



# Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

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## **Infection Prevention and Control Policy (including COVID-19 Procedures)**

Ballygawley Early Years adheres to the Health Protection Agency's guidance "Infection Prevention and Control - Best Practice for Nurseries and Childcare Settings".

### **General Procedures:**

Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup is committed to ensuring that the setting is free from infection by having in place procedures relating to:

### **Good Respiratory & General Hygiene (see below for COVID-19 specific procedures)**

- Children and staff will be encouraged to cover their noses and mouths when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue when possible.
- Children and staff will dispose of used tissues promptly in the bins provided.
- Hard surfaces such as door handles will be cleaned frequently using normal cleaning products.
- Staff will ensure that adequate supplies of liquid soap, hot & cold water and paper towels are available at all times.
- Visitors to the Playgroup will also be encouraged to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene.
- Staff allocated to preparing snack will not be involved in assisting a child/children in toileting duties until snack time is complete.

### **Hand Hygiene**

- Children and Staff will be encouraged to wash hands especially before eating and after visiting the toilet.
- Sink soap dispensers and paper towel dispensers should be placed at a suitable height for children. Supervision appropriate to their stage of development to be provided to the children.
- Hands should be washed using warm water and liquid soap and dried using a disposable paper towel. The 7 steps of correct hand washing are illustrated and displayed at all sinks.
- Staff should do the following - wear sleeves above the elbow. If wearing long sleeves they should be rolled up to the elbows. Remove any hand or wrist jewellery with the exception of one plain band. Keep nails short and clean. False nails and nail varnish should not be worn. Keep cuts and abrasions



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covered with a waterproof dressing.

- For explicit guidance on when hands should be washed and how hands should be washed please see the illustrations displayed at all sinks.

As per Public Health Agency Guidance 05/2011

## **Food Hygiene**

- All staff who are involved in the preparation of food will have successfully completed the Basic Food Hygiene preparation course.
- Good respiratory and hand hygiene (see above) will be used prior to preparing and eating food. Staff who are employed specifically for the preparation and cooking of food should not be involved in cleaning duties in the nappy changing and toilet areas.
- The fridge is kept at the appropriate temperature and different foods are stored in separate containers.
- Food is purchased weekly and stored in the fridge as required. Fresh food is purchased whenever possible.
- All eating and food preparation utensils are washed and stored away daily after use.
- For further information on good food hygiene and keeping food safe, refer to [www.food.gov.uk/goodbusiness](http://www.food.gov.uk/goodbusiness).

## **Accidental Soiling/Assistance with Toileting**

- All staff will ensure that in the event of accidental soiling or assistance being provided with toileting, that they wear protective gloves and a disposable apron. All staff will wash their hands afterwards.
- All staff will also ensure that soiled clothing is double-bagged in a protective sealable bag, and kept away from the children until it can be given to the parent/guardian when the child is being collected.
- Explain to parents that washing the clothes in the setting can expose children and staff to microorganisms, which can cause infection.
- Advise parents that while receiving soiled clothes is unpleasant; this is Playgroup policy and protects the health of both children and staff.
- The toilets and toilet area (including sinks & washbasins & bins) will be cleaned at the end of every day by the Cleaner. However, should any spillages happen during a session staff will ensure that this is cleaned up immediately and the toilet area left suitable for use by the children at all times.



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## **Nappy changing**

- In the event that a child for a period requires assistance with toileting/nappy changing staff should wear a new disposable apron and pair of gloves for each change.
- The gloves and apron are removed immediately as soon as the task is complete. This assistance should be provided in the designated area.
- Soiled nappies should be disposed of in a plastic bag before being placed in the bin. The bin needs to be foot pedal operated, regularly emptied and placed in the appropriate waste collection area.
- Each child should have their own clothes, nappies, creams and lotions provided by the parent.
- Staff will ensure to always wash hands before and after offering assistance with toileting/nappy change.
- Staff will follow the hand hygiene guidance displayed at each sink area.

As per Public Health Agency Guidance 05/2011

## **Cleaning of Toys & Play Equipment**

- Ensure that all toys and play equipment in the childcare setting can be easily cleaned/decontaminated.
- Have a clear cleaning schedule in place explaining when and how toys and play equipment should be cleaned and who is responsible for cleaning.
- Refer to the manufacturer's instructions when cleaning toys and play equipment.
- Hands should be washed with soap and water before and after playing with sand, water and play dough.
- Water play area should be emptied after every use, cleaned with warm soapy water, disinfected and dried thoroughly.
- The sand tray should be covered when not in use, cleaned regularly and sand replaced at least every three months. Sand that spills on to the floor should be discarded and sand should be sieved regularly.
- Discourage children from putting shared toys into their mouths.
- Ensure hands are washed and skin lesions covered before and after, using play



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dough. Ideally, play dough should be prepared and discarded on the day of use.

