



Stepping Stones Playschool

Parent Policy Document

2021/22

Stepping Stones Playschool

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Admissions Policy

Policy Statement

It is our intention to make our setting accessible to children and families from all sections of the local community. We aim to ensure that all sections of our community have access to the setting through open, fair and clearly communicated procedures.

To achieve this:

- We ensure that the existence of the pre-school is widely advertised in places accessible to all sections of the community.
- We ensure that information about the pre-school is accessible, in written and spoken form and, where appropriate would endeavour to provide the information, in more than one language.
- Where necessary, we will aim to provide translated written materials where the language needs of families suggest this is required as well as access to an interpreter.

Procedure:

- Children are accepted into the playschool from the age of two and places will be offered out as soon as they are available and the child is old enough to join (this may be in advance of their 2nd birthday).
- The playschool can cater for 26 children per class per session. The maximum number of 2 year olds per session will be determined by the number of staff deployed but will never exceed the number permitted by our registration.
- To secure a place at Stepping Stones the child's parent or guardian must complete a waiting list form.
- Families are welcome to apply for a place in the playschool as early as they wish; however, early application does not guarantee a place over a later applicant. Date of joining the list will only be considered when places are limited and children share the same birth date-the earlier applicant will take priority. There is no charge for joining the waiting list.
- Children are offered a minimum of 2x two hour sessions per week. Attendance for less than this time makes the settling in process more difficult for the child.
- The parents of children taking up fee paying sessions are required to pay a £50 non-refundable security (this payment will include a t-shirt

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and named bag). However, children joining the group taking up only funded sessions will be exempt from the security. NB taking up non-funded sessions subsequently will mean the security becomes payable.

- Session fees will be due from the agreed start date of the child.
- Children may start at any agreed point during the term.
- Children already attending the setting take priority for booking sessions for the following term or academic year.

Waiting list

- Due to school admissions policy most children join us in the autumn term. In order to accommodate children with spring or summer birth dates or those wishing to defer their start until they are funded we review our waiting list half termly to offer available places for the next term.
- We prioritise our admissions in birth order, according to availability.
- While the management will endeavour to meet the preferred session choice of all families, this may not always be possible. Parent/carers will be offered an alternative and advised if their preferred sessions become available.
- If a place is unavailable, children will remain on the waiting list for consideration in the next term.
- At the time of being offered a place, a £50 security (as detailed above) will be required for all fee paying admissions.

Admission at Stepping Stones

- After the half termly waiting list review, staff will contact the parent by email to offer a place at Stepping Stones for the next term.
- Parents will be asked to confirm their acceptance of the place in writing.
- For families wishing to decrease their child's sessions or terminate their place a minimum of four weeks (term time) written notice is required. This includes Free Entitlement funded places.
- Admission into Stepping Stones Playschool does not guarantee a place at the local school. Parents must apply for their child's first school in line with the West Sussex School Admission procedure.

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- Free Entitlement places will be allocated in line with the groups FE Policy.

Settling in

- Place offers will be sent and confirmation of start date will be sent by email
- A home visit to discuss settling in routines and first days may be arranged*
- Children and parent/carers will be offered at least one 'Stay and Play' session

*Please note- settling in arrangements will be altered to accommodate circumstances e.g. in times of pandemic.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Free Entitlement Policy

Policy Statement

It is our intention to make parent/carers aware of the Free Entitlement offered to 3 and 4 year olds, as well as some 2 year olds, in West Sussex. This policy sets out how FE can be accessed in this setting through open, fair and clearly communicated procedures.

The government offers fifteen hours *universal* free entitlement per week from the term *after* your child's third birthday as well as thirty hours of free entitlement to qualifying families. Some two year olds whose parents meet the eligibility criteria will also qualify for funding.

Both Universal Free Entitlement (UFE) and 2 Year Old funded (2YOF) sessions at Stepping Stones Playschool are offered between the hours of 8.30 am-11.30am or 12.00pm-3.00pm Monday-Thursday (when a maximum of 6 hours free entitlement can be claimed) and 8.30am-11.30am on Fridays (when a maximum of 3 hours can be claimed).

Children accessing 30 hour funding (30HF) can claim their hours between 8.30 am- 3.00pm Monday to Thursday (when 6.5 hours can be claimed) and 8.30am-12.30pm on Friday (when 4 hours can be claimed).

A short lunch time session is available Monday-Thursday and there is a charge for the care given at this time (for fee paying and UFE children). Families of all children participating in a lunch session must be provided a nutritious packed lunch. An advice sheet is made available to all participating families and further advice is available via the link on our website.

At this setting Free Entitlement is available for 38 weeks of the year, term time only. To be eligible for funding children must be on roll on 'headcount' day. If your child accesses care prior to, but is not on roll during headcount, session fees will be due.

It is possible for two settings to claim free entitlement for your child providing no more than 15/30 hours are claimed in any week.

Your child's invoice will reflect the number of hours your child attends including the number of Free Entitlement hours claimed.

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Once your child is eligible for free entitlement you will be asked to complete a funding form to confirm your requirements, funded sessions cannot be claimed until your completed form is received.

Four weeks' notice is required to alter booked sessions and will only be implemented if sessions are available. Exceptional circumstances will be considered by the manager. *Funded sessions will not be altered during the last half term of the academic year.*

Cancellation of sessions also requires four weeks' notice and in accordance with the West Sussex Free Entitlement agreement four weeks funding in lieu of notice will be retained if the appropriate notice is not given.

Applications for free entitlement places will be given priority in the following order:

- Children already attending the setting-giving consideration to their age and availability of sessions
- Children whose paid fees are up to date
- Children joining the waiting list in date order-giving consideration to their date of birth

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Safeguarding Policy

Policy Statement

Staff at Stepping Stones are committed to creating a playschool environment in which children are safe from abuse and in which any suspicion is promptly and appropriately responded to. In order to achieve this we will:

Have a designated member of staff-

Responsible for safeguarding and child protection issues-Jackie Tubb. This member of staff will attend regular training to ensure they are familiar with current practice.

Exclude known abusers-

It will be made clear to applicants for posts within the playschool that the positions are exempt from the provisions of the 'Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974'.

All applicants for work within the playschool, whether voluntary or paid, will be interviewed before an appointment is made and will be asked to provide two references. All such references will be followed up. In the case of applicants with unexplained gaps in their employment history, or who have moved rapidly from one position to another, a detailed explanation will be sought.

All appointments, both paid and voluntary, will be subject to a 3 month probationary period and will not be confirmed until the manager is confident that the children can be safely entrusted to the applicants care.

Seek and supply training-

We will seek and supply training opportunities for all adults involved in the playschool to ensure they recognise the symptoms of possible neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

Prevent abuse by means of 'good practice'-

Adults will not be left alone for long periods with individual children or small groups.

An adult who needs to take a child aside - for example for 'time out'-will remain in sight or hearing of other staff members.

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Adults who have not undergone a DBS check are never allowed unsupervised access to the children. They will not take the children to the toilet or change the children's clothes or nappies.

All adults involved with the group will be aware of examples of adult behaviour which may indicate signs of abuse and neglect. They will understand the need to respond appropriately to safeguard children.

Staff mobile phones will be kept in the designated area away from the class bases during session times. Any member of staff using their mobile during sessions will do so with permission of and in view of the session supervisor. Visitors to the group will have their ID checked and be asked to leave their personal belongings including their mobile phone in the office (families viewing the setting will be accompanied and reminded they are not permitted to use their phone during the visit).

Staff cameras and iPads will remain in the main areas of the class bases/outside and will not be permitted into the toilet areas or disabled toilet. Visitors to the group will not be allowed to take photos of any child without express permission of the parent/carer in accordance with the E-Safety Policy (p.13).

Children will be encouraged to develop a sense of autonomy and independence through adult support, making choices and finding names for their own feelings and suitable ways to express them. This will enable children to have self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.

The layout of the class bases and outside area will permit the supervision of all the children.

Respond appropriately to suspicions of abuse-

Changes in children's behaviour or appearance will be investigated.

Parents will normally be the first points of reference, although suspicions of abuse will also be referred, as appropriate to the social care team.

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All such suspicions and investigations will be kept confidential, shared only with those who need to know, usually staff members and parent/carers of the child/children involved.

An 'out of session' record will be kept on the Family nursery system to note any incidents that occur away from the playschool setting noticed by staff or reported by a child or parent.

Staff are not permitted to act as 'baby sitter' to any child attending the setting without the express permission of the manager.

Adults in the group will be carefully monitored to ensure they remain 'suitable persons' to be looking after children in the setting. Changes in behaviour will be noted and investigated.

