or settle properly, so it is important for parents and staff to work together to help the child feel confident and secure in the group. This takes longer for some children than for others and parents should not feel worried if their child takes a while to settle. We try to smooth the path from home to school. During the first week, children are admitted in a smaller group than that of normal term time to ensure each child has settled reasonably well. This means that children will not all start Playgroup on the same day. You will receive an induction timetable for your child's first week.

What to Wear

The Playgroup uniform gives the children a sense of identity within the Playgroup. The uniform is:

- Red Playgroup jumper
- Yellow polo shirt
- Leggings / Jogging bottoms
- Practical Shoes

The Playgroup uniform can be purchased in Daisy Lane Boutique on the main street in Aghnacloy. Children should wear trousers and shoes that they can independently take on and off themselves, without being too dependent on other people's help. Children should bring in a raincoat at the start of the year, to allow them to access the outdoor area all year round.

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Change of Clothes

All children are required to bring a change of clothes with them to Playgroup. This includes: underwear, socks, trousers and a top. These clothes should be placed in the child's Ballygawley Playgroup School bag which parents will receive during the parents' information evening. The School bag will then remain at the playgroup until if/when the clothes need to be brought home to be replenished.

PLEASE ENSURE ALL CLOTHING IS NAMED

Playgroup Sessions and Times

There are two sessions in our Playgroup which operate 5 days a week:

- Morning Session 9.00-11.30am
- Afternoon Session 12.30-3.00pm

Holiday Arrangements

We endeavour to ensure that holiday dates are similar to the local primary schools. Parents will be advised of holidays and closures at the start of the term.

Toys

We advise that all personal toys, dummies, blankets etc are left at home.

Monthly Newsletter

The Playgroup Leader will endeavour to produce a monthly newsletter which includes relevant and up-to-date news regarding the Playgroup.

Your Child's Progress

Please feel free to chat to your child's key worker or the Playgroup Leader at any time about any concerns you may have about your child. One face to face meeting will be arranged each year to discuss your child's progress and development, however this can be completed via telephone call if preferred. Staff will also complete written reports which will be given to parents three times during the academic year (October, January and June)

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Special Needs

The number of adults present in the Playgroup enables us to provide individual attention for each child. Each child will be able to progress at his/her own rate in all areas of development, and this is true for children with and without disabilities or learning difficulties. We are experienced in working closely with professionals across the range of special needs and will make provisions for inclusion for everyone as much as possible. If you would like to discuss the group's ability to meet your own child's special needs, please talk to the Playgroup Leader. Our Special Needs Policy is available on request.

Expectations

Whilst we understand and will support the varying capabilities of each child, we do expect children beginning playgroup in September to be able to do the following:

- Wear pants, be able to use the toilet and attempt to wipe themselves.
- Drink out of a cup without a lid
- Leave dummy at home
- Attempt to blow their nose and use a paper tissue
- Attempt to put on their coat
- Take off their own shoes
- Try to put on wellington boots
- Pull up their trousers/leggings

Daily Routine

Children's Arrival

Children hang up their coats and leave their belongings in the main entrance hall and are greeted by a member of staff at the door.

Greeting Time

During Greeting Time, the staff will complete a roll call and the children will count the number of children present. The group will then discuss what plans are in place for that day, weekly topics, new resources etc.

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Planning Time

Children plan where they want to play at work time, with their key worker*, e.g. "I'm going to play at the sand and painting area today."

Work Time

Children play with their peers at the different play areas.

Tidy-Up Time

All children and adults work together to tidy up all the toys.

Recall Time

Children talk to their key worker about the play areas they played at during 'work time.'

Wash hands/jobs

All children wash hands before having their break. Each key worker will organise break jobs for each child, e.g. collecting the cups, knives etc.

Break time

Children sit in their groups with their key worker for break. All children are encouraged to practice self-help skills, i.e. pouring their own drink, buttering their bread.

Outside Time

Children are free to engage in vigorous and noisy play, challenge their physical capabilities, and experience nature with all of their senses.

Group Time

All children join together for large group time, i.e. story, songs, rhymes etc.

Home time

All children are prepared for home and wait until parents/carers arrive.

It is important to have a daily routine in place as:

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- Children feel a sense of security and control
- Supports initiative
- Provides social community
- Provides a framework for adults to observe and plan

*Each child is allocated a key worker. This is simply one member of staff who they work closely with.

Social Media and the Internet

We use our social media pages and website as a means of communication and to showcase the great work that the children do. You will be asked for your permission for us to post pictures of your child on these. Parents and carers should not use social media to contact staff with school related matters. All queries should be via telephone or email.

