



Connection, Kindness, Curiosity in Nature

Parent Handbook

May 2022-2023

To be reviewed annually

Date of previous reviews: 06/2018, 06/2019, 03/2020, 08/2020, 04/2021, 05/2022

Dear Families,

Welcome to Mucky Boots!

We hope you will find the information contained in this handbook useful.

We take pride in our nurturing, child-led approach where free play is highly valued. Our dedicated staff are here to structure routines and facilitate your child's chosen play experiences. We look forward to seeing your child grow and develop during their time with us.

We recognise that all the adults in your child's life can have a huge influence on their growth and experience. We wish to provide opportunities for our relationship to grow with you and any other services your child may access. Over your time with us we invite you to join us for fun workshops and informal gatherings to get to know one another.

Full policies and procedures can be found in our shared Google Drive and by request.

Please do not hesitate to approach us with any queries you may have.

The information included in this handbook describes our hopes and plans for the coming year.

Dawn Ewan

Managing Director

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Contact Information

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Service Name	Mucky Boots Education
Registered Business Address	Garden Cottage, Kingcausie Estate, Maryculter, Aberdeenshire, AB12 5FR
Company Number	SCO548239
Care Inspectorate Registration Number	CS2016349631
Office Mobile	07939 547016
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Email	admin@muckyboots.org
Website	https://www.muckyboots.org/
Facebook Group	Mucky Boots Family 2022-2023

Mucky Boots Introductory Information

Imagine a world where life is unrushed, where curious children take time to look at the beauty of simple things. Adults close by are attentive, nurturing and supportive. Children are free to explore questions, develop theories and form plans. Children can move on at their own pace, there is no music lesson or art teacher to rush for. Children are free to play in the woodland, with all the 'toys' nature provides. In inclement weather they can shelter in the comfortable, cosy bell tent, full of blankets and stimulating, natural materials. There are hammocks for resting after a busy morning of tree climbing, exploring and playing with friends. There is a fire area (The Magic Hat), where children can help to cook a foraged snack for sharing or make some hot drinks to keep warm and cosy.

This is Mucky Boots; a child led, holistic and nurturing learning kindergarten for children aged 3 to 8 years old. Our children largely play at our base camp home and we are very fortunate to have access to the large woodland with a stream, pond, native trees, bogs, diverse terrain and all the wonder that this brings. All day, every day, will be spent outdoors, giving the children time and space to connect with and become part of the natural world around them. Maryculter Scout Hut and church provide us with a base in times of extreme weather, such as when the winds are too high.

We offer funded childcare places for four days per week during the school term and a Holiday Club for up to four weeks annually.

Company Structure and Staffing

As a Social Enterprise business, Mucky Boots Education works for the benefit of the community it serves. Instead of financially rewarding shareholders or a business owner, we reinvest our profits back into Mucky Boots. This helps to keep our service affordable and supports us in delivering high quality experiences.

Our team is ever-growing. We prefer to be called by our first names by adults and children alike.

Dawn Ewan, Founder and Managing Director, manages the day to day running of the organisation and quality improvement with the support of our Board of Directors. Dawn has over 20 years experience working with children and young people as a primary teacher, ASN teacher, carer, nursery teacher, forest school leader and workshop leader. She is a trustee of Upstart Scotland and currently has a lead role in establishing a national association for outdoor nurseries in Scotland. Dawn is a mother of two and one bonus child who loves to camp and to simply 'be' outdoors.

dawn@muckyboots.org

Emma King, Depute Manager, takes a lead role in transition, supporting families and community work. Emma has over 20 years working with children; as a primary school teacher, forest school leader, team leader for an autistic playscheme and waldorf kindergarten teacher. She is married with two children; her eldest currently attends Mucky Boots. Emma's favourite things to do in the woods are forage, make wild medicine and connect with children; wrapping them up in the wonders of beautiful nature.

emma@muckyboots.org

Claire Hudson Livingstone, Depute Manager, is our curricular and pedagogy lead who also co-ordinates training for other professionals. Claire has worked with children for over 10 years as a Forest School Leader and trainer, specialising in Early Years. She holds her teaching diploma, and in a previous life trained as a nurse, followed by years as a service manager in the NHS. She has 3 boys, a husband who is obsessed by his chain saw, and loves hanging out with the children in the woods; sitting, chatting, noticing, listening.

claire@muckyboots.org

Gillian Kemp, Practitioner, has 14 years of experience working with young children in a variety of early years settings. Gill has recently received her Forest School Assistant qualification. This has helped her to gain more knowledge and understanding of forests and woodland, and build on skills such as species identification, den building and tool work. Gill's favourite things to do in the woods are going on adventures, practising her fire skills, reading stories and swinging in the hammock.