Keep records-

Whenever worrying changes in a child's behaviour, physical condition or appearance are observed, a specific and confidential record will be set up. This record will be kept separately from the usual on-going record of a child's progress and development. The record will include, in addition to the child's name, address and age, timed and dated observations, describing objectively, the child's appearance/behaviour, without comment or interpretation; where possible, and the exact words spoken by the child; the dated name and signature of the recorder. Words spoken by the child's parent/carer will also be recorded.

Such records will be kept in a confidential record on 'Family' and will not be accessible to people in the playschool other than the manager and any staff members aware of the situation.

Liaise with other bodies-

The playschool operates in accordance with local authority guidelines. Confidential records kept on children about whom the playschool is anxious, will be shared with the social care team if the playschool feels adequate explanation for changes in the child's condition have not been provided.

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Support families-

The playschool will encourage strong, trusting supportive relationships between families, staff and volunteers within the group.

Where abuse in the home is suspected the playschool will continue to welcome the child and family while investigations continue.

Confidential records kept on a child will be shared with a child's parents. With the proviso that the child's welfare is paramount, the playschool will do all in its power to support and work with a child's family.

Treat allegations with seriousness-

In the event of an accusation against a member of staff the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) team will be informed immediately and their advice followed. The staff member will be considered innocent until proven guilty, but advice regarding their work status will be followed until investigation is complete.

The investigation will be carried out in accordance with the local safeguarding board procedures and with the full support of Ofsted.

Contacting the LADO

Parents or staff with concerns about a child can get advice using the Integrated Front Door on 01403-229900 or contact the LADO team using the following details:

Consultation Contact Number: 0330 222 6450 (Available 09.00 - 17.00)

LADO Service email address: LADO@WestSussex.gov.uk.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Confidentiality Policy

Policy Statement

It is our intention to ensure that all those using and working within the playschool can do so with confidence, understanding that the information they share will be treated as confidential.

Families confidentiality will be respected in the following ways:

All files relating to children, families and staff will be kept securely unless they are being looked at or updated.

Parent/carers will have ready access to files and records relating to their own child, but no access to information about other children.

Photos of children will be kept on a password encrypted computer and shared only in accordance with the 'Photo Permission' completed by individual parent/carers.

Information given to staff by the parent/carer will not be passed on to adults outside the group without express permission. When contacting outside agencies only information pertinent to the referral will be discussed.

Anxieties/evidence relating to a child's personal safety will be kept in a confidential file and will not be accessible to anyone within the group other than the manager, key person and staff who need to be aware of the situation.

Individual identities will not be intentionally revealed to visitors to the group e.g photographers from the local paper without parental permission.

A suitable time and venue will be arranged for any parent/carer who wishes to have a private discussion with a member of staff.

Issues arising from the employment of staff, both paid and voluntary, will remain confidential to those involved in the employment process.

Students from the local schools/colleges, and adults on long term placement within the group will be made aware of the groups policies and will be required to work within them.

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Staff using social networking sites will not be permitted to 'add' parent/carers as friends whilst their child remains at playschool without the express permission of the manager. They will maintain a professional dialogue on any site open to public scrutiny and will not write or contribute to a blog, where the content lowers the reputation of the playschool, staff or its customers.

All records kept will be in accordance with the *General Data Protection Regulation 2018*.

All other policies governing the group will be implemented with due regard to the *Confidentiality Policy*.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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E Safety Policy

Policy Statement

At Stepping Stones we recognise that technology and the internet are invaluable tools for both learning and tracking the progress of children. All early years settings have a duty to ensure that children are protected from potential harm both within and beyond the learning environment. Every effort will be made to safeguard against risks, however it is likely that we will never be able to completely eliminate them. Any incidents that do arise will be dealt with quickly and according to policy to ensure that children and staff continue to be protected.

Aims

- To offer guidance for practitioners and to ensure the resources used in the setting provide a safe and secure online environment for all the children in their care
- To raise awareness amongst staff and parents/carers of the potential risks associated with online technologies, whilst also promoting the many educational and social benefits
- To provide safeguards and rules for acceptable use to guide all users in their online experiences
- To ensure adults are clear about procedures for misuse of any technologies both within and beyond the early years setting.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all staff, children, parents/carers, visitors and contractors accessing the internet or using technological devices on the premises. This includes the use of personal devices by all of the above-mentioned groups, such as mobile phones or iPads/tablets which are brought into an early years setting. This policy is also applicable where staff or individuals have been provided with setting issued devices for use off-site, such as a work laptop or mobile phone.

Staff Responsibilities

Practitioners (including Students, Apprentices and Volunteers)

- All staff have a shared responsibility to ensure that children are able to use the internet and related technologies appropriately and safely

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as part of the wider duty of care to which all adults working with children are bound.

- Staff must ensure all visitors to the group are aware of their role in keeping the children safe

Setting Manager responsibilities

- The setting's ICT infrastructure/system is password protected and not open to misuse or malicious attack. Users will have the express permission of the manager before accessing the network.
- Anti-virus software is installed and maintained on all setting machines and portable devices.
- The setting's filtering policy is applied and updated on a regular basis and that responsibility for its implementation is shared with the Designated Person for Safeguarding.
- Any problems or faults relating to filtering are reported to Designated Person for Safeguarding and to the broadband provider immediately and recorded on the e Safety Incident Log.
- The use of the setting's network is regularly monitored in order that any deliberate or accidental misuse can be reported to the Designated Person for Safeguarding.

Internet and Age Appropriate Filtering

Internet access is essential to the running of an early years setting, it allows communication with parents and carers and also provides access to a wide range of resources and support. SSP uses internet enabled devices, including iPad educational apps and games, to enhance the learning experience of children or as online tools for staff to track and share achievement. For this reason, great care must be taken to ensure that safe and secure internet access, appropriate for both adults and children.

At Stepping Stones

- Parental controls are established on all internet enabled devices that children have access to, blocking or preventing access to any harmful, illegal or inappropriate content.

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- Staff use a separate passworded account to the children on computers
- Staff have a password to unlock the iPads

Email Use

- The setting provides all staff with access to a professional email account to use for all work-related business, including communication with parents and carers. This allows for email content to be monitored and protects staff from the risk of allegations, malicious emails or inappropriate contact with children and their families
- Staff must not engage in any personal communications with families for whom they have a professional responsibility without the express permission of the manager. This also prohibits contact with former families outside of authorised setting email channels also without the express permission of the manager
- All emails should be professional in tone, checked carefully and be written in line with all the setting policies in mind before sending, just as an official letter would be.

Use of Social Networking Sites (advertising or parental contact)

Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) can be a useful advertising tool for early years settings and can often be an effective way of engaging with young or hard to reach parents. Due to the public nature of social networking and the inability to keep content truly private, great care must be taken in the management and use of such sites. Best practice guidance states that:

- Identifiable images of children should not be used on social networking sites without permission from parents.
- To maintain professional distance and to avoid unwanted contact, staff should ensure their privacy settings are set to maximum and checked regularly
- For safeguarding purposes, photographs or videos of looked after children must not be shared on social networking sites.
- Staff must not accept friend requests from parents or make friend requests for the duration of their employment without the express permission of the manager

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Please refer to the attached Social Networking Policy for further guidance.

Mobile Phones

Staff:

- Personal mobile phones are permitted on setting grounds, but are to be used during break times only, within designated areas away from children. They must be stored in the manager's office during session times and only accessed with permission.
- Personal mobile phones should not be used to contact children or their families, nor should they be used to take videos or photographs of children- only setting issued devices should be used for this purpose (please also see photos/videos below).

Visitors

- Parents and non-childcare visitors present in the setting will be advised that they are not permitted to use their mobile phone during the visit for calls, photos or video.
- Professionals from other childcare agencies will be asked to leave their electronic devices including mobile phones and laptops in the office for the duration of their visit.

Photographs and Video

Photographs and videos are an important part of the learning experience in early years settings and, as such, staff have a responsibility to ensure that they not only educate children about the safe and appropriate use of digital imagery, but also model good practice themselves. To this end, there are strict policies and procedures for staff and children about the use of digital imagery and videos.

- Written consent must be obtained from parents or carers before photographs or videos of young people will be taken or used within the setting, including displays, learning journeys, setting website and other marketing materials.

Staff will ensure that children are at ease and comfortable with images and videos being taken.

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- Staff must not use personal devices, such as cameras, video equipment or camera phones, to take photographs or videos of children.
- Setting issued devices only should be used for this purpose and, if containing sensitive information or photographs of children, should not leave the premises unless encrypted. In the case of an outing, all data must be transferred/deleted from the setting's camera/device before leaving the setting.

