



## HOPE COVID-19 SAFETY GUIDANCE

Hope Montessori Autism Care Centre is taking all precautionary steps to ensure the safety of both our student and staff. Below is an outline of Safety Guidance approved by HSE and HAS.

### A CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

- Hope Montessori will continue as always to remain a child centred centre. This means our children are at the heart of all policies and practices and involved in decision-making where appropriate.
- Our primary concern will be children's health and well-being.
- We will determine how best to comply with the public health guidance within the regulatory framework.
- There will be no change to the Early Years Regulations. Hope will maintain the statutory adult-child ratios and space requirements for different age groups and care categories as before.

### PREPARING THE PREMISES

**Health and safety:** Each Centre will conduct a health and safety check of the premises as set out in the ECI Health and Safety checklist. Centre managers and anyone they assign the role will be in charge of this.

**Risk assessments:** Centre managers will risk assess all planned activities in light of Covid-19, in conjunction with relevant staff where applicable, and give due consideration to how usual practice may need to be adapted.

**Cleaning and hygiene:** Each centre will have a clear procedure for how hand washing will be managed. This will be place around the centre in both picture and word format. Cleaning will be required at regular intervals. This will be different for each centre based on their facility. Cork, Inchicore and Limerick as a cleaner on staff and as such this will be done regularly throughout the day. Our Dublin 15 centres we will work with the Community centre manager and work on a schedule to ensure this is done throughout the day.

**Protocol for responding to a suspected case of Covid-19:** Hope Montessori Management team alongside each Centre manager will adhere to all recommended protocol for responding to any suspected case of Covid-19 based on public health guidance. All centre managers will follow ever developing procedures in place to respond to any suspected case of Covid-19. Our lay down



procedures are based on public health guidelines. This include space for isolation, communication mechanisms with parents and distancing policy.

#### **Further Consideration for Re-opening the Centres**

- Each centre (where applicable) will have a 2m stickers in the front entrance and within the building. Please note this this might change according to the government's roadmap.
- Parents are not allowed into the centre and children will be collected at the centre entrance.
- Hand sanitizer station are located at the entrance door for everyone to sanitize their hands when entering.
- Classroom will be thoroughly cleaned frequently throughout the day and at the end of each class. Afternoon classes are thoroughly wiped down and cleaned before student arrive.
- The use of playground during break is done class by class. Each class has been allocated specific time to use the playground.
- All play equipment's will be wiped down after each class.

#### **SOCIAL DISTANCING AND 'PLAY-PODS'**

- As with most early year provider, Hope Montessori understands that social distancing is not possible between young children. Infection risk is minimised through children remaining within the same 'play-pod' through the day.
- A 'play-pod' comprises a group of children and the adult(s) who remain with that group as keyworker(s). These is to enable the same staff and children to stay together each day, as much as possible.
- The purpose of 'play-pods' is to limit the number of people a child has contact with, to facilitate tracing, and to support close, positive interactions between children and their adult caregivers, like in a key-worker system. This system will also reduce the amount of contact adults have with each other.
- A 'Play-pods' develop a cohesive, consistent group of children who feel safe. Children are returning to the setting having been with their parent(s)/guardian(s) for several months, and the 'play-pod' aims to develop a team-like spirit between the children where they help one another while playing and learning together.
- Within a 'play-pod', social distancing of young children is not recommended.
- Children older than 6 years will be asked to keep a distance between among themselves and avoid physical contact as much as possible.



- There will be no contact between two 'play-pods' (children and staff). 'Play-pods' will remain apart in shared spaces (including outdoors) and during drop-off and collection times.
- Our larger rooms may have more than one 'play-pod' with partitions that prevent physical contact between the 'play-pods', with layout that complies with the Early Years Regulations and with fire safety requirements.
- Attention is given to any shared entry or exit points to reduce contact between pods.
- Toys are not to be shared between 'play-pods'.
- Staff from different 'play-pods' must maintain social distancing. Where two staff are part of one pod, they should social distance as far as is practicable. Children from different play-pods should not play together for safety to be maintained.
- Hope's staff and parents must maintain the recommended social distancing space.
- Two to four adults will be assigned to a 'play-pod', to allow breaks without need for floating staff.

### **INFECTION CONTROL**

- Hope Montessori will try to minimise and manage risk of infection in each centre. Some risks are inevitable however, public health advises that reopening is safe.
- Children and staff of Hope Montessori should not attend if they have symptoms of viral infection.
- Hope Montessori follows and practices all hygiene requirement. Our Staff will constantly model and practise with children in an age-appropriate way.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is not required for children or for staff when interacting with children, except if required by the Early Years Regulations (gloves/ aprons for nappy changing; gloves for cleaning). When not caring for children, adults should follow NPHEAT advice on use of masks (cloth face coverings).

### **INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS, AND CAPACITY**

- All Hope Montessori's centres ensure that environments remain familiar to children as far as possible.
- Play and learning outdoors are central to practice every day.
- There is no requirement to reduce capacity in a setting (total number of children). However, some centres will reduce capacity in some rooms (if applicable) in order to comply with the maximum size of a 'play-pod' [This is different for each centre] and to prevent contact between 'play-pods'.
- Each Hope centre has considered their staff facilities in deciding their capacity, to ensure that social distancing is maintained among staff.
- Each staff has been trained of the modalities to manage entry and exit, via staggered start and finish times and/or use of multiple exits.



### **PROMOTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUR STAFF AND PARENTS.**

- At Hope Montessori, maintaining staff safety and welfare is essential.
- Each staff has been trained on the guidelines and protocol for the opening of each centre. They are aware of and understand all new measures to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 and their roles and responsibilities.
- All staff have been informed of all new measures put in place and the appropriate way of seeking help when any concern arises.
- Hope Management has supported staff through instruction and training, so they have the knowledge and skills to perform their roles adequately or enhance their practice before and after opening.
- The Management has communicated their plans for the opening of the centres to parents and guardians.
- They are aware of all new measures put in place to reduce risk of transmission of Covid-19, how this impacts them, and their responsibilities in supporting this. DCYA and Barnardos' recommended guideline for safely return to school has been forwarded to parents and guardians.
- Management will continue to partnership with parents/guardians, and with updated information as well as their children's progress.