gillian@muckyboots.org

Stepanka Mocova, Practitioner, is a qualified Forest School Leader, with experience in running forest school sessions for young children. She loves being in nature, learning about plants and their medical properties. In particular, Stepanka has an excellent knowledge of mushrooms, she thoroughly enjoys foraging for mushrooms. Stepanka loves working with children, supporting children to grow, create and learn new skills. Helping children follow their own ideas and interests brings her so much joy. At home, Stepanka enjoys crafts, music, gardening and woodwork.

stepanka@muckyboots.org

Louisa Snelling, Support Worker, has been with us since the day we opened in 2017. She changed careers from Marketing and Communications and is very happy combining her love of nature, wildlife and nurturing children. Louisa is a Forest School Leader and is studying for her SVQ Level 2 Social Services (Children and Young People). She particularly enjoys reading stories to the children and making colourful creations from needle felting with them. Louisa likes going on a stick hunt and gets very excited when she finds peeling silver birch bark for lighting the fire. When she isn't playing '*What's the time Mr Wolf?*' she can be found in the office doing admin. Louisa has two children, Bethan and Jamie. She relaxes by growing flowers and vegetables and watching the birds in her garden.

louisa@muckyboots.org

Esther Banks, Relief Practitioner, has six years experience working with children in a variety of roles and received her postgraduate teaching diploma in 2020. She has a research background looking at people within environmental conservation and a passion for equality of access to the outdoors. She is happiest outdoors and her favourite things to do with the children at Mucky Boots are hunting for plants and mushrooms, climbing trees, cooking on the fire and reading stories. At home, she loves to grow vegetables, cycle, read and learn.

esther@muckyboots.org

Jess Doyle, relief practitioner with many years experience working with children as a primary school teacher, particularly in the early years. She has recently completed her Froebel in Childhood Practice certificate, developing skills to support children to connect with nature and grow at their own pace. In the woods, Jess enjoys peering under logs to see what's hiding, making cups of muddy 'tea', singing songs and discovering new things.

Jess@muckyboots.org

Pip Nash, Forest school leader, early years practitioner of many years and mother of 3. With a passion for the natural world, bushcraft, primitive skills and holistic health and wellbeing Pip is happiest when she is exploring, discovering, adventuring and getting really muddy.

Pip@muckyboots.org

Louise Hibbert is a trained nursery nurse who has many years experience in teaching swimming and skiing. Her son attends Mucky Boots and Louise just loves that he has the opportunity to spend so much time in nature and the outdoors. She loves connecting with the children, reading stories, singing and creating opportunities for play in nature.

louise@muckyboots.org

Adrianna Irvine-Fortescue, volunteer, started at Mucky Boots in November last year and is absolutely loving the experience that both working outside and with children brings. She lives locally and has taken an interest in Nature education as a possible future career. In the woods she loves to help the children with arts, crafts and play helping the children enhance their skills. At home, Adrianna enjoys drawing, making jewellery, baking and music.

Our Vision, Values and Aims

We are set in a beautiful woodland which through community effort is becoming more diverse as native plants are grown and cared for. Nature is our environment but also our teacher. Mucky Boots believe that it is our responsibility to model, respect, nurture and protect our surrounding natural environment.

As part of a three year development process we are reviewing our vision, values and aims. As a team we believe that our renewed values of practising kindness, developing curiosity and nurturing connection is at the very heart of Mucky Boots. As we pave our way, we invite families to join us in building our vision and nurturing these values.

Admission/Enrolment

We hold open days at various points through the year (COVID permitting), when families are welcome to come along and join us for a stay and play session. This gives children the chance to explore, while parents will have the opportunity to hear about our service and ask questions in a relaxed and friendly environment.

Applications are welcome at any point throughout the year and names will be added to our waiting list if there is no space available at that time. In order to access funded places, parents are requested to fill in the Aberdeenshire Council Nursery Application form in January each year. Please use this form even if you live in Aberdeen City.

Please keep in mind that funding can be split between services, so you may wish to use Mucky Boots for some days each week and another nursery for others. You can indicate your preference on the Aberdeenshire form.

Once a place request has been received we will send out a response email, letting families know that we have received the application and that the child is added to our waiting list. During our enrollment process we will send an offer letter to each family to secure a place with us. Families are asked to complete a registration form within two weeks of the confirmation letter being sent, in order to accept the offer.

Once you have accepted your place, one of the first things parents like to do is find out about clothing. Please see our Kit List below for what will be needed. We have secured some discount codes with brands that we recommend. We encourage you to use our Facebook parent group to share the latest deals on quality kit. Please get in touch with Dawn if the cost would be prohibitive to you.