Laptops/iPads/Tablets

- A log of all ICT equipment issued to staff, including serial numbers, is maintained by the setting manager
- Personal use of setting laptops or computing facilities, whilst on site, is left to the discretion of the Manager/Team Leader and may be permissible if kept to a minimum, used outside of session times.
- Where staff have been issued with a device (e.g. setting iPad) for work purposes, personal use whilst off site is not permitted unless authorised by the manager. The settings iPad/devices should be used by the authorised person only.
- Staff are aware that all activities carried out on setting devices and systems, both within and outside of the work environment, will be monitored in accordance with this policy

Staff will ensure that setting iPads and devices are made available as necessary for anti-virus updates, software installations, patches, upgrades or routine monitoring/servicing.

Setting issued devices only should be used for this purpose and, if containing sensitive information or photographs of children, should not leave the premises unless encrypted.

- All photos and videos are stored subject to GDPR regulations.

Children's Use:

- Laptop, iPad or tablet use must be supervised by an adult at all times and any games or apps used must be age/stage appropriate.

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- Online searching and installing/downloading of new programmes and applications is restricted to authorised staff members only. Children should not be able to search or install anything on a setting device.

Family Nursery System and Progress Tracker

At Stepping Stones we use an online app to record family information and track children's progress. This app allows staff to track and share a child's learning journey online with parents and carers, contact family members and record accidents.

- **Personal staff mobile phones or devices (e.g. iPad or iPhone) should not be used for any apps which record and store children's personal details, attainment or photographs. Only setting issued devices may be used for such activities, ensuring that any devices used are appropriately encrypted if taken off site. This is to prevent a data security breach in the event of loss or theft.**
- Before purchasing or accessing any apps for staff or children's use, Managers must have a clear understanding of where and how children's data will be stored, including who has access to it and any safeguarding implications. Please note: The Manager is ultimately responsible for the security of any data or images held of children within the setting.

Data Storage and Security

- Sensitive data, photographs and videos of children are not stored on setting devices which leave the premises (e.g. laptops, mobile phones, iPads, USB Memory Sticks etc) unless encryption software is in place.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Equality and Diversity Policy

Policy Statement

At Stepping Stones Playschool we understand that families are made up in a number of ways. We believe that all children attending the playschool should have the opportunity to participate in all the activities offered regardless of their ability, gender, religion, culture or ethnic background.

Staff will ensure that every child is recognised for their individual achievements and they have opportunities to develop and learn in an atmosphere free of discrimination and prejudice.

Every family will have the opportunity to join the waiting list and admissions will be made in accordance with the Admissions Policy.

Stepping Stones staff recognise the varying needs of the families it serves and will always endeavour to meet these needs individually.

The children within the group will be given opportunities to explore and experience various religious and cultural celebrations. Staff are aware however, that not all families will want their child to participate in some celebrations and will do their best to accommodate every need.

There will be opportunities to explore and appreciate the similarities and differences between themselves and others. All toys and equipment will portray positive images of children, adults of varying cultures, religions and abilities and will avoid racial or sexual stereotyping.

Staff recognise that families speak various languages and communicate in a variety of ways. Efforts will be made to develop communication between staff and parent/carers.

Staff will endeavour to accommodate the dietary needs of all families attending the group.

Staff appointments within the group will be made with consideration to the ability of each applicant. Candidates will not be rejected on the grounds of

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age, gender, sexuality, class, family status, disability, ethnic origin or religion.

All staff, students, volunteers and parent helpers will be made aware of this policy and agree to abide by it while working in the group.

Discriminatory actions or remarks are not acceptable at Stepping Stones. If an incident occurs every effort will be made to ensure those responsible understand their actions and overcome their prejudice. Victim's feelings will be treated fairly and sensitively.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Inclusion Policy

Policy Statement

It is our intention to ensure all families feel welcomed at SSP. This policy sets out how the needs of families and individual children will be met through open, fair and clearly communicated procedures.

Welcome

Staff within the group understand that families and children's needs vary considerably. Everyone is made to feel welcome and treated with equal regard, concern and respect.

Stepping Stones Playschool offers supportive, early education for all children from the age of 2 to 5, of mixed abilities, including those with additional needs, promoting inclusion for all.

Admission and Settling In

Children are admitted into the group in accordance with the Admissions Policy. Staff are aware that children settle into the group with varying degrees of support and will work together with parent/carers to devise an appropriate settling in strategy for each child.

Curriculum and Activities

At regular curriculum planning meetings staff set activities designed to meet the diverse developmental needs of all the children in the group. Children are encouraged to be active in their own learning and to support and encourage each other.

Activities are presented on various levels to ensure the needs of every child are catered for.

Toys and Equipment

The equipment and facilities are continuously assessed and adaptations made to accommodate individual needs. If a child is using specialist equipment at home, they will be encouraged to bring it in for use at the group. All toys, games and equipment are selected to reflect the diverse abilities of all who attend the group.

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Worries or Concerns

If you are worried or concerned about your child's development or your child is receiving or awaiting referral to an outside agency (i.e speech therapy, portage, child psychologist) please speak to your child's key person as we would also like to offer support within the group.

Any child, who it is felt is experiencing difficulties, will be offered encouragement and support from all the staff to enable them to participate fully in all activities.

If the needs of a child cannot be met without the additional support, or the purchase of specialised equipment, Stepping Stones will explore the possibility of securing additional funding.

Communication

Staff believe in experiencing language in as many forms as possible. British Sign Language will be used throughout sessions, especially during stories, songs and rhymes.

Notices and information will be translated into languages other than English when possible and staff will seek advice from outside agencies for families and children who use English as a second language.

Children or families who use other forms of communication e.g. a 'pecs' board will be accommodated, with staff seeking further training if necessary.

Special Needs Code of Practice

As required by law, a trained member of staff will act as the group's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). This role will include:

- Being familiar with the SEND Code of Practice
- Revising and implementing changes to the Code of Practice as and when required
- Maintaining a register of children with S.E.N and Disability
- Assisting key persons in their record keeping of children with S.E.N.D
- Assisting the key person to set an 'Individual Play Plan' for identified children ensuring the plan is implemented within the curriculum of the group
- Encouraging staff and parent/carers to liaise closely together, sharing the child's interests, aims and achievements
- Establish links with outside support agencies where necessary, to offer support to both families and staff within the group

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The Code of Practice will be used as a tool to promote the inclusion of children at Stepping Stones.

The designated person for SEND is Steph Harris.

More Able Children

On entering the group each child is assigned a key person. Through regular monitoring and observation, key people are able to assess the abilities of all children within the group.

To meet the needs of more able children additional challenges, as extensions to planned activities, will be set thus encouraging progression.

Staff

Staff and volunteers will be appointed on their suitability and qualifications, candidates will not be treated less favourably for any reason relating to disability. All new staff, volunteers and students will be welcomed and supported while they settle in. All staff share a philosophy of inclusion. They treat each other, the families and the children with respect and regard. Staff will seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation in the playschool and will undertake regular training and review procedures and policies to minimise discriminatory practice.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Social Inclusion Policy

Policy Statement

Staff recognise that in order for children to progress they need a secure, friendly environment in which to explore, play and learn. This policy sets out the procedures implemented by staff to ensure each child understands their opinions, thoughts and feelings are valued and respected.

By establishing a simple set of rules, the children are aware of what is expected of them, they feel free to develop in safety without fear of being hurt or hindrance from others.

Simple Rules

- We walk in the classroom
- We help each other and have kind hands and feet
- We look after each other and our toys and equipment
- We listen to each other and use kind voices when we talk
- We are all friends at Stepping Stones Playschool

In order to achieve this the adults of the group will:

- Provide positive role models for the children
- Treat all people in the group with equal concern
- Provide toys and activities for children to express and explore their feelings and opportunities for children to make choices
- Praise and reward desirable behaviour
- Treat difficulties met by the children in a sensitive caring way and be particularly aware that 'transitions' - both within the setting and beyond - can be difficult for children
- Use the 'Highscope' method of conflict resolution-supporting children to negotiate a mutually agreeable resolution

Children experiencing difficulty

When a child finds it difficult to interact with their peers or continually challenges the Simple Rules the adults of the group will:

- Use STOP-DIVERT-PRAISE tactics
- Use the 'Group Points' to encourage appropriate responses and team work
- Talk to the child's parents
- Observe the child to assess triggers for challenging behaviour

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- Talk to the child about why this behaviour is not acceptable and the consequences of their actions to themselves and others
- Devise an action plan in consultation with the child's parent/carer
- Use Social Stories to reinforce appropriate interactions/behaviour
- Seek advice from outside agencies with parental permission

Staff never use or threaten physical punishment, but physical restraint may be used if a child is endangering themselves or others. In such cases parent/carers will be notified via Family.

We do not use a 'naughty chair' but, a period of time out with an adult may be implemented if a child continually challenges the 'simple rules'.

