

PARENT HANDBOOK

2022-2023

**Ballyhall Community
Steiner Kindergarten
Ballyhall, Callan, Co Kilkenny**



Ballyhall Community Steiner Kindergarten



Parent Handbook

See also the main Policy Document for further information.

Parents are encouraged to refer to the full document
available in the service upon request.

Address: Ballyhall, Callan, Co Kilkenny

Phone number(s): 086 3719903

Email: bhsteinerkg@gmail.com

Website: <https://kilkennysteinerschool.com/kindergarten-2-6>

Manager: John McDonald

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Welcome to Ballyhall Community Steiner Kindergarten

Welcome to Ballyhall Community Steiner Kindergarten. We are committed to providing an early care and education service of the highest standard. We are registered with Tusla - The Child and Family Agency. Trained, motivated and friendly staff are the cornerstone of our service.

We aim to provide a quality service and a stimulating environment for children to develop their social, personal and educational skills and learn through a planned curriculum.

Your child's welfare and your peace of mind is most important to us. We provide a warm, loving, home-from-home environment, where each child is treated with respect and will develop and learn as individuals while feeling safe and secure.

We have a comprehensive set of policies and procedures that our staff are obliged to adhere to. This handbook is a shorter version of the main document, developed for your convenience. You are welcome to read our main document at any time. Just ask us!

Thank you for choosing Ballyhall Community Steiner Kindergarten.

Manager

1. Children's Charter

- ✓ *Children's welfare and their rights to secure, healthy and happy childhood are paramount.*
- ✓ *The experiences children receive in their early years are critically important in terms of future development.*
- ✓ *Children are entitled to expect that all adults will respect, uphold and preserve their rights and to ensure that their feelings and wishes are considered.*
- ✓ *Children should have the opportunity to make choices and develop a sense of responsibility for their own actions appropriate to their age.*
- ✓ *Children, parents and carers should not be discriminated against, particularly in relation to colour, age, race, religion, gender, disability medical conditions or background.*
- ✓ *Parents should be recognised and respected as children's first and continuing educators.*

2. Our Purpose

We offer a Part-time service as defined in the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. These are the regulations that govern our service and we are inspected under these regulations by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

We cater for children aged 2 years to 5 years and 8 months. We open 48 weeks per year and daily from 8:45am to 12:45pm, Monday to Friday. We have capacity to cater for 32 children at any one time and our ratios are listed in this booklet. This service is a community-based facility operated by a Board of Directors and managed by John McDonald.

KEY PERSONNEL:

Manager (Person in charge):	John McDonald
Deputy in the absence of Manager:	Sarah Telford
Health and Safety Officer:	Sarah Telford
Fire Officer:	Catherine Reville
First Aid Co-ordinator:	John McDonald
Designated Liaison Officer:	Sarah Telford
Deputy Designated Liaison Officer:	John McDonald
Data Controller:	John McDonald

Mission Statement:

Ballyhall Steiner Kindergarten is committed to providing high-quality, Steiner-based childcare, holistic education, and family support service to the community in the local area. As a community-based project, we strive for social integration.

KEY INFORMATION:

Opening Hours:	8:45am to 12:45pm
No of Weeks per year opened:	47
Closures:	Easter, Christmas and August
Capacity:	32
Age Range:	2 years to 5 years and 8 months
Ratios:	2 – 3 years: 1:6 3 – 6 years: 1:8
Curriculum:	Steiner Play based emergent curriculum
Funding Schemes Offered:	The FREE two-year preschool programme (ECCE) NCS
Address:	Ballyhall, Callan, Co Kilkenny
Phone Number:	056 77 06507
Email:	Bhsteinerkg@gmail.com

Aims:

Ballyhall Steiner Kindergarten aims:

- To establish a centre of excellence in childcare and family support.
- To establish a community childcare service open to all regardless of ability/disability, financial status, race, sex, political beliefs, spiritual beliefs, or marital status.
- To create a safe space for children to play freely and creatively and to accompany them as they grow and develop through their early years
- To keep the principles of imitation and imagination at the centre of the work with the young child.
- To incorporate the rhythm of the seasons and festivals.
- To continue to develop our service, responding to the times with varying and new needs.
- To provide part-time care.

Objectives:

- The Steiner/Waldorf principles support the children in our kindergarten by creating an environment which is beautiful, harmonious, and peaceful in its forms and colours.
- Working with rhythm creates security and soul nourishment for the children. Rhythm helps in the development of the social, physical, and emotional realm.
- Celebrating festivals and birthdays brings reverence for life and joy and beauty to the senses. Repetition is nourishing for the growing child.
- We aim to support all families within the community.

We deliver the following curriculum:

1. Steiner
2. Play based emergent curriculum

Ballyhall Kindergarten is a limited company and is governed by company law. The board of directors meet at least 4 times per year. The Committee is made up of some directors and some others. There is a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary whose election takes place at the annual general meeting. Ideally there would be sub-committees; as a community service, the kindergarten needs the input of all parents to help its operation in areas as diverse as fundraising, support of the administrator, maintenance, and marketing to name just a few.

Ballyhall Kindergarten is run by a committee which consists of members, all of which are elected by the parents' group at the AGM.

Chairperson: Catherine-Ann O'Connell

Director: Aideen Da Rocha

Director: Renata Janek

Director: Kareen Pennefeather

Director: Ciara O'Connor

Director: Kareen Pennefather

Director: Medb Helen Lambert Gallgher

Secretary: Etienne Roche

Manager: John McDonald

Finance: John McDonald

Teacher: Sarah Telford

Teacher: Catherine Reville

Teacher: Liz Devine

Teacher: Claire Norman

Teacher: Rachel Devine

3. Our Facilities

- Two large, bright, spacious rooms
- Fully fenced, well-equipped outdoor area
- Safety fencing and safe set-down area
- Trained and qualified staff
- Summer camps

The classrooms are designed in such a way as to meet the developing needs of each individual child. The children are guided through a range of educational and play activities at their own pace. Our staff create a positive and secure environment where children feel confident in exploring their surroundings.

4. What you Should Bring for your Child

- Spare clothes appropriate to the seasons
- Wellies and outdoor gear
- Sun cream, sun-hat

Ballyhall Kindergarten supports the child's right to a nourishing, supportive and appropriate environment. We acknowledge that all children learn from their environment through the sense impressions they receive and their imitation of what they experience around them, we encourage parents to be aware of this and consider the environment to which the child is exposed to, including social media and screen time. Also, children should leave their toys at home, there are enough to be played with in the kindergarten.

5. Curriculum

We are fully committed to being guided by the principles of Síolta and the national curriculum framework Aistear. We recognise how important high quality early childhood experience can be in children's lives. This Curriculum aims to encourage active learning, problem solving, effective communication, creativity and socialisation. It aims to give children a good start which will benefit their long-term success in life. This service recognises the diversity of experiences and relationships that shape children's lives.

Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework:

Aistear is Ireland's curriculum framework for children from birth to six years. It assists us plan for and provide challenging and enjoyable learning experiences that can enable all children to grow and develop as competent and confident learners in the context of loving relationships with others. *Aistear* describes the types of learning and development that is important for children in their early years and offers ideas and suggestions on how these might be nurtured. We use the Aistear guidelines to help plan our curriculum. We also encourage you as parents to research this curriculum framework and the benefits of play. The research is so clear about the benefits of play, so it is not surprising that play is central to the Irish early childhood curriculum

framework. The Irish word 'Aistear' means 'Journey' and together we look forward to supporting your child's learning journey in Ballyhall Community Steiner Kindergarten.

We encourage learning through free play with a range of activities including imaginative play, books & storytelling, music activities, sand and water, arts and crafts and energetic play. We encourage messy play as we believe the benefits are enormous for children. We believe that the 'process' of making a piece of artwork is more important than the 'end product' so make sure you support your child when they present their masterpieces to you and remember it was created from their imagination and their wonderful skills.

Computers:

Computers are not available to children in the service and children do not have access to the internet

6. Admission and Enrolment

We aim to be clear and transparent about our enrolment policy.

- Priority will be given to siblings of children attending our service. Places are then allocated on a first-come, first served basis.
- A waiting list is established when all places are taken and child at top of the list is given first available place depending on availability for the type of place required.
- Children with additional needs and disabilities are welcome based on the resources available to us and any decisions regarding enrolment will be made in the best interest of the child.
- Parents/guardians are required to complete the Registration Form.
- All details regarding a child must be completed and any relevant important information or specific diet or health requirements must be noted.
- A deposit of €75 is taken in advance when a child is given a place. Deposits are taken off the fees bill for September or October.
- We ask you to clarify any guardian or custody information that may be relevant at Registration

7. Clothing

No uniform is necessary, but we do ask that all children wear suitable, comfortable clothes, ideal for art work and outdoor messy play. (No 'good' clothes please).

8. Allergies

Please inform us if your child suffers from any allergies. This is recorded on the Registration Form. A Care Plan may be required, especially if your child needs life-saving medication. Management will discuss this with you.

9. Children with Additional Needs

We are committed to providing all children with the opportunity to access our service regardless of their ability but within the expertise and resources available and in accordance with the best interests of the child. Your child may benefit from assistance from AIM, the Better Start **Access and Inclusion Model** (AIM) which is designed to ensure that children who may have additional needs or require additional supports can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. **This applies to ECCE children only.** Please talk to us about this if you think your child is eligible for supports under this programme. There are a range of possible supports available.

For more information check <http://aim.gov.ie/> and or Policies and Procedures

10. Fees

- Fees for non-ECCE children are €4.50 per hour or €18.00 per day.
- Fees must be paid monthly in advance by cash, cheque or bank transfer.
- A receipt will be issued for cash & cheque payments and upon request for bank transfer payments.
- A deposit of €75 is taken in advance when a child is given a place. Deposits are taken off the fees bill for September or October.

Reviewing Fees:

- Fees are reviewed annually
- Parents/guardians will be informed by giving service notice of increase in fees.
- Increase in fees each year will be related to the cost of living increases and/or exceptional cost circumstances.

Payments in relation to Holidays or Illness of the Child/Children:

- Parents/guardians will be required to pay for any days/weeks that their child/children do not attend the service.
- In the case of a long term, medically certified illness of a child, parents/guardians are advised to keep in contact with the manager on a regular basis. Further arrangements will be discussed with the Parent/Guardian.
- There is no reduction in fees for Public Holidays.

Closure in Exceptional Circumstances:

In the event of the closure of the service in exceptional circumstances that are beyond the control of the management, i.e. adverse weather conditions, the following will apply:

- Full fees for the closure period will be payable.
- If the service is open during adverse weather and your child does not attend the full fee will be payable.

Late Collection of Child/Children from the Preschool:

- Parents/guardians are advised to keep within their agreed time for collection of their child/children for the above reasons. We require that all children should be collected by the designated time in order that the service may follow health and safety practices to ensure that the service may close safely.
- Please see the Collections and Arrivals Policy and Procedure.

Withdrawal of Children:

Parents/guardians by signing this handbook agree to

- Give 4 weeks notice in writing that the child/children are leaving the service

Non-payment of Fees:

- Non-payment of fees may result in loss of placement.
- A repeated failure to pay fees may result in suspension or withdrawal of your child's place until the matter is resolved.
- Any delays in payments must be discussed in advance and agreed with management.

Organisational Links

Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship: We operate under the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship of the UK and Ireland (SWSF) and under BLATHÚ (Steiner Early Childhood Association). It is an Equal Opportunities Organisation.

NVCO: Through its membership of ISKA, Ballyhall Kindergarten participates in the collaborative work of the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations, particularly in support of the County Childcare Committee and local childcare networks

BLATHÚ: Steiner Early Childhood Association works with other NVCO's to improve the quality of childcare in Ireland and is active with other Steiner based childcare networks to improve and extend the quality of the services offered by its members.

Early Childhood Ireland: Is the leading membership organisation in the early years sector

11. Working in Partnership with You

- We recognise the importance of working in partnership with you and that you have a central role in educating your child
- We have an "open door" policy where families are always welcome but where the needs of all of the children in our care are always the first priority
- We will give you regular information about your child's progress and welcome your contribution – please share information with us
- We will hold meetings at times suitable to you and have a comments and complaints policy if you encounter any problem

- Please tell us of any difficulties that your child is experiencing at home such as bereavement, illness, relationship breakdown, a new baby – all these can change a child's behaviour and we want to help
- If a parent needs to be contacted in relation to a concern about behaviour we will do this in a helpful rather than a complaining manner and we will together, try to resolve the situation
- Regular exchange of information with parents is important. Please inform us of change of personal details (e.g.) new house, phone number.

12. Settling In

We aim to ensure children feel safe and secure in the absence of their parents/carers. We will therefore endeavour to make the settling-in process a positive experience for children and will work closely in partnership with parents/carers to ensure this is achieved. We recognise that in some cases there may be particular difficulties experienced by children, parents/carers, and staff during the settling-in period and we are prepared to explore and consider various ways of settling children into the service. All children are individuals and we plan to meet their individual needs and resolve any difficulties quickly and smoothly. If you are experiencing challenges in relation to settling your child, we will work with you to assist in making this transition.

13. Attendance, Arrival and Collection

Attendance:

It is essential to the efficient running of this service that you inform the Manager if your child is unable to attend the service and follow up with a telephone call to inform the Manager when the child will be returning. A register of the times and days that children attend is kept.

Arrivals:

- Parents/guardians gain access to the service by keying in a code at the gate or awaiting a member of staff to let them in.
- A member of staff will register each child on arrival.
- Parents/guardians are asked to ensure that the external gate is securely closed for the safety of all the children when they leave.
- If a child will not be attending, we request that parents/guardians advise us.

