

# Parent Hand Book



**BEECHWOOD CHILDCARE &  
MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

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**BEECHWOOD CHILDCARE &  
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# Introduction

The purpose of this information guide is to give you background details on the aims, ethos and running of Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School. At Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School we strive to provide a happy, caring, secure and educational based environment for every child and parent.

All staff members are qualified within a specific area of childcare and have their certificates on display in their rooms. A list of relevant qualifications is available upon request. Each room has a member of staff trained in Paediatric First Aid. The staff at Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School continuously work to create an atmosphere that is relaxed and informal, hence providing a second home for your child. We will guide and nurture your child every step of the way.

The Montessori and High Scope method of care and education are the ethos behind the running of Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School. Dr. Maria Montessori believed in creating a child centred environment where children would be stimulated in every area of their development.

The universal characteristics of the child are used to promote and aid the child's well being. Our Crèches have recently adopted the methods of High Scope, an American pre-school method of teaching and caring for children, thus giving your child the best possible start in their pre-school years.

The needs of parents and guardians are always taken into consideration. We do our utmost to accommodate parental wishes. We encourage all parents to get involved in the activities of the Crèche and welcome any suggestions or ideas that you may have. Two-way communication is an important part of Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School philosophy. We have a comprehensive policy and procedure book (included in your parents pack on registration) and we welcome any type of feedback.

Our health and safety document is displayed on the premises and copies may be obtained if required. Insurance and fire maintenance certificates are also on display in the hallway. A parent notice board is situated as you enter the Crèche to host weekly menus and other relevant information.

Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School is approved by the National Children's Nursery Association [NCNA], the Eastern Health Board and the Department of Environmental Health. Annual inspections are carried out to ensure a high level of care and education is maintained at all times.

We are proud to have achieved the NCNA Centre of Excellence Award in 2004-2006. in our sister Crèche. Our objective is to achieve the same award in Beechwood in the near future.

## Mission Statement

At Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School, we are committed to providing excellent standards of care for the holistic development of your child. Our mission statement is to prepare and provide the most natural and life enhancing environment for the child, observing the children and continually adapting the environment to support the fulfilment of the child's greatest potential – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. We strive to provide a happy, secure and caring environment, for the purpose of inner development and learning.

## Aim

Our ultimate aim is to provide a childcare programme, which promotes optimal development for each child, supports parents, upholds best practices of early childhood education and promote collaborations that help all children realise their potential.

## Ethos

The ethos of our service is very apparent to all who visit. Children, parents and staff will regard this service as an extension of the home. Creating a “home from home” environment. We believe in ensuring that children who attend this service have the opportunity to experience:

- Spontaneous expression
- Esteem as an individual
- Dignity and autonomy
- Self confidence and zest in learning
- A stable learning and caring environment
- Sociability, friendship and co operation of others
- Equal opportunities irrespective of gender, race and disability
- Culture diversity
- Respect as a unique individual with rights

# Baby Room

Age Range: 3– 12 months

Ratio: 1:3

## Activities

The Baby room is designed to aid the child's developmental needs. This is achieved by employing qualified, experienced and competent staff that understands the needs of children under the age of 12 months. All our staff in the baby room has the ability to provide suitable stimulus in a productive environment.

Your child will be provided with experiences relevant to their age and/or stage of development. We encourage physical and intellectual growth, whilst at the same time continually aiding your child's social and emotional development. Developmental charts are kept for each stage and may be viewed by you at any time.

Floor toys, activity mats, books, holistic baskets and construction boxes will help your child develop fine and gross motor control, whilst group activities such as painting, water play and play dough will aid in promoting confidence and self awareness skills. Weather permitting the babies will also venture out to the garden, where they can interact with the older children.

We are delighted to welcome older siblings into our baby room at any stage to visit.

## Routines

Prior to your child beginning at Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School we ask you to provide us with a written routine to include:

- Sleep and feeding patterns
- Play and nurturing preferences (e.g. how your baby likes to be held or comforted, does s/he have a pet name etc).

Once you and your baby have settled into Crèche life, we will discuss how the routine is working and if there are any changes that we feel would be beneficial to you and your child.

Routines are based on well-researched practises that are age appropriate and in accordance with childcare experts. We are always delighted for parental involvement and input.

We request you to remove your shoes before entering the baby room; this is to prevent any dirt from your shoes getting onto the carpet that the babies crawl on. Alternatively a member of staff would be delighted to receive your child at the door.