Curriculum

Ballygawley Early Years follows the CCEA Curricular Guidance for Pre-school Education. This curriculum is carefully planned into 6 key learning areas; Personal, Social and Emotional development, World Around Us, Language, Early Numeracy, Physical Development Skills and the Arts. These are delivered through play based activities that aim to develop your child and provide a solid foundation for their future learning. The full curriculum and its learning outcomes are available for all parents to read at www.ccea.org.uk A link can also be found on our website www.ballygawleyearlyyears.co.uk

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Staffing

Staff are well qualified and experienced in childcare and Early Years practice. Their roles are the Playgroup Leader, Deputy Leader and Playgroup Assistant. Below is some information on our current leaders and deputy leader of the playgroup. There are also a number of playgroup assistants who support these leaders daily.

Playgroup Leader (Shared Role) : Gillian Robinson



Qualifications

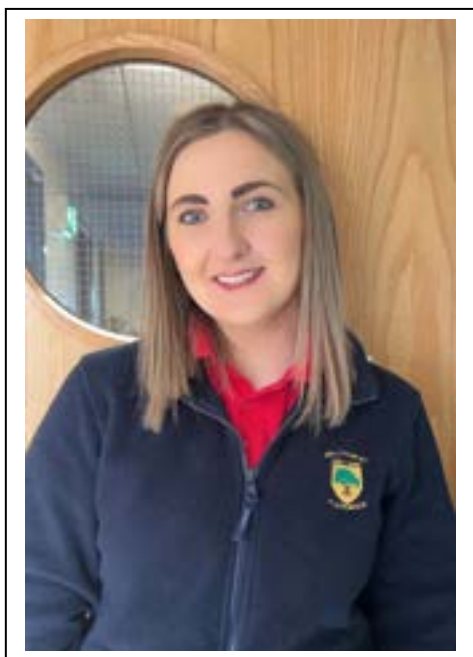
- City & Guilds Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for children's care, learning and Development.
- Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education
- Level 3 Award in Working with Children and Young People with Special Needs
- Level 3 Award in Autism
- Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene
- Award in Encouraging Language Development in Early Childhood settings
- Pediatric First Aid
- Designated Pediatric First Aid
- Training on CPR, defibrillation, recovery position, asthma, anaphylaxis and choking
- Anaphylaxis and Epi Pen training
- Child Protection
- Designated Child Protection

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Playgroup Leader (Shared Role) : Jade Parker



Qualifications

- Level 5 Diploma in Children's Care, Leadership and Management
- Level 2 in Children's Care, Learning and Development
- Level 3 Diploma in Children's Care
- Paediatric First Aid
- Food Hygiene
- Food Safety
- Food Allergen and Safety Awareness
- Child Protection
- Designated Child Protection Officer

Playgroup Deputy Leader: Rachel Pike



Qualifications

- BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development
- Currently working towards Level 5 Diploma in Children's Care, Leadership and Development.
- Level 3 Special Educational Needs
- Paediatric First Aid
- Designated Child Protection Officer
- Food Hygiene
- Health and Safety
- Manual Handling

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In addition to the above permanent staff members, we also have some volunteers who help us out with staff training days and staff sickness. All volunteers are fully vetted before entering our setting.

If you would be interested in becoming a volunteer, please speak to the Playgroup Leader for more information.

Management

Our Playgroup is run by a Management Committee made up of parents /guardians. We simply cannot operate without the support of our committee and parents/guardians. Throughout the year, the committee are responsible for reviewing both policy and practice, for the employment of staff, fundraising and dealing with issues that arise. However, the day to day running of the setting is left in the hands of the professionals.

Our committee is always in need of more help, whether you can give a day to fundraise or can take up a more permanent post on the committee, we would love to have your help. We have our Annual General Meeting each year and encourage all parents/guardians interested in helping out to attend. Dates of this meeting will be forwarded to parents/guardians nearer the time.

Fees and Break Money

All children are required to pay a £40 registration fee at the beginning of the year, plus an optional additional fee of £5 for their school bag if you wish to purchase one. Total: £45

For children allocated a free place:

(As per the Pre-school Education Group) (PEAGS)

If your child has been allocated a PEAGS/free place, you are required to pay a £20.00 break fee each month. Break money not only covers the cost of food, but also cleaning essentials such as toilet roll, hand wash and paper towels. The break fee can be paid on a monthly basis on the first week of every month or can be paid by term.

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If your child is allocated a 'free place' and you do not avail of the full five-day week, an additional fee will be payable at the discretion of the committee. This is due to a loss of core funding from the Education Board. It is vital that your child attends five days a week, as it helps the child's overall development.

Each child's attendance at the Playgroup is conditional upon continued payment of any necessary fees.

All fees and break money should be placed in a sealed envelope with your child's name, amount of money and the date clearly written on the front of it. This is to avoid any confusion for staff.