Collection Policy:

- Parents/guardians must collect their child by the agreed collection time. Parents/guardians will be asked to give the names of at least two other people who

are authorised to collect the child. If the parent is late arriving to collect the child, the person in charge will endeavour to contact the parent. In the event of being unable to contact the parent, the person in charge will contact the other named persons to collect the child. Make sure you inform those named on the Registration form as collectors.

- Children will not be released into the care of a person under the age of 18 years or to a person who appears to be incapable of caring for the child. Should this situation arise the staff will contact an authorised collector. If no one is available to collect your child, we may have no option but to contact the TUSLA social work child protection team or Gardai.
- We ask that parents/guardians to do not collect their child from the service while under the influence of alcohol. This can lead to embarrassment and worry within the team. If parents/guardians feel that this situation may arise they should arrange for an authorised collector to collect their child.
- In the event of a parent collecting another child a prior arrangement must be made.

Attempted collection by a person who is not on the child's records:

Children should be collected only by the adult/s named on the 'Collection Authorisation'. Should the person responsible be unable to collect the child, a letter of explanation must be presented signed and dated by the parent / guardian with a contact telephone number, the staff member will then telephone the parent prior to allowing the child leave the service. If the parent personally arranges this with the staff the telephone call may not be necessary, but signed consent will be required at all times. If the parent has not been personally contacted to authorise the collection of their child, the child **will not** be permitted to leave the premises until an authorised collector, as recorded in the child's records is available.

Late Collection of Children:

We understand that sometimes a parent is unavoidably delayed when coming to collect their child. We will ensure that the child receives a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible. Parents/guardians in this situation must contact the Manager to say that they will be late and arrange with staff what to do. Children are only released from the service to individuals named by the parent.

A late fee of €5.00 will be charged for the first 15 minutes and €5.00 for every minute thereafter as set out in our late collection Policy.

Early Collection of Children:

We ask that parents/guardians let us know if they will be picking up their child early so that we can have the child ready and minimise disrupting the rest of the group.

Late Drop Off:

We ask parents/guardians to drop children off at the correct time to avoid disrupting the group once they have started and so that they child benefits from the full daily programme.

Separated and Divorced Parents:

Married parents are automatically joint guardians of their children. Neither separation nor divorce changes this.

- We cannot refuse either parent to collect their child unless a court order is in place.
- We ask that parents give us information on any person that **does not** have legal access to the child.
- Where custody of a child is granted to one parent, we would ask parents to clarify the circumstances with us. This information will remain confidential and will only be made known to the relevant staff. If there are any legal documents i.e. custody order, barring order we would ask parents to provide us with a copy to keep on file.

Attempted collection by a parent who has been denied access in a court order:

- A parent who has been denied access to a child through a court order will not be permitted on to the premises
- If the parent who has been denied access becomes threatening or violent and insists on removing the child from the service, this will be viewed as trespassing. The service will in this event contact the Local Garda.

By law, an unmarried mother is the automatic guardian of a child born outside of marriage. In some circumstances, unmarried fathers have automatic access. The service should be informed about access rights. Unmarried fathers will automatically become guardians of their children if they meet a cohabitation requirement. An unmarried father who cohabits for 12 months with the child's mother, including 3 months following a child's birth, will automatically become the child's guardian. This provision is not retrospective, so guardianship will only be acquired automatically where the parents live together for at least 12 months after 18 January 2016.

14. Car Parking

There are designated car parking spots available for parents. We ask that parents ensure they do not block our neighbours when dropping/collecting their child.

15. Comments and Complaints

We love compliments! You are welcome to make any suggestions, comments or complaints to the Manager. We believe that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We will give prompt

and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the service. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with any concerns or complaints that are raised. If you wish to make a complaint, please consult the complaints policy.

More details on making a complaint can be found on our Policies & Procedures a copy of which will be displayed in the Boot Room

16. Confidentiality

We respect the right for all information, records and observations to be treated with respect and with due attention to confidentiality and privacy. Information will not be shared with third parties, unless required under law or Child Protection Guidelines. For more information please see our full policy on confidentiality and our Child Protection GDPR policy. We also have a Privacy Notice that explains the data that is collected, stored, shared and retained under the regulations.

17. Equal Opportunities

Equal opportunity for children to learn is a fundamental aspect of this service curriculum. Equality means open access for every child and family to participate in the service's activities. This service is committed to promoting equality of opportunity. We promote equal opportunities through a wide range of policies and procedures that are reflected in the practice of our early years setting. This service is committed to promoting equality of opportunity:

- ✓ We encourage children to celebrate difference and multiculturalism
- ✓ We encourage children to show respect for all cultures, religions, races, abilities, disabilities, and genders
- ✓ We help children to become empathetic and considerate to their peers
- ✓ We foster a sense of fairness and respect and we will challenge any discrimination
- ✓ We nurture each child's identity and self-concept
- ✓ We try to use our curriculum and equipment to encourage acceptance of all others, irrespective of cultural background
- ✓ Children will be discouraged from gender stereotyping
- ✓ Boys and girls are to have equal opportunity and be actively encouraged to use all activities.
- ✓ Any discrimination (language, behaviour or remarks) by children, parents/carers or staff/volunteers is unacceptable in our service
- ✓ We aim to show respect for and awareness of all major events in the lives of the children and families in the service and in the wider society.

Note: We are always delighted to learn about different cultures and to celebrate diversity. If you can help us in this regard, please let us know.

18. Supporting Positive Behaviour

We believe that children should be encouraged to grow and develop to their full potential in a suitably planned environment. The children will know what is expected of them, and where clear limits are set, appropriate to their age and stage of development and any special needs they may have.

We have a comprehensive policy available on request.

- We want your child to enjoy his or her time with us.
- We believe in children's ability to control their own lives, to make choices and accept responsibility for their actions.
- We use a positive approach to behaviour management and encourage good behaviour.
- We encourage children to respect themselves, each other and property. We aim to provide a happy, caring environment with challenging activities.
- In the case of a particular incident or persistent unacceptable behaviour we always discuss ways forward with parents.

19. Observations and Assessments

In order to plan, prepare and organise for good quality care and education, adults need to observe children, review and evaluate the curriculum regularly and maintain systematic records. By observing how children respond to activities, staff will be able to evaluate if the activities and resources they have provided meet the needs of all the children and helps them to plan a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum. Observations also enable staff to provide challenges and extensions so that each child is able to progress. All observations / records / assessments will be treated with confidentiality. Sharing observations with parents/carers strengthens the partnership between the home and the service, giving understanding and information and allowing staff and parents/carers to do their best for each child.

20. Health and Safety

The safety and wellbeing of every child attending our service is paramount. For the full risk management policy and health & safety policies consult the full policy and procedure document. We will assess any potential risks to the safety of the pre-school children, employees or visitors attending the school, and will take the necessary steps to either eliminate those risks or mitigate them.

