



Midlothian Council

What will my Early Learning and Childcare look like in August 2020?

This document provides key information to parents/carers and children to demonstrate how the spaces, experiences and adult interactions, will support children's health & wellbeing and progression in learning.



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What will my Early Learning and Childcare setting look like?



This document has been created to offer key information for parents, carers and children within Midlothian Council. The main aim is to deliver high quality learning experiences for children following the Covid-19 pandemic. This document is based on the core principles of Realising the Ambition, this is a government document which keeps the needs of every child very much at the centre. The staff will continue to deliver play based learning and will nurture and support relationships. We have looked at the spaces available for children to play in, the experiences staff will be offering children and the staff will specifically focus on child and adult interactions within the setting. The staff will also take into account the recent requirements from Care Inspectorate and guidance from the Scottish Government strategic framework outlined below:

- enhanced hygiene and cleaning practices
- caring for children in small groups - Bubbles
- minimising contact between those groups - Bubbles
- maximising use of outdoor spaces
- physical distancing between adults in the setting, including parents/carers at drop-off and pick-up times

Excellence and Equity During the COVID 19 Pandemic-A Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools, Early Learning and Childcare- Page 18 (May 2020) Scottish Government

Every setting is different and they will be adapted to suit their particular context. The staff in your setting will find a new approach that works for them and your children, in keeping with their Vision Values and Aims during this challenging time.

Spaces, Experiences and Quality Interactions



The staff will be streamlining resources, which will make cleaning, health and safety more manageable. Establishing routines, procedures and risk assessments that all staff are happy with, will allow everyone to feel comfortable and the staff can then be free to be with the children in a relaxed manner.

Your setting will have established a system that allows children to play happily in "Bubbles" this is a model that has been adopted from other countries. The children will be in a Bubble of up to eight children. The staff have carefully selected the children who will be together, taking previous friendships into consideration. These bubbles of children will not change, they will play together inside, outside, eat together, they will be only be able to play with children from their own bubble. The setting will endeavour to have the same members of staff with the children, although under the circumstances this might not always be possible.

The staff will use their outdoor space as possible as we know that this is a safer approach. It is important that you ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for outside play. Please put on sun cream and provide sun hats for your child when they attend nursery.

Staff in settings have been creative and have made up nurturing spaces by carefully selecting key resources to enable children to continue their learning. The staff will focus on quality interactions, with your children as they play.

The staff will spend time to get to know the children, observing what they need, which children need more nurture and those who need more challenge. This will allow staff to observe what children are interested in and what they will need next, which has always been important, but now more than ever. Children will need space to play, talk, be listened to and time to interact with staff and their friends, to help them to make sense of their current world.



If recycled resources such as paper, cardboard etc. come from outside the nursery, they should be left for 72 hours and then they can then be used freely.

Staff will select books for children to use within their "Bubble" for a period of time. Once finished with these books, they should be boxed, sealed, dated and kept for 72 hours before another group of children can enjoy them.

Story corner

Each group will have its own special box of books which children can choose from at any time. Make the area cosy by adding fleecy blankets for individual children, which can go in the washing machine between sessions. Staff will make sure books are wiped between sessions.

Staff will use resources as long as they can be put in the dish washer or washing machine at the end of each session between groups. Wooden blocks, pens, pencils etc. should be wiped with antibacterial product.

Construction

Children can play with Lego and other construction sets with props such as small world people, cars and trains. These can be thoroughly cleaned in the dishwasher at the end of the session. Having a selection of blocks which can be wiped after use, alongside loose parts will provide a range of possibilities for creativity and problem

What can I play with?

It is important to provide a form of house corner, small world and mark making resources within the play space, providing children with opportunities to express themselves and help them to make sense of their current world

Numeracy

Loose parts, shells, stones, buttons, counters can be used for counting. Plastic numbers can be used to order, count and represent quantities. Games and puzzles should be chosen to meet the needs and interests of the group and wiped after use.

Playdough

Children can have playdough to use within their bubbles. A selection of tools and natural resources should be available for children to play with.





Sand and Water

Children can play in the sand and water trays within their Bubbles. But cleaned and sand changed before another Bubble can use it. Alternatively they can have their own individual trays, depending on the resources available. Different shaped jugs, containers of different sizes, plastic spades, scoops, and boats can be added and washed after use.



Creative Area

Resources including scissors and paintbrushes can be shared if cleaned between Bubbles. Recycled resources for junk modelling can be used if left for 72 hours. Have a display area for children's creations.