A settling in period is recommended by us in order for you and your child to gradually settle into the Crèche. See policy and procedure booklet.

A "care book" is given to you each day, detailing your child's day i.e. bottles taken, nappies etc. All books must be placed in your child's bag to be filled in for the next day. Any comments you may wish to make may be written in these books, however we do encourage all parents to try and make time to talk to your child's carer each day in addition to the care books.

### **Clothes**

Two changes of baby clothes need to be provided daily and placed in your child's bag. All of your baby's belongings should be clearly labelled.

### **Rest**

The cot room is situated beside the Baby Room. There is a viewing window and baby monitors. Children are also physically checked every 15 minutes whilst sleeping.

### **Food**

When your child is fully weaned and has been introduced to a variety of solids, Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School will supply breakfast, lunch, morning and afternoon snacks. All meals will be liquidised accordingly and a staff member will advise you when they feel your child's meals should become less liquid.

Please check our weekly menus posted on news board in the entrance hall to make sure you are happy for your child to eat the food supplied, if not you may supply an alternative. All food groups are adhered to and meals are prepared daily on site. We are fully HACCP trained – see policy and procedures.

Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School Childcare do not provide milk or baby juice. All milk should come to the crèche ready made and the bottle should be clearly labelled. Instructions for heating your baby's bottles should be given to a member of staff. Milk, juice and food will always be placed in the refrigerator in the baby room kitchen.

### **Nappy Changing**

Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School Childcare provide cotton wool for cleaning your child after each nappy change. Sudocream or Vaseline is to be provided by the parent for their child.

Please inform a member of staff if you would like your child to have cream applied after every nappy change. If you wish us to use another cream, your child has an individual box where nappies and cream can be kept. Nappies can be supplied daily, or for convenience you may supply a bag every couple of weeks. A note will be placed in your care book when you are running low. Nappies are changed at 10.30am, 2.30pm and 4.30pm or as and when necessary. See policy and procedure booklet for nappy changing procedure.

### **Soothers**

If your child uses a soother, blanket or comforter, these may be brought into the Crèche, please however double check that they are in your child's bag before you leave the Crèche. All soothers will be placed in a sterile container in between use.

# Wobbler Rooms One and Two

Age Range: 13-18 Months (Room One)  
18 Months – Two Years (Room Two)  
Ratio: 1:5

## General

The “Wobbler Room” is where your baby will graduate! The age range is only a guide and depending on your child’s overall development he/she may move at different ages. Every child develops at different stages and we urge parents not to feel anxious if their child does not move to another stage within a given time period.

A period of time will lapse before your child will move permanently to the Wobbler room. We encourage your child to visit the Wobbler room for short periods of time when the room is quite. We also use the “pairing system”, where possible and move two children to a new room together, so that your child has a familiar face to play with, whilst making new friends.

The visits may continue for some time, until we feel your child is comfortable with their new environment. Staff are always on hand to discuss your child’s progress and two way communication is very important at this stage.

A communal “care sheet” is used each day, detailing your child’s day i.e. bottles taken, nappies etc. A member of staff will always be on hand to talk to you about your child’s day. A detailed written report will be given to you every three months outlining your child’s progress, needs and interests.

## Routines and Activities

The routine in the Wobbler Room is a little more structured than the Baby Room. Appropriate activities are introduced to your child aiding all areas of development and in particular their intrinsic sense for independence and exploration. This is provided through short structured play programmes. Arts, crafts, music, books, puzzles, tabletop toys, construction boxes, home play, water play and sand play are just some of the activities on offer. Regular outdoor activities take place in the playground Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School (weather permitting).

## Clothing

We ask you to supply and leave a spare set of clothes for your child in the Crèche. Due to the creative (but messy) activities that the children participate in, we do advise you to dress your child in appropriate clothes and to leave your child’s “Sunday Best” for Sundays!!

## Rest

We encourage your child to have just one nap per day. Naptime is between 12.30pm and 3.00pm. All children sleep in their own separate mat; these mats are fire retardant and are likeable to a cot mattress. They are covered in a Duvet/ fitted sheet and a member of staff is in the room to monitor the children at all times. Wobblers may sleep at any time during the day, either on a mat in the room, or in a cot if the sleep timetable does not suit your child or they need more than one sleep.