As per Public Health Agency Guidance 05/2011

## Cleaning and Disinfection

- Ballygawley Early Years will have a written cleaning schedule detailing what has to be cleaned, when it has to be cleaned, how it has to be cleaned and who is responsible for cleaning.
- Carpeted areas and mats should be regularly vacuumed and periodically steam cleaned.
- Furniture should be maintained in a clean condition.
- To prevent cross-contamination, use separate cleaning equipment and materials for all areas e.g. play areas, toilets, kitchens.
- Mop heads should be detachable and machine washable and they should be replaced regularly. They should also be stored upside down to allow for drying.
- Mop buckets should be cleaned following use, then dried and stored upside down in a designated area.
- Playgroup staff will ensure that cleaning equipment and materials are kept out of reach of all children at all times.
- Playgroup staff will be trained to follow the guidance flowchart on display in the cleaning store.
- All staff should practice a "clean as you go" policy at all times, i.e. clean up spillages as soon as they occur.

As per Public Health Agency Guidance 05/2011

## Laundry

- All staff will ensure laundry is done in a designated area. Clean linen and dirty linen remains separate at all times.
- All playgroup cloths/clothes must be laundered at highest possible temperature which manufacturer guidelines will allow.
- Staff handling children's *soiled* clothes must wear protective clothing e.g. gloves and disposable apron.
- Staff should place child's soiled items into plastic bag and seal the bag. All bags must be kept in safe place e.g. away from food preparation area and out of child's reach.
- Staff will ensure that gloves and apron are removed correctly and disposed off. Adequate hand washing is completed after dealing with soiled laundry.



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- If parents ask why they receive their child's clothing soiled and not washed, Staff will inform parents that it is Playgroup policy not to wash soiled clothing, as it can increase spread of infection.

As per Public Health Agency Guidance 05/11

## **Exclusion of Adults from the Playgroup**

- Staff who present with vomiting and or diarrhoea must inform their Playgroup Leader immediately, so that they can be excluded.
- Playgroup Leader will ensure the staff member is excluded until they are free from symptoms for a period of 48hours, with at least one formed motion during this time.
- Staff with infected wounds or skin infections on exposed parts of their body should be similarly excluded until the lesions have healed or they have been advised by their GP that it is safe for them to return to work.
- Staff with minor respiratory conditions where there is potential to spread infections such as colds, must exercise good respiratory cough etiquette including good hand hygiene. Staff with influenza, however, should be excluded from work until their symptoms have resolved.

As per Public Health Agency Guidance 05/2011

## **Exclusion of Children from the Playgroup**

- Children who are ill should not attend Playgroup. If a child becomes ill the parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to take the child home as soon as possible. The child should be isolated from other children and closely monitored until they are collected by a parent/guardian.
- Children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting illnesses should not be brought to the Playgroup. Concerned parents/guardians should contact their GP for advice regarding the child's illness. The exclusion period from the Playgroup should last until the child has been free of symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting for at least 48hours and has had at least one normal motion.
- Children who require antibiotics should be excluded from Playgroup for at least 48hrs of treatment. Parents/guardians will be made aware of this in parental information book.
- Playgroup Leader should inform the Management Committee / PHA if a child has been excluded from the Playgroup due to an infection.
- Parents/guardians should be advised by the Playgroup leader if there are



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known cases of infection within the Playgroup. Confidentiality of children should be maintained at all times.

- The Playgroup Leader/Staff should advise mothers/Staff who are pregnant of the following infections - chickenpox, measles, rubella and slapped cheek syndrome (Fifth Disease).
- For further information on exclusion please see Sickness Exclusion policy  
As per Public Health Agency Guidance 05/2011

## **Pets and Farm Visits**

- Touching or feeding farm/pet animals can be a source of infection particularly in young children. The only way to eliminate this risk is to; avoid contact with animals and their faeces. It is the parent/guardian's choice whether a child should be allowed to touch or feed the animals. Consent for this must be sought prior to any contact with animals.
- Staff or parents/guardians must supervise the washing of children's hands immediately after contact with animals, before eating or drinking, and after removing footwear.
- For further advice staff should consult the HSENI Advice to teachers and others who organize visits for children.

As per Public Health Agency Guidance, 05/2011 and HSENI Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attraction, 04/2011.