21. Child Protection

The full and comprehensive Child Protection Policy is available. Please ask the Manager for details.

We have a duty to care for every child attending our service. We will follow *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Our Duty to Care* published by the Department of Health and Children in this regard. This details our responsibilities and outlines the reporting procedures that we use if we are concerned about the welfare of a child.

The Designated Liaison Person is John McDonald and the Deputy designated liaison person is Sarah Telford. Both contact details will be displayed on the Parent's Notice Board. All our staff are mandated to report any concerns of abuse.

22. Healthy Eating

The service promotes healthy nutritional choices. We always sit with the children and supervise them when eating and drinking snacks or meals. Snack time will be enjoyed, and socialisation and interaction encouraged. Children are encouraged to feed themselves as appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Please let us know if your child has an allergy or dietary/religious/cultural food preferences. Cultural and religious dietary habits are respected. Parents/guardians are requested to provide details of foods that children can or cannot eat. If your child has a severe allergy that requires medical intervention (e.g. epi-pen) we will develop an emergency care plan with you and ensure our staff are trained in medication management.

- All meals are prepared by the Kindergarten
- A variety of foods is selected from each of the four main food groups every day:
 1. Bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes
 2. Fruit and vegetables
 3. Milk and dairy foods
- A Menu planning sheet will be used weekly to plan meals listing ingredients and allergens.

Drinking water is always available.

We will inform parents/guardians if we are concerned or if they haven't eaten well.

23. Outings (where possible)

It is part of the child's development to experience fresh air and access to a variety of outdoor experiences. This service is committed to planning and undertaking appropriate

supervised outings. The location for the outing will be familiar to staff and a risk assessment will be carried out prior to the visit with the children. Parents are always notified in advanced and are required to complete an Authorisation form.

24. Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is essential to early childhood development. Children learn social skills by interacting with other children, with adults, and even with objects and natural materials found in the environment. The outdoor environment exposes children to opportunities to explore, question, and develop theories about how things work. Negotiation, language, and cooperation are all skills that develop through a well-planned outdoor curriculum. Outdoor play, physical activity and fresh air are important to children's overall health and wellbeing. Outdoor play is an important part of our daily curriculum. We aim to ensure that children play outdoors every day. Our intention, through our outdoor programme is to enhance gross motor skills, co-ordination, balance and body awareness. It also gives children opportunities to socialise freely and use imagination and initiative.

Clothing:

It is important that children are dressed appropriately for outdoor activity. Parents are asked to ensure their children have the appropriate attire for the weather including hats and coats. Spare clothes and sun cream must be supplied by parents and everything should be labelled.

25. Security

- The main door is locked for security reasons and there is no unauthorised access
- Parents are requested not to admit anyone else into the service whilst entering or leaving unless they know them and to check that all doors are securely closed behind them, at all times

26. Accidents and Incidents

If your child is involved in an accident or incident a record will be written up and shared with you. You will be asked to sign these records. Staff members at this service are trained in First Aid and will treat minor injuries. If a child needs to attend hospital a staff member will travel too.

27. Illness and Exclusions

You have entrusted your child into our care and we aim to ensure this environment is as healthy as possible and we want to minimise your child's risk of infection. We encourage you to get your child immunised according to the HSE recommendations. Children with the following cannot be admitted to the service:

- Acute symptoms of food poisoning/gastro-enteritis.

- An oral temperature over 37.5 degrees C. Children that have a temperature will not be allowed to come to the centre and will be sent home. If a child develops a temperature while at the centre and it will not come down the parents will be called, and the child will be monitored, and temperature recorded until their arrival.
- An earache.
- A deep, hacking cough.
- Severe congestion.
- Difficulty breathing or untreated wheezing.
- An unexplained rash.
- Vomiting (in last 48 hours). Children who vomit in the centre and are sent home will not be allowed back into the centre until at least 48 hours has passed
- Diarrhoea (in last 48 hours).
- Complaints of a stiff neck and headache with one or more of the above symptoms
- Lice or nits
- An infectious /contagious condition.
- A child who is on an antibiotic for less than 48 hours

If a child becomes ill at the service parents will be contacted so that the child can be taken home. If, for some reason, the parent cannot collect they should organise an authorised adult to collect their child. All children must provide up to date record of immunisations. Should there be an outbreak of any infectious disease or incident you will be informed.

Head Lice:

Head-lice are very common amongst children. All parents should check their child's head regularly for lice. If there is an outbreak you will be informed. If your child is infected, you will be asked to refrain from bringing your child to the service until it is cleared.

28. Medication

We do not routinely administer 'Calpol' or other non-prescription/prescription medications. We only administer medicines with the correct signed permission.

Medicines must only be brought into this service for administration by the staff when it is essential. This means where it would be detrimental to the child's health if it were not to be administered. Medicine should be in its original container with the doctor's instructions. We cannot administer medication without its original packaging. We cannot administer medication not licensed for the age of your child or where the instructions are not written in English.

If your child has an allergy or a medical condition such as diabetes, epilepsy etc. you will be asked to complete a medical emergency care plan.

29. Fire Safety

All our staff are trained in fire prevention and evacuation. Your child will participate in monthly fire drills. The Designated Fire Safety Person is **Catherine Reville**.

30. Photographs and Other Recordings

We occasionally take photographs of the children and these may be displayed within the individual child's scrapbook. You will be required to give consent to allow this

- Parents are only permitted to take photos or video record their own child at the discretion of the Manager.
- You will be asked to sign a photo consent form upon registration.
- We will dispose of photos in accordance with our Child Protection policy

31. Data Protection

Under the provisions of The Data Protection Acts of 1988 and 2003, and the 2016 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) this service has appointed a "Data Controller" to manage the storage of personal information about staff, children and families in its computerised and manual records. All data is stored confidentially.

The Data Controller is John McDonald

32. Staff

It is the policy of this service to recruit and select the best candidate for any vacant position within our Service. All our staff are qualified, and their qualifications are on display. Our staff are one of the key resources we have in achieving our aims and objectives of providing good quality care to the children in our Service. All our staff are Garda vetted and reference checked. We are committed to training and development of staff in order to meet and exceed your expectations.

33. Withdrawal from the Service

Parents/guardians sign up to agree in the Parents/guardians Fee Agreement Form that they will:

- Give 4 weeks notice in writing that the child/children are leaving the service

34. Privacy Statement

Your Personal Data - What the Service Needs:

Ballyhall Community Steiner Kindergarten is what is known as the 'Controller' of the personal data you provide to it. We take your privacy seriously and will only use personal information about you and your child to provide the services you have requested from us and administer your account.

We collect a variety of personal data to be able to deliver the service requested by you. Most of this data is captured on an enrolment form or on the forms required to obtain government funded fees or fee subsidisation (where applicable).

