



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

Additional and Special Needs Policy.

SECTION 1

General Information

Introduction

Ballygawley Early Years promotes the development and education of all children under statutory school age in a parent involving, community based group. Our setting promotes an inclusive ethos, where all children are offered access to a broad, balanced and curricular-led experience. At Ballygawley Early Years, we believe that every child is entitled to develop to their full potential while being educated alongside their peers, and we provide educational experiences which celebrate the achievement of every child and nurture their unique individuality. This is reflected in the relationships each child develops with their own personal key worker, and with all of the staff in our setting. We work in partnership with parents to minimize barriers to learning.

Aims and Objectives:

- It is our aim to have regard for the Code of Practice (See Appendix 1) on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs.
- To ensure that all provision is accessible by all children including those with special needs.
- Regularly monitor, evaluate and review our SEN provision.
- To provide the necessary support to ensure that all children have access to the same quality of play and learning experience.
- To support and promote the development potential of each child within the Playgroup.
- To develop a partnership with the parents/guardians of all the children attending the Playgroup, whose role as their child's first educator is greatly valued.
- To provide ongoing feedback to parents/guardians regarding their child's progress whilst attending the Playgroup.
- To ensure each child within the Playgroup experiences integration fully and completely i.e. physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually.
- To take reasonable steps to ensure that a child's inclusion is compatible with the efficient education of other children
- To liaise with other professionals to help us effectively meet the needs of children with difficulties.
- To provide the resources necessary to support children with SEN, including adapting



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

the environment and activities to meet individual needs - subject to funding.

Definitions of SEN and Disability:

Definition of SEN

The term 'Special Educational Need' is defined in legislation as **'a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made.'**

A child has a learning difficulty if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of their age, and/or has a disability which either prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities generally provided for children of their age in ordinary schools.

(Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs 1998: Par1.4)

Definition of Disability

'Someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

(Part 1 of Disability Discrimination Act 1995)

Management of SEN within the Policy

Committee

The committee of BEY will co-operate with the Leader to:

- Determine the SEN policy and approach
- Establish appropriate staffing and funding arrangements
- Maintain a general oversight of the playgroup's work in relation to SEN
- Ensure all relevant legislation is upheld

Playgroup Leader as the SENCo

An AENCo (Additional Educational Needs Co-ordinator) or SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) will be identified within the setting and they will have responsibility for the co-ordination of provision, supporting other staff, liaising with parents/guardians and external agencies, maintaining a SEN register and ensuring there is an effective additional needs and special needs policy. The current SENCo Leader's picture is displayed in the Hallway.



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

The SENCo will:

- Take responsibility for the day to day operation of the playgroup's SEN policy
- Keep the SEN policy under regular review
- Co-ordinate SEN/Disability provision through planning and delivery
- Maintain the SEN/Disability register and the records on children with SEN/Disability.
- Liaise with parents of children with SEN/Disability.
- Liaise with external agencies when required.
- Respond to requests for advice from other staff within the setting.
- Ensure appropriate training is undertaken by staff in order to support the needs of individual children with SEN/Disability.
- Report regularly to the Committee regarding SEN matters within the setting.

Staff

The Playgroup operates a key-worker system enabling staff to identify individual needs and, where possible, work on a one to one basis. We also consult closely with parents/guardians during this process. We believe in implementing early intervention strategies when an additional/special need is identified.

Staff will work to provide the best possible support for children with SEN by:

- Providing nurturing support through the key worker system.
- Identifying barriers to learning early.
- Assessing the needs of the child and keeping careful records.
- Planning and implementing appropriate Individual Education plans (IEP).
- Monitoring and reviewing the child's progress.
- Seeking advice from professionals outside the setting in consultation with the parent/carer (s).
- Working in partnership with the parent/carer(s) and the child.
- Attending training and developing their SEN knowledge.
- Activate and share new learning with the team.

Children

Some children will begin Playgroup already having been identified as having additional/special need. Other children may only have their additional/special needs identified for the first time while attending the Playgroup. It is the aim of the Playgroup to have regard for the Code of Practice (see Appendix 1) on the identification and assessment of additional/special need.



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

We encourage our children to:

- Be active in their own learning.
- Build their individual sense of self-esteem and confidence.
- Express their thoughts, feelings and opinions in all matters relating to them.