From August onwards, parents and children are invited to join us for some induction sessions. As each child is an individual, the same induction process will not suit each child or family. It is vital that we work together on this to ensure a smooth transition for your child. We will invite you along with your child for a minimum of two part days.

****PLEASE NOTE****; when joining us to walk into the woods, parents are responsible for their own child's safety unless alternative arrangements have been made with the supervising member of staff.

During this walk, staff will assess how to best support your child from then on and collaborate with parents/carers on how to ensure the best possible start at Mucky Boots.

Term Dates

We follow Aberdeenshire Council term dates which can be accessed here: [School term dates and holidays - Aberdeenshire Council](#)

Please also check the 'Local Holidays' link for details of further closures. We are part of the Stonehaven network of schools.

Kit List

"There's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing."

We are pleased to announce that we are working in partnership with



[Littletrekkers](#) have been our preferred supplier for the last few years, most of the kit we recommend can be purchased on this site.

When ordering online, Mucky Boots Families will receive a Discount of 15% off!

The discount code is **MUCKYBOOTS22**

All Year Round

All Mucky Boots children need a set of high-quality **waterproofs** and a **Deuter rucksack**.

You will also need to provide a sturdy **lunchbox**, **water bottle** and **thermos** for your child, in addition to appropriate **footwear**, **warm socks**, **thermals**, and a **change of clothes**.

Kit recommendations are listed below.

*If the price of this equipment presents a barrier to your child's attendance, please let Dawn know.

A full change of spare clothing is essential. This includes pants, **socks x 2 pairs**, **trousers**, **T-shirt and a top**. Please place a **waterproof bag** inside the rucksack to protect it from rain or damp ground. Please ensure all trousers are long to avoid ticks, nettle stings and scratches from bushes.

Colder Weather

During winter, children will need considerably more clothing. Please provide a **cosy hat** and **3 pairs of 'magic', stretchy gloves**, as well as **eating gloves** (clean woolly gloves to keep hands warm and dry whilst eating, stored in lunchbox) a pair of **waterproof gloves**, a **buff/scarf**, **multiple thin layers of clothing** (as opposed to one or two thick layers), **3 pairs of socks** – one thin, one thick, plus spare in the rucksack. We recommend buying your child wellies that are a half or one size larger than usual so that they can wear the cosy thick socks comfortably.

Warmer Weather: Sun hat, midge repellent such as [Mosiguard](#). We provide this [aloe vera sun cream](#) but please do apply cream on the morning of hot days and provide your own if you have opted for this on the registration form.

We also ask that children do not take in toys from home as this impacts the nature play and connection we strive to give our children. If a child needs a toy to help support their transition into the woods, we can facilitate this during our induction process.

These are our favourite go-to's for kit

Waterproofs

We love Didrikson's because they are suitable for all year round, wide to allow for layers and have adjustable straps which means your child can get many years use out of them:

[Didriksons Slaskeman Waterproof Set | little trekkers](#)

Boardman waterproofs have extra cosiness for the winter months:

[Didriksons Boardman Waterproof Set | little trekkers](#)

We also highly rate **Lidl waterproofs**, unlined for year round use and lined for winter use. Unfortunately they can be hard to come by!

Top tip- Waterproof trousers should be sitting over wellies to ensure water does not drip inside!

Backpacks

These Deuter backpacks are a great size and comfortable for young children:

[Deuter Kikki 8L Backpack | little trekkers](#)

[Deuter 8L Schmusebar backpack little trekkers](#)

The Deuter Junior backpack is a great option for our older (age 5-7), children:

[Deuter Junior Rucksack - Violet/Navy | little trekkers](#)

Wellies

Demar wellies are by far the best we have found. They are extremely lightweight, incredibly easy to clean and very robust! This style comes with woollen liners which stay on and cosy much more effectively than the alternative. For warmer weather, just pull the liner out:

[Demar Kids Boys Girls Wellies Wellington Boots Rainy Snow Ultra Light EVA Graphite](#)

Flasks

This [Light and Compact Flask 350ml](#) flask is a perfect size for winter drinks and has an easy to push button on the top for pouring:

Water Bottles

We recommend using clear water bottles as they allow staff to check how much water has been drunk throughout the day and at mealtimes.