## **Food**

All meals are provided for your child. You can refer to Menu Board each week to see what your child will be eating. If you do not wish your child to eat something on our menu, please let us know. We do encourage children to try different foods, tastes and textures. Your child should be fully weaned at this stage. Water is offered to your child throughout the day. We provide fresh water throughout the day. Age appropriate beakers are introduced to your child in this room. If your child requires a bottle of milk you can supply it to your child's carer who will store it in the refrigerator until required.



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# Toddler Room

Age Range: 2 - 2½ years

Ratio: 1:6

## General

Your child will be introduced to the Toddler Room similar to the introduction to the Wobbler Room. The transition is usually quicker as they are that little bit older and in general more confident in their environment. A communal `care sheet` is used each day, detailing your child's day i.e. food consumed, nappies etc. A member of staff will always be on hand to talk to you about your child's day. A detailed written report will be given to you every three months outlining your child's progress and interests. We ask you to supply and leave a spare set of clothes for your child in the Crèche.

## Routines and Activities

Once again we focus on your child's overall development and use a variety of toys and equipment to aid and refine your child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social skills.

The Toddler Room is divided into five separate work areas and autonomous play and exploration is encouraged. We base our work and play sessions on the High Scope Method of play and education. The children are still very young so short work periods are encouraged. Tabletop activities such as jigsaws, sorting and pairing are introduced to promote motor skills, hand/eye co-ordination and basic numerical and literacy skills. Home corner, role-play, arts & crafts and music also feature. We continue to refine and aid your child in the promotion of self-awareness and confidence. Garden play is also extremely important all year round. We ask you to provide wellie boots and coats in the winter months.

## Rest

We will encourage your child to have a nap/rest each day. Naptime is between 12.30pm and 3.00pm. All children sleep on individual floor mats with sheets and a member of staff is in the room to monitor the children at all times. If you do not wish your child to have a nap, please inform a member of staff and your child can play in another room at this time.

## Food

All meals are provided for your child. You can refer to Menu Board each week to see what your child will be eating. If you do not wish your child to eat something on our menu, please let us know. We do encourage children to try different foods, tastes and textures. Your child should be fully weaned at this stage. We provide fresh water throughout the day. Age appropriate cups are introduced to your child in this room.

## Potty training

At approximately two years of age potty training will be encouraged. This process takes time and patience. The child must be both physically and cognitively ready. The Crèche and parents must work together to make it an enjoyable experience for the child. Each child is different and will require different ways of training, hence when your child is ready, a member of staff will discuss with you, how best to make the transition from nappies to pants. Child sized toilets are in the Toddler Room bathroom's and various sized potties are available.

# The Pre-School Room / High scope Room

Age Range: 2 ½ – 3 years

Ratio: 1:8

The child's day is structured around two three hour sessions, one in the morning and again in the afternoon. The children in Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School will benefit from both the Montessori Room and the High Scope room. They participate in a morning High Scope Session and in the afternoon they are introduced to our earlier Montessori apparatus.

## **High/Scope Education**

The High/Scope educational approach is an open framework of educational ideas and practices based on the principles of child development. David Weikart developed the High/Scope approach during the 1960's for use in the Perry Preschool program. Now known as the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, these ideas and practices continue to be developed and refined through work with children, training of teachers, and research.

Based on the work of Jean Piaget, the High/Scope educational approach views children as active learners, who learn best from activities they plan, carry out, and reflect upon. The role of the adult in the High/Scope approach is to plan activities based on the children's interest, facilitate learning through encouragement, and engage in positive adult-child interaction strategies. The concept of active learning comes from the belief that children learn from personal interaction with ideas, direct experiences with physical objects, and application of logical thinking to these experiences.

The components of active learning are, manipulation, choice, language from the children, and support from the adults. The materials typically found in a High/Scope preschool are manipulated by children in a "hands on approach," not teacher directed approach. As children are actively involved with materials, support from the adults helps children to express what they are doing and further develop and refine their language and cognition skills.

The High/Scope educational approach supports active learning through a daily routine largely made up of plan-do-review, in addition to other activities described. During the planning process children use language to make a choice about the materials they are going to work with, which provides for a consistent time to express their choice, build on their own interests, and recognize themselves as individuals who act on decisions.

Work time allows the children to carry out those plans with the support of the adults to encourage, extend those ideas and provide opportunities to solve problems. Clean-up time is naturally integrated into the plan-do-review cycle at the end of work time. At this time children return materials to their labeled places on open shelves.