The Booking/Enquiry form includes name, and contact details of the child and his/her family for the purpose of adding the child to a waiting list. This will be kept for the duration of the waiting list and will be destroyed when the waiting period expires, or the child is removed from the waiting list by the parent/guardian.

The Enrolment Form includes your name, address, details of your child including date of birth plus further detail on any specific medical and other relevant health-care details, and history necessary to allow us to ensure the welfare and safety of your child. Because of the sensitive nature of much this information, you will be asked to confirm your consent for us to collect and hold the information before it does so. We also ask you for other permissions regarding other data such as photographs etc

In addition to this, the Service will, at your request and again with your consent, gather additional information on your nationality, religion, and ethnic origin, if you believe this to be an important factor in providing the appropriate care and support for your child.

The enrolment form also collects the contact details and phone numbers of your child's emergency contacts and authorised collectors. You are required to ensure these persons agree to their information being stored and you will be asked to confirm this on the enrolment form.

The Funding Form (eg ECCE registration form) may collect personal data including your PPS number and your social welfare status. This is only collected to allow us process funding applications on your behalf to allow you access subsidies or free care and education for your child (where eligible and applicable).

Why the Service Needs Data/Purpose of the Processing:

The Service needs your basic personal data to provide you with its services in line with this overall contract. The Service will not collect any personal data from you it does not need to provide and oversee this service to you.

What the Service Does with Data/Disclosure:

All personal data is processed by management or by staff designated by Management. To deliver our services effectively, we may need to exchange your details with:

- The relevant funding bodies such as DCYA, Pobal, and the Childcare Committees,
- Regulators such as TUSLA or the Revenue Commissioners,

- Inspectors (TUSLA, Department of Education and Science and Health & Safety Authority), or
- External personnel such as HR contractors, accountants and professional advisors.

The Service has a Data Protection Policy in place to oversee the effective and secure processing of your personal data.

How Long the Service Keeps Data/Retention Period and Criteria Used:

The Service will keep your and your child's personal data for as long as he or she remains within the Service, and for the period afterwards required by the relevant statutory and legislative guidelines that apply. More information on the Service's retention procedures can be found by contacting the Manager directly at the addresses given below

What are your rights?

If you wish to see what information the Service holds on you or your child, simply contact the Manager either by post or email and we will endeavour to respond to you within 30 days of receipt of your request.

If at any point you believe the information the Services processes on you is incorrect, you may request to have it corrected. You can contact the Manager at the address shown below. If you wish to raise a complaint on how the Service has handled your personal data, you can also contact the Manager.

Data Controller: Ballyhall Community Steiner Kindergarten, John McDonald

Contact Points: Sarah Telford, Catherine Reville, Claire Norman , Liz Devine and Rachel Devine

Manager: John McDonald

Data Protection Officer: John McDonald

Ballyhall

Callan

Co Kilkenny

05677065

Email: bhsteinerkg@gmail.com

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe the Service is not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain directly to the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner at:

Email: info@dataprotection.ie

Postal Address: Data Protection Commissioner
Canal House
Station Road
Portarlinton
R32 AP23 Co. Laois

35. Steiner Based Childcare

The Austrian philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner wished to create a form of education which would help pupils achieve clarity of thought, sensitivity of feeling and strength of will. After listening to his lectures, the workers at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart asked him to form a school for their children and in 1919 the first Waldorf school was founded. Today, from the favelas in Sao Paulo to the villages of Nepal, there are some 800 schools, 1500 early years centres in over 50 countries serving children from birth to eighteen years of age.

The educational philosophy springs from a recognition of three seven-year cycles of development; from birth to seven, from seven to fourteen and from fourteen to twenty-one. At each stage the education is designed to work with the unfolding abilities and changing needs of the child. These stages connect with the development of the all-round human qualities of thinking, feeling, and willing. In the first phase the active or **will** aspect predominates, in the second the affective or **feeling** and in the third the cognitive or **thinking**.

Our approach to not forcing formal learning is borne out of a desire to protect the faculties of feeling and willing which are so often marginalized in the rush to meet early, and unnecessary intellectual attainment targets. Children who have suffered from early pressure to learn often lack the will and enthusiasm later to study for themselves. Any education that neglects children's feelings runs the risk of creating adults with emotional or other difficulties.

The carefully structured environment is designed to foster personal and social learning. During the early years we teach by example and learning is integrated rather than subject-based. Our curriculum aims to adapt itself to the child. This takes time and the children in our kindergartens are given time to unfold at their own pace.

Young children are gifted players and imitators. These creative faculties, which appear shortly after birth and recede at around seven, are the child's personal pedagogues. The Waldorf teacher co-operates and works with these powerful educational forces. Respect for the wisdom of childhood and for the child's unique mode of experiencing and learning is the first step towards affirming the inner child.

Each day some time is dedicated to free creative play. Studies demonstrate that good players show more empathy towards others and have less aggression; are able to see things from the perspective of the other, and show less signs of fear, sadness and fatigue. Play also strengthens the imagination. Through play children are able to exercise and consolidate their ability to understand and think and to develop and strengthen their concentration. Creative play supports physical, emotional and social development and allows children to learn through investigation, exploration and discovery. It encourages children to become inventive and adaptable.

We are a community of 'doers' and our work is a combination of practical and artistic activity. We garden, clean and cook; we bake our own bread together; share and eat it at meal-times. Children love to help and develop a wide range of motor skills. The presence of a working adult creates an atmosphere which helps children to become independently active, to find their own learning situations through play. To see an adult at work, perhaps in the activity of carving a spoon, in which care, skill, concentration and perseverance are all demanded, is a wonderful example to an ever-watchful child – a lesson in sustained application of will-power. Implicit in everything we do but also in how we do it – is the value base of the teacher. How we handle our tools and materials, even our gestures and body language, are all registered and internalised by the child.

The teacher who sets example may then have certain expectations of children. A variety of songs, stories and poems including verses in French, German or other languages are learnt naturally by 'heart' not 'head'. Children develop good memories, which do not depend on the printed word. The forces of imitation naturally diminish and give way to a new kind of knowing after 6 years old. Only then, when we feel children have reached a stage of maturity and are genuinely 'school-ready', do we begin formal instruction.

Children's learning experiences gain meaning by their relevance to life. We provide opportunities for learning which are embedded within the business of daily living. In an integrated context children have a unified experience of the world and are able to gather strength and security from it. Maths in the Waldorf kindergarten might take place at the cooking table where food is being prepared. Thinly sliced carrots make wonderful natural circles, each containing its own tiny 'sun' which appears when held up to the light. The carrot can also be cut, chopped, cubed and counted and has the added virtue of being able to be eaten later in soup! Maths is encountered not as an abstraction but serving human needs.

