



Pre-School Montessori
After-School Care

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS

PRESCHOOL

2024



Club Ardagh is a non-profit company limited by guarantee started by a group of local women who came together in 2003 to apply for financing under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme to provide a childcare facility in the village. The application was finally approved in 2007 and construction commenced on a site in the grounds of St Mel's National School in the autumn of 2008.

The facility is a bright, modern building that can accommodate up to 22 Senior Montessori Preschoolers, 11 Junior Montessori Preschoolers and 30 after school children. It is fitted out and equipped to the highest standard, with a dedicated playground and sensorial garden for the preschool and afterschool children. Club Ardagh CLG is operated as a company limited by guarantee by a voluntary board of management, employing qualified childcare staff to deliver childcare services.

Club Ardagh operates under the legislation of Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 (a copy of these regulations can be found in the office). We work alongside and in cooperation with TUSLA (The Child & Family Agency), Department of Education, DCEDIY, HSE, Pobal and Longford County Childcare. Club Ardagh is inspected regularly by TUSLA & DOE and inspection reports are public and available for viewing online.

Club Ardagh's Mission Statement

To provide excellent care and an inclusive experience for preschool and afterschool children in a safe, happy and stimulating environment.

We will endeavour to provide all children in our care with the opportunity to develop physically, intellectually and socially while incorporating the principles of Siolta & Aistear into our everyday practices and curriculum. We will encourage active learning, the use of imagination and freedom of expression while promoting self-discipline, good manners and tolerance of others. We see the children's parents or guardians as partners in this endeavour and welcome their views and contributions while retaining ultimate responsibility for the management and operation of the service.

This handbook is intended as a guide to services and an outline of Club Ardagh's general policies and procedures. The handbook will be updated regularly as required. Club Ardagh's official policy and procedures document is available in the manager's office for any parent or guardian who wishes to read it in full.

Contacting Club Ardagh

Manager: Melissa Eager
Address: Ardagh, Longford, N39 FH68
Telephone: 043 66 75797
Mobile: 086 125 0549
Email: clubardagh@gmail.com
Website: www.clubardagh.com

Chairperson: Aine McHugh

Charity number: 15791 / RCN: 20055448

Days & Hours of Operation

Club Ardagh's **Montessori Senior & Junior Preschool Service** will commence on Thursday, 29th August 2024 until Wednesday, 25th of June 2024, Monday to Friday from 9:30am to 12:30pm daily.

Montessori Senior & Junior Preschool services will operate according to the **national school calendar** and will not be in session during October Midterm, Christmas, February Midterm, Easter, summer holidays and Bank Holidays. A Preschool calendar will be distributed with the Preschool Pack handed out at the open day to notify parents of the dates preschool will be closed. It is also uploaded to our website.



You will be notified via text message or telephone if Club Ardagh is being closed for any unforeseen circumstances such as adverse weather conditions, water or electricity outage etc.

Staff Names & Qualifications

Club Ardagh CLG Manager:	Melissa Eager (Level 8 – BA / Level 5 - Special Needs Assisting)
Montessori Preschool Leader:	Carmel Keogh (Level 6 – Supervision Childcare & Special Needs Assisting / Diploma in Montessori Teaching)
Montessori Preschool Educator:	Catherine Smyth (Level 6 – Supervision Childcare)
AIM Support Educator:	Ciara Waters (Level 6 – Early Childhood Care and Education)
AIM Support Educator:	Joan Dempsey (Level 6 – Early Childhood Care and Education)
Junior Room Preschool Leader:	Melissa Tynan (Level 9 – MA in Anthropology of Education, Level 6 – Early Childhood Care & Education)
Junior Room Preschool Educator:	Joan McKenna (Level 5 Early Childhood Care & Education)

Garda Vetting

All staff, Board of Management and outside consultants have been properly recruited, screened and Garda vetted in accordance with our Child Safeguarding policy. Original copies of Garda vetting documents are kept on file in Club Ardagh.

Child Protection

Club Ardagh is committed to a practice which protects children from harm and to full compliance with the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and our Duty to Care. We recognise the rights of children to be protected from harm, treated with respect, listened to and to have their views taken into consideration in matters that affect them. A full copy of our Child Protection Policy & Procedures is available for viewing in the office.