Adults will be aware that some kinds of behaviour may arise from a child's special needs and in such cases additional support from outside agencies may be sought.

Bullying

Bullying is a serious concern to the staff at Stepping Stones. In order to prevent such incidents happening we work hard to promote the self-esteem of all the children in the group. Awareness of bullying is raised through the curriculum and the children are given various opportunities to discuss their feelings.

If a child reports an incident to the parent/carer it should be brought to the attention of their key person. Observations will be carried out of the alleged behaviour to assess the cause and those involved will have the opportunity to discuss their actions 1-1 with a member of staff.

A child observed bullying will be told that their behaviour is not acceptable and will have the reasons explained to them. The incident will be logged. The child's parent/carer will be informed and the child's key worker will work with them to devise a strategy to encourage positive behaviour.

Behaviour management strategies will be regularly revised and strategies developed for individual cases. The staff may seek advice from other professionals. A named member of staff will be responsible for overseeing the group behaviour management strategies. The current member of staff leading our positive behaviour approaches is Rheanna Taylor.

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The children's achievements and positive behaviour are celebrated in a number of ways including visual recognition such as the key group 'pasta pots' and the 'Awesome Achievement' boards to notify parents.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

Stepping Stones Playschool

Biting Policy

Policy Statement

Stepping Stones staff understand that biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through. It is usually a temporary stage that commonly occurs between thirteen and twenty-four months of age. The safety of the children at Stepping Stones is our primary concern and this policy addresses the procedures staff will employ to support both children and families affected during incidents of biting.

Staff recognise that toddlers bite others for many different reasons; exploration, teething, cause & effect, frustration, imitation, independence or stress. Toddlers have limited verbal skills and are impulsive without a lot of self-control. Sometimes biting occurs for no apparent reason. Staff will encourage the children to "use their words" if they become angry or frustrated.

In the event of a biting incident the following procedures will be taken:

- the biting will be interrupted with a firm "No...we don't bite!"
- staff will stay calm and will not overreact.
- the bitten child will be comforted.
- staff will remove the biter from the situation. The biter will be redirected into another environment.
- the wound of the bitten child shall be assessed and cold compress applied if needed-the bitten area will continue to be observed by staff and parents for signs of infection.
- appropriate paperwork will be completed and the parents of both children will be notified
- confidentiality of all children involved will be maintained.

If the incidents are recurring the following procedures will be implemented:

- the child being shadowed and observed by a staff member (e.g. shadowed for 10 minutes at a time without hindering their play or activities) and the observations will be monitored to assess for triggers
- the child will be given appropriate activities (sensory activities) to help cope with the biting.

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- the advice of outside agencies will be sought and a behaviour management program will be implemented with the full involvement of the parents/carer.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

Stepping Stones Playschool

Health and Safety Policy

Policy Statement

It is our intention to make our setting safe and secure for children, families, staff and visitors.

Aim

We aim to make children, parents and staff aware of health and safety issues and to minimise the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment.

Methods

The member of staff responsible for health and safety is Alison Hall. She has undertaken health and safety training and regularly updates her knowledge and understanding. We display the necessary health and safety poster in the playschool.

Security

To maintain the security of the premises, the outside access gates are kept locked during sessions. While access gates are opened during session times a member of staff ensures the children are not able to leave unless accompanied by an appropriate adult.

In accordance with Ofsted guidelines a record of attendance is kept for every session. On arrival at a session the children are marked as being present in the register and the time of arrival is logged. At the end of each session the children must be marked out of the register and their departure time noted. Children may only be collected by a responsible adult (over the age of 16) named on the child's emergency contact form OR by someone who is aware of the child's password. To ensure your child's safety we ask that parent/carers wait by the classroom door until their child's name has been marked out of the register. To avoid accidents the children are encouraged to remain seated until their name is called by a member of staff.

All visitors to the group are required to show ID and to sign in on arrival. They will be issued with a visitors badge detailing the emergency evacuation procedure.

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SSP uses the 'Family' nursery management system which keeps family and medical details for all attending children. It is vitally important that you regularly update this information as current details are essential to ensure the children's safety and welfare. Staff will check and regularly remind parents to review their child's emergency contact/health/and allergy information is complete and correct.

A comprehensive list of people permitted to collect your child is required. Staff will not allow a child to leave unless they are confident your child is being collected by a person authorised by yourself. In order to minimise risk, you are required to supply a 'password'. This may be used to confirm your identity if you telephone and will be needed by anyone picking up your child who is not known by playschool staff.

In the event of a child being lost during a playschool session staff will immediately contact the Police and the parent/carer. Ofsted will be informed and the advice of the Police and Ofsted will be followed.

Welfare and Safety

It is a requirement that all staff hold a Paediatric First Aid qualification (there is a 3 month grace period for new staff). A comprehensive first aid box is kept in an accessible place in both class bases. In order to perform first aid on your child it is important that you have agreed to the 'Emergency Medical Attention' included in your induction before your child starts. This gives a qualified member of staff permission to administer emergency first aid on a child in the setting. In an emergency the qualified member of staff will act appropriately and inform the parent/carer.

Plimsolls must be worn during a session-these prevent slipping on the floor or equipment. Children are discouraged from running except when taking part in adult led movement activities. Sandals are permitted during hot weather but must cover the children's toes to prevent injury.

A record of accidents and incidents is kept. Should your child be involved in an accident or incident you will be informed via Family and required acknowledge the notification via the app.

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An 'out of session' incident will record any incidents that occur away from the playschool setting noticed by staff or reported by a child or parent. These will also need to be acknowledge by parents via the app.

Fire drills and 'lock down' drills are held regularly both in line with the school and independently. In the case of a fire drill the staff and children practice leaving the building and meeting at the assembly point. All staff, volunteers and students are made aware of their role in the procedure. In the event of a real emergency, when the building has to be evacuated, the children will be taken to St. Albans Church from where parent/carers will be contacted to collect their child/children. In the case of a 'lock down' drill the staff and children practice returning to the building quickly, locking all exits and awaiting further instructions from the head teacher of GGPS.

We would prefer that children did not wear jewellery of any kind during a session. However, if you wish your child to wear jewellery you will be required to complete the consent form in the permissions section of the Family system. Children will not be allowed to enter a session wearing 'hoop' earrings. *In the event of any injury arising from the wearing of jewellery the manager or staff will not be prepared to accept any legal liability.*

Through the curriculum the children are encouraged to explore subjects such as 'Road Safety and 'Stranger Danger' to develop an awareness of keeping themselves safe when out and about.

Health and Hygiene

At Stepping Stones Playschool staff seek to promote healthy living at all times. A selection of healthy snacks is served at snack time and either fresh water or fresh milk is provided for the children to drink. The children have water bottles which are available throughout both the playschool and lunchtime sessions.

When the children take part in cooking activities all equipment has been recently sterilised, the ingredients are fresh and vegetarian. Allergies are taken into account during the planning process.

In order to reinforce physical wellbeing it is important that children are encouraged to develop good hygiene habits. At Stepping Stones Playschool

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the children are encouraged to wash/sterilise their hands regularly, especially when entering and leaving the setting, after going to the toilet, before snack time and after handling any animals in the group. Anti-bacterial hand gel is available for the staff and children throughout the session.

Oral hygiene is promoted and the setting follows the Dental Wellness Trust guidance to support toothbrushing. All brushes are sterilized after use daily.

Every child will be encouraged to develop an awareness of sun safety and factor 50+ sun cream will be applied when needed-for children attending all day this will be a least once during the day.

The children will be encouraged to wear hats during outside play and should bring a named hat to every session during hot weather.

Curriculum activities encourage the children to develop an awareness of Sun Safety. Staff use the 'Slip, Slap, Slop' message to promote an appropriate approach to playing in the sun.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Anyone who begins to display coronavirus symptoms while in the setting will be sent home immediately and government guidelines on what to do if you or someone in your household develops symptoms will be followed.

If a child is waiting to be collected, they will be separated from their group and isolated with one member of staff if this is possible.

A face-covering will be worn by the member of staff who is caring for a child who is symptomatic and awaiting collection and if contact is necessary, then gloves, an apron and a face shield should be worn.

Once the child or member of staff has left the setting, the setting staff will follow the Government guidance 'Cleaning of non-healthcare settings' to ensure areas they have been in are disinfected and any PPE and other waste is disposed of safely.

All staff and children who are attending the setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and we expect that any child/staff member who has displayed symptoms will seek a PCR test. Where

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the child or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation. If the child or staff member tests positive, the current government guidelines will be followed. Please note these are subject to change and staff will implement the guidelines relevant at the time of the positive test being known.