In a secure environment, children speak freely and learn to listen to others. We concentrate on the oral tradition by telling many stories. A well told story creates an appreciation for the human voice and the beauty and rhythms of language. It also helps to extend vocabulary and aids the development of a good memory and a rich imagination. Fairy tales and nature stories address the feeling realm and awaken a fine moral sense. Puppet shows by the teachers and children develop dramatic skills through

narrative and dialogue. Children also sing together and take part in eurythmy – movement which works with language and music.

Steiner Waldorf kindergartens identify rhythm as an important educational principle. Children need the reassurance of continuity and regular events punctuate the kindergarten year, week and day. Seasonal activities celebrate the cycles of the year. The seasonal area reflects the changing natural world throughout the year, as do the themes of our songs, stories and poems.

Each week has its own regular rhythm of recurring activities: baking day, painting day, gardening day.

Every day has its own smaller rhythms. These help the child to feel secure and to know what to expect; a tidy-up song for example, might signal the end of one activity and the beginning of another. The day is structured so that there is a varied pace with periods of contraction and expansion providing a balance between times of activity and times of rest. Each day has a special time – a quiet moment to experience reverence. Celebrating a variety of festivals together provides an opportunity for rich cultural and religious experiences and involves the wider community.

There is a rhythmic alteration between the child's time (creative play, outside time) and the teacher's time (ring-time, story) – the teacher's time being short at this age. Working with rhythm helps children to live with change, to find their place in the world, and to begin to understand the past, present and future. Attention to rhythm promotes healthy development and leads to a balanced life later.

Repetition also plays a key role in establishing continuity and aids the development of memory which is strengthened by recurring experiences. Daily, weekly and yearly events are remembered, and eagerly anticipated a second time round and stories are told not just once, but many times. Repetition brings the opportunity for children to familiarise themselves with the material and to deepen their relationship to it.

The kindergarten is designed to be a warm and friendly place with a homelike environment. We are conscious of the importance of a happy, smooth transition from home to school and close liaison between parents and teacher is encouraged at all times. Parental involvement is high – most kindergartens have parent and toddler sessions and already have a good rapport with the family before the child enters kindergarten.

We believe that children whose needs are met, who are valued and not hurried through their childhood, are more likely to become well-adjusted adults who succeed in life and are able to contribute to society.

The Early Years Curriculum

Children enter the kindergarten between the ages of 2 and 5. Group sizes vary. Traditionally, five morning sessions per week are offered, each session lasting for approximately four hours. Children take up provision according to age and need.

General Principles

Cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills are accorded equal value in the kindergarten and many different competencies are developed. Activities reflect the interests and developmental stages of the child and the carefully structured environment is designed to foster both personal and social learning.

Teaching is by example rather than by direct instruction and is integrated rather than subject-based. The curriculum is adapted to the child. In recognition of its vital role in early education, children are given time to play.

Emphasis is given to regular patterns of activities both within the day and over each week. A cyclical pattern is reflected in themes of work related to seasons of the year.

The Nature of the Early Years

Physical, emotional and cognitive development are subtly and inextricably linked. This view underpins and informs the early years curriculum which is tailored to meet the child's changing needs during each phase.

At each developmental stage, the child presents a particular set of physical, emotional and intellectual characteristics which require a particular (empathetic) educational response in return. This is the basis of a child-centred education. The formative period before second dentition, is seen as the period of greatest physical growth and development. Structures in the brain are being refined and elaborated, a process which is not completed until after the change of teeth, and until that time the young child's primary mode of learning is through doing and experiencing - he or she 'thinks' with the entire physical being.

The nature of this early learning should be self-motivated, allowing the child to come to know the world in the way most appropriate to his or her age - through active feeling, touching, exploring and imitating, in other words, through doing. Only when new capabilities appear, at around the seventh year, is the child physically, emotionally and intellectually ready for formal instruction. Through experiential, self-motivated physical activity the small child 'grasps' the world in order to understand it - an essential prerequisite for the later activity of grasping the world through concepts. Children are encouraged to master physical skills before abstract intellectual ones.

Early Years Education - Aims and Objectives

Providing opportunities for children to be active in meaningful imitation

To complement the maturational timetable, we acknowledge imitation as the prime means of children's learning - hence adults in our kindergartens teach by imitation and most of what children learn at this stage is imparted by example. The child learns for life from life (the acquisition of the mother tongue for example, takes place largely through imitation) and children model their behaviour on what happens around them. Adult activities stimulate direct responses in the young child and teachers carry out their daily tasks in such a way as to be worthy of imitation.

The Kindergarten is a community of "doers" and we support our community through our work, for example by baking our own bread. The children are welcome, but not required to help. The activity of the teacher may inspire the children to become independently active, finding their own learning situations in play. Children perceive and register everything the adults do - it isn't only what one does before the young child but also how one does it. Teachers are conscious of their own moral influence upon the child and of the development of good habits through imitation. One would expect to see a range of suitable activities for imitation taking place in the kindergarten. These might include domestic tasks such as baking, cooking, cleaning, caring for the room etc. - all activities with a social, practical, moral and educational basis.

The forces of imitation, which are so important in helping the young child to know and understand the world in this first phase, naturally diminish and give way to a new kind of knowing which appears at around the time of second dentition. This is the time when teaching 'by example' moves into more formal teaching by instruction. The curriculum changes as one phase of child development comes to a close and another begins. (There is a similar shift in our curriculum at age 14 which corresponds to the changes which occur at puberty.)

Working with rhythm and repetition

Steiner Waldorf Kindergartens identify rhythm as an important educational principle. Children need the reassurance of continuity and regular events mark the kindergarten year, week and day. Seasonal activities celebrate the cycles of the year - Autumn in kindergarten might be a time for threshing and grinding and Spring a time for planting. A 'seasonal area' in the room or wider environment reflects the changing natural world throughout the year, as do the themes of our songs, stories and poems. In addition, each week has its own regular rhythm of recurring activities i.e. baking day, painting day, gardening day.

Every day has its own smaller rhythms which support the day's activities. These daily rhythms help the child to feel secure and to know what to expect, a tidy up song, for example, might signal the end of one activity and the beginning of another. The day is structured so that there is a varied pace - with periods of contraction and expansion - providing a balance between times of activity and times of rest. In practice, this might mean that creative play would be followed by a more concentrated circle time, or energetic outdoor activity by a quiet story. There is a rhythmic alternation between the 'child's time' (creative play, outside time) and the teacher's time (ring-time, story), the teacher's time being comparatively short at this age. Working with rhythm helps children to live with change, to find their place in the world, and to begin to understand the past, present and future. It provides a very real foundation for the understanding of time - what has gone before and what will follow - and helps children to relate to the natural and the human world. Attention to rhythm promotes healthy development and leads to a balanced life later.

Repetition also plays a key role in establishing continuity and in the healthy development of memory. Children's memories are strengthened by recurring experiences and daily, weekly and yearly events in kindergarten are remembered and often eagerly anticipated a second time around. Stories are told not just once, but many times - repetition brings the opportunity for children to familiarise themselves with the material and to deepen their relationship to it.