Parents

Parents/guardians views and contributions are valued and we aim to foster a two-way communication to promote parental/guardian involvement.

All parents/guardians are advised to familiarise themselves with the additional needs and special needs policy at the start of the Playgroup year. Should you have any queries please ask a member of staff.

As a parent involving, community based group, we will:

- Foster an atmosphere in which partnership between parent/carer(s) and staff can flourish.
- Keep the parent/carer(s) at the heart of our SEN work, taking into account and respecting their wishes, feelings and knowledge in all matters regarding their child.
- Operate an open door policy for parent/carer(s) to discuss concerns and offer individual appointments which can be arranged with the Leader.
- Help parents to access the information we provide.
- Be sensitive to the needs of a parent/carer in understanding the processes and plans designed to support their child.
- Keep records of all meetings with parent/carer(s) when the child's progress is being discussed.
- Ensure parents have access to records concerning their child and contribute to the IEP process.
- Ensure parents have access to our SEN policy.

Others

As a community based group we encourage people from outside our setting to enrich the children's learning experience as part of our planned programme. All such visitors will be expected to have regard for this SEN policy as they interact within the setting.

Admissions:

Ballygawley Early Years is open to every family in the community. We aim to provide a



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

welcome and stimulating learning environment for all children. We operate an Equal Opportunities policy and our admission arrangements for children with SEN are consistent with the setting's general arrangements for all other children. Where a child has a statement of SEN we will work with other services and agencies regarding admission. Together we will take into account the wishes of the parent/carer(s), the suitability for the child and the provision for other children. This is in line with SENDO legislation.

Special facilities/Resources:

We have a good range of equipment to support the varied needs of children including; height adjustable sand and water trays, inside and outside sensory areas, tactile materials - sensory tiles/ cushions/ lights, sand timers, bubble timers, puppets, easy grip tweezers, emotion balls, light parachutes, a wide range of books exploring emotions and SEN, a visual routine and visual boundaries, a 'first and then' routine, thick handled pencils and paintbrushes, large play vehicles and construction, a range of musical instruments specifically tailored for children with SEN, and dress up clothes with velcro to promote independence.

Access

- Easy access within one level both indoors and outdoors
- Spacious playroom enabling easy access to all activities
- Quiet den area
- Neutral calming décor
- Access toilet
- Meeting area for consultation with parents and other professionals

Reference to other relevant policies

We have a range of other policies to support our work with children with SEN namely:

- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Promoting Positive Behavior Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy
- Confidentiality and Clients Access to Records Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Intimate and Personal Care (including Nappy Changing) Policy



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

- Management of Records Policy
- Outings Policy
- Menu Planning and Healthy Eating Policy
- Maintenance and Replacement of Play Equipment Policy
- Settling in Policy
- Consent for Observations Policy

Complaints procedures relating to SEN procedures

At Ballygawley Early Years our staff are always ready and willing to listen to and work with parents/carers through any concerns they might have about their child and their provision in our educational setting.

Parents may contact Jade Parker (Playgroup Leader) on 02885567411 or 07917485942 regarding any SEN comments, issues or complaints.

Alternatively Iona Devine, the Chairperson of the Committee is also available and may be contacted on 07590255634.

If email is preferred please email: ballygawleyearlyyears@hotmail.com

SECTION 2

Identification, provision, monitoring and evaluation of SEN procedures

Identification

We seek to identify children with SEN as early as possible through our professional judgment supported by our thorough observations and assessments. We also take into account information provided by parents and external agencies. Within our playgroup we work within the best practice guidance provided in the five stage approach outlined in *The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs*.

Provision at Stages 1-3 of the Code of Practice

Stage 1:

When staff identify a concern this is discussed initially with the SENCo. They then help gather information and assess the child's needs. Following this the SENCo will speak to the parent/carer(s) and share this concern, explaining how the concern is presenting and outline the support which will be put in place for the child. With parental permission the child's name is placed on the SEN register. This records the child's name, date of birth, type of SEN,



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

date and stage of support made available.