Parent/carers will be asked to ensure that emergency contacts are regularly updated, they understand their role and responsibility in this procedure and will be available to collect their child if necessary.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Medicines and the Sick Child Policy

Medicines

At Stepping Stones, medication is only administered to a child with ongoing, non-infectious ailments or where a course of medicine is being completed, e.g. antibiotics.

All medication provided must be prescribed by a doctor and proof of the prescription for a named child along with the dosage must be seen by staff.

Any child using prescribed medicine (including inhalers) must attend each session with their medication. Your child will not be admitted into the session without it unless the Health & Safety Coordinator gives express permission.

Medicines and inhalers are stored in their original containers, clearly labeled and kept with the first aid kit during session times.

A record of administered medicine is kept. Staff note the dosage, date and time given. All entries are acknowledged by another member of staff after checking.

Medicine will only be administered by a member of staff qualified in pediatric first aid. Permission from a parent/carer must be registered on Family *before* any medication is given. Staff do not give Calpol (or its equivalent) unless prescribed by a doctor.

If the administration of prescription medicines requires technical/medical knowledge then individual training of staff is sought from a qualified health professional.

If a child is prescribed Antibiotics, then we request that the child does not attend playschool for the first 48 hours.

The sick child

If your child is too ill to attend the playschool, please notify us using one of the following: Family/telephone/text/email. While it is useful to be aware of what is wrong, some illnesses are "notifiable" and must be reported to the Environmental Health Department.

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In order to control the spread of infection we need to exclude sick children with infectious illness from the playschool. It is also our belief that sick children need to be at home in order to recover from sickness where they are more comfortable.

A list of illnesses which includes symptoms, incubation periods and expected duration, is available to parents on request for reference.

If a child becomes ill while at playschool, staff will make every effort to make the child comfortable while we contact parent/carers in order to arrange for the child to be collected. Parents are asked to ensure all emergency contact numbers are regularly checked and updated.

If staff suspect a child may be ill their temperature will be taken using a 'no-touch' head thermometer and parents will be informed of the results via the Family app.

It is imperative that parents/carers notify staff if they have administered medicine or if they suspect their child is unwell.

Children who have had medicine such as 'Calpol' to control their temperature must not attend playschool until they are clear of all symptoms.

Children must not return to playschool until *at least 48 hours* after their last bout of sickness or diarrhea.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Parental Involvement Policy

Policy Statement

At Stepping Stones Playschool we recognise that by establishing close links with a child's parent/carer we can work together to provide opportunities in which the child can play, learn and achieve. This policy sets out the ways staff will encourage dialogue and information sharing.

Staff will:

- Welcome all parent/carers into the group and ensure their contribution is valued
- Ensure all parent/carers are aware of the group's policies and procedures-displaying the changes at the gate and making parents aware of the update via the website
- Inform parent/carers about their child's progress regularly. Work with parent/carers to develop suitable targets for their child, discussing ideas for activities to be carried out at playschool and in the home
- Provide information about the curriculum, planned activities and forthcoming events and celebrations via Family, newsletter, notices and Facebook
- Provide information concerning various issues via Family, posters, leaflets, web links etc which will support families in bringing up their children
- Work towards providing information in a number of languages
- Implement a flexible 'Parent Rota' encouraging involvement from as many parent/carers as possible
- Inform parent/carers of relevant medical issues within the group such as head lice or chickenpox
- Hold events at which parent/carers can come together to build on friendships formed within the group
- Develop a set of resources which can be used by parents to support their child's development at home

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Outing Policy

Policy Statement

Staff at SSP recognise the benefits of learning about the local community through experience. Throughout the year we arrange visits around the local neighbourhood. These may include visits to the local school, shops, the Church, mobile library or to look at things of interest in the natural world around. This policy sets out the procedures staff follow when carrying out these outings.

Whenever an outing like this is planned the staff will ensure that there is adequate adult supervision according to the age and ability of the children involved. Parent/carers may be asked to help with these outings.

Although we will endeavour to notify you when an outing is planned, there may be times when the staff feel in order to enhance the children's learning experience, a spontaneous trip may take place.

Your signature in the permissions section of Family is recognised as your agreement to include your child taking part in local outings.

Before any trip is undertaken staff will carry out a 'Trip Risk Assessment' to plan requirements for the journey.

Please note: Any trips outside the local neighbourhood are organised separately and you will be required to sign a separate consent form

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

Stepping Stones Playschool

Keeping Healthy Policy

Policy Statement

Staff understand that in order to promote a healthy lifestyle it is necessary to support the children's knowledge of healthy eating. We follow Ofsted guidelines which recommend that a healthy diet is promoted and the opportunities provided in the group reflects this. This policy outlines the procedures staff follow to develop the children's understanding of healthy living and to support families in making healthy choices when it comes to nutrition, oral health, physical activity and mental well-being.

Water bottles with clean fresh water will be available throughout each playschool and lunchtime care session. The milk used will be semi-skimmed and pasteurised, fresh food and washed fruit will be available for snack. Lunch sessions will follow the group's healthy eating ethos and packed lunches are expected to reflect this (juice will not be given to the children).

During each session the children will be given the opportunity to participate in 'snack time', when the children can come together in small groups. For snack the children will be offered the choice of fresh milk or water and a variety of healthy food to eat. This time is used to encourage discussion of the health and safety issues raised by food preparation and consumption i.e hand washing, healthy foods and well-being.

Children are asked not to bring additional food, sweets, crisps or juice into the group *with the following exceptions:*

- Children who have to adhere to a special diet for medical or religious reasons
- Birthdays - when children are welcome to bring in sweets or treats for the whole class, so no-one feels left out. We ask that you bring in treats that are suitable for vegetarians and that do not contain nuts. However, the birthday treats are placed in a basket outside the classroom so parents can decide if they are suitable for their child. At this time, we will sing 'Happy Birthday' to your child (if appropriate)
- Party-time/Celebrations - when the children may be encouraged to bring in vegetarian food items to share with others

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Parents should ensure their child's special dietary requirements are noted on Family and the staff are fully aware of them.

Cooking activities will take into account your child's dietary requirements. All ingredients will be fresh and washed.

The playschool works with guidance from the Dental Wellness Trust and supports the children to learn about oral hygiene through experiences and activities as part of the curriculum.

Children participating in the lunch session will be encouraged to clean their teeth with staff supervision following their meal.

Regular physical exercise is included as part of the planned curriculum and children are encouraged to access the wide variety of equipment available for developing both fine and gross motor muscles.

Staff work closely with families to build respect and trust. Key people establish strong attachments with children in their key group to ensure every child can explore and experiment, confident in the knowledge they will be well supported.

Children are supported to develop ways of expressing their emotions. Staff help the children increase their vocabulary, give names to strong feelings and use the HighScope method of dispute resolution, extending their negotiating skills and increasing their ability to find solutions to disagreements independently.

Using our 'Playing to Learn' ethos, we provide experiences to support each child to develop the skills, confidence and resilience they need to build friendships and meet new challenges.

Families are supported to develop their understanding of healthy choices through interactions with outside agencies, parent information sessions and a range of resources (available to borrow).

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

Stepping Stones Playschool

Changing Policy

Policy Statement

Staff understand that in order to participate fully in the playschool curriculum, children should be clean and comfortable. Staff recognise that children develop at individual rates and that wearing nappies may be attributed to a child's additional needs. The policy addresses the issues surrounding nappy changing and outlines the procedures staff follow when carrying out this task.

We ask that your child is brought to playschool in clean, dry nappy/clothes. If on arrival at playschool your child has soiled themselves the parent/carer will be asked to change them.

Parent/carers are asked to provide disposable nappies, wipes and a change of clothes for each session their child attends, in a named PE bag.

Children will be taken to the toilet/sink area to have their nappy/clothes changed. Clean, sterile equipment will be used and staff will wear appropriate protective clothing and gloves.

Children in nappies will be checked at least once during a three-hour session and changed when appropriate. Nappy changes will be logged on Family so families are aware immediately when their child is changed.

Clothes changed as a result of soiling will be logged on Family and parent/carers will be required to acknowledge this via the app.

Any wet/soiled clothes will be placed in a plastic bag and sent home with the child at the end of the session (although in some cases soiled pants/socks may be disposed of). Any clothing provided by the playschool should be washed and returned as soon as possible.

To assist with toilet training Stepping Stones provides a potty. Please liaise with staff regarding your child's progress during toilet training so we can help whenever possible.

Dirty nappies will be sealed in a plastic bag and disposed of appropriately.