Child Protection Liaison is: Melissa Eager

Deputy Child Protection Liaison is: Carmel Keogh

ECCE Scheme

The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE) programme is a universal two-year pre-school programme available to all children within the eligible age range. It provides children with their first formal experience of early learning prior to commencing primary school. The programme is provided for three hours per day, five days per week over 38 weeks per year and the programme year runs from September to June each year.

The ECCE subsidy covers 3 hours of service (9:30 – 12:30pm) Monday to Friday

National Childcare Scheme (NCS)

The National Childcare Scheme provides subsidies to help parents meet the cost of quality Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare. It will replace all previous targeted childcare support programmes with a single, streamlined and user friendly Scheme. Under the National Childcare Scheme, subsidies are available for families with children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years who are attending any participating Tusla registered childcare service, including any Tusla registered childminder and school age



childcare services. You can apply online on www.ncs.gov.ie using a **verified MyGovID** by clicking on the 'Sign In' tab at the top of the screen. If you need help with the application process you can read the Application Form Guide or you can contact the NCS Parent Support Centre on 01 906 8530 open Monday to Friday from 9am – 5pm

Fee Policy

Montessori Preschool & Junior Preschool (NON ECCE)

Five days: €75 Three days: €45 Two days: €30

Optional Charges

Montessori School Trip(s): €15 - €20 approx

Fees are payable **every four weeks in advance** by cash or bank transfer. Failure to pay the due amount on time may result in immediate termination of the service.

There are no refunds for days missed due to illness, holidays taken during term time, other personal reasons, or for Bank Holidays. (Fees are not charged for preschool for periods when the centre is closed, e.g.: Christmas, Easter, Mid-term Breaks and summer)

Admissions

Club Ardagh's objective is to provide an inclusive preschool service for any child aged 2 year and 8 months to 5 years of age who lives in the locality irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. Our Senior Preschool can accommodate up to 22 children and our Junior Preschool can accommodate up to 11 children daily.

Preschool children should be toilet trained and be able to use the toilet and wash hands independently, although it is understood and accepted that accidents can happen from time to time. A clean change of clothes in a clear labelled bag is to be kept in the preschool.

Preschool settling in period

The teachers and other childcare staff are aware of the apprehension with which children (and their parents) often approach the first days of preschool. Every effort will be made to make this process as smooth and happy as possible. Some children adapt more quickly than others. We recognise this and will ensure that all children receive the assistance they need to feel safe and content in their new environment.

Delivery and collection of children

Parking on the roadside is limited, there are designated spaces reserved for two school buses and a short double yellow line section near the school entrance. **We would kindly ask parents to please be diligent and to not park in the bus space or at the double yellow line as it obstructs the line of site when children and parents are crossing the road. Please do not park on the avenue down to the Church.** 3 point turns in the church gate and parking on the Pedestrian crossing is illegal. Pedestrians can gain access to Club Ardagh via the gates at either end of the school grounds or to the right of the main gate at the school entrance.

Preschool children must be brought up to the building on arrival and handed to a member of staff. Children should be collected promptly at the end of the session at 12.30pm.

Children and their parents attending the Junior Preschool Room can access the Junior classroom via the door to the rear of the building.

Lunch/Snack

We follow a 'Healthy Eating Policy' as recommended by TUSLA (The Child & Family Agency) for both our Preschool and Afterschool Services. Preschool children should bring with them a light, healthy lunch and a drink (water or milk – no diluted juice please). Example of preschool lunch - sandwich / wrap / crackers or pasta salad accompanied by a piece fruit or vegetables. Please make sure grapes and cherry tomatoes are quartered to reduce the risk of choking. ***Sweets, crisps, chocolate bars, fizzy drinks, popcorn and chewing gum are not permitted.***

We promote family style eating at lunch time with all the children sitting around their table together. We ask that children do not share lunch with each other, including siblings. We encourage children to use the refrigerator in each classroom to store their lunch. For any children with food allergies, a care plan will be in place immediately and all staff will be made aware of the care plan and procedures to be followed. In addition, parents of children attending the service will be made aware of any children with allergies and we ask that they use caution when preparing lunches and to avoid particular foods depending on the type of allergies known at that time.