Encouraging personal, social and moral development

Children learn, through their creative play and through their daily social activities, to interact with each other. In kindergarten they learn to share, to work together, and to co-operate. They know and trust their teachers and are able to establish effective relationships with other children and adults. Teachers and children care for and respect each other.

We place much emphasis on caring for the environment - both inside and out. Wooden toys, for example, can be polished and mended, unlike their plastic counterparts. Where possible, gardening and composting activities introduce children to the idea of ecology and form an important part of the curriculum.

There are moments of reverence each day and teachers lovingly create opportunities for children to experience joy, awe and wonder. Kindness is practised by teachers and encouraged in the children. Festivals provide rich cultural and religious experiences for the child. Traditional fairy tales and nature stories address the feeling realm and gradually awaken a fine moral sense for knowing right from wrong. The teacher sets the example and has certain expectations of the children.

Providing an integrated learning experience

The learning experience of children under seven should be integrated and not compartmentalised. Young children need to experience the relevance of their world before they separate themselves from it and begin to analyse it in a detached way. Consequently learning in kindergarten is integrated rather than subject based. Mathematics and use of mathematical language, for example, might take place at the cooking table, where food is prepared (thinly sliced carrots make wonderful natural circles and have the added virtue of being able to be eaten later in soup!) and concepts such as addition and subtraction (or more or less), weight, measure, quantity and shape are grasped in a practical manner as part of daily life. Mealtimes offer an opportunity for the moral, social and mathematical to work together as children engage in place-setting and the sharing of food which has been prepared earlier for everyone to eat.

Through movement games, children recognise and recreate patterns - in, out, alternate, in front of, behind. Natural objects such as acorns, pine cones, conkers and shells are sorted, ordered and counted, as part of spontaneous play. Our children are directly involved in mathematical experience and use mathematical language in a natural way which is usually embedded in a social and moral context. Learning experiences for the young child are not separated from the business of daily living: we feel that learning gains meaning by its relevance to life.

As indicated above, a similar approach is taken to the teaching of language and literacy. Children develop competence in talking, listening and in the ability to use words with confidence they speak freely and learn to listen to others. Good speech and the development of aural skills are promoted. We concentrate on the oral tradition and the children listen to many wonderful stories - which belong to the literary heritage of the culture of childhood.

A well-told story creates an appreciation for the human voice and the beauty and rhythms of language. It also helps to extend vocabulary and to aid the development of a good memory. Children leave kindergarten with a rich and varied repertoire of songs, stories and poems; this might also include verses in French or German. Much of this learning will have taken place in the integrated way described - although story-time is always a very special event.

Children engage in many activities, such as sewing, which develop hand to eye co-ordination, manual dexterity and orientation (useful preparation for reading print from left to right). Children also discuss their own drawings and take great delight in telling stories by 'reading' their pictures. This activity promotes the development of verbal skills and frees the narrative from the printed text, thus encouraging children to use their own words. Many children also act out or perform puppet shows and develop dramatic skills through working with narrative and dialogue. Painting and drawing help with balance and symmetry and most five-year-olds are able to write their own name. Children experience the musicality of language and its social aspects through playing ring games and eurythmy, a form of movement which works with language and music.

The combination of these activities cultivates a love of language, promotes fluency and allows children time to become really familiar with the spoken word - the best preparation and foundation for the subsequent development of literacy. Use of language also affects cognitive development as well-chosen words and good syntax support clear thinking.

Encouraging learning through creative play and supporting physical development

Children are able to exercise and consolidate their ability to understand and to think through their play. Creative play supports physical, emotional and social development and allows children to learn through investigation, exploration and discovery. It also gives scope for the use of imagination - an essential aspect of human intelligence. Play encourages the child to become inventive and adaptable, and to work with initiative and flair. In addition it develops and strengthens concentration.

There is considerable evidence that children who score highest in socio-dramatic play also demonstrate the greatest gains in a number of cognitive areas such as higher intellectual competence, longer attention span, and more innovation and imaginativeness. Good players also show more empathy toward others, less aggression, and in general more social and emotional adjustment. We would expect time and space to be given to creative play and a selection of suitable objects, for instance cloths, shells, logs, domestic toys and dolls to be provided in order to support a variety of play situations.

Encouraging children to know and love the world

As mentioned in the section on rhythm and repetition, children develop a good relationship to the natural world. They learn to value its gifts and to understand its processes and patterns of change. Domestic tasks provide opportunities for elementary experiences in science and good use is made of the four elements. Children make toys from sheep's wool, wood, felt, cotton and other natural materials. Many items are made as gifts for family members. Family participation is encouraged and teachers, working with parents, create 'birthday stories' which are based on the child's personal biography and are told at special ceremonies to which families are invited. People in the community who practise a particular craft, or who have special skills, are often invited to visit kindergarten and many teachers take their children for short local walks.

Providing a safe child-friendly environment

The kindergarten should be a warm and welcoming place, an artistically shaped free space which serves as the setting for what the day's impulse brings. This 'impulse' is a mixture of child motivated play experiences and teacher structured activities. There are few 'finished' toys which demand to be used in a predetermined way. Furniture is small-scale and child-friendly and, as mentioned, the day is structured so as to provide the child with periods of activity and periods of rest. Groups are usually of a mixed age range and older children, who are familiar with the rhythm of the particular kindergarten, are able to help the younger members of the group to feel secure.

Working with parents

We are committed to establishing good relationships with our parents. We recognise the importance of a happy, smooth transitions from home to school and we work closely with our parents to achieve this end. Teachers promote and emphasise the importance of close partnerships with parents and provide a focus for parent support. Links are also created with parents through a range of social and school-based events and activities. Close liaison between parent and teacher is encouraged.

An example of a Kindergarten session

Perhaps the best way to exemplify the integration of the above educational aims is to describe a typical Kindergarten morning session. This example, of course, only highlights one range of activities. Normally each day of the week would have its own main focus and these vary with the changing seasons.

The Kindergarten staff spend hours in their Kindergartens both before the children arrive in the morning and after they have gone. There are activities and materials to prepare, of course, but more importantly there has to be the right mood in the place. The staff often meet in the morning to say a verse together before going to their rooms to be there when the children arrive.

As the children begin to arrive, the Kindergarten leader is already busy so that the children, can be given a homely welcome. At first there may be a period of free play with small groups of children choosing their area, perhaps getting the dolls up and dressed, building with small logs or driving a bus made from an upturned chair. The adults are usually engaged in some task, such as preparing the dough if it is baking day. There is conversation and some of the children may prefer to be around the adults, as children traditionally have been, watching, 'helping', while adults work, asking questions and so on. These informal moments are vital, not least in a world in which everyone is often so busy.

The adults initiate the next phase by beginning to clear the things away and the children join in helping each tool or object to find its place on shelf or in basket. The forces of imitation are strongest at this age and can be most easily directed when the adults perform their tasks in a conscious and careful way, repeating the gestures of each action in a rhythmical and natural way. Children can learn to do quite complex practical tasks, even involving sharp or awkward tools or equipment, if they see them regularly performed with love and care.

