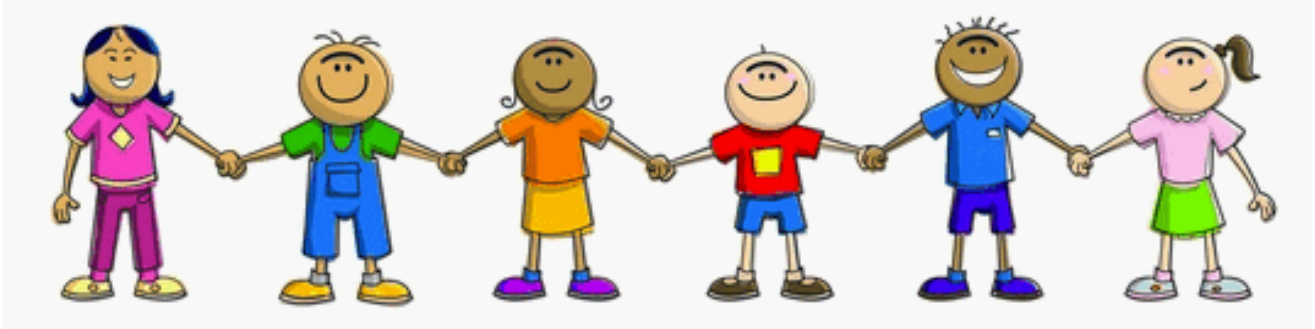


# Maine Integrated Playgroup



## Parent Information Book

Maine Integrated Playgroup  
93 Portglenone Road  
Randalstown  
Co. Antrim  
BT41 3EH

Tel: 07920671307

or

02894478766 (please ask to be put through to playgroup)

Email: [maineintegratedplaygroup@gmail.com](mailto:maineintegratedplaygroup@gmail.com)

Website: [www.maineips.com](http://www.maineips.com)

## **WELCOME TO MAINE INTEGRATED PLAYGROUP**

We would like to welcome you to Maine Integrated Playgroup. We hope that you and your child will enjoy your time with us. We have put together this information booklet to help you answer any questions you may have about the playgroup or our daily routine. If you do not find the answer required, please do not hesitate to contact the playgroup staff. All inquiries and questions will be treated with respect and confidentiality.

Maine Integrated Playgroup is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of parents and staff. The playgroup is registered by the Northern Trust and is a member of the Early Years Organisation. Maine Integrated Playgroup is inspected annually by Social Services and regularly by the Department of Education. Maine Integrated Playgroup also uses the services of an Independent Early Years advisor.

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

#### **Our Aim**

**At Maine Integrated Playgroup our aim for the children who attend our setting is for each child to learn and grow through play, explore the world around them, and to celebrate and embrace their individuality.**

- “Learn. Grow. Play. Explore. Celebrate.”

#### **Our Mission**

- To create a safe, caring, and stimulating environment where each child can develop their social, emotional, physical, and educational potential while becoming independent and active learners.
- To provide high-quality learning opportunities and an environment that inspires curiosity and exploration.
- To build up each child’s confidence, while encouraging them to demonstrate care and respect for others and their environment.
- To encourage a positive attitude, understanding, and respect of differences in race, religion, gender, appearance, and ability.
- To provide clear instruction and boundaries to promote positive behaviour while helping children develop a sense of morality.
- Each child in our setting is to be valued as an individual with a unique personality and needs. We will always strive to meet the individual needs of every child. Staff will focus on supporting each child to achieve personalised goals and targets.
- Our staff will be vigilant with their safeguarding responsibilities and be a voice for the children in our care.

- We will value each child, family, and member of staff and will ask everyone to show respect for each other, the playgroup, and its resources.
- We welcome parents or carers who wish to become directly involved in the activities of the provision and provide opportunities to do so, we also actively encourage parents and carers to understand and provide for the needs of their children.

## **Staff**

Children are cared for by our qualified staff at a minimum ratio of 1 adult per 8 children. All staff and regular volunteers working in the group will have Access NI checks as well as checks from Social Services prior to being allowed to work in the setting. All staff are required to complete a child protection induction.

The staff members for the current school year are as follows:

**Playgroup Leader:** Jade Ruttley

**Deputy Leader and SENCo:** Sarah Foreman

**Playgroup Assistant:** Megan Beggs

The staff regularly attend training sessions and are continually updating their qualifications. Any questions or concerns about staff are to be directed to the playgroup leader.