What size? Child size bottles (eg 330ml) which fit in the side pockets of their backpacks are ideal. We will provide top ups of drinking water when required rather than you needing to provide a large bottle. Please bear in mind that the children carry their belongings in and out of the woods so we recommend considering the materials and weight of their water bottle, lunch box containers and food flasks. If all made from metal these can be heavy for little ones joining us. Luckily there are lots of eco-friendly lightweight products available and our existing parents can recommend tried and tested products in our private Facebook group. The children attach their lunchboxes to the outside of their bags. Top tip- some families like to use a clip to ensure the water bottle stays attached to the outside pocket.

Food Flasks

Either of these flasks [FUNtainer® Food Flask 290ml](#) or [Stainless King™ Food Flask 470ml](#) are great for keeping food hot. You can sometimes find a Baked beans, dinner leftovers and

soup are all very popular for warm tummies! Top tip - don't forget to heat the flask up with hot water before the hot food!

Lunch Boxes

These will be thrown into big tubs for storage and likely dragged around at some points too so it is important to have something robust! Lunchboxes are attached to backpacks so we recommend going for something slimline with a handle in a sensible place. These are our favourite style: <https://thermos.co.uk/radiance-standard-lunch-kit-navy>

Sets for eating and drinking

Thermos do some great sets, with both plain and themed options for children. <https://thermos.co.uk/shop/sets?p=2>

Thermals

All year round from: Mountain Warehouse, Spotty Otter, Little Adventure Shop, Little Trekkers, Muddy Puddles, Decathlon and Didriksons Thermals. Seasonally from: Marks and Spencers, Aldi, Lidl and. Layers made from Merino Wool are especially recommended.

[Didriksons Jadis Thermal Set | little trekkers](#)

[Didriksons Monte Fleece Jacket | little trekkers](#)

[Didriksons Monte Fleece Pants | little trekkers](#)

Gloves and Hats

Didriksons gloves and hats are great for staying on and keeping hands and heads warm and dry:

[Didriksons Biggles Cap | little trekkers](#)

[Didriksons Biggles Mittens | little trekkers](#)

[Didriksons Biggles Zip Mittens | little trekkers](#)

Magic Gloves - nice and stretchy for growing hands. Found in most pharmacies and Spar stock them for £1 per pair (experience tells us to stock up on many pairs as these are frequently 'magically' lost). Top tip - layering up a pair of magic gloves under the waterproof ones can keep hands really toasty!

Cosy socks

Marks and Spencer do a good range of thermal socks and we also love Heat Holder socks for winter. Please ensure wellies have enough room - squashed socks cannot provide warmth.

Recommended Shops

Mountain Warehouse, Spotty Otter, Little Adventure Shop, Little Trekkers, Muddy Puddles, Decathlon, Aldi, Lidl, Sports Pursuit

Wellness Bag

We take a wellness bag with us everyday. This includes Weleda Skin Food, sun cream and Mosiguard. We will apply when we feel appropriate, with permission which has been obtained through the registration form.

Keep an eye on the Facebook Group: Our families are great at keeping each other informed of when sales are on!

Mucky Boots Families 22-23 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1425294097890860>

******* PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING! *******

Food and Drink

We highly value time for our children and staff to enjoy each other's company while eating. We come together for lunch and snacks. This gives opportunities to chat about the importance of food and drinks and a healthy lifestyle.

We follow the National Guidelines 'Setting the Table'

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/s/genericresource_tcm4850187.asp

This document provides guidance on packed lunches and the balance of food groups we offer children throughout the day.

Children should only bring milk or water to drink and we request that children do not bring sweets. Warm food and drinks are very welcome during the colder months and we recommend that you purchase 2 high quality flasks for this purpose. Please do not provide your child with food to share as we may have children with allergies or intolerances.

Mucky Boots provides an afternoon snack which is prepared by Maryculter House Hotel. In winter times it is usually a vegetable soup and a carbohydrate accompaniment. In summer, it can be oat bars, cheese toasties and fruit. Afternoon snack is always vegetarian with vegan and gluten free options.

Children should bring morning snacks and lunches. To facilitate mealtimes, we ask that parents choose meal time storage that can be opened easily by your child. Packets can be pre-opened and then sealed by a peg for example. Please try, as best you can, to provide

something you know your child will want to eat. We have no food storage facilities and therefore only carry oatcakes and fruit/veg as back ups.

It is difficult for us to keep an eye on how much each child eats, and what they choose to eat. A lunchbox offers a wonderful array of appealing and less-appealing food - when at Mucky Boots they are likely to first choose the item you would save until the end at home. Please let us know if you are concerned about the type and volume of food that's being eaten, and we can provide some guidance to your child.