## **Outbreak of Infection**

- An outbreak is defined as "having two or more children or staff with an infection, caused by the same microorganism at the same time in the same place".
- If the Playgroup Leader suspects an outbreak they should inform the Health Protection Duty Room by telephone: 0300 555 0119 and contact the Early Years Team at the Southern Trust on 02837 564020.

As per Public Health Agency Guidance 06/2020

## **COVID-19 Specific Procedures:**

The below procedures apply in relation to COVID-19 and will supercede any other general procedures for so long as Playgroup is advised that it is necessary to follow them.



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The Playgroup will take all recommended measures to attempt to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes dealing with direct transmission (for instance, when in close contact with those sneezing and coughing), and indirect transmission (via touching contaminated surfaces). A range of approaches will be employed to do this. These include:

- Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 symptoms, or have someone in their household who does, do not attend Playgroup
- Cleaning hands more often than usual- washing hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap before drying thoroughly, and/or using hand sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered
- Ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach
- Minimising risk through altering the environment where possible (playroom and outside area, resources, way in and out) and staggering drop-off and pick-up

Any child displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (a new, continuous cough or a high temperature over 37.8C) should not attend Playgroup, and parents/guardians should consult the PHA website (<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>) for up to date guidance re isolation periods and testing. If a child becomes unwell whilst at Playgroup they will be sent home and advised to follow the home isolation advice on the PHA website.

While the child is awaiting collection, they will be moved to the hall, where they can be isolated behind a closed door, with the window open for ventilation. If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, the bathroom will be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

The Playgroup will not take children's temperatures every morning, but staff and parents should be vigilant for signs of a temperature.

If a child displays symptoms, the Playgroup will:

- Contact parents to request collection



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- Move the child to the hall where they can rest in isolation and be attended to by a limited number of staff
- If direct care is required while awaiting collection, staff will wear a disposable mask, plastic apron and gloves.

Staff members assisting a child with symptoms do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell.

If a parent contacts the setting to advise that a child who recently attended has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or that they are a close contact of someone that has been diagnosed, then there will be additional cleaning of the setting to reduce the risk of retention of the virus, with the parent advised to follow the up to date isolation advice for the household from the PHA website.

## **Cleaning and Hygiene:**

The Playgroup will promote and facilitate best infection-control practice, including the following:

- Following cleaning guidance as set out in <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
- Ensuring as far as possible that there are adequate supplies to support cleaning and disinfection practices
- Ensure that sufficient handwashing facilities are available, with easy to use soap dispensers and a supply of disposable towels. Hand sanitiser will be placed in each area.
- Establish a routine to clean surfaces that children are touching, such as toys, books, desks, chairs, doors, sinks, toilets and light switches more regularly than normal
- Ensure that all adults and children:
  - Frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly
  - Clean their hands at regular intervals, including (but not limited to) on arrival at the setting, after using the toilet, when coming in from the outside area, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing
  - Are encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose



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- Use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste ('catch it, bin it, kill it')
- After a child or staff member uses the toilet, the lid should be put down first, before flushing
- Ensure that help is available for children who have trouble cleaning their hands independently
- Encourage young children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition
- Discourage children from sharing food, drinking cups, eating utensils, towels, toothbrushes, etc.
- Ensure that bins for tissues are emptied throughout the day
- Where possible, all spaces should be well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening windows)
- Prop doors open only if they are not fire doors, and where it is safe to do so (bearing in mind fire safety and safeguarding), to limit use of door handles and aid ventilation

## **Communication with Parents**

Playgroup will:

- Encourage parents to reinforce key messages about good respiratory hygiene in the home
- Check with parents/caregivers daily on the status of their children when they are dropped off at the setting
- Maintain up-to-date email addresses and home, work, and mobile phone numbers for parents/guardians of children at the setting so that they can be reached at all times
- Provide parents/caregivers with information on COVID-19 symptoms, transmission, prevention, and when to seek medical attention
- Encourage parents/caregivers to share the information with their children as appropriate
- Communicate with parents/caregivers that children should stay at home if they are sick, have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or if someone in the household has symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath)



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- Ask parents/caregivers to check their children's temperatures every day before coming to the childcare setting and to keep their children at home if their temperature is high, that is, if they feel hot to touch on the chest or back
- Require parents to advise Playgroup if they, their child or any other family member with whom they live or have had contact has tested positive for COVID-19

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

## 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: .....

This policy links with the following policies;

- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy
- Sickness Exclusion policy
- Emergency Plan policy



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- Handling Animals policy
- Infection Prevention & Control policy
- 'Infection Prevention and Control: Best Practice advice for Nurseries and Childcare Settings'