

How will services offering the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme be structured and operated?

Services must be trading as a sole trader, partnership, limited liability company or school Board of Management. Community based services depend on parents using the service to get involved in the management of the service and can only establish a limited liability company where parents and the wider community are willing to be involved by becoming a director and/or member of the company.

How will services offering the ECCE Scheme be regulated?

Services offering the ECCE Scheme must be notified to the HSE as a pre-school service and have a satisfactory level of compliance with the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006 and Explanatory Guide to Requirements and Procedures for Notification and Inspection.

Will childcare staff be experienced and suitably qualified?

The preschool leader must hold a major award in childcare/early education at a minimum of level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications of Ireland (NFQ) or an equivalent recognised qualification in the above fields.

During the period Sept 2010 to August 2012 the qualification requirement will be considered to be met where a childcare worker can show that he/she has obtained a certification for an award in ECCE that includes the areas of child development, early learning, health and welfare and has a minimum of two years experience in a childcare setting catering for 0–6 year olds.

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Other useful contacts

- Office of the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs www.omcya.ie
- Síolta The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education
"A guide for Parents" www.siolta.ie
- Aistear the Framework for Early Learning
www.ncca.ie
- HSE Pre School Inspection Team: www.hse.ie



Free Pre-school Year Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) Scheme



Information for Parents

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Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme

The ECCE year will be available, once again, from September 2010. The ECCE scheme is set out so that all children can access a free pre-school year the year before they begin primary school. This will provide children with an opportunity to their first formal experience of early learning. Childcare services must employ qualified staff and implement Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education to help them deliver appropriate educational programme based activities.

What age must my child be to avail of a free preschool place?

For children who enter the ECCE scheme in Sept 2010, they must be born between 2 February 2006 and 30 June 2007, both dates inclusive. Exceptions will continue to be considered where children have been assessed by the HSE or a treating consultant as having special/additional needs which will delay their entry to primary school. Also, children at an older age due to the enrolment policy of the local primary school. To establish your child's eligibility, parents will be asked for details such as the child's name, date of birth and PPs number.

How many hours /days/ weeks can my child avail of the free preschool year?

If your child is attending a sessional service she/he may attend for 3 hours per day, five days a week for 38 weeks per year. Where the service operates for 4 days per week your child may attend for 3 hours 30 minutes per day for 41 weeks of the year.

A Sessional service can also participate in the Scheme by providing 2 hours 15 minutes per day, five days a week for 50 weeks per year.

If your child is attending a full or part-time day care service, she/he has the opportunity to attend for 2 hours 15 minutes per day, five days a week for 50 weeks per year.

A full or part-time service may also choose to provide a sessional service (3 hours per day/5days per week) over 38 weeks of the year.

It is not mandatory for children to attend 5 days per week but services are advised by the OMCYA to prioritise places for children where parents indicate that they intend to avail of the place for at least 4 days each week.

Will I have to pay any additional fees?

The value of the free pre school year is estimated at €2,500 per child. Parents will be asked to pay for hours which are additional to the free pre-school year. Services may charge for optional additional one-off activities or services such as outings, birthday parties, specific teaching resources such as dance or music, and food.

What kind of preschool programme will be offered?

Your local service may offer a programme that is guided by a number of philosophies including Montessori, High/Scope, Play based, Steiner Waldorf, Naíonra, Reggio Emilia and others. Regardless of the individual philosophy of the service, all services participating in the Free Preschool ECCE Scheme will be required to offer programmes that reflect the principles and standards of Síolta the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and in the future will be guided by Aistear The Framework for Early Learning.

How do I know which pre-schools are on the scheme?

Official notification of successful services will be available on RCCC's website as soon as this information has been made available from the OMCYA.

What is Síolta?

Síolta is a quality assurance process which addresses all aspects of quality practice in early childhood care and education services. It is designed to support practitioners in developing high quality services for children aged birth to six years and is relevant to all settings where children spend time out of their home environment.

What is Aistear?

Aistear, the Early Curriculum Framework, supports childcare practitioners in planning for and providing enriching, challenging and enjoyable learning opportunities for children from birth to six years. It can be used in different types of settings including children's homes, childminding settings, full and part-time daycare, sessional services and infant classrooms. The aim of the Framework is to help every child to grow and develop as a competent and confident learner within loving and nurturing relationships with adults and peers.

When can I enrol my child?

Roscommon County Childcare Committee would like to encourage parents to support their childcare service with the introduction of the ECCE Scheme. Priority will be given to parent's seeking full time places. Services may require booking deposits and, provided that this is not more than twice the weekly capitation fee and, provided it is repaid to parents by the end of September 2010, this is acceptable.

If parents have any further queries with regard to the free preschool year they should contact RCCC on 094 9622540.

