

Nurture and Nature Children's Center

Parent's Handbook 2023-2024

Welcome to Nurture and Nature Children's Center! We look forward to providing your child with a stimulating, safe, caring, and developmentally appropriate learning environment. To ensure the best possible care for your child, we ask that you please read through the established policies and procedures. By signing your child's enrollment contract, you are agreeing to abide by these policies and procedures. If at any time you have questions about your child's day, please consult with the teachers and Director. Parents are welcome to visit the center at any time during their child's day. Our goal is to make this experience one of positive growth for both child and family.

Thank you!

Nurture and Nature Children's Center, a Not-for-Profit organization
171 Exeter Rd. #8, Newfields, NH 03856
(603) 772-3811

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MISSION STATEMENT

Nurture and Nature Children's Center's mission statement: In partnership with families, we as an educational community, foster learning in a nurturing, supportive, child-centered environment immersed in nature. We teach, respect, and celebrate diversity, individuality, and the whole child.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Nurture and Nature Children's Center is a New Hampshire not-for-profit agency. Nurture and Nature members include the leadership team of Nurture & Nature and parent volunteers serving in positions on the board of directors. The board may also be comprised of community members who have an interest in childcare. The executive committee of the board meets frequently with the Executive Director of Nurture & Nature to keep lines of communication open. Community board members with specialties are consulted as needed. Community members may include a pediatrician, accountant, public relations advisor, community leader, child development specialist, or lawyer.

The executive committee hires the on-site Executive Director to manage the day to day operations at the center. All other staff report to the Executive Director who carries out the mission of the organization. The Executive Director in turn reports to the executive committee.

COMMUNICATIONS & PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Nurture & Nature Children's Center has an open-door policy for all parents. Weekly lesson plans will be posted outside classrooms and daily highlights of each child's day will be shared through direct communication with teachers at drop-off and pick up. Developmental progress reports will also be sent home periodically to assess each child's social, physical, and cognitive growth. Parent/Teacher conferences are held once a year or at any other time throughout the year at the parent's/teacher's request.

Communication between home and school is further enhanced through weekly newsletters, Procare updates and pictures, and daily conversations. Parents are also welcome to borrow resource books/articles which are available on a variety of developmental issues.

Parent feedback regarding our program throughout the year is encouraged. The staff will utilize this feedback when formulating program goals each year.

CENTER'S PHILOSOPHY

Parents are the first and most important teachers of every child. The center's goal is to support parents by creating close communication between home and the center. Parent involvement is necessary to provide the best possible care for each child. Parents are involved in the center through daily communication, helping with special events and projects, field trips, fundraising, and volunteering as members of the board.

The center separates children by age and stage of development and provides appropriate learning environments accordingly. **Each child is respected as a unique individual.** Children learn through play, and are encouraged

to explore, create, and manipulate objects in a relaxed, unhurried environment. Children are encouraged to learn and exhibit self-control and are empowered to manage their own behavior.

GRANITE STEPS FOR QUALITY - PYRAMID MODEL

Nurture & Nature is a GSQ - Pyramid Model implementation site. GSQ implementation sites are quality programs that build a strong foundation for healthy development. Early experiences build the architecture for the brain. Positive, responsive interactions with caring adults at home and in the community are the key ingredient in building a strong foundation for children's future success. Families deserve quality care and education where they can engage with the program and their children will thrive. The Pyramid Model is a framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development.

ORIENTATION

To help ease a child's transition to the center, families are invited to visit the center before a child's start date. During this visit, a child will be introduced to their new classmates and teachers. Also during this time, enrollment paperwork and Parent Handbook will be reviewed, and all questions answered.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

Classrooms are divided into the following groups: Infants (Sweetpeas), Pre-toddlers (Daisies), Toddlers (Sunflowers), Preschool 1 (Lilacs) and Preschool 2/Pre-K (Snapdragons). Our curriculum design begins with a universal theme as a basis for the monthly, weekly and daily offerings. A universal theme lends itself to a common language between classrooms and families. The teachers develop the curriculum offerings in each classroom not only with developmental appropriateness in mind but to reflect the individual children and their families.