In colder weather, we may also offer a hot drink such as fruit tea or low sugar hot chocolate. When we cook on the fire, we may have toast, popcorn, scones, soups etc. For birthday celebrations, our children are involved in preparing Welsh Cake batter to cook on the fire. This has become a lovely tradition, one that all our children look forward to! Please do not send in birthday food treats for your child to share.

Dropping off and Collecting Children

As we have limited parking and understand that many parents will have other children at other settings, we operate a flexible drop off and pick up time. Staff carefully record children arriving in order to keep an accurate record. Please let us know if there will be anyone other than the usual parent or carer collecting your child. You will have noted a password on your child's registration form, please ensure you pass this on to anyone who is unknown to us.

Morning meet

Between 8.30am and 8.45am.

Children are met by staff at the Glebe Field, by Maryculter Scout Hut. Children have the opportunity to greet each other in the field and play until 8.45am. Any latecomers will need to walk with their parents to either to the woods entrance gate or into our playspace in the woods. Staff cannot take responsibility for children at any other points as they are crossing and walking alongside roads supervising the group. You are, of course, welcome to join us in the woods for a play should you wish!

Pick up time

Between 4.00pm and 4.30pm.

Parents/carers should come to the Glebe Field, by Maryculter Scout Hut to collect their child at the end of the day. If you are coming earlier, you are welcome to come into the woods to meet your child and share their discoveries! Before you arrive, please consult staff as we may be playing in a different area of the woodland.

Parents/carers must arrive and pick up their child by 4.30pm. Staff have a very short time at the end of the day for planning, meetings etc. We do try to talk with every parent at the end of the day and so we ask that parents arrive before 4.30pm to ensure that meaningful handover conversations can take place.

Absence/Late Arrival

We request that you telephone to let us know as early as possible if your child is going to be absent or late.

Mucky Boots Woods Phone - 07376 225989 - For daily communications with staff in the forest. Please use this number for late arrivals, absences and any changes to pick up arrangements.

Mucky Boots Office Phone - 07939 547016 - To speak to a member of the management team.

Communicable Diseases, Head Lice, Ticks and Asthma

- When children are absent due to sickness or diarrhoea, they must **not** return until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Children must also be kept at home while they have an infectious or contagious disease. This includes ailments such as impetigo, conjunctivitis, chicken pox etc.
- If you are in doubt about exclusion times, please go to [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS](#) for up to date information.
- Please check your child's head regularly for head lice (we recommend weekly), and notify us if you find any. Current information about treating head lice is available from a local pharmacist.
- Please ensure your child arrives at kindergarten with tick repellent. We advise Mosiguard, as recommended by [Lyme Disease UK](#) . We carry a spray bottle of Mosiguard in our welfare kit – please ask staff if you would like to use some.
- Please check your child every day for ticks and remove them as soon as possible using a tick removal device. <https://lymediseaseuk.com/tick-removal/> We carry tick twisters in our first aid kit. If we remove a tick from your child, we will complete a first aid form for you to acknowledge.
- If your child requires any medication during their day with us, please inform us so we can provide the appropriate medical forms in advance for you to sign when you arrive. All medication including inhalers should be handed to staff, clearly marked with your child's name (see below). We have an insulated lunch box and ice packs available for keeping medication cool during the day.

Administration of Medicines

Most children will require medication at some point during their childhood. For the vast majority, this will be a short-lived course of medication.

Where possible, can you request medication which can be given outwith Kindergarten hours. Where this is not possible, parents are required to complete a signed **Authorisation to Administer Medication** form prior to staff administering medications on parents' behalf. This policy includes items such as Calpol, throat lozenges and cough mixture. Medicines will only be accepted if they are in their original packaging. Medicines dispensed by a Pharmacist must have a clearly printed label containing details of your child's name, date, dosage, and duration of the course of medication.

However pupils may have long-term medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes, which may require on-going support and, if their conditions are not properly managed by taking regular medication in Kindergarten, their access to education could be limited. In addition, some children have conditions that may require occasional staff intervention, including severe allergic conditions such as anaphylaxis. In certain cases specific staff training about a child's treatment may need to be given.

Emergency Closures/Adverse Weather

There may be occasions where we take the decision to close the service early, for example if there has been an incident which puts the children at risk such as uncontrolled fire or the weather is deteriorating to a stage which would make road travel particularly dangerous. We use the Scout Hut and occasionally the Church when it is not safe to play in the woods, such as when there are high winds.