## **Partnership With Parents**

We will seek to ensure that parents are given updates on their child's progress in the form of parent/carer interviews with their child's key worker in October and March, as well as informal discussions as matters arise. We ask for your patience and understanding as due to the sensitive nature of these informal discussions we will refrain from speaking to you in detail about your child at the gate during drop-off and pick-up time or outside of the playgroup setting. Where informal discussions are required staff will ask to arrange a meeting with you or you can request a meeting or phone call with a staff member. Should you have any queries or concerns at any time, please feel free to contact the playgroup. The playgroup will provide updated information through our monthly newsletter. We invite all parents to contribute to the playgroup through

- Involvement on the committee
- Volunteering in playgroup (as needed)
- Participating in fundraising events and outings
- Providing materials or resources
- Assisting with the maintenance of facilities

## **What is Pre-School education**

Maine Integrated Playgroup is part of the Pre-School Expansion Programme. This program was set up by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland. It funds Pre-School places for children in their immediate year before school. As part of this scheme, the Playgroup must use the Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education and plan activities under the six areas of learning. These areas are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Early Mathematical Experiences
- The Arts

- Language Development
- Physical Development and Movement
- The World Around Us

To cover all these areas of the curriculum we organise a wide range of play-based activities, which are planned in advance by the playgroup staff. The areas of play we use to provide these activities are:

- Water
- Sand
- Painting and Junk Art
- Mark making and Drawing
- Table top (jigsaws, matching and sorting puzzles etc)
- Home Corner/Role Play
- Construction
- Small World (train tracks, doll house etc)
- Music
- Books
- Interest Table
- Physical Play/Outdoor Play

### **Opening Hours**

Maine Integrated Playgroup is open Monday to Friday from 9.15am to 11.45am. There is an option for an early drop off club at 9:00 (includes toast) for £1 per day. The doors do not open before this due to insurance regulations. Parents/carers are asked to wait with their child at the gate where a member of staff will welcome them. Please ensure that an adult always accompanies your child at all times while waiting at the gate. If you are late and the 9:00 gate has closed, staff are unable to come down to collect your child until 9:15 due to staffing restrictions.

If a parent/carer cannot for any reason collect their child on a particular day, they must inform staff at the beginning of the morning or by telephone of the person delegated to collect your child. The person collecting your child is required to show a form of photo identification and have been given a password by the parent/caregiver before your child will be released.

Please note children will only be allowed to go home with the named persons on the collection form and will not be permitted to go home with anyone under the age of 18 years old unless they are the parent. If there is a change in your child's pick-up arrangements, please inform the playgroup as soon as possible to avoid any confusion.

Parents/carers are asked to be prompt in collecting children at 11:45 am as some children can get distressed when picked up late. Please remember to ring the playgroup if you have been unavoidably delayed so we are aware of the situation.

Staff need to be aware of cases where parents are separated or where custody is an issue. Please inform staff and provide a written legal document regarding situations where there is someone your child should never be released to.

Situations occasionally arise that result in a child not being collected. Staff will contact all the names on the collection list and emergency contacts list, and if the child has still not been collected 30 minutes after the end of the session, social services and the police will be called to assist.

Please note – all vehicles must be parked INSIDE of a labeled parking spot at drop off and collection times. We will not release a child to any individual that pulls up to the gate or parks inappropriately until the

situation is resolved. Poor parking practices are dangerous for the children and families using the car park and can also cause congestion and delays for other vehicles.

### **Settling In**

During the first month, children will be started on different dates, in small groups, to facilitate a peaceful settling in process. Your child will be going home at an earlier time for the first few days when they start. This is to allow them to adjust and become familiar with the playgroup environment. Parents are asked to send in a box of tissues and a 4-pack of toilet rolls with their child at the beginning of the school year.

We kindly ask that children do **NOT** bring any toys or comfort items with them into the playgroup (for settling in or at any stage during the year). We cannot allow these kinds of items into the setting and if a child does bring them in and they will be asked to place them in their bag in the hall. These items oftentimes get lost or broken and we cannot keep track of them throughout the day to guarantee their safety. If your child must bring an item with them as they go on to daycare or another setting where these items are allowed, we ask that they are secured inside a bag that can be kept on their coat hook in the hall.

### **Uniform/Clothing**

All children are asked to wear a navy blue sweatshirt and light blue polo shirt. These are available from Select Kidz on Church Street in Ballymena. Children also wear navy jogging bottoms, navy shorts, navy leggings, navy school dresses, or navy school skirts. We please ask that children wear comfortable and practical **velcro or slip-on shoes ONLY**. Children are very active during the session and shoes with laces or uncomfortable footwear can be bothersome.

All children **MUST** bring a carrier bag at the start of the year that will be left in the playgroup. This bag must contain a complete change of clothes in case of accidents, or if they get wet during messy play. We are unable to provide a change of clothes for every child that gets wet or dirty. If a change of clothes has not been sent in, your child may come home in wet/dirty clothes.

All clothing belonging to your child, including coats and shoes, **MUST** be clearly labelled with your child's name, otherwise, we cannot guarantee that the correct items will return home. If your child needs a change of clothes throughout the day they will be assisted, if required, by two members of staff, and the child's responsible adult will be informed.

### **Toileting/Intimate Care**

Children are expected to be fully toilet trained before starting playgroup. It is normal for children to have the occasional accident, and staff will assist children in these situations to change into dry, clean clothes that have been brought in their bags. In circumstances where a child is not toilet trained and needs to be regularly changed, we will ask parents/carers to come in to change their child as we do not have adequate staffing to allow the necessary two members of staff to leave the floor to conduct a safe change.