Every week the teaching staff in each classroom prepare the learning environment to support the theme and needs of the children in their classes. Each learning center is organized and inviting, welcoming children to explore at their own discretion and speed. Teachers balance each day with group / individual time, teacher directed time, free choice time and outdoor recess periods. Lesson plans are posted weekly on the bulletin board or in the newsletter. Daily routines are also posted and maintained to provide a secure and consistent environment for each child.

Goals for the children include:

1. Allowing each child the opportunity to grow to his/her fullest potential by recognizing stages of development and preparing play/learning environments that nurture and facilitate their growth.
2. Giving each child the opportunity to express their feelings, to gradually understand them and develop self-control.
3. Helping children develop a strong sense of respect for themselves, other children and adults, and the environment around them.

PRIMARY CAREGIVER (INFANT, PRE-TODDLER, TODDLER ROOMS)

Nurture & Nature actively seeks ways in which to increase the depth and quality of care provided to our families. In accordance with best practices and recommendations from the Department of Health and Human Services, Nurture & Nature follows a Primary Caregiver model to achieve these goals:

1. Assigning a Primary Caregiver to each child enrolled in all of our classrooms
2. Including daily needs communication for our all children, except those in the Preschool 2 classroom

Teachers in these classrooms will be observing new students and/or transitioning students for cues to see which teacher is best suited for this honor. After this period of observation, parents will be notified of a child's assigned Primary Caregiver. The Primary Caregiver will be the person to connect, observe and document the child's progress day to day.

It is important to note, all staff are committed to the highest quality of care and parents should feel free to communicate with any and all staff who work with their child. The goal is to identify the teacher who best knows the child and is focused on the child's individual development and success.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The ultimate goal of discipline is to help each child learn self-control, and to empower each child to direct their own behavior. **Physical punishment is not allowed.** The teachers help children take steps towards responsible self-direction as would be developmentally appropriate. Natural or logical consequences are demonstrated where appropriate. Books, songs and other methods of correcting behavioral difficulties in a positive, empowering manner are utilized. Positive methods of guidance used include:

1. Structuring the environment to encourage positive behaviors, timing of teacher intervention, re-direction, offering choices of duplicate toys and enforcing logical consequences for their actions.
2. Program-Wide Expectations are established for each age group and they are stated in a reasonable, clear way for children to understand. Program-wide expectations are established for the children's safety and to protect the rights of others.
3. When a child infringes on the rights of another, the other child is encouraged to talk about how the act makes them feel with teacher support.
4. Teachers may request a parent/teacher conference to discuss behavioral challenges and to formulate a unified, supportive approach to address concerns.

STAFF

The center is staffed with child care professionals that are trained in child development. Staff meet and in many cases exceed the educational requirements for teachers as described by the NH Child Care Licensing Unit. Additionally, staff are required to follow all state licensing guidelines and obtain the minimum annual professional development in accordance with the state regulations. The center meets or exceeds state standards for teacher-to-child ratios for all age groups. All staff are trained in First Aid and CPR.

CENTER DAYS/HOURS

The center is open from 7:30 am to 5:15 pm, Monday through Friday. The center is open year round, with the exception of the following days: (For specific dates, please review the annual contract)

New Year's Day
MLK Day for Professional Development (January)
Serve with Liberty (May) TBA
Memorial Day (May)
Juneteenth (June)
Independence Day (July)
Friday in late August for Professional Development
Labor Day (September)
The United Way Day of Caring (September) TBA
Indigenous People's Day (October)
Veteran's Day (November)
Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
Holiday Break –varies but at least 12/25-1/1

The center will be closed for Snow Days at the discretion of the Executive Director.

