



Pandemic Policy

The purpose of this operational policy is to meet the recommendations of the Ministry of Education to develop a pandemic plan in accordance with the *Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 2008 (Regulation 46)* and Licencing Criteria HS26.

Position Statement

Our centre aims to provide a safe environment for children and staff. We have a pandemic plan in place to ensure that children and staff members affected by a pandemic event are managed effectively throughout its duration. Alongside our own action plan we will follow all requests by the Ministry of Health and/or the Ministry of Education.

Issue Outline

In the event of a pandemic outbreak we will be able to effectively manage and implement our planned health and safety responses. By being prepared we will be able to better manage children and staff affected by the pandemic, reducing the risk of further spread of infection. For families, knowing what will happen with fee payments in the event of a Centre closure should be covered in the Centre Fee Schedule or Enrolment pack. Staff disruption and staff payment needs to be planned for.

Detail

General:

- Our Centre will remain open for as long as safely practicable
- Our Centre will open/close only after receiving instructions from the Ministry of Health, local health authorities or the Ministry of Education
- In the case of the Centre being closed down under the request of the Ministry of Health we will follow our response plan
- Management will work closely with the Ministry of Health and other relevant authorities, following their advice
- We will maintain communication with other schools and Early Childhood Centre's in the area
- Our emergency contact details will be regularly updated and a process in place for contacting families
- We will ensure the centre has adequate emergency supplies of tissues, medical and hand hygiene products, cleaning supplies. These may be difficult to purchase once a pandemic begins
- A process is in place for recording details of staff or child illness
- Management will coordinate communication to students and staff at different phases of a pandemic.

- Our centre will ensure that all cases and status reports are notified to health authorities and assist health authorities to track 'contacts' of people showing symptoms.
- We will have a recovery plan in place.

Procedure:

In the case of an outbreak of a pandemic or the Centre being closed down under the request of the Ministry of Health we will follow this procedure;

1. We will communicate with families Immediately, following the guidelines from the Ministry of Health
2. We will put up notices at all entry points advising people not to enter if they have pandemic symptoms
3. We will display Information from the Ministry of Health on pandemic outbreaks for parents and staff
4. We will record details of all staff or child illnesses (we do this irrespective of a pandemic)
5. A system will be implemented to manage children and staff who become ill, involving immediate isolation and sending home immediately
6. We will continue to ensure regular hygienic cleaning and sanitation of the centre, toys and equipment
7. All internal spaces will be well-ventilated
8. Teachers will emphasise hand-washing and cough/sneeze etiquette with the children and display posters
9. During the pandemic period, we will not use playdough or shared food.
10. We will hot-wash dress-ups, puppets, etc and dry in a dryer where possible or hang in the sun to dry, or remove from play.
11. If our Centre closes, parents will be notified, notices will be posted on doors and relevant groups updated through text alert, e-mails, Facebook and website
12. We will follow the guidelines from the Ministry of Health on when children and staff can return to the Centre.

Recovery plan:

- There will be a debrief of the pandemic event for staff and families
- We will ensure the Centre has been cleaned and disinfected
- We will only re-open when we have the capacity of staff to resume normal Centre operations
- We will continue to support and monitor the wellbeing of staff and children
- We will re-stock our emergency supplies kit
- We will review our pandemic plan and procedures.

Alignment with Other Policies

This policy aligns with:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Emergency Response Policy
- Infectious Disease Exclusion Policy

Relevant Background (including Legislation/Regulation/Licensing references)

- Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 2008; Regulation 46:
 - 1(a) The licenced service provider will take all reasonable steps to promote the good health and safety of children enrolled in the service; and
 - 1(b) Take all reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of infection among children enrolled in the service
- Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations 2008; 57 Health and Safety of Children
 - 57(1) if the service provider or educator has reasonable grounds to believe that a person employed or engaged in the service, or any other person (b) has an infectious or contagious disease or condition may ensure that the person is excluded from the service and does not enter
- Licencing Criteria 2008, Health and Safety, Child Health and Wellbeing:
 - All practical steps are taken to ensure that children do not come into contact with any person (adult or child) on the premises who is suffering from a disease or condition likely to be passed on to children and have a detrimental effect on them
- Education Act 1989
- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

Impacts of Policy on Staff, Parents, Children

Having a Pandemic Policy and Procedure in place will provide staff and parents with an awareness of both the financial impact as well as health and safety implications. This will reduce uncertainty and confusion.

Alignment with the Centre Philosophy

This policy aims to ensure a safe and healthy environment, a crucial part of creating and maintaining the well-being of children in our care.

Implications and/or Risks

Following this policy significantly reduces the risk of this Centre failing to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, losing trust with parents because of spread of illness and a lack of communication and planning.