

## 17. Curriculum Statement

### Preamble

Welcome on board with us as we travel together on your child's education journey..... and that's what it is!

It began at birth and for the months before we knew your child (s)he has grown and developed in ways you could not have imagined. Our role at Links Childcare is to walk alongside you, as this growth and development continues. It is vital we work together. We will inform you of every developmental signpost reached, of any concern that arises and of any achievement, no matter how small. We need you, in turn, to let us know of anything that may impact on your child's journey, physical or psychological, so that we can provide the best support and care possible along the route. We need you to share a little of family life (photos, stories, celebrations and customs) so that we can make the movement between home and crèche as seamless as possible.

### **Aistear - what will it mean for my child?**

We are very proud to work within the parameters of the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, Aistear (the Irish word for a journey!) It was a long-awaited development in Irish education and is based on quality research in four areas.

1. The important balance that needs to be struck between 'care' and 'education'. We need to appreciate that 'learning' takes place in the day-to-day routine and relationships while at the same time 'education' can be provided in a caring way. We at Links Childcare like the term 'nurturing pedagogy' that underpins this research and matches what we believe to be the core of what we do.
2. The message of the second piece of research is that
  - children constantly make connections between their new learning and previous learning (you will notice your child revisiting areas of curriculum very frequently)
  - a balance between child-initiated and adult-initiated learning is essential to successful outcomes for the child.
3. The focus of the third piece of research is the importance of play and the role the adult has in facilitating it, a role that changes as the child grows. At all Links Childcare crèches, play is the most important feature of every day. It is an uninterrupted time for imagination, exploration, construction, pretence, drama, exercise and language.
4. Finally comes the idea of assessment. We hear you wonder if that can't wait until my child is older! But we are not talking about grades and marks – of course not! The type of formative assessment used at Links Childcare is based on observations that go to make up a complete picture of your child. We watch his/her strengths and also areas that might need attention/support. We note them so that we can better plan what to do next to foster his/her talents. We share the observations with you, and together, we have a bank of rich information which will help us both, to provide the best caring and learning environment for your child.

While our framework is the Aistear programme your child's daily experience will be greatly influenced by the inspirational and innovative *Reggio Emilia* approach to early childhood learning. This approach originated with Loris Malaguzzi and dates back to a 1960's very successful project in Italy. Its most basic principle is that children learn best through play and that all activities should be chosen by children as opposed to being adult led. So please don't be surprised if your child plays for most of the day. There is a clearly planned curriculum hovering there in the background and your child's voice is being heard and his/her learning being provoked and encouraged.

Very briefly, the Reggio Emilia philosophy centres around the following four points: -

- Children must have some control over their own learning
- Children must be able to learn through experience of touching, moving, listening and observing
- Children must build a relationship with other children
- Children must have endless ways of expressing themselves

Underpinning this philosophy is the concept of **The Hundred Languages of Children**..... a hundred different ways of thinking, of discovering, of learning. Your child speaks through drawing and sculpting, through dance and movement, through painting and pretend play, through modelling and music and we believe that each one of these *Hundred Languages* must be valued and nurtured.

At links childcare, therefore, we see our crèche as:

- a LIFE SPACE with broad guidelines on learning but with total flexibility in implementation
- a LIFE SPACE where the focus is on working with the whole child and his/her family
- a LIFE SPACE where play is king!
- a LIFE SPACE where children are respected as competent, confident and capable
- a LIFE SPACE where the building of quality relationships is at the core

At Links Childcare you can expect that in an average week your child, depending on his or her age, will engage with:

- ✓ sand
- ✓ water
- ✓ books
- ✓ construction
- ✓ paints
- ✓ the Home Corner
- ✓ the Dress-up box
- ✓ imaginative play
- ✓ play dough
- ✓ games and puzzles
- ✓ the Kitchen Area
- ✓ table-top activities
- ✓ the garden

And after all that ..... the rest/quiet area!

### The Daily Routine

The daily routine will obviously be different, depending on the age of your child, but every aspect of it is an opportunity for social development.

Nappy changing has a protocol that involves your child in chat, songs and fun as they interact with their Educarer. Snack times and meals are always preceded by tidy-up time and hand wash time. Both have a song to ease the burden! Dinner and Tea are times to relax with friends, to talk, to observe, to manipulate cutlery, to respect someone else's bowl (!) and to hone the social skills that will last throughout life.

### Curriculum Details

The Aistear framework has four themes that will follow your child right through Primary school and as far as Junior Certificate. They are as follows: -

1. Well-being (W)
2. Identity and Belonging (IB)
3. Communicating (C)
4. Exploring and Thinking (ET)

You will find that your child's learning will be linked to these themes and to their corresponding Aims and Goals. Your child will be encouraged to initiate his/her own play in response to this curricular stimulation.

You may be interested in looking more closely at these Aims and Goals on pages 17,26,35 and 44 of Aistear, *The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. [Click Here](#)

Planning the curriculum that will best serve our children begins long in advance of the school term. We start with a blank canvas and then see how we can creatively incorporate the Aistear strands into a full year. This is our **Long-term Planning** and is Stage 1. We then move to **Medium-Term Planning** (Stage 2) and this will involve you, the parents and guardians. Each calendar month is treated as a single unit and will have its own Topics. You will receive the Medium-Term Plan by email each month and it will include information around the chosen Topic and how it will be implemented. Very importantly, it will have a section asking for your help – this may include bringing in some materials your child might need (a photo, a piece of cardboard, a leaf) or maybe a suggestion as to how you can reinforce your child's learning at home if you wish. Finally, we come to our **Short-Term Planning (Stage 3)**. The weekly plan is never done in advance. It will be compiled on a Friday, ready for the next week, based on a meeting of the Educarers at which they gather and process the children's emerging interests and then plan a week's activities around them. The emergent interests will enhance and support the Medium-Term plan and ensure that the children's voices are being heard in line with the best aspirations of the Department of Education and Skills and the Aistear programme.

*Enjoy the journey with your child and us. It will be over in the blink of an eye!*

### Review

Management in consultation with staff monitors and reviews the effectiveness of the Curriculum Statement yearly or as required.