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If a child becomes distressed and refuses to be changed by the staff, the parent/carer will be contacted.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Curriculum Planning Policy

Policy Statement

Staff recognise that in order for children to make good progress across all developmental areas they must plan a detailed curriculum which is structured, relevant to the child and related to the real world. This policy describes the aims and procedures staff implement to deliver a broad curriculum which follows the child's interests which supports every child in the group to progress across the seven areas of learning -

- Personal, Social, Emotional
- Physical
- Communication and Language
- Mathematics
- Literacy
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

The group has a wide range of equipment which is appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children attending. Both the planned and spontaneous activities will endeavour to stimulate interest, encourage investigation, extend understanding and reinforce existing skills.

Our curriculum is based around guidelines set down by the Department for Education known as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which establishes the expectations for most children to reach by the end of their reception year.

To support children's learning within our curriculum staff at Stepping Stones Playschool will:

- Work in partnership with parents
- Work closely with GGPS to develop ideas for planning and observation
- Be a key person to a small group of children - observe and record the child's development, setting targets to encourage progress across all areas of learning
- Offer opportunities for the parent/carer and key person to share information, ideas, concerns and achievements
- Share curriculum plans with other professionals, including local schools and Ofsted, implementing any changes they may advise

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- Attend regular curriculum planning meetings contributing ideas for activities
- Develop a curriculum which provides equal learning and development opportunities for all children
- Attend training to increase their understanding of current practices

Children joining the setting before their third birthday will have a 2-year-old report. This report focuses on the three 'Prime Areas' of learning-PSE, Communication & Language and Physical.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Staff Development Policy

Policy Statement

Staff at Stepping Stones are committed to providing quality childcare and a curriculum which challenges each child through both play and practical activities. We realise that in order to do this staff must update and complete further training regularly.

In order to achieve this the manager will ensure staff:

- Are suitably qualified for the position they hold. Staff will be given a job description, outlining their role and responsibilities.
- Are given a mentor who supports them through the induction process ensuring they fully understand what is expected of them
- Are given a contract of employment, clearly stating their working hours, rate of pay and holiday entitlement
- Are given the opportunity to contribute to a stakeholder pension with a chosen company
- Have the opportunity to assess their training needs, along with needs of the group to meet inspection requirements
- Whenever possible be offered financial support for training
- Are offered opportunities to attend 'in-house' training when appropriate
- Are offered opportunities to discuss matters that concern them in confidence with the manager
- Feel supported, respected and valued as a Stepping Stones team member
- Are given access to subsidised childcare through the playschool if appropriate
- Staff meetings, evaluations and staff appraisals are held regularly ensuring staff are able to contribute ideas and plan for the future of the group, in keeping with present practice and ideas

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

Stepping Stones Playschool

Payment Policy

Policy Statement

In order to ensure the playschool remains sustainable clear guidelines are provided for both staff and parents to ensure regular and full payment of non-funded fees to the preschool. This policy outlines the support offered to parents who find themselves in financial difficulties and outline the clear process the Preschool will take to ensure all fees are collected.

At Stepping Stones Playschool, we are committed to equal opportunities for everyone, ensuring it is accessible to all families in the community, whilst providing high quality care and education. We carry out a review of our charges on an annual basis and increases will be implemented following a terms notice.

1. Rates

From September 2021 fees are £6.00 for 2 two-year-olds and £5.00 per child per hour for 3- and 4-year-olds.

Fifteen hours per week of Universal Free Entitlement is available for three and four year for 38 weeks of the year*. Some two year olds may be entitled to funded sessions and qualifying families of 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to claim 30 hours. If parents wish their child to attend for additional hours they will be charged according to the rates detailed above.

*Please see the Free Entitlement section

2. Security

A non-refundable £50.00 security is charged for all fee paying children joining the group. Fee paying children are determined as those not eligible for two or three year old funding, thirty hour funding or children accessing more than their 15 hours of Universal Free Entitlement.

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Children joining the setting accessing only their FE will not be charged a security. However, should they increase their hours to include non-funded sessions the non-refundable security will become due.

2. Invoicing

Fees due will be invoiced half-termly in advance-there are 6 half terms per academic year. Invoices will be sent out by email prior to the start of each half term. Payment is due within 7 days of the start of the half term, or the invoice date if later, unless an alternative arrangement is agreed with the Management.

3. Payment

Invoices can be settled via the Family app, in cash, debit/credit card or using childcare vouchers. **N.B. There is a £2.50 fee for paying by credit card.** Alternatively, parents may choose to pay fees directly into our bank account. The details of which are:

Natwest Bank Plc Account number: 13327364 Sort Code: 60-06-20

Parents are requested to use their child's name as reference for any payments made in this way.

4. Collections and Debt Recovery

If a parent/carer has difficulty paying by the due date, they must advise the management to arrange an alternative payment plan.

If the fees are not paid by the due date and parents/carers do not advise the management a £6.00 late fee will be passed on. This late fee will continue to be applied weekly until the debt is cleared.

Our aim is to promote positive action to prevent arrears occurring by providing a range of payment methods. However, the preschool will consider enforcement action against deliberate non-payers or those who delay payment.

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Where a parent/carer makes contact with the pre-school, their circumstances will be sensitively and confidentially considered with a view to agreeing a reasonable payment and minimising recovery action, thus helping to alleviate possible hardship.

Where parent/carer's fail to establish contact or maintain arrangements, recovery action will continue as follows:

The pre-school will:

Contact the parent/carer within 7 days after the payment due date has expired.

A payment reminder letter will be sent out within 14 days after payment due date has expired, detailing late payment fees and the parent/carer will be encouraged to discuss any difficulties they may be experiencing with payment.

Liaise with parent/carer to advise on re-scheduled arrears amount and appropriate payment method.

Provide a detailed summary of re-scheduled amount in writing, showing relevant amounts and instalment due dates.

Advise the parent/carer to commence and maintain payments immediately.

Should non-payment of fees continue, and no contact has been made from a parent/carer, then Stepping Stones Playschool reserves the right to suspend the child's place until such time the outstanding amount is paid.

5. Notice to leave/decrease sessions

We plan our staffing levels and set our budget well in advance. Four weeks (term time) written notice is required of a child leaving the pre-school or reducing their sessions, otherwise fees in lieu of notice will be charged. This includes FE funding. When no notice is given for a fee paying child or the child leaves when fees are outstanding the playschool reserves the right to withhold the 'Learning Journey' flash-drive-giving parents the opportunity to

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download their child's record instead. *No request to alter sessions will be considered in the final half term of the academic year.*

6. Refunds

No refund is made for sickness, holiday or absence from the Pre-school.

7. Late collection fee

A late collection fee will be levied on parent/carers who are late collecting their child during a half term ('late' means more than 10 minutes following the end of session (twice during the half term) or parent/carers who are persistently late by a few minutes after the end of session).

8. Free Entitlement (FE)

Stepping Stones Playschool is in receipt of FE for two, three and four year olds. Two year old funding is a means tested benefit and parents need to apply to the local authority to determine eligibility. Three and four year old universal free entitlement (UFE) and 30 hour funding is available the term following your child's third birthday. UFE will up to fund 15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year while 30 hour funding is also available for 38 weeks per year. To access this funding you need to complete a FE registration form and provide a copy of your child's birth certificate or passport.

Children who are 3 between:	Will become eligible for 15 hours funding from:
1 April and 31 August	September
1 September and 31 December	January
1 January and 31 March	April

Please note the lunch session (11.30-12.00) is not included as part of the UFE (Please see the Free Entitlement Policy for full details).

30 hour extended free entitlement funding (EFE) is available for eligible children. Qualifying families will not be required to pay the non-refundable security.

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9. Closure In the event of the Playschool being forced to cancel sessions, the Playschool will endeavor to give as much notice as is reasonably possible. The Playschool reserves the right to offer replacement sessions in lieu of refunds. (Please see Emergency Closure Policy for full details).

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

Stepping Stones Playschool

Emergency Closure Policy

Policy Statement

We endeavor to be open as stated in our prospectus without disruption. Where disruption is unavoidable, all involved in the pre-school are kept informed and we will reopen at the earliest possible opportunity.

In the unlikely event that we have to close at times other than scheduled in the normal opening hours and dates, the policy is applied to ensure that all involved in the pre-school have a clear understanding of the procedures which will take place.

An emergency closure is implemented in the following circumstances:

- When the building is unusable through accidental or malicious damage.
- When an outbreak of illness within the pre-school requires closure in line with Health Protection Agency (HPA) and Ofsted guidelines.
- When illness levels within the staff body mean it is impossible to maintain the correct ratios of suitable adults to children.
- When severe weather conditions prevent staff from reaching the pre-school safely and it is impossible to maintain the correct ratios of suitable adults to children.
- When the building is unusable due to required maintenance work. Where possible we will endeavor to negotiate scheduled work to be carried out during times of holiday closure.