CONTRACTS

A contract is required for all children attending the center. To ensure appropriate staffing ratios, families must indicate the hours of attendance each day the child is enrolled. Standard enrollment is not to exceed 9 hours per day. The tuition rate will not be altered when a child is out sick, on vacation or when the Center is closed for a holiday or snow day. Any change from the original contract will need to be approved by the director and may require a new contract. Parental changes to the contract require a two week notice.

Priority enrollment goes to currently enrolled families. A yearly registration fee of \$150 per child is payable upon signing the annual contract which is renewed July 1, of each year.

WAIT LIST

A \$75.00 deposit is required to be placed on the Center's waiting list. Once a space becomes available and is accepted, the \$75.00 deposit will be credited toward the registration fee. If a family chooses to be removed from the waiting list, the deposit will not be refunded.

REGISTRATION

It is required that the following registration forms be on file at the center before a child begins attending:

1. Child Registration and Emergency Information Form
2. Medical Health Form (to be completed by a physician)
3. Parents' Consent Form

4. Signed Child Care Enrollment Contract

****All forms need to be updated annually. Immunizations must be updated as children receive them.**

PAYMENTS

Tuition is to be paid by check, ACH, credit card each Monday for the current week. Tuition is considered late if received after 10:00am Monday and will be assessed a \$10.00/day late charge. Late tuition payments in excess of two weeks may result in termination of the contract. Returned checks are subject to a \$35.00 fee. Full-time families with more than one child enrolled will be given a 10% discount on the rate of the older child. **Parents are responsible for payment for each week. This includes scheduled closings as well as Snow Days.**

PARENT "PITCH-IN" PROJECTS

Families are required to "pitch-in" 10 hours of time/materials to assist with center projects or needs throughout the year. Examples of "pitch-in" contributions include: monthly donations to the pantry, painting, planting flowers, Spring and Fall cleaning events, attending board meetings, classroom assistance, fundraising, etc. **In lieu of the 10 hours of service, parents may opt to pay an additional \$150 fee (\$15 per hour of service not completed). If parents do not complete their 10 hrs. of service by the time contracts are renewed, fees owed will be added to the end of contract billing statement.** (Fees owed by parents terminating a contract would be calculated according to length of time of the contract i.e. If a child was at the center for 3 months and no pitch-in time was completed, the family would owe \$45.00—\$15.00/month x 3 months).

TERMINATION

*******The center reserves the right to immediately terminate a contract because of disrespectful/rude behavior, abusive treatment, language, or threatening behavior toward any child, staff member, board member or employee; whether it be in person, via messages or emails. There will be no refund of any fees already paid. *******Contracts may also be terminated after 2 weeks of non-payment of tuition and no notification to the leadership team of hardship. If a family is on a repayment plan and fails to make those payments, that will be the cause for termination of contract.

CALL-INS

In the event of a change in attendance, drop off or pick up, families are requested to notify staff by phone or Procure message with ample notice. Awareness of changes to the daily routine will help us to better support families through various transitions and is part of our safety protocol. Please notify staff of changes if the following circumstances occur:

1. If a child will be absent.
2. If the child will be dropped off or picked up earlier or later than their typical schedule. As this may impact the teacher to student ratio, advanced notice is required.
3. If an alternate adult will be picking up a child -- staff will not release the child until:
 - a. Written notice and phone call from the parent is received including the name and phone number of the adult who will pick up the child from the center.

- b. The adult picking up the child must display a picture ID. Staff will check this against the Alternate and Emergency Pick-up documentation included in the child's file, or the written notice provided by the parent.

WHEN BRINGING YOUR CHILD TO THE CENTER EACH DAY:

1. Please turn vehicle ignition off while bringing children into the center each day.
2. Accompany the child to their cubby to unpack items for the day and deliver each child to their classroom, letting the teacher know the child has arrived. Sharing information about a child's evening and/or early morning aides the teachers in assisting each child through the transition from home to school.

WHAT YOUR CHILD WILL NEED:

All Children:

- * 2 full sets of spare clothing, including: socks, underwear (or training pants), pants, and shirts
- * a small crib sheet for mat or crib and a small blanket if 12 months or older
- * lunch box with premade lunch and ice pack
- * water bottle

Infants specific:

- * sleep sack (optional, but recommended)
- * bottles of breast milk/formula, and/or solid foods
- * diapers
- * wipes
- * powder and/or diaper cream (optional)

Pre-Toddlers/Toddlers/Preschool 1 specific:

- *diapers/pull ups
- *wipes
- *powder and/or diaper cream (optional)

Wintertime:

- * snow pants (or snow suit)
- * warm jacket
- * gloves/mittens
- * hat
- * boots
- * extra socks

Summertime:

- * sunscreen
- * bathing suit
- * towel
- * water shoes/crocs
- * sun-hat
- * insect repellent

Please remember that children are taken outdoors daily (weather permitting), so a waterproof rain suit and an extra set of clothing should be kept at the Center at all times. Nurture and Nature believes in the best outdoor education and experience for children. We encourage children to be barefoot outside when the weather is warm enough, to allow for them to have the full sensory experience and connect with the earth. If wet or dry clothes are sent home, please return a clean set of clothing the next morning. **All clothing and belongings should be labeled with the child's name.**

PROMOTING A HEALTHY & SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Maintaining a healthy environment is important. The center promotes healthy routines in the following ways.

1. Hand washing among children and staff, particularly before and after meals, after messy activities, after nose blowing and bathroom use.

2. Taking particular care during diaper changes, including: child hygiene, gloves by staff; hand washing and disinfecting changing area.
3. Posting educational units for children to look at, on healthy habits such as nutrition, how to dress appropriately for weather, how to say no to unsafe and uncomfortable situations.
4. Role modeling by adults of healthy, safe practices.

ILLNESS POLICY

**Stricter CDC/DHHS guidelines supersede all illness policies listed below until such time that it is no longer necessary by the Director and Board.*

State regulations require that children/teachers be excluded from the center when they are ill. This is not only in the best interest of the ill individual, but of the group as well. The following guidelines are used in excluding children/teachers:

1. A fever is considered an axillary (underarm) temperature of 99.4 or an oral temperature of 100.4 or higher. **A child may return after 24 hours have passed with no fever and no fever reducing medication.**
2. One episode of vomiting (not involving coughing or eating) or two of diarrhea. **A child can return 24 hours after symptoms have subsided.**
3. If a child has a very runny nose or congestion, or cough, or fever, a negative Covid test is highly recommended prior to returning. The Director reserves the right to require a Covid test from any child based on symptoms or circumstances surrounding the illness.
4. Some of the more common childhood illnesses for exclusion are: conjunctivitis, impetigo, chickenpox, head lice, influenza, RSV. Exclusion time varies based on the illness. The director will notify families based on state/medical/center policy regarding when the child can return to the group setting. A physician's note may be necessary for a child to return. We also follow the state guidelines according to the NH DHHS Disease Handbook for Child Care.
5. Severe cough or difficulty breathing to the point the child **cannot keep up with the group.**
6. Infants under 3 months may not remain in the center when displaying any indications of illness. The infant may return when they are symptom free.
7. If any of the above conditions continue while the child is at the center, parents will be called to remove the child from the center unless we have a signed note from the child's doctor stating that the condition is not contagious. The center director, however, has the right to override any doctor's notes if the child is obviously unwell and **unable to keep up with the day's activities** .
8. Children who are teething or who have a non-threatening condition which might prompt low-grade fevers (between 98.6 and 99.3 axillary) and/or diarrhea, may return to the center and remain at the center as long as a note from the doctor stating that the condition is not contagious is provided.
9. A written note or prescription to administer medication must be provided and all medications must be in the original container with clearly labeled instructions for administration to the child.
10. Parents must notify teachers if a child is taking any medications at home. This will help in the event the child has an unexpected adverse reaction to the medication.
11. A parent who refuses to abide by or accept the illness policy risks termination of the child care contract.
12. A positive Covid test or exposure to Covid, will require a close look at the current recommendations.

*At Nurture and Nature, each classroom has their own thermometer. Thermometers are identical throughout the school. Teachers are trained on the use of thermometers. Children in our care will have their temperature taken under their arm twice prior to contacting a parent. Forehead temperatures can be taken as an additional measure, but will not replace the axillary method.

When a contagious illness is identified, all parents will be informed concerning developing symptoms. During the height of cold and flu season, it is strongly suggested that families have a backup person to count on to reduce stress on mildly ill days.

All members are trained in first aid and CPR to handle any injuries or emergencies that may occur. Emergency procedures are posted in each classroom, including who to contact in the event of such an emergency. Parents will be notified in the event that their child needs to be taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital (Exeter Hospital), so they will have the option of taking the child themselves, or meeting staff at the hospital. The staff member most familiar with the child will accompany them to the hospital, as well.

MEDICATIONS

Our teachers are permitted by state law to administer prescription medications to children, provided the medication is brought to the program in the original prescription bottle, accompanied by an appropriately completed and signed medication permission form. **The following guidelines are to be followed when administering medication:**

1. The first dose of any new medication must be administered at home by the parent so that the child may be observed closely.
2. Prescription containers must note the child's name, name of medicine, dosage, expiration date, name of physician and pharmacy. The signed and completed medication form must accompany each medication.
3. **All medications and ointments must be given directly to a teacher and may not be stored within reach of children.** Medications are placed in a medication box located in the refrigerator or in the Director's office. The medications are stored in approved covered containers and labeled with the child's name, name of the drug, dosage, expiration date and directions for administration.
4. The staff member assigned to give medications will individually administer medications following posted guidelines. A properly sanitized medication measuring spoon must be used. A medication spoon provided by the parents and kept in a zip-lock storage bag with the medication can also be utilized.
5. **Medications will not be administered in bottles/cups or mixed with any foods/drinks to ensure proper dosage has been received by the child.**
6. For all children under 2 years old (or 24 lbs), medication forms must be signed by a physician in addition to the parent's signature. A physician's signature is also required for non-prescription drugs for which dosages on the bottle state that for this age group "consult a physician".

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Children with special needs will be considered individually for the program by the Director. Outside consultants may be contacted to help determine the needs of the child and whether our center has the facilities

and staffing to meet the child's individual needs. There may be times when the center is not adequately staffed to meet the individual needs of a child with special needs.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Children benefit physically, emotionally and learn a great deal from playing outdoors throughout the seasons of the year. For these reasons, the children go outside daily unless a wind chill factor or serious rainstorms are present. Please be sure to send the appropriate clothing for outdoor time. Also, clothing should be suitable for the environment and may become soiled in the process of play. Staff will encourage children to be outside unless it would present a health risk.

Staff will apply sunscreen and insect repellent to the children before each outdoor period.

Parents are required to sign an annual permission form allowing teachers to apply sunscreen and insect repellent. Parents are required to supply these materials in the original container. Staff must adhere to the expiration date printed on the label by the manufacturer. Expired materials will be returned or discarded.

Sunscreen and bug spray must be handed directly to a teacher and not placed in the classroom.

It is Nurture and Nature's belief that children learn best by exploring the world around them and being allowed to test their limits in a safe way. Teachers and the director collaborate to do risk assessments for all ages of children on the playgrounds, the wooded areas outside of the playgrounds, as well as the front driveway. Please know that our playgrounds are mostly all natural, there is sand, dirt, sticks, acorns, rocks, etc.

NUTRITION/MEALS AND SNACKS

The center follows the USDA guidelines in the types and amounts of foods served to the children. Menu guidelines for breakfasts are posted in the kitchen. Breakfast is served from approximately 7:30 to 8 am. Parents desiring their child to eat breakfast at the center are requested to be here by this time. Families are required to provide lunch and the center provides 2 nutritious snacks. The center will provide each child with milk to go along with lunch. On Mondays, pizza is delivered. Families that do not wish to participate in pizza day, may provide lunch as usual. Labeled water bottles are also required for each child daily.

TOYS AND CANDY

Please do not send in toys, candy, or gum from home, unless a "Show & Tell" day has been announced by the child's teacher (This does not include naptime "lovies"). Please do not send in toy weapons, or any other items that promote aggression. Nurture and Nature cannot be held responsible for any damages or lost belongings. Do not bring from home and leave in cubby-they become a distraction and sometimes disappear. It is best to leave those "treasures" at home. The exception is a naptime buddy.

BIRTHDAYS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Parents are welcome to send in a group snack, dessert or any other treat to share with their child's friends on birthdays or special occasions. Teachers are happy to assist or offer ideas to help children celebrate their special day at school. Please be sure to inquire with the room teachers about any food related allergy restrictions.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are planned on occasion (weather permitting) to enhance the children's learning experiences. Parents are asked to sign up to assist in providing transportation, but must carry appropriate insurance coverage to do so, and be over 21 years of age. A copy of insurance coverage is to be given in advance to the director if a parent will be transporting children other than their own. Parents must also sign permission slips before their child can attend a field trip. **Parents and staff members shall ensure that all children are properly restrained in car seats when transporting to and from field trip destinations.**

NAPTIME

Naps are approximately 1.5 to 2 hours long. During this time children are required to rest quietly. A child may have a special stuffed animal or blanket to make naptime more comforting where appropriate. It is our policy that a child shall not be kept awake if their body is in need of a nap. If a child does not fall asleep after 1/2 hour of rest, they will be offered quiet activities while the others sleep. Rest time in the Infant Room will occur on an individual schedule, as needed. Teachers will provide daily napping documentation as necessary in all classrooms. During naptime in our Preschool 1 & 2 classroom we have one less staff person in a classroom than required to meet ratios as allowed in licensing [He-C 4002.26(v)].

EVACUATION DRILLS

Evacuation drills will be conducted on a monthly basis to familiarize children with the procedures in the event of an emergency. Childcare centers are required to have a minimum of 15 evacuation drills per year. Emergency and safety procedures are posted in all classrooms detailing our response plan.

WHEN PICKING UP YOUR CHILD IN THE AFTERNOON

1. Teachers will be looking to share information about your child's day.
2. Teachers will assist families in the transition to home to the best of their ability. Please be aware that each child's teacher has a group of children in their care needing constant supervision. Once parents have removed a child from the classroom or playground, the child is no longer counted in the ratio and is under the supervision of the parent. Please be sure that children are closely supervised at this time. For their safety, children must always be in the company of an adult.
3. Items needing to be laundered should go home on Fridays, or the last day of attendance each week -- including sheets, blankets, stuffed animals, towels, etc.

LATE PICK-UPS

The center closes at 5:00pm Monday through Friday. Parents should call the center if they expect to be delayed. There is a \$25 late fee for parents who are late picking up their child. Parents are required to pay the late fee at drop off, the next day the child attends the center.

ALCOHOL/ ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES POLICY

Alcohol or illegal substances are not allowed in the building or on the center's property. If a staff member detects the odor of alcohol or other substances on a parent/guardian's person, we reserve the right to not release the child to that person as that person's ability to operate a motor vehicle may be impaired. A child's safety is of greatest importance.

WITHDRAWALS

Parents may withdraw their child from the program at any time. A paid two-week notice is required to cover transition costs. No fees will be reimbursed at that time.

NON-VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWALS /INCLUSION POLICY

Nurture and Nature is committed to ensuring that all children attending our program have access to a quality early childhood program that provides developmentally appropriate experiences and nurtures positive learning and development. We will involve the child's family in our efforts to support his or her successful inclusion in our program. Nurture and Nature will make every effort to successfully include and maintain children in our program.

An important goal at the center is to meet the developmental needs of each individual child, while also considering the needs of the group as a whole. If a child's behavior consistently compromises the quality of care or threatens the safety of the group, parents will be required to meet with staff to discuss the behaviors and needs of the child. A working plan will be developed to establish consistency between home and school regarding the child's daily routines and discipline techniques. A request for withdrawal from the center may be necessary only after all other measures to minimize disruptive behavior have been exhausted, or if the parents are not willing to participate or abide by the agreed-upon plan of action. As stated previously, the center maintains the right to terminate a child care contract, particularly if the needs of the group as a whole are compromised.

UTILIZATION OF STAFF FOR PERSONAL CHILDCARE

Parents may utilize employees for child care (babysitting) in their home if the employee is interested and willing, please just *leave your number with them and allow them to call you if they are interested*. Reaching out through social media or calling the center is not an acceptable way to contact staff for your private childcare requests. The staff members and families are made aware that, though an employee may be "off-duty, they are still obligated to maintain confidentiality regarding discussions of other families, staff members, or Nurture and Nature business. Solicitation of employees from the center for personal in home child care is unacceptable (ie. hiring a teacher away from the center for full time care in your home). Contracts will be terminated immediately in this instance with no refund.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Purpose

The care and safety of the individual is the key issue behind this policy. At Nurture and Nature we seek to implement the underlying principles of safeguarding in its wider sense, and to address the issues which may arise about confidentiality. All persons involved will be given clear, unambiguous guidance as to their legal and

professional roles, and we will strive to ensure good practice throughout the school, which is understood by pupils, parents/guardians and staff. The school is mindful that it is placed in a position of trust by all stakeholders and there is a high expectation that a professional approach will be used in all matters of confidentiality. The Employers Code of Conduct forms the basis for the following policy.

Definition of Confidentiality

Confidentiality means: A strict principle of privacy that allows for information to be shared only amongst certain specified individuals. Having confidentiality may allow people to express things that they would otherwise keep to themselves.

Rationale

Nurture and Nature seeks to put the child at the heart of the learning process and to provide a safe and secure learning environment. We are committed to developing creative and positive ways for the child's voice to be heard whilst recognizing the responsibility to use, hold and safeguard information received. Sharing information unnecessarily erodes trust. The School is active in promoting a positive ethos and respect for the individual.

A large volume of data is generated in schools by gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs categories - individual children or staff should not be able to be identified.

Objectives:

- To provide consistent messages in school about handling information about children once it has been received.
- To foster an ethos of trust within the school.
- To ensure that staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, students, parents and pupils are aware of the school's confidentiality policy and procedures.
- To reassure pupils that their best interests will be maintained.
- To encourage children to talk to their parents and guardians.
- To ensure that pupils and parents / guardians know that school staff cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
- To ensure that if there are child protection issues then the correct procedure is followed.
- To ensure that confidentiality is a whole school issue and that in lessons ground rules are set for the protection of all.
- To ensure that parents have a right of access to any records the school may hold on their child but not to any other child that they do not have parental responsibility for.

Guidelines

1. All information about individual children is private, and should only be shared with staff that has a need to know.
2. All social services, medical and personal information about a child should be held in a safe and secure place which cannot be accessed by individuals other than school staff.
3. The school teachers follow the Nurture and Nature handbook guidelines.
4. There is clear guidance for the handling of child protection incidents and all staff have regular training on child protection issues, as documented in the Nurture and Nature handbook.
5. There is clear guidance for procedures if a member of staff is accused of abuse.

6. Any intolerance about gender, faith, race, culture or sexuality is unacceptable and should follow the schools discipline policy.
7. Parents and guardians and children need to be aware that the school cannot guarantee total confidentiality and the school has a duty to report child protection issues.
8. Directors and Staff are always available to talk to both children and parents / guardians about issues that are causing concern. The school encourages parents / guardians to talk about concerns with the director.
9. Parents / guardians and children should feel reassured that only in exceptional circumstances will confidentiality be broken.
10. All children have a right to the same level of confidentiality irrespective of gender, race, religion, medical concerns and special educational needs.
11. The school director must be notified immediately in writing of issues. Child protection procedures are made clear to all staff and covered in the Nurture and Nature handbook. All staff are given training at least every three years, in order to ensure the required training for their role.
12. Confidentiality is a whole school issue. Clear ground rules must be set for any classroom work such as circle time and other situations dealing with sensitive issues.
- 13 .Even when sensitive information appears to be widely known it should not be assumed by those immediately involved that it is appropriate to discuss or share this information further. The school needs to be clear about the boundaries of their legal and professional roles and responsibilities e.g. Child Protection procedures, Personal Private Information PPI, HIPPA.
14. Health professionals have their own code of practice dealing with confidentiality. Staff should be aware of children with medical needs and the class information sheet should be accessible to staff who need that information but not in general view to other parents /guardians and children. Staff must comply with PPI and HIPPA guidelines concerning health confidentiality.
15. Information about children will be shared with parents but only about their child. Parents should not have access to any other child's books, marks and progress grades at any time especially at parents evening. However parents should be aware that information about their child will be shared with the receiving school when they change school. Staff must comply with HIPPA guidelines concerning health confidentiality.
16. All personal information about children including social services records should be regarded as confidential. Information regarding health reports such as speech therapy, medical reports, minutes of meetings and social services minutes of meetings and reports will be circulated in envelopes/files and once read should be returned for secure filing.
17. In all other notes, briefing sheets etc. a child should not be able to be identified.
18. Staff should exercise prudence and consider the dignity of individuals during conversations on the school site, for example in the staff room, particularly if non-members of staff are present and in the presence of children.
19. Addresses and telephone numbers of parents and children will not be passed on except in exceptional circumstances or to a receiving school.
20. Staff and Board members should be aware that making comments on social networking and other internet sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) can potentially lead to disciplinary action, if a breach of confidentiality is made. The school is clear about the boundaries of legal, professional roles and responsibilities e.g. Child Protection procedures, Personal Private Information PPI, HIPPA.
21. Where discussions are held with an individual that might result in disciplinary or capability measures, the matter must not be discussed with any person other than the Director. To do so would be deemed a disciplinary issue in itself as it has the potential to undermine any independent investigation that might be held in the future.

22. Board of Directors need to be mindful that from time to time issues are discussed or brought to their attention about staff and children. All such papers should be treated as confidential. These confidential papers should be destroyed after use.
23. Board of Directors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the Director, especially in relation to matters concerning Personal Private Information (PPI), for individual staff, pupils or parents.
24. Although decisions reached at Board of Directors' meetings are normally made public through minutes or otherwise, the discussions on which decisions are based should be regarded as confidential. Staff and Board of Directors should exercise the highest degree of prudence when discussion of potentially contentious issues arises outside the governing body. No matter discussed during a board meeting should be openly discussed by either staff or Board of Directors until the Director releases the information by circulation of minutes. The contents of these minutes will remain confidential within the school until released to the parents and general public by the Director. Staff and Board of Directors should not discuss any such matter with anyone unless given express permission to do so by the Director and Chair of the Board of Directors.
25. All staff and Board members will be expected to sign a Confidentiality Policy Agreement at the beginning of each Academic Year. Non-members of staff, for example, students and voluntary helpers, will be asked to follow the principles of the confidentiality policy and sign a confidentiality agreement.