Should we close unexpectedly;

- In the first instance we will send a text message to all parents to inform you of the situation.
- If we have informed you that your child needs to be collected early, please contact us via **text message** to confirm collection arrangements for your child as we need to keep our phone line clear in case of emergencies.
- If we have not heard from you within a reasonable amount of time, we will telephone the emergency numbers you supplied us with on the registration form.
- At all times, the safety of the children is our main priority.
- In cases of Adverse Weather, we aim to make any closure or part closure decision as soon as reasonably practical. This is never an easy decision but we must make a decision based on the safety of our staff and children. This includes ensuring that we maintain the correct staff/child ratio.
- Please be aware that the roads in and around the Kirkton of Maryculter can be particularly treacherous and are often gritted much later than other roads.

- We may close for the day or part of the day – for example, it sometimes makes more sense for us to travel outwith busy times.
- If local schools are closed, Mucky Boots will automatically close.
- The Manager will seek advice from residents within the Kirkton as to local road conditions, as well as checking local roads information from Police Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council and local Facebook groups.
- Please bear in mind that staff will be attempting to reach Maryculter at the same time of day as you are, once we have dropped off our own children at childcare. We may not be able to respond to messages promptly.
- We will send text messages to all parents and post on the Mucky Boots Family Facebook page should we be considering closure.

Learning and the Curriculum

At Mucky Boots, the physical and emotional health of the children in our care is of paramount importance.

Our nurturing ethos encourages respect for self, others and the environment. Staff model this through their interactions with each other and the children at all times. As a result, children feel secure, valued and respected. This in turn leads to children who feel emotionally secure.

At Mucky Boots, we understand that each child develops at his or her own pace; physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally we are all unique. Our priority is to get to know and understand your child in order to support their all round development.

We observe children closely, providing a secure base from which they can explore. We promote curiosity and encourage the children to use their imaginations, develop and test theories. We record our observations, provide support and record our findings, along with photographs in your child's journal. Journals are shared with parents on a regular basis and parents are encouraged to add to these documents with experiences from home. We use our own Holistic Assessment alongside national curricular guidance for supporting children's progress.

The Importance of Play

Play is the work of the child

Maria Montessori

Our child-centred approach places emphasis on the value of free play experiences for the children in our care. We are there to facilitate play experiences, to manage the routines and 'flow' of the day and to provide a source of inspiration and comfort for the children. We join in with play when invited and sometimes draw the children's attention to an area or discovery, for example caterpillar eggs on the nettle leaves or an icy path. Our nurturing staff spend time 'listening' to the children in a number of ways, discovering where their strengths and interests lie and working together to provide opportunities to further encourage further growth and curiosity.

Working With Parents and the Community

Parents

We strongly value the relationships we have with parents, families and the wider community.

- Our flexible drop off and pick up times offer opportunities for parents and staff to share information.
- Parents are invited to open events, family events and work parties.
- At least twice a year, parents have the opportunity for a more formal discussion with their child's key worker or member of management to discuss children's progress (see below).

Children's journals are cared for by your child with the support of their key worker. Your child's key worker is determined by who your child feels connected to during their first few months at Mucky Boots.

Children can access them at any time and they are available to take home at the end of the kindergarten day to share at home. Families are asked to return learning journals as soon as possible to ensure they are accessible to children during the kindergarten day.

Regular events and stay and play sessions will provide opportunities for parents and families to experience kindergarten with their children. Events may take the form of workshops, work parties or celebrations and provide an informal atmosphere in which families and staff can reflect on the service and their children's experiences. Events take place on at least 3 occasions each school year.

Discussion

Each child will have a nominated key worker who is responsible for communicating with parents about their child's progress. Opportunities will be given on at least two occasions each year for parents to meet with their child's key worker or a member of management, to discuss the child's experiences and progress in more detail. Notes from discussions are recorded on the children's personal plans and are available for the staff team to view. In our weekly meetings we have a rolling programme to focus on each individual child and collaborate on how to support them, in order to ensure the best possible experiences for each child at Mucky Boots.

This process is intended to complement and not replace conversations which take place with parents regularly during drop off and pick up times. We at Mucky Boots feel it is important to

respect each child and family member with our feedback process. Therefore we discuss aspects from your child's day from a strengths-based perspective and when we need to tell you about matters that are more difficult, we make sure that the children or other families are not privy to the matter at hand. If that is not possible we offer a phone call or message later when the matters can remain confidential. We want to keep the end of the day as positive for the child and your family as possible but also ensure that information has been shared effectively.

Mucky Boots Parent Council

The Mucky Boots Parent Council was recently established in November 2021. The aim of the Council is for parents and Mucky Boots to come together to enhance Mucky Boots. In a short amount of time the Council has proved to be hugely beneficial and successful. Each month the council meets online to collaborate on new projects and fundraising events. The majority of parents on the council are leaving this year, therefore it is crucial we replace its members in order to continue. Please contact muckybootscouncil@gmail.com or speak to Emily Bamford (a returning parent) in person if you would like to join the committee.