Clothing and personal belongings

We ask that each child be sent in with one full set of spare clothing, in a bag labelled with the child's name at the start of term in case of food spillages or toilet accidents. All children should bring sun hats and sun block in warm, sunny weather and rain coats / woolly hats in colder weather. All children's clothing, hats, lunch bags and belongings should be clearly marked with their name.

We recommend and prefer that children not bring their own toys, teddies, books, as these can be lost or damaged. Club Ardagh and staff cannot be responsible for items that may become lost or damaged.

Photographs

From time to time the staff may take photographs of the children, for example on occasions when they are involved in a project or activity during the day, for their monthly observations, during games, birthdays, or at the end of year as a memento of the groups in that year. Photography will be confined to these activities and photographs will not be released to anyone outside Club Ardagh other than parents/guardians.

Illness and medication

Children who are ill or have an infection which might be contagious should not attend preschool and should only return when they are no longer contagious. **Parents should contact Club Ardagh via telephone or text message (086 125 0549) on the morning of the absence to confirm that their child will not be present on that day.** Parents are required to keep children at home if they are suffering from any of the following:

- Fever, shortness of breath, cough or any other symptoms of Covid-19
- Contagious or infectious conditions such as measles, chickenpox, rubella, mumps, impetigo, conjunctivitis, ringworm, scabies and meningitis.
- A temperature of 38 degrees C (100 F) or higher.
- Severe earache.
- Food poisoning/gastroenteritis.
- Vomiting and/or diarrhoea.
- Persistent, hacking cough.
- Any unexplained rash.
- Untreated head lice.

Children should return only when they have completely recovered and are able to participate in indoor and outdoor activities. Parents notified of a child's illness during preschool should make arrangements to collect the child as quickly as possible.

Staff are not permitted to administer any medicines without a parent's consent. If a child suffers from a long-term condition such as asthma or diabetes, and needs injections or treatment of any kind, Club Ardagh will need a written indemnity from the child's parent or guardian, **along with clear instructions for administration from the child's doctor.**

Partnership with Parents

It is very important to us that we work in partnership together with parents/guardians in order to better support the growth and development of their children while they are attending the Club Ardagh preschool service. We hope that parents feel comfortable speaking to us about any matter that concerns their children. We can organise meetings throughout the year for parents to meet individually with the preschool leaders to discuss their children's progress and general information about how the children are getting on in the preschool. Please use the parent app Little Vista to communicate directly to your child's teacher. Preschool educators and the manager work together with children's parents/guardians in order to provide the best supports needed for each individual child in our preschool program.

Behaviour

Children are encouraged to grow and develop to their full potential in an environment where they know what is expected of them and where clear limits are set appropriate to their age and any special needs they may have. Children will be corrected when any form of unacceptable behaviour is taking place. Unacceptable behaviour is categorised as punching, slapping, kicking, biting, pulling hair, hitting, scratching, bullying, using bad language and any other actions deemed to be unsocial, including purposeful damage to equipment, fixtures or fittings. Termination is seen as a last resort and would be preceded by efforts to reverse the behaviour while maintaining the child's dignity and self-respect.

Equal Opportunities

It is our policy to respect the individuality of all children and adults involved at Club Ardagh CLG and to promote positive attitudes to differences of culture, race, gender, language and financial circumstances; to children with additional needs; and to minority groups. Equal opportunity for children to learn and grow is a fundamental aspect of our preschool curriculum. Equality means open access for child and family to participate in the service's activities. Club Ardagh is committed to promoting equality of opportunity to all.

Complaints

We will endeavour to deal quickly and effectively with complaints pertaining to services, staff or other children. All complaints should be addressed in the first instance to the manager of the service. If the manager is unable to address the matter at hand, the complaint should be raised to the Board of Management in writing as per our formal complaints policy & procedure.

Confidentiality

Information about the health and family/personal circumstances of each child will be treated as confidential at all times other than in the fulfilment of legal obligations, for example in relation to child protection legislation or in a medical emergency.



Termination by parents/guardians

Parents are requested to give six weeks' notice of termination if it takes place before the end of the booked period.

Agreement

Accompanying this handbook is an agreement form indicating that you accept the principles and arrangements, fee policies and that you agree to emergency medical treatment being administered to your child by a doctor or a hospital in the unlikely event that you cannot be contacted.

This form should be signed by you to confirm your agreement with this handbook.

Club Ardagh CLG – September 2024