



## **Parent Handbook**

**June 2018**

Dear Parent/Carer,

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 on our website [www.muckyboots.org](http://www.muckyboots.org)

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

Dawn Ewan

Managing Director

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## Contact Information

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Website	<a href="http://www.muckyboots.org">www.muckyboots.org</a>

## **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 but unobtrusive. Children are free to ask 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, and, in inclement weather they can shelter in the comfortable, cosy tepee full of rugs, cushions 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 where children can help to cook a nutritious snack for sharing or make some hot drinks to keep warm and cosy.

This is Mucky Boots; a child led, holistic and nurturing learning environment for children from 3 to school age. Children will have access to the large woodland with a stream, native trees, bogs 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.

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

## **Company Structure**

As a Social Enterprise, Mucky Boots Education works for the benefit of the community it serves. All parents/carers are automatically invited to become members of the organisation when their child enrolls at Mucky Boots. Other interested persons may also become members at the discretion of the Directors. Interested persons may include, but are not restricted to: parents of children who have previously attended Mucky Boots, members of the community, directors/members of Maryculter Woodland Trust.

All members are invited to our AGM where there will be updates about the service; election of Directors and any member can propose a resolution.

Members are encouraged to become Directors. Directors meet regularly to discuss the business, finances and help to organise family events. We are keen for parents to join our board 😊

Managing Director, Dawn Ewan manages the day to day running of the Kindergarten.

For more information about becoming a member or joining our board, please get in touch with Dawn.

## **Aims and Objectives**

### **Mission and Objectives**

To offer a holistic, nurturing outdoor environment in which:

- Children are listened to and feel valued as part of a community
- Children are confident, capable, motivated learners
- Parents and families feel valued and listened to as part of a community

### **Objectives**

- We will offer 2 services for families – a Nature Kindergarten for children age 3 to school starting age and a holiday club for children aged 3 to primary school leaving age.
- Children will be involved in planning for their learning through the use of learning journals and floor books.
- Children will be encouraged to use their voice, express their ideas, opinions and ask questions.
- We will support the emotional development of children by working with a maximum of 15 children at any one time in mixed age groups to provide for a 'buffer zone' of development and peer support.
- We will use high quality, open-ended resources in order to encourage problem solving, imaginative play opportunities and 'thinking out of the box'.
- We will work in a holistic way, which promotes both inner health and outer health for children, their families and staff.
- We aim to build emotional resilience by providing open-ended experiences, including risk full learning.
- We will have a community-based approach, which provides services where there is a clear local need.
- We will work in true partnership with families, holding open days, work parties and family events.
- We will use up to date research and thinking to inform our practice and maintain a high quality of provision.
- We will work in partnership with Maryculter Woodland Trust to establish and maintain the woodland, to promote the importance of learning and playing outdoors and ensure the long-term future of both the woods and the Kindergarten.
- We will support staff by providing high quality training opportunities, time to reflect as a team, peer support network and a thorough recruitment and induction process.

## **Admission/Enrolment**

We hold Open Days at various points through the year where 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 keep in mind that funding can be split between services, so you may need to use Mucky Boots for some days each week and another Aberdeenshire nursery on others. You can indicate your preference on the Aberdeenshire form.

The deposit paid is non-refundable and is used to provide your child with high quality kit. Children will be presented with their welcome pack prior to their first Kindergarten day. It will contain: waterproof dungarees and jacket, socks, backpack, head torch and lunch box.

Once a place request has been received and deposit accepted, parents and children are invited to join us for an induction session. 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.

## **Kit List**

We wish your child to be comfortable and to be able to participate fully in their day, so please provide the kit they will require. This includes

### **All year round:**

A full change of spare clothing is essential. This includes pants, socks x 2 pairs, trousers, T-shirt and a top. Please place in 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.

Waterproof dungarees and trousers, well-fitted wellies, fleece, rucksack, lunch box with snacks, lunch and eating gloves included, flask with drink (cold or hot dependant on weather).

### **Colder Weather:**

Cosy hat and 3 pairs of magic, stretchy gloves, waterproof mittens buff/scarf, multiple thin layers of clothing (as opposed to one or two thick layers), 2 pairs of socks – one thin, one thick, plus spare in the rucksack.

### **Warmer Weather:**

Sun hat, enclosed shoes (no shoelaces please).

## 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](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 a high quality food flask for this purpose. Please do not provide your child with food to share as we may have children with allergies or intolerances.

We have morning and afternoon snacks with lunch in between. Staff carry a stock of fruit/vegetables, oatcakes and water so there will always be additional food available. When we cook on the fire, we may have toast, popcorn, scones, soups etc. We may also serve low sugar hot chocolate during the colder months.

## 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. Please let us know if there will be anyone other than the usual parent or carer collecting your child.

### Morning meet

Between 8:30am and 8:50am

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 8:50.

Staff and children walk into the wood and together decide where to play.

### Pick up time

Between 4:10pm 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 wood to meet your child and share in their discoveries! Before you arrive, please consult staff to find out where we are playing.