Maryculter Woodland Trust

As caretakers of the wonderful space we use, we work very closely with Maryculter Woodland Trust to develop and maintain the woodland for the benefit of the children we work with and the surrounding community. It is an integral part of our work that the children and families work with the trust to plant trees, plan and develop spaces for play and become involved with the hard work of maintaining the wood. Through this, our children will develop a real connection to nature and become the future caretakers of wild spaces. Parents are encouraged to join in with the activities of the trust, including work parties and events. Information can be found at [Maryculter Woods - Home](#)

Child Protection

'The Guidance outlines how statutory and non-government agencies should work together with parents, families and communities to prevent harm and to protect children from abuse and neglect. Everyone has a role in protecting children from harm.'

'The Scottish approach to child protection is based upon the protection of children's rights. The Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) policy and practice model is a practical expression of the Scottish Government's commitment to implementation of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This requires a continuum of preventative and protective work.'

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021

It is everyone's job to ensure that children are kept safe; thus it is a priority for Mucky Boots Education to protect the children and young people in our care. We are required to report any suspected child abuse to appropriate services such as police or social work.

Categories of abuse include:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Criminal Exploitation
- Child Trafficking
- Neglect
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Forced Marriage

(From the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021)

[National guidance for child protection in Scotland 2021 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-for-child-protection-in-scotland-2021/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

Click for more information about;

- [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/getting-it-right-for-every-child-girfec/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx) and
- [Safeguarding children and child protection](https://www.gov.scot/publications/safeguarding-children-and-child-protection/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)
- Aberdeenshire Council [Report child protection concern](https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/your-voice/child-protection/report-a-concern/)

Aberdeenshire Social Work Office, 9-5 Mon to Fri 01467 537111	Outside office hours, call the out of hours emergency service on 03456 08 12 06
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Toileting

We have a toilet area that is set up each morning for the children and adults. In this area there are two tents for the children, each has a small portable toilet which is regularly changed by staff. One of these tents also includes a changing area for children. We also have a private 'pee-tree' for children who prefer this option. There is one toilet, the green tent, which is specifically for adults.

We respect that every child has their own personal toileting needs. Whilst we encourage the children to be as independent as possible we appreciate that some children will need extra support. Our focus is to respectfully facilitate the toilet learning process. If children do require adult assistance, the child will be supported in the tent with the door shut to the extent that it creates privacy from other children and adults. Where a child requires a nappy, velcro nappies rather than pull ups are requested. If your child needs to be changed, this will be completed in a standing position. Please provide nappies and wipes according to your child's needs. Please ensure that there is plenty of spare clothing for your child to change into.

Transitioning on

We hope to help your child's transition to their school to go as smoothly as possible.

During term four we will ask for details of any school you may have chosen for your child.

- When a child is transferring to a different nursery or moving on to school, we will invite the staff to visit Mucky Boots in order to observe your child at play and discuss the transition with our staff.
- We will pass you your child's journal to take to their new setting.
- For families who choose to home educate their child, we will also offer support to those families to identify their child's areas of strength and development.

Concerns and Complaints

At Mucky Boots, we strive to provide a high quality, nurturing environment, which allows children the freedom and opportunity to explore, interact with, and learn about the world around them.

If any parent or carer has any concerns about our service, we encourage you to let us know. It is in the best interests of your child that we work together, building good communications based on trust and respect.

The procedure is as follows:

- In the first instance, talk to your child's key worker who will discuss with you and report to the management team. A member of the management team will organise with the family an opportunity to discuss the matter at hand and collaborate on a plan to navigate the situation successfully.
- If the parent/carer is not satisfied, he or she should then bring their concerns to the managing director who will also discuss any next steps which need to be taken. Key points from this discussion will also be noted and kept in the complaints record.
- If you are not satisfied that the matter has been resolved, you can contact the Care Inspectorate (and/or Aberdeenshire Council if your child is using funded hours):

Care Inspectorate:

Phone: 0345 600 9527

Web: [Home](#)

Email: enquiries@careinspectorate.com

Aberdeenshire Council Early Years Team:

Early Years team

Woodhill House

Westburn Road

Aberdeen

AB16 5GB

Email: Eligible2andCensus@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Insurance

Mucky Boots Education holds employers' liability and public liability insurance with Birnbeck Insurance.

No insurance is held by Mucky Boots Education that automatically compensates participants for personal accidents, whether it is an accident occurring within or outwith the boundary of the service. Insurance of this nature, e.g. personal accident, life, private medical, is seen as a parental responsibility. It is your responsibility as a parent to insure your child for personal accident or death if you feel this is appropriate.