The other elements of the High/Scope daily routine are small group time and circle time. Small groups may be used to develop closer relationships between teacher and children in which the teacher plans the materials for small groups and begins the session, but leaves the remainder of the time to the children to explore the materials in an open-ended fashion. During circle time, the whole group meets together with an adult for 10-15 minutes to play games, sing songs, or do basic movement activities.

The framework or curriculum piece to the High/Scope approach is based on the key experiences, which guide the teacher in supporting and extending the child's development. Such key experiences include creative representation, language and literacy, social relations and initiative, movement, music, classification, seriation, number, space, and time.

### **Rest**

We will encourage your child to have a nap/rest each day. Naptime is between 12.30pm and 3.00pm. All children sleep on individual floor mats with sheets and a member of staff is in the room to monitor the children at all times. If you do not wish your child to have a nap, please inform a member of staff and your child can play in another room at this time.

### **Food**

All meals are provided for your child. You can refer to Menu Board each week to see what your child will be eating. If you do not wish your child to eat something on our menu, please let us know. We do encourage children to try different foods, tastes and textures. Your child should be fully weaned at this stage. Water is offered to your child throughout the day.



# The Montessori Classroom

Age Range: 3 - 6 years  
Ratio: 1:8

## **General**

In 1896 Dr. Maria Montessori became the first female doctor in Rome. After many years practising as a doctor she became involved in child development. Her studies and analysis covered children's needs and investigated for universal traits and characteristics amongst children. Dr. Montessori believed that all children possess sensitive periods, whereby; they absorb every experience encountered no matter whom they are with, or where they are. These sensitive periods would go on to stimulate the child's entire persona. From her research the Montessori Method of education was devised where children would work with didactic (self-teaching) apparatus, the child would learn and refine areas of their development through this equipment. Along side the apparatus, the teacher directs and guides the child in conjunction with these universal traits and sensitive periods. This method of teaching allows the child's true potential to manifest itself.

The six areas within the Montessori classroom are:

## ***Practical Life***

These are every day tasks that children adore to complete, not just for the end result - such as polishing a shoe, but because they enjoy the activity in itself. Directly they teach the child a skill, indirectly they promote and refine the child's gross/fine motor development, concentration, hand and eye co-ordination and independence. This in turn will encourage the child to be self aware and confident.

## ***Sensorial***

These activities encourage the refinement of the child's senses and give them experiences that enable them to be more aware of the world around them. They enhance visual discrimination, auditory awareness and chromatic sense to name a few. Indirectly they prepare the child for later language and mathematical work.

## ***Language and Arithmetic***

Earlier work with practical life and sensorial exercises will have indirectly prepared the child for basic linguistic and numeral operations. The apparatus relevant to these areas introduces the child directly to the world of spoken and written language, as well as basic numerical and mathematical operations.

## ***Cultural activities***

The world of biology, geography, zoology and science will be opened to the child. These activities are designed to promote experiences that encourage the child to see and involve himself in the world around him.

## ***Creative Studies***

Through various group projects and activities, the child's creative attributes will be explored. This will encourage self-awareness, confidence, self-esteem and a positive self image.

Our Montessori Classrooms is equipped with Dr. Montessori's apparatus. The teachers have the knowledge and experience to guide the child into self-discovery and self-construction of themselves and their capabilities. Although Montessori education features primarily within our environment, not all children will benefit from it, hence if need be, our environment and teachers can adapt to suit the needs of each individual child. Towards the end of their time with us, the children are slowly moved away from the Montessori apparatus and taught by a more traditional approach to prepare them for the next level of their schooling.

# Food and Nutrition

In Beechwood Childcare, we have adopted a Three Week Menu Plan, which was highly recommended by dieticians in the Health Promotion Department. The menu plan provides a guide for breakfast, lunch, tea and snacks for five days of the week, over a three-week period. At the end of week three we start the menu plan at week one again. This ensures each child receives the recommended number of servings from all food groups each day and that suitable portion sizes are offered.

We offer healthy snacks between meals to meet their higher energy requirements. Children are ready and eager learners, and through our Healthy Eating Programme, and as a childcare provider we can seize this opportunity to cultivate in them a healthy interest in good nutrition.