**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.

## 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. This saves us waiting in the Glebe field for your arrival any longer than necessary.



## Communicable Diseases, Head Lice 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 off Kindergarten 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 [www.nhsgrampian.org](http://www.nhsgrampian.org) 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.
- If your child requires any medication during their day with us, please inform us so we can provide the appropriate medical forms in advance. All medication including Inhalers should be handed to staff, clearly marked with your child's name (see below).

## 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 school, 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 occasion 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.

- 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 your emergency numbers.
- At all times, the safety of the children is our main priority.

## **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 track children's progress in line with the Curriculum for Excellence.

## **The Importance of Play**

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 development in the 4 capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence: Successful Learners, Responsible Citizens, Effective Contributors and Confident Individuals.

## **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.
- Parents have access to password protected online records, which give details about their child's progress (see below).
- Three times a year, parents have the opportunity for a more formal discussion with their child's key worker to discuss children's progress (see below).

#### **Online Records**

Our observations and discussions are recorded digitally. They provide a snapshot of the time children are with us and links are made to the Curriculum for Excellence. Each child has his/her own file in our Online Learning Journals account. Parents are provided with login details and a password so that they can keep up to date. Journals are not updated at given timescales. Rather, we find that the number of observations recorded depends on our weather and seasons. During the spring term, for example, most of the children will have been attending for a number of months. The younger children will be finding their feet and our most experienced children will be getting prepared for transitioning to school. The weather is usually kinder and so staff can spend time recording observations freely. During the colder months, we spend more time moving through the woods with children, cooking warm food and preparing warm drinks. This naturally results in less time spent recording observations.

#### **Discussion**

Each child will have a nominated key worker who is responsible for communicating with parents about their child's progress. Each term, we will identify a focus fortnight where we will record more in depth observations of each child. Parents are asked to complete a form to keep us up to date with events at home and any other pertinent information. At the end of the fortnight, parents are invited to meet with their child's key worker to discuss the child's experiences and progress in more detail and to identify next steps. This is in order to complement and not replace conversations, which take place with parents regularly during drop off and pick up times. Notes from discussions are recorded on the children's files and are available for the staff team to view in order to ensure the best possible experiences for children.

### **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.

## Child Protection

“All children and young people in Scotland have the right to be cared for and protected from harm and to grow up in a safe environment in which their rights and needs are respected. The welfare of children is paramount”.

*Protecting Children and Young People: Framework for Standards, Scottish Executive 2004.*

It is everyone’s job to ensure that children are kept safe; thus it is a priority for Mucky Boots Education to protect 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
- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

(From the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014)

More information about Child Protection can be found on the NESPC website:  
<http://www.nescpc.org.uk/home/home.asp>

This is the best place to find information as it is updated regularly.

Aberdeenshire Council information is on the Aberdeenshire Council website:  
[http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/care/help/protection/child\\_protection.asp](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/care/help/protection/child_protection.asp)

Social Work Office, Rowanbank Road, Portlethen, AB12 4NX 01224 666200	Portlethen Family Centre, Portlethen Academy, Bruntland Road, Portlethen, AB12 4QL 01224 786199
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## Transitions

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

During P1 enrolment week, 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 invite staff from our feeder schools to our open days in order to form collaborative working relationships.

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

We have an 'open door' policy at Mucky Boots that encourages open dialogue between the parents, carers and staff.

We encourage parents and carers to come to us with any concerns as soon as possible so that we can work together to find the best solutions.

In the first instance, parents should discuss any concerns with their child's key worker. The staff member will note the concern and record any key points arising from discussion. This will be forwarded to the Managing Director who will keep a record of concerns.

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 that need to be taken. Key points from this discussion will also be noted and kept in the complaints record.

If a parent/carer is still not satisfied, he or she will be advised to report their concerns to the Care Inspectorate.

The complaints procedure outlined below can be referred to in the Mucky Boots Handbook for staff, parents and carers.

### Complaints Procedure

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 note the complaint, discuss with you and report to the Managing Director.
- If this is not appropriate or you feel unsatisfied with the outcome, talk to the Managing Director.

If you are not satisfied that the matter has been resolved, you can contact the Care Inspectorate:

[www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

0845 600 9527

Fax: 01382 207 289

Web: Online complaints form

Email: [enquiries@careinspectorate.com](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.com)

## **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 accident, 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/GDPR**

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 nursery and the staff working at the nursery. 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. However all records will be stored in a locked cabinet/computer/online in line with Data Protection registration.

We are registered with the Information Commissioners Office to hold data.

Parents will have constant access to their child's Online Learning Journal. All other records can be accessed through your child's key worker, or the Managing Director, or by writing to us.

Full policies can be found on our website.

## **Payment of Fees**

Fees are paid monthly in advance. Bills will be sent out at the end of each month and we request payment within 7 days.

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 08453003900 or visit [www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk](http://www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk)

Mucky Boots Education also accepts all Employee Child Care Vouchers, which may be available from your employer towards the cost of your nursery fees. To find out more visit:

[www.hmrc.gov.uk/childcare](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/childcare) or speak to your employer.