Data Protection

In our work with children and their families Mucky Boots will have access to confidential information. It is a legal requirement for Mucky Boots to hold information about children and families using the kindergarten and the staff working for our organisation. This information is used for registers, invoices, emergency contacts, to record learning and experiences, conversations and, occasionally, if staff have a concern about a child. All records will be stored securely in a locked cabinet/computer/online in line with Data Protection legislation.

We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office to hold data.

All records can be accessed through your child's key worker, or the Managing Director, or by writing to us.

Payment of Fees

All eligible children are entitled to up to 1140 hours a year of Early Learning and Childcare and a substantial snack or meal. Children are entitled to this funding from the term after their third birthday.

For term-time settings such as Mucky Boots this equates to 30 hours a week (term-time). This can be split across two settings. Any hours above the funded amount (30) will be charged by Mucky Boots as the non-council childcare provider.

We ask parents to contribute a small amount each day towards covering the expenses not covered by the Scottish Government, including resources, snacks, hygiene and cleaning materials, insurances and administrative costs.

Current information about costs can be found here: [Fees Schedule 2022.pdf](#)

Invoices will be sent out at the beginning of each term and we request payment by the end of that term. You can choose whether to send one payment or to spread the cost over the term.

You may also be able to apply for Childcare Tax Credits to help with your childcare costs. To find out if you are eligible, contact:

Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 or visit [Tax credits calculator - GOV.UK](#)

Mucky Boots Education also accepts all Employee Child Care Vouchers, which may be available from your employer towards the cost of your kindergarten fees. To find out more visit: [Tax credits - GOV.UK](#) or speak to your employer.

Mucky Boots Kindergarten Terms and Conditions

Key terms

Start Date

If, after enrolment (forms received), you require to delay your child's start date, please note that Mucky Boots Education can only guarantee to accommodate a delay in start date by a maximum of one month. If you request to delay your child's start date by more than one month this will be accommodated where possible. If your request date cannot be accommodated, Mucky Boots Education reserves the right to amend your child's start date to the following August.

Payment of Fees/Child's Attendance

Payment of fees is termly in advance. Bills will be sent out at the beginning of each term and we request payment before the final two weeks of each term. Fees are non-refundable in the event of your child's absence. Fees are normally subject to annual review but may be revised at other times with reasonable notice. Mucky Boots Education reserves the right to charge 5% of the monthly fee for late payment of fees. If you wish to decrease your child's attendance, we require one month's written notice.

Termination Notice/Change of days/hours

One months notice in writing, or payment in lieu of notice, must be given if you wish to withdraw your child from the kindergarten or to request any change in days or hours.

Start and Finish Times

Mucky Boots Nature Kindergarten operates between the hours of 8:30am to 4:30pm each Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. We are open during Aberdeenshire Council term time, and operate the same in-service and occasional day pattern as the Stonehaven school networks.

Children should be dropped off at the Glebe Field by 8:45am and collected from site **by 4:30 at the latest**. Parents/carers must inform Mucky Boots by 8:45am if their child is not attending that day, otherwise the group will be delayed leaving for the woodland, attempting to contact parents/carers or emergency contacts. If parents/carers are running late they must inform Mucky Boots as soon as possible and staff will make arrangements, either to delay the group or arrange to meet within the woodland.

Children cannot be cared for outwith the stated hours, therefore Mucky Boots Education

reserves the right to charge £15 per child for every 15 minutes late in collection.

Confidentiality

All information relating to each child will be treated as confidential and can be examined by parents/carers upon written request. We follow GDPR guidelines for safe storage and retention of data. In cases where a child may be at risk, Child Protection legislation will take precedence.

We enjoy having parents spend time with us at Mucky Boots, and very much encourage this. We trust that all parents will treat observations of children and staff in the strictest of confidence. If you have any concerns or questions at all, please bring this up with present staff in the first instance. Thereafter, please approach a member of the management team. For complaints, please follow our complaints procedure.

Full terms and conditions can be found at the following link:

[Terms and Conditions 2022.pdf](#)

Policies and Procedures will be shared with you on our google parent drive

Thank you for taking the time to read through this Parent Handbook. Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information and clarity on the subjects covered either in person, phone or email.

Kind regards



Dawn Ewan

Mucky Boots Education, Garden Cottage, Kingcausie Estate, Maryculter, Aberdeenshire, AB12 5FR ♦ Company Limited by Guarantee ♦ Registered in Scotland no SC548239 ♦ Email: admin@muckyboots.org ♦ Tel: 07939547016 ♦ www.muckyboots.org