Tidying up is an important task and it is done in such a way that it does not occur to the children that this is something which spoils their fun or is a tedious chore. Once things have been put back in their places, the children gather for ringtime during which traditional songs are sung, rhythmical verses are spoken and acted out. Sometimes the eurythmist or foreign language teacher may visit and contribute to the circle's activities. These activities help focus the children's attention and especially strengthen their linguistic skills. Listening and clear articulation can be exercised through this kind of rhythmical recitation. Afterwards, the children go to the toilet and wash their hands. Some of the older ones who are first back help lay and set the table with place-mats, cutlery and perhaps a vase of flowers. Bread is cut and everyone gathers to say a grace and sing some seasonal songs. There is no deliberate effort to teach the children in any formal sense. The conscious activity of the teacher is imitated by the children.

Following the morning snack, some of the children help clear up while others go off to a second period of free play or another artistic or handicraft activity. Here the children follow by example and may paint or model for as long as their interest lasts. This might be the time to go outdoors into the garden or sandpit or may even involve a walk to a nearby park. Once more everyone returns, coats and scarves are hung up, things are carefully put away and then all gather, perhaps around a chair in the 'story corner'. The morning concludes with the Kindergarten teacher telling a fairy story. By then the parents are waiting outside to collect the children. Some Kindergartens include afternoon sessions as well. In this case lunch is eaten, followed by a rest and then further periods of play.

Each day of the week has its own artistic or handicraft activity, such as a baking day. While most Kindergartens offer water colour painting and drawing with wax crayons, or beeswax modelling and eurythmy, the handicrafts vary according to the facilities or the particular skills of the adults concerned. In all these activities the children learn by example, finding their way in to the experiences at their own pace. In this way the children learn to explore and be creative whilst acquiring a love of work. This manifests itself in an increasing mood of self-reliance and calm industriousness when the children are engaged. The same mood is carried over into creative play. A strong and lively rhythm helps give the children a deep sense of security.

Introduction to Formal Learning

Many years of experience confirm that literacy and numeracy, as formal skills, are best taught when the child has reached a point of maturation which corresponds to the emergence of the second teeth. The principled approach of Steiner Waldorf practitioners to not forcing early literacy and numeracy leads to Class One pupils (at 6+) learning to read and to work formally with number with such enthusiasm and alacrity because:

- they have reached a point of developmental readiness,
- the diversity of lively hands-on experience, which they have encountered in their kindergartens, supports and enriches this learning process, and
- they are motivated learners, unburdened by early failure.

A Day in the Kindergarten

Each Kindergarten may have a slightly different morning routine, but what is similar is the rhythm of the day; working within a structure, yet flowing together in a smooth, gentle fashion without seeming to stop one activity and start another. The children learn actively, imitating adults in their daily tasks, exploring their environment, using simple natural materials (which have endless possibilities to become whatever their blossoming imagination want them to become), making friends and learning new skills.

The child is welcomed into the kindergarten by the teacher, with a quick word or wave to the departing parent and begins with:

Creative play which is child initiated, using the furniture, natural toys, logs, softly coloured cloths, houses and dolls. Chairs, for example, become a train, shop or restaurant. A puppet show may be performed, audience entertained, tickets sold and 'conker' popcorn eaten in the break. In their play the children are able to re-create, learn from and play out what they have seen or experienced. There is also plenty of opportunity for the children out of their own initiative to do various crafts such as sewing, weaving, drawing, woodwork. They often join the teacher or assistant as they sit quietly mending torn cloths or preparing the mid-morning snack.

Tidy time is an integral part of the morning activity. We meet the puppet Tidy Gnome for conversation, taking care to greet and listen to each other before we make a bowl for our raisins which will "help us tidy today". The raisins often get counted as they are eaten, and then we get our fingers ready with a seasonal finger game before we work together - sorting, cleaning, folding, stacking and making sure everything is in its rightful place before play can begin anew the next day.

Activity time follows, and we work together - making bread, muesli or soup for our mealtimes, doing crafts using seasonal materials (to be played with, used, hung around the room or taken home to be enjoyed by the family). We draw, paint, model with clay or beeswax and much more. It is a lively enjoyable time where the children have the opportunity to develop many skills.

At **Ringtime** we make a circle, and through songs, poems, finger plays and ring games, joyfully experience our bodies, the seasons, the animals and people that make up our world. The repeated ringtime aids the children's memory as they sing, act and move each day in imitation of the teacher. Many of the songs becoming favourites which are sung at school and at home.

Eurythmy is enjoyed by all when we are visited by a trained Eurythmist each Tuesday morning who brings his own stories and songs, with beautiful movement and gesture which the children love to imitate.

Snack Time: At mid-morning, after we have washed our hands, we sit down and eat together (at a table set with care) usually the food which children have helped to prepare. Healthy bread (baked together), or fresh produce from our organic garden, muesli, porridge or soup and fresh fruit, together with water. We say a 'thank you' together for our food, we share or serve each other, we listen and are heard in a social gathering.

Outside Play: Then it is time for the children to go outside, to play, run, climb, skip, dig, sweep up the leaves or work in the vegetable gardens - time to test our physical limits, stretch limbs and develop new skills.

Story Time: The morning ends with a story told (rather than read) by the teacher where the children listen and fill their imaginations with pictures of the seasonal story, folk or fairy tale. The stories are often repeated so that they are first an adventure, and then become a friend and companion - a gift for the child's growing soul.

At home-time the child is handed back into the care of the parent or carer, with perhaps a quick word about the child's day.

The child is reassured by the recurring rhythm of the day, the week and the year through repetition of seasonal activities, festivals and songs. The structure and security of the Kindergarten forms the basis for a deep confidence, a bridge between the home and the busy world outside and lays a foundation for a healthy social adult life.

Our regular weekly activities might be:

Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thursday	Friday
Baking	Eurythmy	Painting	Cooking	Crafts

The children will have the opportunity to do some of these activities on other days as well. Birthdays are very special at the Kindergarten. Gifts and a birthday crown are made. Parents are invited to bring a (shop bought) cake and share a special story, celebrating their child's birth as a gift to earth and giving a picture of the child's life in a story told at the birthday table. It is both an exciting and moving event.

And finally, ...

We would like to thank you for choosing us for your child's early education and we assure you of our best attention at all times

Ballyhall Community Steiner Kindergarten

PLEASE SIGN and RETURN THIS SLIP

I have read the Parents Handbook and I agree to abide by the conditions therein.

I am aware that this service has comprehensive policies and procedures and that these are available to read upon request.

I have been given a copy of the Privacy Statement

Child's name is: _____

Date commenced at: _____

Parents Name(s) (Block Capitals) and signature(s):

1. _____

2. _____

Dated: _____