Stage 2:

The SENCo takes the lead responsibility for co-ordinating the child's SEN provision working in partnership with the staff team and family. We will seek parental permission to place the child's name on Stage 2 of the Code of Practice. An IEP is written and implemented detailing the provision of support being put in place. It is then monitored and reviewed. A decision is taken regarding the next level of support required to meet the need. The SENCo will ensure the child accesses an inclusive curriculum which also provides specific nurturing support.

Stage 3:

If required, Stage 3 support will be given following a Stage 2 review. The staff and the SENCo continue to work together providing support but take advice from external agencies supporting the child such as Speech and Language Therapy. With parental permission the child's name is registered as Stage 3 on the Code of Practice. Staff work to integrate components of these specialist programmes into daily learning opportunities they provide for the child, as part of the IEP process. Again, this is monitored and reviewed. A decision is taken regarding the next level of support required to meet need.

Provision at Stages 4 and 5 of the Code of Practice

Stage 4:

At this stage an application is considered for a statutory assessment and if appropriate a multi-disciplinary assessment is made. With parental permission, the child's name is registered as Stage 4 on the Code of Practice. The SENCo may be involved in supporting the information gathering process being undertaken. The SENCo ensures the optimum provision which can be given to meet the child's needs is maintained throughout the implementation of the Stage 4 IEP.

Stage 5:

At this stage, following assessment by The Educational Psychology Service, the need for a statement of Special Educational Needs is considered by the Board. If appropriate, a statement is given which details the additional support provision which is recommended for



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

the child. The setting will implement the recommendations, regularly monitoring and reviewing provision.

Record Keeping

SEN Information is personal to a child and their family, therefore it is treated with the utmost respect and confidentiality.

BEY SEN information contains the SEN register, current and previous IEP's for each child, copies of Statements of SEN and multi-agency reports.

We update our register as required. Additionally we keep records of any SEN staff audits we carry out, along with a record of training attended and how it was disseminated. Within this file we keep a record of external support services available. It is kept in a locked cupboard - with staff access only available to the current SENCo and Leader.

Monitoring Progress of children with SEN

We regularly monitor the IEP targets we set for children to ensure progression and carefully observe how they are working towards them. This helps inform our future planning for the child.

Evaluation of our procedures for SEN

As professionals, we consider the extent to which the quality of our provision for children with SEN has impacted positively on their learning and strive to address any identified aspects.

Professional Development and Partnerships

Professional Development

To give the best to our children, we need to be the best we can be as individuals and as teams. BEY strives for best practice in their provision for children with SEN through investment in staff development. The Management Committee in consultation with the Playgroup Leader ensure all staff receive the necessary training and opportunities to activate and share knowledge to effectively support children with SEN.

The new learning gained from staff development courses is both shared and then put into action, and the process is also monitored to ensure that the training is impactful in our setting.



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

Qualification and Experience of our staff

We have completed further training in:

- The Code of Practice
- Individual Education Plans
- Leadership and SENYS
- Supporting children with Transitions
- L1 and L2 ACEs Training
- Autism Awareness

Partnership Approach Statement:

The Additional/Special Educational Needs Coordinator within Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup (in conjunction and with the respective parents/guardians) will develop links with a variety of external agencies/professionals to ensure that all early intervention strategies are evidenced based and recommended/reviewed by the specialist in the area where the need/s have been identified. These include:

Health Visitors
Educational Psychologists
Physiotherapists
Speech & Language Therapists
Occupational Therapists
Southern Education Support Team
Social Workers
General Practitioners
Voluntary Agencies e.g. Autism NI, RNIB.

Links with other educational establishments and transition arrangements

When specific information relating to individual children needs to be forwarded to the receiving school the Leader will seek parental permission for copies of appropriate records to be shared. The Leader will meet the Year 1 teachers to help ensure a smooth and effective transition process.

The Management Committee will ensure that our SEN policy is implemented and assess its effectiveness. They will review this policy annually, taking into account relevant legislation.

This policy was adapted at a meeting of our playgroup held on the 1st September 2026.



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the management team to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

This policy was reviewed by the Ballygawley Early Years Management Committee on:

Date: 01/09/2026

Signed:
(on behalf of the Management Committee)

Name and Position: Iona Devine, Chairperson

Reviewed on:

Date: Signed: Position:

Date: Signed: Position:

Date: Signed: Position: