



Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs Policy and Procedure

Statement of Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs:

Little Acorns Montessori promotes safe guidelines for the successful inclusion of children with additional needs into preschool. Little Acorns Nursery, Montessori Preschool and Acorns Afterschool aims to ensure that the needs (including the physical, emotional and intellectual needs) and the religious beliefs (if any) of all children attending the Service are addressed. Reflective practice, training and development opportunities are available to all staff.

The Service's inclusion policy is available and communicated to all parents and guardians. Relevant staff know the requirements and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy. Relevant staff have received training on this policy. We aim to ensure that all children, including children with a disability, will be able to meaningfully participate in our settings (apart from exceptional situations where specialised provision is required for unavoidable reasons).

In line with this vision, our policy is about supporting the access and inclusion of children with a disability and/or additional needs.

Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 (Síolta Standard 3: Parents/guardians and Families, Síolta Standard 7: Curriculum, Síolta Standard 9: Health and Welfare, Síolta Standard 8: Planning and Evaluation) (National Standard 1: Information, National Standard 3: Working in Partnership with Parents or Guardians, National Standard 5: Organisation and Management, National Standard 8: Care, Play and Learning, National Standard 9: Nurture and Well-Being, National Standard 10: Behaviour, National Standard 15: Children with Disabilities, National Standard 16: Equal Opportunities.

Purpose of Policy:

- To provide guidelines for the successful inclusion of children with additional needs into the setting.
- To provide guidelines for the successful celebration of diversity into the setting.

Guiding Principles:

Consistent: The provision of support and services for children with a disability should be consistent across our service

Effective: Supporters should make a difference and genuinely enhance



inclusion.

Equitable: All children should have equality of opportunity to access and participate.

Evidence-informed: supports and services for children with a disability should be evidence-informed.

High quality: supports and services for children with a disability should be of high quality.

Integrated: Our approach is to work in partnership with families and other stakeholders/agencies Needs-driven: supports will be needs driven.

A Sense of Identity:

All children, parents and staff are entitled not to be discriminated against and to be given the same fair opportunities. The practice in a childcare setting should represent and recognise the different needs, experiences, and backgrounds of both its users and the wider community. Staff need to be aware that different skills, experiences, interests, and awareness that children have affects their ability and how they learn. When planning a curriculum, it should meet the needs of both boys and girls, children with additional needs, more able children, children with a disability, children from all social, cultural and religious backgrounds, children from different ethnic groups including, Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and children from a variety of different linguistic backgrounds.

The Service is inclusive, recognises diversity and is accepting of other cultures:

- The Service uses a child-centred approach, creating an inclusive and diverse learning environment where each child has equal opportunity by a variety of means.
- Routines, experiences, materials and activities with the Service reflect diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, religions, skin colour, family structures, language, cultures or additional needs in a positive way which helps children to learn, become aware of and be respectful of differences.
- Each child's critical thinking is fostered, and children are empowered to recognise and respond to or challenge bias, injustice and discrimination. ● All children, including those who have additional needs, or who are dual language learners or who are new to the community are supported to be confident about their identity and to have a strong sense of belonging each day within the Service.
- Staff adjust the level of support provided to children depending on the child's abilities, allowing for children's partial participation and participation with support.



- Staff use positive strategies to support children's including (eg using personal greetings, giving appropriate encouragement, accepting children's best efforts)

INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS Definitions:

Additional Needs: Children whose development, in one or more of the following areas, needs additional support - mobility, expressive and/or receptive communication, social behaviour, behavioural control, fine/gross motor skills, vision, hearing, self-care, cognitive skills. Definition of Disability "A long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder a child's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".

The definition is broad and should ensure that children with needs arising from a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment will be supported even where the particular impairment may not be traditionally recognised as a disability. "Long-term" should be understood as referring to an impairment which is enduring and permanent or likely to be permanent. (Adapted from AIM).

Inclusion:

A process involving a programme, curriculum or education environment where each child is welcomed and included on equal terms, can feel they belong, and can progress to his/her full potential in all areas of development (National Childcare Strategy 2006– 2010).

The Manager of this Service takes responsibility for:

- Ensuring the physical environment is suitable where possible and within available resources.
- Providing clearly defined enrolment procedures set out in our enrolment/admissions policies, which endeavour to facilitate access for all children within the resources and expertise available.
- Identifying children with additional needs during the application process. Regularly reviewing with staff, the planning and resources provided for children with additional needs attending the service.
- Linking with other groups that support the child, HSE, Early Intervention Team, TUSLA, Voluntary Services etc. Linking in with AIM for advice and support from the Early Years Specialist Service (Access and Inclusion) which can be accessed by phone (01-511 7222), e-mail (onlinesupport@pobal.ie) or via the AIM online application form at www.pobal.ie. This applies to the ECCE funded two year free preschool programme only.
- Working with staff and families to identify and apply for additional resources/support for children with additional needs.



- Providing appropriate physical and staffing resources within the budget constraints of the Service.
- Supporting staff to gain the appropriate knowledge and skills for the implementation of this policy and additional roles as they are created and developed.
- Creating Job descriptions for all roles within the Service and specifically for:
 - o The Inclusion Coordinator
 - o The Early Years Practitioner with Keyworker responsibilities for a child with additional needs (AIM Level 7)
 - o Practitioner (Specific Medical Needs)
 - Ensuring that Medical Emergency Care plans are set up for children requiring life-saving medication.
 - Ensuring an Individual Education Plan is developed for the child.
 - Planning and facilitating continuous professional development of staff to enhance inclusion.
 - Facilitating the development of transition plans for children within and outside the setting.
 - Ensuring there is purposeful learning for the child with additional needs within the setting.
 - Providing support and strategies to staff in developing differentiated learning and providing accommodations/adaptations.
 - Facilitating problem solving with staff to enhance inclusion. ● Being an advocate for children with additional needs within the setting. Modelling inclusionary practices for the entire Service.

Our team will work in consultation with the staff, the parents/guardians of the child, and other professionals and/or agencies working with the family to determine additional resources required to meet the functional and developmental needs of the child and to determine the suitability of the Service in meeting these needs.

The Staff are responsible for:

- Being a champion for children with additional needs.
- Reviewing enrolment applications to identify children with additional needs. Identifying, if additional support is required, the type of support required and consulting.
- Liaising with families and liaising with management and outside agencies to access it if possible.
- Ensuring that any support or resources available for a child are accessed



in consultation with the parents/guardians.

- Ensuring that the parents/guardians are fully informed about the curriculum planned and provided for their child and have given written consent for any action, support, or intervention for their child.
- To plan and implement a programme which incorporates the individual goals for the child with additional needs.
- Ensuring the programme provides opportunities for participation and interaction with other children.
- Responding to parents/guardians needs and providing support and guidance, where appropriate.
- Encouraging a collaborative family approach.
- Ensuring that, in consultation with persons involved in the care and education of the child, any specialised medical and nutritional needs of the child are catered for in the day-to-day programme.
- Ensuring that the programme incorporates opportunities for regular review and evaluation, in consultation with all persons involved in the child's care and education.
- Providing personal and intimate care where appropriate.

The parents/guardians will:

- Share information about their child and their child's needs within the Service whilst maintaining the right to decide who will receive information about their child.
- Be open to engaging with the AIM programme or other supports suggested or available.
- Raise any issues/concerns they have about their child's participation in the programme.
- Be involved in, and fully informed about, any support proposed for their child. Be given the opportunity to consent to any observations, intervention or reports on their child and have a right to copies of such documents.
- Be given the opportunity to withdraw consent to any observations, interventions, or reports.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY:

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) states: "It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights". We provide equal opportunities by ensuring that:



- We are aware that everyone's tastes vary and each of us has a different way of doing things. We all have different interests and ways of expressing ourselves.
- All staff have a responsibility to show clearly, through their work, that they respect all children and their families regardless of ability, culture, beliefs and traditions.
- Staff are non-discriminatory, and we believe in equal attention and care for all children without regard to race, gender, national origin, ancestry etc.

Definitions 'Diversity':

Refers to the diverse nature of Irish society. Diversity is about all the ways in which people differ, and how they live their lives as individuals, within groups, and as part of a wider social group: for example, a person can be classified, or classify themselves, by their social class, gender, disability/ability, as a returned Irish emigrant, family status, as an intercountry adoptee or from a different family structure, including foster care. They can be seen – or see themselves – as part of a minority group, a minority ethnic group or part of the majority/dominant group (adapted from Murray and Urban, 2012).

Equality:

Refers to the importance of recognising, respecting, and accepting the diversity of individuals and group needs, and of ensuring equality in terms of access, participation and benefits for all children and their families. It is therefore not about treating people 'the same'. Equality of participation is particularly relevant when working with children and parents. Inequality can be instigated by an individual, or through policies at an early childhood service or broader institutional level (adapted from Murray and Urban, 2012).

The Curriculum:

- All children are to be respected and their individuality and potential recognised, valued, and nurtured.
- Activities and the use of play equipment will offer children opportunities to develop in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination.
- Through the proactive use of planning and curriculum development opportunities will be given to children to explore, acknowledge and value similarities and differences between themselves and others.
- It is important for children to experience a variety of cultures at an early age so that they realise that cultural diversity is part of everyday life.
- We ask families to share their own cultures, religions and traditions with our staff so that all values are respected and celebrated in the Service.



- It is our objective to support and encourage each child in their experience and guide them to embrace their own values and the values of others. These experiences help set the child's foundations and potentially shape the people they will become.

Resources:

All materials are to positively and accurately reflect cultural and racial diversity. These materials will help children to develop their self-respect and respect other people by avoiding stereotypes. We use a range of books, images, music and songs and experiences that reflect diversity. Boys and girls are to have equal opportunity, and be actively encouraged to use all activities.

Discriminatory Behaviour/Remarks:

Any discrimination (language, behaviour or remarks) by children, parents/guardians or staff/volunteers is unacceptable in the Service. Discrimination will be positively challenged by supporting the victim and helping those responsible to understand and overcome their prejudices.

All bias and/or discriminatory behaviour or remarks must be brought to the immediate attention of the Manager. Such occurrences will be dealt with in accordance with the Service's complaints procedure.

Festivals:

We aim to show respect for and awareness of all major events in the lives of the children and families and wider society. Without indoctrination, we aim to acknowledge festivals celebrated by all families in our community and wider society through stories, activities, special food and clothing which reflect the diversity of life. We have a sensitive approach to Father's/Mother's Day etc. and welcome parents/guardian's contributions.

Language:

It is important that all children and their parents/guardians feel welcome and encouraged to be involved. To help children with little or no English we will:

- Ensure inclusion in the group and staff will talk to the child, speaking slowly and simply, demonstrating what is meant by the words.
- Support child and parents by staff member who will try and learn some key phrases in the child's language, e.g. 'hello' 'goodbye' 'hungry' 'thirsty' 'do you need help?'
- We encourage children to use their home language whenever they are so inclined.



- Make it easy for the child to settle into the setting, we encourage other children to talk to non-English speaking children in the same way as usual.
- Parents are invited to help with key words and phrases in their home language. Staff will ensure that they correctly pronounce and spell children's names.

Manager Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Rees'.

Date: 21/07/2023



Appendix A:

THE PRINCIPLES OF AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICE:

An inclusive culture involves:

- Working in partnership and openly communicating with the child's family.
- Working in partnership with outside agencies that may be involved with the family. (Consent must be given by the child's parents.)
- Actively promoting equal opportunities and anti-bias practices, so that all children and families feel included and valued. (Derman-Sparks and ABC Task Force, 1989).
- Having robust policies and procedures – inclusion policy, equal opportunities policy.
- Recognising and valuing that all children are unique and will develop and learn at their own rate.
- Utilising the AIM programme to meet the needs of children and recognising that not all children with disabilities will require additional support.
- Encouraging children to recognise their individual qualities and the characteristics they share with their peers.
- Actively engaging children in making decisions about their own learning. Respecting the diversity of the child, their family and community throughout the Early Childhood Service.
- Understanding that children have individual needs, views, cultures and beliefs, which need to be treated with respect and represented throughout the early childhood services.
- Reflecting on our own attitudes and values





APPENDIX B

ACCESS AND INCLUSION MODEL: AIM

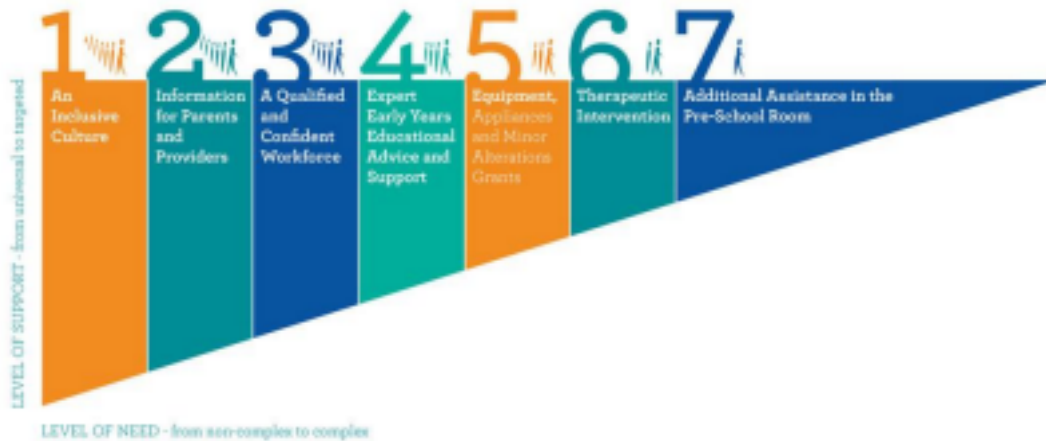
The Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a model of support designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Its goal is to empower service providers to deliver an inclusive preschool experience, ensuring that every eligible child can fully participate in the ECCE programme and reap the benefits of quality early years care and education.

AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the service provider. For many children, the universal support offered under the model will be sufficient. For others, one discrete support may be required to enable participation in pre-school, such as access to a piece of specialised equipment. For a small number, a suite of different services and supports may be necessary. In other words, the model is designed to be responsive to the needs of each individual child in the context of their pre school setting. It will offer tailored, practical support based on need and will not require a formal diagnosis of disability.

What supports are provided under AIM?

AIM provides a suite of universal and targeted supports across 7 levels





A new Inclusion Charter has been developed for the early year's sector. Service providers are invited to sign-up to this Charter by producing and publishing their own Inclusion Policy. To support this process, updated Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education have been produced and a national training programme on the Inclusion Charter and the Guidelines will be delivered by the City and County Childcare Committees. The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines can be accessed at <http://aim.gov.ie>

A broad multi-annual programme of formal and informal training for pre-school staff in relation to disability and inclusion will be funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and will be delivered by the City and County Childcare Committees, in collaboration with the HSE and other agencies.

Targeted Supports (Levels 4 – 7 of the Access and Inclusion Model):

The supports at levels 1 to 3, when appropriately developed, have been found internationally to be sufficient to support many children with disabilities. However, where a service provider, in partnership with a parent or guardian, considers that some further additional support may be necessary to meet the needs of a particular child, they can apply for one or more of the following targeted supports.

Expert advice: mentoring and support is available from a team of 50 specialists in early years care and education for children with disabilities. These experts, termed Early Years Specialists (Access and Inclusion), are based in the Better Start National Early Years Quality Development Service.



A scheme: is available for the provision of specialised equipment, appliances and grants towards minor building alterations which are necessary to support a child's participation in the ECCE programme.

Therapy services: which are critical to a child's participation in the ECCE programme, are available through the model and will be provided by the HSE. Finally, where the above supports are not sufficient to meet the needs of a child, service providers, in partnership with parents or guardians, can apply for additional capitation to fund extra support in the classroom or to enable the reduction of the staff to child ratio.

How do I access AIM supports? Where the Service has agreed to enroll a child in its pre-school and considers that additional support will be needed to meet the needs of the child in an inclusive way, the Service can, in partnership with the parent, apply for support under AIM. Applications are made via the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP) on the Pobal website.

Targeted Supports (Levels 4 – 7 of the Access and Inclusion Model):

The supports at levels 1 to 3, when appropriately developed, have been found internationally to be sufficient to support many children with disabilities. However, where a service provider, in partnership with a parent or guardian, considers that some further additional support may be necessary to meet the needs of a particular child, they can apply for one or more of the following targeted supports:

- Expert advice, mentoring and support is available from a team of 50 specialists in early years care and education for children with disabilities. These experts, termed Early Years Specialists (Access and Inclusion), are based in the Better Start National Early Years Quality Development Service.
- A scheme is available for the provision of specialised equipment,



appliances and grants towards minor building alterations which are necessary to support a child's participation in the ECCE programme.

- Therapy services, which are critical to a child's participation in the ECCE programme, are available through the model and will be provided by the HSE.
- Finally, where the above supports are not sufficient to meet the needs of a child, service providers, in partnership with parents or guardians, can apply for additional capitation to fund extra support in the classroom or to enable the reduction of the staff to child ratio.

How do I access AIM supports?

Where the Service has agreed to enroll a child in its pre-school and considers that additional support will be needed to meet the needs of the child in an inclusive way, the Service can, in partnership with the parent, apply for support under AIM. Applications are made via the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP) on the Pobal website.

Universal Supports (Levels 1 – 3 of the Access and Inclusion Model):

Early Years Practitioners can apply for the new higher education programme, "Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years" or LINC, at www.lincprogramme.ie. National training programmes in relation to the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Guidelines, as well as in relation to disability and inclusion more generally, will be advertised on this website and on the websites of all City and County Childcare Committees. Service providers and practitioners will be able to apply for places on these training programmes via their local City or County Childcare Committee.

Targeted Supports (Levels 4 – 7 of the Access and Inclusion Model):

Advice and support from the Early Years Specialist Service (Access and Inclusion) can be accessed by phone (01-511 7222), e-mail (onlinesupport@pobal.ie) or via the AIM online application form at www.pobal.ie. This form only needs to be completed once to access supports across levels 4, 5, 6 or 7.

To apply for specialised equipment, appliances or a grant towards minor



alterations, service providers, in partnership with parents or guardians, should complete the relevant part of the aforementioned online application form on PIP.

To apply for therapy services or additional capitation to fund extra support in the classroom, service providers, in partnership with parents or guardians,

should complete the online application form on PIP, including the Access and Inclusion Profile section of the form. It is estimated that only 1 to 1.5% of children in ECCE will require, and therefore be eligible for, the Level 7 additional capitation.

To meet these diverse needs childcare practitioners should:

Plan opportunities to build on an extend children's knowledge, experiences, interests and skills and should develop their self-esteem and confidence.

- Use a wide range of teaching practices based on the children's individual learning needs.
- Provide a wide range of opportunities to motivate and support development. Provide a safe, stimulating and supportive learning environment where all children are valued and where racial, religious, disability and gender stereotypes are challenged.

- Use materials that positively reflect diversity and are free from stereotyping and discrimination.
- Plan challenging opportunities.
- Monitor children's progress, identify areas of concern and act to provide appropriate support.
- Differentiate activities for children who have additional needs to allow for full participation and integration.
- Provide opportunities for children where English is their second language, to hear and see their home language.
- What we provide and how it is presented influences children's identity. ● All children have the right to grow up feeling proud, self-confident and sensitive to the feelings of others