Home Corner

It can have real furniture or it might be a house made from cardboard boxes with some props including kitchen pots, utensils, plates, cups etc. Some scarfs, different materials, plastic pegs can be available for dressing up. Children can create and act out their own stories using a selection of open ended props like sticks for wands. They can turn the area into a shop or castle using the props and make signs, coins etc.



Models

Children's models, drawings, paintings and creations can be displayed, photos taken and possibly emailed home.



What can I play with?

"I need spaces where I can relax, feel safe, happy, content and cosy and which give me a sense of care and wellbeing" RTA

"I continue to need both open spaces to move freely and small spaces to feel calm and cosy" RTA

Mark Making

Children can have their own special named bag/box of resources with pens, pencils and a glue stick. Alternatively, a small selection of pens, pencils and crayons can be available as long as they are only shared within the Bubble and wiped after use either at the end of a session or as required. A selection of different sized paper, envelopes etc. should be available and replenished throughout the session.





Q. Can I enjoy story time with my friends?

Yes. Within their bubbles, children will have daily opportunities to listen and participate in story time. Use props which are easy to clean to enhance the understanding of the story*



Q. Can I sing with my friends?

Yes. Singing time will be offered to children in their bubbles. If a music, drama area is difficult to set up, have a box of instruments which are easily cleaned for children to use. Add in laminated nursery rhymes.



*Books – during this time it is important that we offer books which can help children understand their feelings, emotions and thoughts. We have selected a number of appropriate books to support children.



Experiences

"In all my experiences notice and encourage my schematic play I use through the process of my repeated actions I am learning about the world and how things work" RTA

Q. Can I do different activities in small groups?

Yes. Within bubbles children can enjoy physical activities to support their motor and co-ordination development outside and inside. Focus groups for specific children is fine, as long as it is within their bubble.





Q. Can I brush my teeth?

At this current time the advice is not to have tooth brushing in a group, but it can be done individually. However, if it is not possible, you can talk to the children about the importance of brushing their teeth in the morning and evening.



Q. Can I have snack/lunch with my friends?

Yes. Snack/lunch will now be offered in bubbles which can be outside or inside. Children will have their snack/lunch prepared and plated for them by one member of staff.



Q. Can I bake?

No. It is currently advised that children do not bake. We will let staff know when this advice changes.



Q. What will be the routine of my day?

Having a visual timetable for children will support their understanding of the day, which could help them to settle back into/into their early years setting.



Experiences

"I need support and reassurance to cope with changes to my usual routine, for example if I am separated from familiar people or if I move to a different space. Help me learn to feel secure and to regulate my emotions through your empathic manner" (RTA)

Q. Who will support my learning?

Responsive planning will be continued to be used to ensure that each child is at the centre of how staff plan for their interests and unique development. The staff will be supporting children's interests and progress.



Q. Who will look after me?

The staff will support all aspects of the children's well-being, safety, supporting and nurturing them during the session. Staff will be communicating with parents/carers on a regular basis.



Q. Can I learn about things I'm interested in?

Observing spontaneous play in a variety of situations will inform planning. Practitioners will observe closely, get to know the children as learners and as individuals, which will inform their next steps in learning.



Q. Can I get comfort?

If a child approaches staff for emotional reassurance, then staff can give them physical comfort, a hug. Children may be experiencing anxiety, trauma and bereavement, which may have a significant impact on their development and they may be overwhelmed by emotions. Practitioners will be there to help children feel safe, secure and settled.



Quality interactions

"Notice how I observe and respond to your voice, words and expressions. You help me to learn to communicate and find my words by modelling empathy. I am learning from you how to be kind, calm and caring" RTA.



Q. What will I be learning?

Staff will be carefully observing and planning the learning through play within the three key areas of the curriculum- literacy, numeracy, with health and wellbeing being at the centre. Midlothian Recovery Curriculum – resilience and nurture will guide staff in supporting children.



Q. Can I bring a comfort toy to Nursery?

Yes. Children can bring a special toy. The key person will ensure that it stays with the child, until they feel that they can continue their day without it. It will be given back at the end of the session.

Quality interactions

Practitioners are the key resource.

Q. Who can I talk to?

Staff will take time to listen and talk to children sensitively. Open ended questions will be used to support and extend conversations, providing opportunities for children to explore and express their feelings.

Q. Will I be able to play with my friends?

Yes. Children can play with other children within their bubble. They will be able to play close to each other and hug, as long as it is with children within their bubble.



Will my bubble be outside when other bubbles are outside?

Bubble groups should not interact with each other or share resources (unless they are cleaned in between or left for over 72 hours, both of which kill the virus). If there is enough space, each bubble group can have area and their own resources to use.



Can I use the climbing/play structures and mud kitchens?

Yes, you can use the play structures and mud kitchens within one bubble group. If another bubble group are to use them they will be washed in between or left for over 72 hours to kill the virus, regardless of what they are made of.

Can I mix and play in larger groups outside with other children?

No.
Bubble groups only work if they are completely isolated from one another. Mixing large groups of children outside defeats the purpose of maintaining social bubbles elsewhere, as the virus could potentially spread to all the children.



Can I use loose parts, tools etc.?

Yes, you can use loose parts, tools and other resources within a bubble group. If another bubble group are to use them they will be washed in between or left for over 72 hours to kill the virus.
Staff may choose to provide fewer loose parts/resources for now, to make this easier.



Outdoor Learning

"It is undeniable that daily, high quality play experiences have a direct and positive impact on children's physical, cognitive, social, mental health and emotional development,"
RTA



Can I use sand and/or water together outside?

Yes, you can use sand and water outside within one bubble group. If another bubble group is to use it, sand must be left for over 72 hours before this happens, or fresh sand provided. Each group could have a separate sand area/supply. Likewise water will be emptied, the vessels cleaned and refilled with fresh water for the next group.



Will the resources and tools outside be clean for me to play with?

Yes, the tools and resources will be washed thoroughly with warm, soapy water and a sponge or cloth, the same as inside. Resources can also be left to dry in the sun afterwards, if appropriate, as UV light has been shown to kill the virus.

Can I share waterproofs or would I need to provide my own?

Waterproofs may be contaminated, so children cannot share them unless they are laundered in between. You can either wear your own or we will offer waterproofs to you, ensuring that they are washed before another child wears them.

Outdoor Learning

"It is undeniable that daily, high quality play experiences have a direct and positive impact on children's physical, cognitive, social, mental health and emotional development,"

HTA

Do I need to wash my hands more or less regularly outside or the same amount?

Yes, you will need to wash your hands regularly as you would indoors, as frequent handwashing is key to preventing viral spread. Handwashing stations will be provided.





How will you support my free flow play if I am in a group?

Bearing in mind that staff will not be able to offer the same provision for now as we did before, staff need to look at what we do provide within the bubble groups and ensure that free flow play is available where possible.

Will I be outside with other bubble groups or just in my bubble group?

No, not necessarily. Every setting is different. Some settings may try to set up separate bubble areas outdoors, keeping groups at least 2m apart and using different doors out, if possible. Staff may have one group using the garden and another using local woodland for the day/few days. For now, we have to do the best we can while keeping you and the staff safe.



What would be the guidance for me if I am upset/had an accident whilst outdoors?

Staff will need to meet your emotional needs in this difficult time. Maybe you will need a hug. Staff must keep with their bubble groups. Accidents and incidents will use the usual reporting methods.

Outdoor Learning

"It is undeniable that daily, high quality play experiences have a direct and positive impact on children's physical, cognitive, social, mental health and emotional development."

If I am allocated to outside space how do I access the toilets if other group is inside?

Different bubble groups will use different toilets if available. Creating a toilet tent outdoors for one group is a simple way to do this. See our Toileting 'How To' for details.





How will adults ensure I do good handwashing outside? How will it work when I am being served snacks and lunch?

Outdoor handwashing stations will be provided.

For eating, ensure strict hand hygiene for all. Staff with clean hands can serve food. While normally children would be encouraged to help with snack, for now only staff may do so.

Children can eat outdoors, within bubble groups and with plenty of space between them.



Can my visits to the woods be increased?

Yes, the staff can use the outdoors as much as possible. It is safer than indoors because of ventilation, so viral droplets in breath are dispersed quickly, and sunlight, which has been shown to break down the virus. There is also more space, so you and your friends can naturally spread out and there are fewer surfaces that lots of hands will have touched.



Can I play in wooded areas be used as before?

Yes, you can. You can use a wooded area within your bubble group, maintaining social distance of over 2m from any members of the public you encounter. You'll be washing hands more frequently, staff will need to bring more warm water for this.

Outdoor Learning

"It is undeniable that daily, high quality play experiences have a direct and positive impact on children's physical, cognitive, social, mental health and emotional development,"
HTA

Will staff have guidance on taking me and my bubble friends outdoors?

Yes, there is extensive guidance, which is updated on a regular basis. We follow the guidance specifically for outdoor learning which is a really important part of the early years curriculum.