In the event of any of the above incidents occurring which requires the pre-school to remain closed for a session (or more), the leadership team will make contact with the pre-school families affected (in advance of the start of session) by Family, phone, text or email service where practical. The playschool Facebook page and website will also hold this information.

A member of the management is asked to remain at the building until such time as it can be determined that all the affected families have been made aware of the situation. The manager is responsible for informing the relevant authorities of the unexpected closure when necessary. This may mean informing the Children's Information Service, Ofsted, Health Protection Agency, local health authority, Health and Safety Executive and RIDDOR, depending on the circumstances of the closure. Parents are informed about

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how they can find out when the pre-school will re-open and other pertinent information according to the circumstances of the closure. This may include asking them to nominate a preferred contact number/email address or holding a special meeting to keep parents informed.

Emergency closure after a session has started

In the event of an emergency closure after the session has started you will be informed by Family, telephone and text that you are required to collect your child as soon as possible. If the closure is due to sickness, the children and all staff who are unaffected remain on the premises until all children can be collected.

If the closure is due to an emergency which requires the building to be evacuated, the children are safely evacuated according to the current Emergency Evacuation procedures. Contact information for all the children is taken out of the building alongside the daily register. Once the building is evacuated, the manager ensures the relevant authorities/emergency services are called. The children are then taken to a place of safety until such time as they can all be collected by parents and carers. The management team will contact the parents and carers of the children present. All staff remain with the children during this time.

Where the preschool has to close in an emergency, the management arrange for any funding from the local authority to be repaid if required, and for refunds to be made to any families who pay fees. This is usually made by way of a reduction from the next half-term's fees, but may be in the form of a direct payment if circumstances require.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

Stepping Stones Playschool

Looking after our environment policy

Policy statement

At Stepping Stones Playschool we believe it is important to appreciate and value our living world and our environment. We encourage and enable children in our care to develop their understanding of the living world and the impact we all have on it. We aim to ensure our working practice supports the environment.

We do this by appreciating living things and learning about and respecting our local and wider community in the following ways:

- Children take part in planting and caring for plants (flowers and vegetables) both indoors and outside
- Children help care for any animals kept or visiting at the provision, learning how to respect their needs and habits
- Activities are planned to explore and reinforce the concept of caring for all living things in our world
- Adults are positive role models, showing their respect for all living things
- Children are taken on walks in the immediate vicinity, where discussion is encouraged and follow-up activities (such as map making, documenting, photography) are carried out
- Children are encouraged to use litter and recycling bins inside and outside our premises and understand why
- Children take part in tidying, clearing and cleaning activities as appropriate
- Recycling is integral to the way we work with and dispose of equipment and resources. We encourage the reuse of any appropriate materials

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- Children are encouraged to use resources (including paper) conservatively
- Children know that we recycle food waste and help maintain our compost bin, learning to understand its role in our provision and the wider community
- Children learn that we use water carefully and how a lack of water affects the local and wider community
- Activities are planned to develop and nurture children's natural curiosity about their location and the world around them, including cultural diversity
- Members of the local community (such as post people, police, fire service, farmers, etc) are invited to the provision to tell us about their roles and responsibilities, how they help us and how we can help them
- Stepping Stones Playschool commits to take part in local/national eco-friendly schemes as appropriate
- We encourage families using the group to 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' when possible and have introduced a scheme to support this.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

Stepping Stones Playschool

Home Visit Policy

Policy Statement

Childhood experiences lay the foundations for later life. Stepping Stones staff recognise that parenting has a critical impact on children's emotional, behavioural and educational development, and their health and wellbeing. The playschool works in partnership with parents to ensure positive outcomes for children.

Aim:

- To provide an opportunity for a new child and family to meet the key person in their own home prior to the child starting at the setting.
- The purpose of the visit is to help the child, family and key person get to know more about each other in the home environment where the child usually feels most relaxed.
- The home visit is an optional service that the setting provides, not all families wish to take us up on this offer, and the home visit is additional to our settling in policy provided for all children.

Procedure:

- All parents are given the opportunity to book a home visit at a mutually convenient time before their child starts playschool.
- Staff remaining at the setting will always be made aware of the address of the family being visited. Staff will carry a mobile phone, the number of which will be known to staff.
- A home visit will always be attended by two members of staff, usually a member of the Senior Leadership Team and, whenever possible, the key person.
- The staff will make their own way to and from the family's home, and this will take place during normal working hours wherever possible.
- Staff will use the home visit as a means of talking to the family, gaining information about the child and answering any questions the family may have. The key person will speak to the child during this time.

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- The staff will stay together during the home visit and would not expect to be left alone with the child during the visit.
- We would not expect a home visit to last longer than 30 minutes.
- Staff will be conscious of the fact that they are guests in the families' home and will treat all families with a high level of respect and regard during the visit. They will not be permitted to have refreshments during a home visit.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Parent/carer use of Social Networking and Internet Sites Policy

Policy Statement

Staff recognise that social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are now widely used. This type of media allows people to communicate in ways that were not previously possible. However, such sites can be inappropriately used by some as a means of expressing negative or offensive views about preschools and their staff. This document sets out the playschool's approach to parental use of such sites and sets out the procedures we will follow and action we may take when we consider that parent/carers have used such facilities inappropriately.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage social networking sites to be used in a beneficial and positive way by parent/carers
- Safeguard pupils, staff and anyone associated with the school from the negative effects of social networking sites
- Safeguard the reputation of the preschool from unwarranted abuse on social networking sites
- Clarify what the preschool considers to be appropriate and inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents
- Set out the procedures the preschool will follow where it considers parent/carers have inappropriately or unlawfully used social networking sites to the detriment of the preschool, its staff or children attending, and anyone else associated with the preschool
- Set out the action the playschool will consider taking if parent/carers make inappropriate use of social networking sites

Appropriate use of social networking sites by parent/carers

Social networking sites enable parent/carers to access information about the preschool and provide feedback efficiently and easily. The preschool recognises that many parent/carers have personal social networking accounts, which they might use to discuss/share views about preschool issues with friends and acquaintances. As a guide, individuals should

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consider the following prior to posting any information on social networking sites about the preschool, its staff, the children attending or anyone else associated with the preschool:

- Whether a social networking site is the appropriate channel to raise concerns, give feedback or express views
- Whether private and confidential discussions with the preschool would be more appropriate
- Whether comments are likely to cause emotional or reputational harm to individuals which would not be justified, particularly if the preschool has not yet had a chance to investigate a complaint
- The reputational impact that the posting of such material may have to the preschool

Inappropriate use of social networking sites by parents

Although social networking sites may appear to be the quickest and easiest way to express frustrations or concerns about the preschool (and those associated with it), it is rarely appropriate to do so. Other channels, such as a private and confidential discussion with the manager or using the formal complaints process are much better suited to this.

The playschool considers the following examples to be inappropriate uses of social networking sites (this list is non-exhaustive and intended to provide examples only):

- Making complaints about the playschool/staff at the playschool
- Making allegations about staff or pupils at the preschool/cyber-bullying
- Making defamatory statements about the preschool or staff at the preschool
- Posting negative/offensive comments about specific pupils/staff at the playschool
- Posting racist comments
- Posting comments which threaten violence.

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Procedure the playschool will follow if inappropriate use is reported

The playschool will always try to deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional and appropriate manner and understands that parents may not always realise when they have used social networking sites inappropriately. Therefore, as a first step, the playschool will usually discuss the matter with the parent to try and resolve the matter and to ask that the relevant information be removed from the social networking site in question. If the parent refuses to do this and continues to use social networking sites in a manner the playschool considers inappropriate, the preschool will consider taking the following action:

- Set out the preschool's concerns to you in writing, giving you a warning and requesting that the material in question is removed
- Contact the host/provider of the social networking site to complain about the content of the site and ask for removal of the information
- Take legal advice and/or legal action where the information posted is defamatory in any way or if the circumstances warrant this
- Contact the Police where the preschool feels it appropriate - for example, if it considers a crime (such as harassment) has been committed; or in cases where the posting has a racial element, is considered to be grossly obscene or is threatening violence

Please note staff are not permitted to accept friend requests or follows from parents attending group without express permission from the group manager.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Complaints policy

Policy Statement

At Stepping Stones we regularly share our achievements, reflect on our work and look for ways to improve our service.

We welcome suggestions and constructive criticism from all who use our service.

We avoid the potential for escalation of issues by responding to, recording and resolving complaints quickly, effectively; and where possible in a positive and informal manner.