Fundraising

Ballygawley Early Years are a non-profit making, registered charity. In order for the playgroup to offer the best services possible for your child, we hold fundraising events throughout the year. Whilst these are not compulsory to partake in, we greatly appreciate all efforts made during these campaigns to raise money for the playgroup.

Food

A snack will be provided to all children each day. We ask that children do not bring any food with them to playgroup. This is to ensure a safe environment for everyone, especially those with allergies. If you would like to discuss the food on offer or if you have any suggestions for this, please contact a member of staff.

List of Snack foods offered throughout the year:

Variety of fruits and vegetables, variety of breads, meats such as chicken, ham and tuna, beans, spaghetti, cheese, yoghurt, milk and water.

Refreshments: Water is available for children throughout the session.

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Special dietary requirements: should your child have any special dietary requirements, please inform the Playgroup Leader._

Pick-Up and Drop Off

It is important for the safety of the children and also to ensure a quick and smooth drop off and collection, that the following procedures are adhered to:

Drop Off - Please use the car park spacing provided and escort child safely to the building. Line up at the door where you will be greeted by a staff member at the door. Each child will enter the preschool one by one on a 'first come first served' basis.

Collection - Please use the car park spacing provided and line up at the door where the children will exit the preschool one by one on a 'first come first served' basis. Then safely escort your child to your parked car.

Policies

The Playgroup has a range of policies which are available for you to read, and which can be found on the Playgroup web site www.ballygawleyearlyyears.co.uk. or in the Policies file in the entrance hall. Parents/guardians are asked to sign that they have read each of these policies and return the signed form to the Playgroup. These policies are designed to offer the best possible care and experiences for the children, families, staff, volunteers and Management Committee. If you require a copy, please ask.

List of Playgroup Policies:

1. Absence of the Leader Policy
2. Additional and Special Needs Policy
3. Admissions Policy
4. Adverse Conditions / Winter Policy
5. Allegations Against a Staff Member Policy
6. Anti-Bullying Policy
7. Break Policy
8. CCTV Policy
9. Child Arrival & Collection Policy

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10. Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy
11. Confidentiality and Clients Access to Records Policy
12. Consent for Observations Policy
13. Consent Policy
14. Daily Routine Policy
15. Data Management Policy (including Privacy Notice)
16. Emergency Plan Policy
17. Equal Opportunities Policy
18. Fire Drill and Fire Safety Policy
19. First Aid Policy
20. Food and Drink Policy
21. Handling Animals Policy
22. Health and Safety Policy
23. ICT (including E-Safety and Social Networking) Policy
24. Infection Prevention and Control Policy
25. Intimate and Personal Care (including Nappy Change) Policy
26. Lost Jumper Policy
27. Maintenance and Replacement of Play Equipment Policy
28. Management of Medicines Policy
29. Management of Records Policy
30. Management of Risks Associated with the Care of Individual Service Users
31. Menu Planning and Healthy Eating Policy
32. Mission Statement
33. Mobile Phone Policy
34. Outings Policy
35. Part Time Places & Fees Policy
36. Participation & Partnership with Parents Policy
37. Photography and Videography Policy
38. Play Policy
39. Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
40. Recording, Reporting of Accidents and Untoward / Adverse Incidents Policy (includes HSE and RIDDOR Reporting)
41. Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy

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42. Security Policy
43. Settling-in Policy
44. Sickness Exclusion Policy
45. Smoking, Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy
46. Statement of Purpose
47. Sun Care Policy
48. Transport Policy
49. Unwanted Adult Visitor Policy
50. Whistleblowing Policy

The policies are reviewed regularly by the Management Committee, in line with current legislation, through feedback from children, families, social services and our Early Years advisor.

Consent / Policies

At the beginning of each school year, we ask for information from parents and consent/authorisation linked to the policies/procedures listed below:

- Additional and Special Needs
- Management of Medicines
- Break Fee
- Child Arrival and Collection
- Consent for Observations
- First Aid
- Handling Animals
- Lost Jumpers
- Anti-Bullying
- Promoting Positive Behaviour
- Photography and Videography
- Intimate and Personal Care (including nappy change)
- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection
- Whistle Blowing
- Sickness Exclusion

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- Sun Care
- Transportation

All parents/guardians are advised to read each of the policies mentioned above on the Playgroup website and complete the authorisation form provided.

A hard copy of all the policies is available for any parent/guardian on request. We also encourage parents/guardians to discuss any issues that they are concerned about with the Leader or the Deputy Leader, before giving consent.

Parents/guardians may reserve the right to refuse or accept any of the policies mentioned above on their child's behalf. We also recognise that consent may be withdrawn through the year, in this case we ask the parent/guardian to provide a written letter of retraction of consent to Playgroup Leader.

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