We understand that there may be circumstances where a child has a medical or SEND diagnosis that means independent toileting is not possible. If this is the case, please notify staff prior to the start of the school year and ensure that you provide/replenish adequate supplies in the event that your child needs to be changed, as playgroup does not keep nappies, wipes, or nappy rash cream. If these items are not provided and your child needs to be changed we will have to phone the parent/carer to come and provide the items or collect their child.

## Fees

|                             |               |                                      |
|-----------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Voluntary Registration Fee  | £20 per child | Due at start of 1 <sup>st</sup> term |
| Snack Fee                   | £1 per day    | Due first Monday of each month       |
| Non Funded (Pre-pre) Places | £7.50 per day | Payable – at start of the month      |

The above fees (except registration) must be paid each month, regardless of attendance. We ask that all fees may be paid via PayPal ([maineintegratedplaygroup@gmail.com](mailto:maineintegratedplaygroup@gmail.com)). Where this is not possible, please provide fees in a clearly labelled envelope. The snack fee covers snacks for each week, allowing the children an opportunity to try a wide variety of foods in order to promote healthy eating. It also covers cooking activities and other events that may occur throughout the year.

## Snack

We operate a buffet-style snack time that enables children to choose what they want to eat from a selection of healthy foods. This style of snack encourages independence and provides an opportunity to develop healthy eating habits and skills in basic hygiene and food preparation (i.e. washing hands, pouring their own drink, and buttering bread).

**\*\*Please specify any allergies/sensitivities/strong dislikes on Data Collection Form\*\***

We kindly ask that you do not send your child to the playgroup with their own water bottle, bottles of juice, or fizzy drinks. We provide water and milk at snack time during the session and can provide additional drinks if a child requests. There is no outside food permitted into playgroup unless a child has specific dietary needs. If your child does have special dietary needs please inform staff before the start of the year so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Please DO NOT allow your child to bring their breakfast or any snacks with them into the playgroup as there may be children in the setting with severe food allergies. If a child does bring food with them it will be put into their bag on their coat hook in the hall for the duration of the session.

## Attendance

Throughout the school year, every child will undoubtedly miss time at playgroup due to illness, family holidays, special events etc. We do ask for all absences to be accounted for as the playgroup has an obligation to record and explain each child's absences in order to maintain funding. If your child misses 14 consecutive days due to poor health you must provide a letter from their doctor documenting any relevant illness or health condition so that the playgroup does not lose funding for their place, ensuring your child is able to return to playgroup when they have recovered.

Should your child be absent from playgroup, we would ask that you let us know as soon as possible. It is essential that we are made aware of any illness or infectious diseases your child may be experiencing. Please be aware that any child who has suffered from vomiting or diarrhoea must not be brought back to playgroup until 48 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea. Please do not send your child to school if they have a fever. Providing medication to reduce a high temperature and then sending the child into playgroup is not permitted. These guidelines are set by the Public Health Agency and must be adhered to.

If a child does not attend playgroup for any reason, their playgroup fees should still be paid.

## **Key Worker System**

Children in their pre-school year are allocated a key worker at the beginning of the year. While each staff member is responsible for observing all children in the setting, the key worker will take special responsibility for keeping written observation records on the children in their group. You will be informed of your child's key worker at the start of the school year and we welcome you to reach out to this member of staff with any questions or concerns you may have about your child.

## **Observations**

Staff carry out regular observations and assessments of the children under the six areas of learning in the curriculum as a means of monitoring a child's progress throughout the year. Through these observations, staff can identify any potential concerns or instances where a child may need additional support. This information is incorporated into planning to help support your child in meeting desired targets. Where these situations arise, staff will have open and transparent conversations with parents/carers to ensure everyone is on the same page and working together for the benefit of the child. Parent/carer feedback is encouraged and valued.

## **Sun Protection**

It is important that in hot weather, children wear sun cream and bring a sun hat to playgroup. Due to child protection policies and potential allergic reactions, staff are not permitted to apply sun cream during school hours. Therefore, sun cream should be applied before school when the weather requires it.

## **Administration of Medicines**

If a child requires routine medicine for a specific condition, the parent should administer it before coming into the playgroup. If it is absolutely necessary that the child has medication administered during playgroup hours, they are required to fill in a "Medication Plan for a Child with Medical Needs" form. Parents/carers must provide the appropriate medication in its original packaging with a prescription label that clearly states the child's name as well as any necessary dispensers. Only medications prescribed by a doctor can be administered in playgroup.

## **Fire Drill**

Fire drills will be done on a regular basis to ensure your child's safety in the unlikely event of a fire.

## **Policies**

You will receive physical copies or an email of the most relevant playgroup policies. Parents/carers will need to sign that they have read, agreed, and understood the policies. List of policies to be included:

- Policy for Settling In
- Drop off/Collection Policy
- Infection Control Policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Parental Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy

- Complaints Policy
- Accident Policy
- GDPR Policy

Other playgroup policies will be available for you to read if requested.

### **Useful Contact Numbers**

**Gateway Team:** (02894424459)

**Link Social Worker:** Ms. Jennifer Ross (02825635111)

**Independent Early Years Specialist:** Mrs. Ann Dixon (07936232268)