We do this by:

- Operating an effective quality assurance process that includes seeking the views of parents/carers and others who may use our service about the way we work.
- Applying a similar approach to all suggestions, concerns and complaints by keeping records of dates and actions taken as an audit trail.
- Responding to comments, suggestions, concerns and complaints within specific time scales in line with relevant legislation and in a confidential and sensitive manner.
- Implementing a set of effective policies and procedures to protect those who are involved with our service.
- Ensuring that all staff (including volunteers and students on placement) are familiar with the complaints policy and procedure and confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Suggestions and concerns can be dealt with by:

- Speaking to the person in charge (a mutually convenient time can be made to discuss any issues in confidence and outside operational hours).
- Responding to the parent Survey

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Any action taken in response to suggestions, comments and concerns is fed back either verbally, in writing or by placing a notice on the notice board about any changes made to operations as a result.

Making a complaint:

In the event of a complaint please address your complaint to the manager, Jackie Tubb.

In all cases a written record of complaints is kept, which includes the following information:

- Name of complainant.
- Nature of complaint.
- Date and time of complaint.
- Action taken in response to complaint.
- Result of complaint investigation.
- Information given to the complainant, including the date of response.

At any time during the process of the complaint being resolved, the complainant has the right to complain to Ofsted.

Responding to a complaint

At Stepping Stones we aim to deal with complaints quickly and effectively 'in house' within the following process.

Stage 1: local resolution of a complaint (complaints are resolved within 14 days)

- The complaint is acknowledged within 2 working days (excluding weekends and bank holidays).
- The complaint is investigated by the senior leadership team. This may involve:
 - Making arrangements for a meeting with all relevant parties to discuss the issues, when it is appropriate, and with the complainant's agreement.

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- Advising the complainant about the availability of advocacy to assist during the procedure.
- A written record is made of the investigation, any discussion (including any witness statements) and any decisions or agreements made at any meeting.
- Complainant is sent a letter within 14 days of receipt of their complaint informing them that their complaint has been resolved, and of any action that has been taken as a result.
- In certain circumstances, with the complainant's agreement, the 14 days can be extended for a further 14 days.
- Complainant is also advised that if they are unhappy with this process or the outcome of the complaint, they can contact Ofsted.
- Stepping Stones makes a written record of outcomes of the investigation, and any action taken.

A copy of the complaint record is kept for Stepping Stones' records and a summary is made available for Ofsted at their request.

If your complaint is not resolved by the stage 1 process above, you may resort to stage 2 (or in some cases you may want to go to stage 2 from the start).

Stage 2: formal consideration of a complaint (stage 2) - when the complaint is dealt with by an agency outside Stepping Stones Playschool

The formal consideration can begin if either:

- The initial discussion (stage 1) has not been resolved and the complainant requests a formal consideration or;
- The complainant wishes to go straight to stage 2

Complaint resolution

- These types of complaints are resolved as soon as reasonably practicable in line with the procedures of the outside agency

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- The outcomes of a formal consideration are confirmed in writing by the outside agency to the complainant and summarise the nature and substance of the complaint, the conclusions and the action to be taken as a result.
- A copy of the written response is sent to Stepping Stones Playschool setting out the conclusion and any action to be taken.

Where complaints are subject to concurrent consideration:

A complaint may be part of another wider investigation where another agency is also making an investigation, such as child protection or staff disciplinary process. In these circumstances, or where a complaint relates to any of the following matters:

- About which the complainant has stated in writing that they intend to take legal proceedings or;
- The registered person/responsible individual is taking, or proposing to take, disciplinary proceedings or;
- About which the registered person/responsible individual has been notified that an investigation is being conducted by any person or body in contemplation of criminal proceedings.

The registered person considers, in consultation with the complainant and any other relevant agency, how the complaint will be handled. In this case the registered person/responsible individual may decide to discontinue investigating the complaint subject to concurrent consideration if:

- It appears that to continue would compromise or prejudice the handling of the wider investigation.

In which case, the registered person/responsible individual:

- Informs the complainant of the decision to discontinue.
- Can resume the investigation at any time.
- Ascertains the progress of the concurrent consideration and notifies the complainant when it is concluded.

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Resumes consideration of the complaint where the concurrent consideration is discontinued or completed and the complainant requests that the complaint be considered.

At all times during any complaint investigation Stepping Stones Playschool places safeguarding and protection of children as their highest priority. Complaints of this nature should be brought to the attention of the designated safeguarding officer-Jackie Tubb- and will trigger the responses outlined in the group's Safeguarding Policy.

If the complaint is about the registered person/responsible individual stage 2 of the procedure must be followed and Ofsted must be notified.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb

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Data Protection Policy

In order to provide a quality early years and childcare service and comply with legislation, we need to request information from parents about their child and family. Some of this will be personal data and some may be classed as special category data.

We take families' privacy seriously, and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), we will process any personal data according to the seven principles below:

1. We must have a lawful reason for collecting personal data, and must do it in a fair and transparent way. We will be clear about what data we are collecting, and why.
2. We must only use the data for the reason it is initially obtained. This means that we may not use a person's data inappropriately or to market a product or service to them that is unconnected to the reasons for which they shared the data with us in the first place, unless required to do so by law.
3. We must not collect any more data than is necessary. We will only collect the data needed in order to provide appropriate childcare services and abide by relevant laws.
4. We will ensure that the data is accurate, and ask parents to check regularly (at least) annually and confirm that the data held is still accurate.
5. We will not keep data any longer than needed. We must only keep the data for as long as is needed to complete the tasks it was collected for and in compliance with relevant laws.
6. We must protect the personal data. We are responsible for ensuring that anyone charged with using the data, processes and stores it securely.
7. We will be accountable for the data. This means that we will be able to show how we are complying with the law.

We expect parents to keep private and confidential any sensitive information they may accidentally learn about the families of staff members, the setting or the other children and families attending the setting, unless it is a child protection issue.

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We ask parents for personal data about themselves and their child/ren in order to deliver a childcare service (see privacy notice). We are required to hold and use this personal data in order to comply with the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Ofsted, Department for Education and the local authority.

Subject access

Parents/carers and those with parental responsibility have the right to inspect records about their child at any time. This will be provided without delay and no later than one month after the request. Requests can be made verbally and we will ensure we have received the correct information. We may need to check the identity of the person making the request if, for example, the request was made via an unknown email address. We will ask parents to regularly check that the data is correct and update it where necessary.

Individual Rights

The GDPR provides the following rights for individuals:

1. The right to be informed
2. The right of access
3. The right to rectification
4. The right to erasure
5. The right to restrict processing
6. The right to data portability
7. The right to object
8. Rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling

Storage

We will keep all paper-based records about children and their families securely locked away. We will make sure keys are also securely stored. If we keep records relating to individual children, families or anyone working for SSP, including in a digital format, such as on the computer or smartphone, externally or in cloud storage such as iCloud, Google Drive or Dropbox, including digital photos or videos, we will obtain parents' permission. We will ensure any external or cloud based services have adequate security around the data. We will store the information securely, for example, in password-protected files, to prevent viewing of the information by others with access to the computer or device.

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Firewall and virus protection software are in place.

Any records using our nursery app Famly is compliant with GDPR. Any external providers who process data on our behalf will be vetted to ensure they comply with GDPR.

Information sharing

We are expected to share information with other childcare providers if a child also attends another setting.

We are also required to share information with West Sussex County Council in regards to the childcare and early years entitlements.

In some cases we may need to share information without parents' consent, if there is a child protection concern, criminal or tax investigations, health and safety reports etc.

Ofsted may require access to our records at any time.

Record keeping

We record all accidents on the secure nursery app Famly.

We are insured with Morton Michel and will notify them of any accidents which may result in an insurance claim, e.g. an accident resulting in a doctor or hospital visit. Morton Michel will log and acknowledge receipt of the correspondence to enable a claim number to be allocated.

We will inform Ofsted, the local Child Protection Agency and the Health and Safety Executive of any significant injuries, accidents or deaths as soon as possible.

We record all significant incidents on the nursery app Famly. These are shared with parents so that together we can work to resolve any issues.

We will only share information without your prior permission if it is in a child's best interests to do so. For example in a medical emergency we will share medical information with a healthcare professional. If we are worried about a child's welfare we have a duty of care to follow the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and make a referral. Where possible we will discuss concerns with you before making a referral.

Safe disposal of data

We are required by law to keep some data for some time after a child has left the setting.

We have a review plan in place and ensure that any data is disposed of

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appropriately and securely. Paperwork will be securely disposed of. Any IT hardware is securely disposed of.

Suspected breach

We will investigate any suspected breaches and take prompt action to correct any areas of concern. If we suspect that data has been accessed unlawfully, we will inform the relevant parties immediately and report to the Information Commissioner's Office within 72 hours. We will keep a record of any data breach.

This policy was adopted on September 1st 2021 and will be reviewed no later than August 2022 Miss J.S. Tubb-JSTubb