## Menu One

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast	Cereal and toast	Cereal and toast	Cereal and toast	Cereal and toast	Cereal and toast
Morning Tea	Mixed Fruit	Mixed Fruit	Mixed Fruit	Mixed Fruit	Mixed Fruit
Lunch	Mild Chicken Curry and Brown Rice	Beef Casserole Potatoes	Vegetable Pasta Bake	Boiled Ham, Cabbage and Potato	Salmon Gratin
Tea	Banana Bread	Omelette	Baked Beans and Toast	Pineapple and custard	Fruit Scones
Evening Snack	Bread Sticks	Biscuit and Raisins	Mixed Fruit	Crackers and Cheese	Pancakes

Nb All meals and snacks are made with fresh ingredients. Water is provided with all meals throughout the day

# General

## Illness

Certain symptoms in children may suggest a presence of a communicable virus.

All parents/guardians are asked to notify the Crèche where exposure has taken place.

- **Fever** - a temperature over 98.6 degrees, especially if accompanied by vomiting, sore throat, diarrhoea, headache, stiff neck or undiagnosed rash.
- **Diarrhoea** - any abnormally loose stools in the previous 24 hours.
- **Vomiting** - any episodes of vomiting within the previous 24 hours.
- **Eye/nose** - thick mucous or pus draining from the eye or nose.
- **Sore throat** - especially when fever or swollen glands in the neck are present.
- **Skin problems** - rash, undiagnosed or contagious. Infected sores with crusty yellow or green drainage that are not covered.
- **Itching** - persistent itching of body or scalp.
- **Hair lice** - must be reported.
- **Vaccinations** - must be reported.

Children who have any of the above symptoms should not come into the Crèche until:

1. Your doctor has certified that the symptoms are not associated with an infection, and/or they are no longer in danger of infecting other children.
2. The symptoms have fully subsided.

It is the policy of Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School not to accept children into the Crèche who appear to be “under the weather”. We have a responsibility to other parents and children and we cannot allow sick children to circulate with healthy children, it would be unfair to the sick child and to other children.

Should your child become sick or have a temperature during the day, it is the policy of the crèche to immediately call the parents or guardians requesting the child to be immediately taken home to recover.

We would ask parents to regularly check their children for Head Lice and notify us if necessary. Other parents appreciate knowing if head lice are about, so that they can check their children or “pre-dose” their own family.

## Medication

- No medication will be administered to children unless written consent has been given by parents/guardians. The necessary forms will be provided to you for completion.
- Children on antibiotics are requested not to attend the Crèche for 24 hours after course has commenced. They must also have a covering note from their doctor.
- Please inform the staff when your child receives their vaccinations to allow the Crèche to give special precautions and care.

## Bumps and Bruises

All possible care is taken to ensure your child’s safety, however we would ask parents to appreciate that there will be the occasional bump or bruise as there would be at home. We will notify parents of incidences as necessary.

## Opening Hours

Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School is open from 7.30 am to 6.30 pm Monday to Friday.

## Activities

In addition to the everyday activities that take place at Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School, we also offer gym classes.

## Birthdays

A party and birthday cake will be organised each year to celebrate your child's special day.

## Trips

Children over two years of age can participate in two organised outings a year.

1. A visit to the farm in May/June
2. A visit to the puppet theatre in November/December.

## Holidays

Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School is open 51 weeks of the year. The crèche will close on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December at 2pm for one week, re-opening the day after New Years Day, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January. If either Christmas day or St. Stephen's day falls on a week-end, the Crèche will re-open on the next working day. We operate from Monday to Friday all year except for public Bank Holidays, Good Friday and over the Christmas period.

No fee concessions are given to parents who require their child to:

1. Take holidays throughout the year.
2. Take extended periods of absence throughout the summer months.
3. Shorten their hours at any time throughout the year (illness or other).

## Fees Structure

- All fees are due monthly by standing order, cheque or cash.
- A breakdown of the fee structure is attached for your review.
- Rates available for session after school services.
- A sibling discount of 10% applies to full day care only taken off your eldest child's fees
- Fees are subject to an annual increase in March

## Procedure for booking your child in

- To reserve your child's place we require a registration fee of €100.00 and this is **non-refundable**
- To secure, your child's place and agreed starting date we require one month's fees, 60 days prior to your child starting at Beechwood Crèche and Montessori School. This will be used for your child's first month's fees. For any reason your child does not commence on the agreed start date, the one month's fees will therefore be forfeited and we cannot guarantee a further placement regardless of notice period given.
- One month's notice is required if you wish to take your child out of a Crèche.